

PIMA COUNTY
RECORDER'S OFFICE

After Action Report

Regional Transportation
Authority (RTA) Special Election
March 10, 2026



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This narrative is provided to the Pima County Board of Supervisors to review the Pima County Recorder's Office operation of Early Voting and Ballot Replacement Sites for the 2026 Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) Special Election.

Reports and Statistics

Early Ballots Process Report

Total Original Ballots mailed out to voters	651,388
Total Early Ballots Returned	243,319
Unresolved Redlines*	(23) [†]
Total Curable Ballots Rejected**	(424)
Total Ballots Returned Unvoted***	(33,338)
Ballots Turned Over for Tabulation	209,533

Reported Numbers

Ballots Redlined Before Tabulation**** 31

***Unresolved Redline:** The voter did not vote another ballot. Ballot was rejected.

****Curable Ballots Rejected:** Ballots eligible to be signature verified but voter signature could not be confirmed.

*****Ballots Returned Unvoted:** Ballots returned as undeliverable or with notation that the voter is deceased. These ballots are retained by the Recorder's Office for voter roll maintenance purposes.

******Redline:** Ballot Affidavits rejected for containing something other than a 2026 RTA Election ballot. These are removed from the turnover receipt. Efforts are then made by the Recorder's Office to contact the voter. These voters are eligible to receive another ballot up until Election Day at 7pm.

[†]There is a one ballot discrepancy due to one voter submitting a Ballot Affidavit containing only the ballot instructions. The voter was contacted and sent a new ballot, which they returned a second time, and the second time the affidavit envelope again only contained ballot instructions. This number had to be manually changed, as our system was unable to attribute more than one redlined ballot to the voter.

Ballots Received by Recorder's Office

Ballots received by mail	182,082
Total Ballots received by mail	182,082
Replacement Ballots issued on site	
– Downtown Recorder's Office	236
– Country Club Recorder's Office	47
– Tucson Ward 2 Office	142
– Votemobile	42
Total Replacement Ballots issued on site	467
ID Verified Ballots	
– Downtown Recorder's Office	745
– Country Club Recorder's Office	407
– Tucson Ward 2 Office	419
– Votemobile	72
Total Ballots ID Verified On-Site	1,643
Permanent Dropbox	
– Downtown Drive-Up	3,611
– Downtown Walk-Up	4,056
– Eastside Drive-Up	11,403
Total Ballots Dropped off in Permanent Drop Box	19,070
Ballots dropped off in person	
– Downtown Recorder's Office	990
– Tucson Ward 2 Office	2,208
– Country Club Recorder's Office	1,314
– Special Election Board	6
– Votemobile	1,948
Total Ballots Dropped off in Permanent Drop Box	6,466
UOCAVA (Military and Overseas)	
– Mail	10
– Enhanced Voting	76
Total UOCAVA (Military and Overseas) Ballots received	86
TOTAL NUMBER OF BALLOTS RECEIVED BY RECORDER'S OFFICE	209,782

Areas of Note

Number of Undeliverable/Unvoted Ballots

The Regional Transportation Authority Special Election was a rare, county-wide, all-vote-by-mail election. Ballots were mailed to every eligible voter in Pima County, rather than only those on the Active Early Voting List (AEVL). Ballots were sent to more than 200,000 voters who do not usually receive ballots in the mail.

In response to increased public interest in election data, our office began providing online Early Ballot processing reports in 2024. Additionally, due to a new interest in “undeliverable ballots,” our office began including those ballots in our reports, adding a category called “returned unvoted.” For this reason, it is too early to compare the number of undeliverable ballots in the RTA all-by-mail election with any of the elections we have conducted since tracking this data. The undeliverable return rate for the RTA election will be difficult to compare to other elections, as we mailed more ballots than usual.

ID Verification Option

During this election, we began offering voters the option to verify their identity when dropping off their Early Ballots, in line with A.R.S. § 16-579 (A)(4). If a voter presented their ID to Early Voting Site Workers, their Ballot Affidavit was marked with a special stamp that indicated that the signature had already been verified by Recorder’s Staff. These ballots were separated at the Ballot Processing Center and automatically accepted within our system, bypassing the signature verification process. They were then transferred to the Elections Department for immediate tabulation.

Votemobile

The Motemobile is Pima County’s new mobile voting unit and was used as a Ballot Replacement Site during the RTA Special Election. This project was made possible by a grant from the Tohono O’odham Nation in partnership with the Pima County Board of Supervisors*. The mobile voting unit allows voters to securely drop off ballots and receive and vote Replacement Ballots on site.

Equipment and Staffing

The mobile voting unit uses the same staffing structure as all Voting Sites managed by the Pima County Recorder’s Office, with a bipartisan team of permanent and intermittent staff. A separate recruitment process was conducted to hire trained and licensed drivers to transport the Motemobile. Each driver also receives training as a Site Worker.

The Motemobile has the necessary equipment to operate as an Early Voting Site:

- Accessible Ballot Marking Device
- Wheelchair lift
- Five private voting booths
- Ballot On Demand printer
- Site Issued Ballot Drop Box
- Mail Ballot Drop Box

*A grant was unanimously approved by the Pima County Board of Supervisors on September 6, 2022, and a second, supplementary grant was unanimously approved on August 8, 2023, for the purchase of a mobile voting unit.

The Votemobile was in operation for the final week of voting and visited four sites:

Votemobile Statistics Hours of Operation: 10 am to 3 pm			
Date	Location	Ballots Dropped Off	Replacement Ballots Issued on site
March 2*	Tohono Plaza, 1 Indian Route 19, Sells	23	7
March 4	Salazar-Ajo Library, Ajo	15	4
March 5	La Villita Community Center, Sahuarita	310	5
March 9	Nanini Library	1,600	26

*Votemobile opened as an active site after a Ribbon Cutting ceremony. To accommodate the event, its opening time differed from the other locations.

Future Initiatives

In addition to Early Voting services, the Votemobile will be deployed at community events and public programs to support voter education and outreach. This includes providing information about the voting process, election timelines, voter rights and Voter Registration.

Our office sees an opportunity for improvement in increasing the number of appearances, expanding the range of locations and extending visit durations to enhance accessibility and reach underserved communities. We also plan to provide on-site demonstrations of the accessible Ballot-Marking Device to ensure voters can confidently use the equipment. For updates and locations, visit recorder.pima.gov/Votemobile.

Political Party Observers

In January 2026, before the passage of HB2022, which expanded statute A.R.S. § 16-590 to allow Political Party Observers to be present at Early Voting Sites, Recorder Cázares-Kelly invited the five state-recognized parties to discuss observation protocols for the RTA Special Election. On February 10, the Recorder hosted the chairs of the Republican, Democratic and Green parties for a tour of two Ballot Replacement Sites. She explained the new policies and procedures outlining how to appoint Observers and the expected standards of conduct.

All our Ballot Replacement Sites were open to Party Observers during the RTA Election.

The procedures and guidelines for Site Workers and Observers provide a clear understanding of roles, participation and communication with our political party representatives. These clear guidelines and procedures are made available to all political party chairs, Observers and the public. The public can easily identify Observers by their orange vests, issued by the Recorder’s Office during active voting. Documents can be accessed on our Election Security webpage at recorder.pima.gov/Security.

Challenges relating to Observers were minimal. This included political party chairs not providing adequate notice to the Recorder’s Office before sending Observers, and some Observers not having the required documentation upon arrival.

Reminders of the procedures were provided. However, by the end of the election, we were confidently able to safely and securely welcome Observers at any of our sites. Below are the number of Observers who participated during this election cycle at each of our available Ballot Replacement Sites and Ballot Processing Center:

Observer Statistics

Ballot Replacement Site	Number of Observers
Recorder's Country Club Office Ballot Processing Center	2
Recorder's Country Club Office	1
Recorder's Main Office	3
Tucson Ward 2 Office	3
Votemobile	2

Increased Ballot Drop Box Pickups

We have increased the frequency of Ballot Drop Box pickups and now use equipment that allows us to quickly remove and seal the collection totes that sit inside the Ballot Drop Boxes. We have also increased the number of courier teams picking up ballots. Courier schedules are not shared with the public as a safety precaution. Ballot Drop Boxes were carefully monitored throughout the election to prevent them from reaching capacity. There were no issues during ballot collection.

Recorder Staff Visibility

All staff members carrying out their duties outside of an Early Voting Site are now required to wear branded, yellow safety vests. This allows the public to easily identify Recorder's Office staff as they set up voting locations, transport ballots or conduct other election-related business.

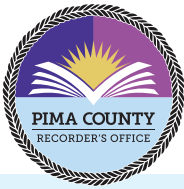
Updated Signature Verification Process

We implemented a new Signature Verification process that allows us to view both the scanned ballot and the signature from the voter's record on the same screen. This enables us to reduce the number of times Ballot Affidavits are physically handled. The Pima County Recorder's Office has been preparing for this enhancement for more than two years.

Ballots are immediately prepared for scanning upon arrival, a benefit of the one-envelope solution, reducing the time it takes to confirm that we have received a voter's ballot. Human beings verify signatures on Ballot Affidavits, as usual. However, they no longer handle the Ballot Affidavits directly. Our process largely remains the same, however, ballots are scanned a second time to separate verified ballots from ballots that have been identified as requiring further action from the Ballot Curing Team. Ballot Affidavits are prepared for transfer in bi-partisan teams and physically rolled next door to the Elections Department where the Ballot Affidavit is opened and the ballot is removed from the envelope and prepared for tabulation. The new signature verification process allows us to transfer more ballots, faster to the Elections Department in bundles of 50. This makes for a more orderly process and allows for a continuous stream of transfers.

We built an automatic three-second delay in the Signature Verification process to combat fatigue and automatic acceptances. This has reduced the number of staff in our secure ballot rooms as well as the number of ballots being placed in the wrong trays for additional processing.

The new process has been very successful, and both our permanent and intermittent staff have responded positively to the change.



EARLY BALLOT PROCESS/LIFE OF A BALLOT

1

Receiving

Bipartisan Teams collect Ballot Affidavit Return Envelopes from in-person voting locations, 24/7 Ballot Drop Boxes and the U.S. Postal Service in Tucson and bring them to the Ballot Processing Center.



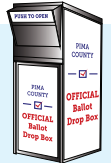
U.S.P.S.



MAIL DROP OFF



SITE ISSUED



OFFICIAL BALLOT DROP BOX

2



Bipartisan Courier Teams

Ballot Affidavit Envelopes are picked up by couriers wearing safety vests and visible staff ID.

3



Received/Secured/Sorted

Bipartisan Teams sort the envelopes to prepare them for scanning. **The Recorder's office does not open Ballot Affidavit Envelopes.** The ballots remain sealed inside the envelope throughout the signature verification process.

4

Scanning

Ballot Affidavits are scanned and a unique bar code ties it to the voter's record. Once scanned, the system makes sure that only one affidavit is accepted per voter. Status updates are sent to voters via text and email to let them know we have their ballot. Updates are also available on the Voter Dashboard.



5



Signature Verification

Trained signature verifiers compare the signature on the Ballot Affidavit Envelope to signatures in the voter's record. If the first verifier cannot confirm the signature's authenticity, it is then reviewed by a more experienced staff member.



Second Checking

The second checker accepts the signature.

OR

If the signature still cannot be verified, the Ballot Affidavit is sent to the Ballot Curing Team.

Ballot Curing

Multiple attempts are made to contact voters to resolve problems with the signature. We reach out via postal mail, email, phone and text.*



6

Verified!

Once the signature is verified, status updates are sent to voters via text or email and posted to their Voter Dashboard.

7

Audit Scan

Envelopes are scanned again to separate the verified ones from those still being cured.



8

Physical Turnover

The audited Ballot Affidavit Envelopes are bundled and turned over to the Elections Department.

9



Tabulation

The Elections Department is responsible for opening the Ballot Affidavit Envelopes and removing and tabulating the ballots.

Though we work closely together, the **Recorder's Office** and the **Elections Department** are separate county offices and have different responsibilities.

Visit Pima.vote for more info!

*Ballots that are not verified are rejected. In the 2024 General Election, fewer than 0.29 percent of curable ballots were rejected for various reasons.

Challenges and Resolutions

Available Voting Options

We received many complaints about the lack of Election Day Vote Centers in this election. The public was unhappy about not having the usual number of voting day options. The all-vote-by-mail format was chosen by the Regional Transportation Authority Board. Voters were generally positive when told there would be more options in the Primary and General, as those elections will follow the standard format.

How we are resolving this issue:

We are installing more Ballot Drop Boxes throughout Pima County in the event of another all-vote-by-mail election with limited in-person voting options. We will also deploy the Votemobile to rural locations to provide more voting options throughout the county.

Single Ballot Affidavit Return Envelopes

We received a relatively low number of complaints regarding the single-envelope solution. **We are prepared to continue to address these complaints through the 2028 Presidential Election Cycle.**

How we are resolving this issue:

We have continued to share information about why the change was made via media releases, media requests, community outreach events, our website and our phone operators. Callers are directed to Ballot Drop-Off locations, including our new 24/7 Ballot Drop Boxes and in-person voting opportunities. We will also be installing more 24/7 Ballot Drop Boxes throughout Pima County to provide voters with additional return options.

Website Reporting Vs Canvass Report

There was some public confusion on data reported on the Pima County Recorder website. During routine audit checks, the Recorder's Office and Elections Department caught a discrepancy in the number of eligible voters. The Elections Department corrected the total from 665,294 to the accurate 660,275 eligible voters. Eligibility of Federal Only voters never changes, and the voting system would not have allowed Federal Only voters to receive full ballots for the RTA Election. As a result, no votes or outcomes were affected.

A member of the public highlighted this change via a lawsuit that was dismissed on April 14, 2026. A media release explaining the error was released on April 3, 2026, and is available on our website at recorder.pima.gov/PressReleases.

How we are resolving this issue:

We have instituted an additional logic check for all major data reports.

There was also a complaint about turnover numbers not aligning between the Recorder's Office and Elections Department websites. The complaint centered around a ballot turnover receipt that was not immediately uploaded to the Recorder's Office website.

The Recorder's Office and the Elections Department include clear disclaimers on our websites stating that any figures published before the canvass are unofficial and for informational purposes only. After the ballot-curing deadline, the Pima County Recorder's Office Voter Team conducts a multiday audit to account for every ballot received. While additional reports on Early Ballot status are published throughout the election to promote transparency and public access, all such data remains preliminary until the canvass is completed and results are certified.

How we are resolving this issue:

We are reviewing our disclaimers and options for providing clearer information to the public.

Space

We continue to struggle with spacing and storage needs. We use multiple locations to house our equipment, provide trainings and provide workspaces for staff.

How we are resolving this issue:

We are looking forward to moving into a new Ballot Processing Center in 2027 that will take us from roughly 7,000 square feet to 16,000 square feet and provide our office with much needed space for ballot processing, training, staging and storage.

Future Initiatives

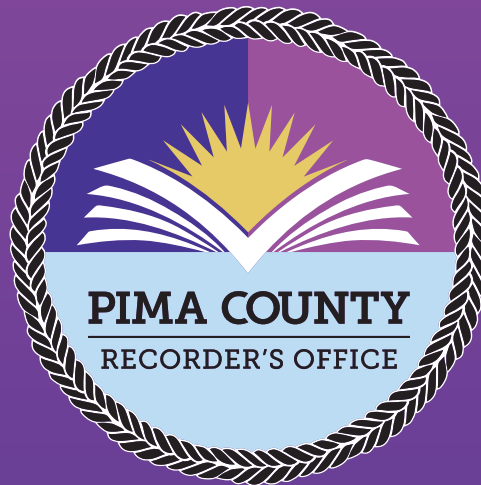
We are currently working to install more permanent ballot drop boxes throughout Pima County. The current locations identified for a Ballot Drop Box are: Ajo, Sells, Sahuarita, Pascua Yaqui and Oro Valley. A larger permanent Ballot Drop Box will replace the Recorder's current East Side Ballot Drop Box.

The Downtown Drive-Up Ballot Drop Box entrance is causing some lower vehicles to scrape the sidewalk upon entry. We are currently working with the Pima County Transportation Department, Pima County Facilities and the City of Tucson to fix the entrance.

We will be working with the Pima County Communications Department and the Pima County Elections Department to build our communications campaigns for the 2026 Primary and General Elections.

"...thank you for the easy and safe voting options you have always provided voters in Pima County."

- Pima County Voter



Voter Registration Dashboard

Log in to check your voter registration,
find out about upcoming elections,
request a ballot, and more!

SCAN FOR INFO

