



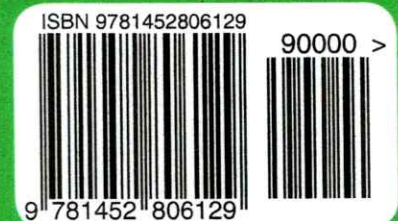
DO YOU BELIEVE IN SECRET VOTE COUNTS? IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE SECRET VOTE COUNTING BELONGS IN THE GREATEST DEMOCRACY ON EARTH, AND YOU WANT TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT, THEN THIS HANDBOOK IS FOR YOU.

HACKABLE E-VOTING MACHINES BEGAN TO BE USED IN AMERICA'S ELECTIONS IN THE MID-1960S; THEN EXPLODED IN USE AFTER THE 2000 ELECTION, AND THEY NOW COUNT THE LION'S SHARE OF AMERICA'S BALLOTS. WITH COMPUTERIZATION CAME PRIVATIZATION OF OUR ELECTIONS AS WELL. YOUR VOTE—THE RIGHT BY WHICH ALL YOUR OTHER RIGHTS ARE SECURED—IS NOW THE PRIVATE PROPERTY AND TRADE SECRET OF CORPORATE E-VOTING INDUSTRIALISTS. THESE FOR PROFIT CORPORATIONS SEIZE OUR BALLOTS, COUNT THEM IN SECRET, TELL US WHAT THE RESULTS ARE, AND THEN LOCK AWAY THE RECORDS, SO NOBODY CAN EVER VERIFY OUR ELECTION RESULTS.

THIS IS NO WAY TO RUN A DEMOCRACY! WE NEED TO RECLAIM OUR PUBLIC ELECTIONS. FORTUNATELY FOR US, IT TURNS OUT THIS IS SOMETHING WE ALL CAN DO!

USING THIS HANDBOOK YOU CAN LEARN ABOUT:

- VOTING RIGHTS
- PUBLIC ELECTIONS
- ELECTION LAWS
- HOW OUR VOTES ARE OR ARE NOT BEING COUNTED
- THE PEOPLE RUNNING OUR ELECTIONS
- HOW TO RUN REAL ELECTIONS
- HOW TO OVERCOME CHALLENGES IN TAKING BACK OUR ELECTIONS
- THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S ROLE IN OUR ELECTIONS
- CITIZEN ELECTION WATCHDOG GROUPS



Excerpted From:

Hands-On Elections

**An Informational Handbook for Running Real
Elections, Using Real Paper Ballots, Counted by
Real People**

**Lessons from New Hampshire
2nd Edition**

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Hand Count Methodology

**Adapted From the NH Department of State: Hand Count Methods and Costs Address to Democracy
Fest Annual National Convention, June 10, 2007*

Preferred Method for Hand Counting: Sort and Stack

Years of hand counted election experience in New Hampshire indicates a preferred method to provide maximum accuracy, reliability and security. This method is the sort-and-stack method.

In this method, many of the steps are similar to the read-and-mark method, also used heavily in the Granite State. Local traditions reveal that the sort-and-stack method may not yet be used as widely as the read and mark method in New Hampshire polling places on election night.

Advantages of Sort and Stack Method

Of the two commonly used hand-count methods ("sort and stack" and "read and mark"), the sort and stack is favored for significantly reducing risks of human error. The reason for this is simple. With the sort and stack method, physiologically, the eye is looking only at one place on the ballot; it is trained on that spot both during the sort and during the count, effectively creating a double check even by that one person doing the sorting and counting.

In contrast, marking tally sheets is an inherently error-prone task. Observers, readers, and markers alike, face challenges in the read and mark method. Going back and forth from one name to another, to one spot on the tally sheet or the ballot to another, against the continuing drone of the reader, who is reading off names aloud, creates a situation where all involved—the reader, the marker and the observer—find their eyes, hands, and minds easily wander.

For checks and balances in hand counting, observers are a necessary component. Observing the read and mark method is more difficult than observing the sort and stack. In the sort and stack, the counters sort one contest into its piles, and then count one

contest in its piles. This is simple. On the other hand, in the read and mark, observers must listen to different names read aloud and observe marks as they are made up and down and all over any given tally sheet. If the names range from A to Z, the eyes of the observers and the markers are really jumping around, making the process become confusing very quickly and very easily. When using the read and mark method, however, having dual observers increases the ability to observe that both the reader and marker are being accurate.

If counting teams are employing the read and mark method, they should have at least two observers: one to observe the reader and the other to observe the marker. Otherwise, it is impossible to observe that both the reader and the marker are being accurate.

With the read and mark method, it is easy to fall into a "counting trance" of a sort. Your mouth becomes used to saying one name, and even if it's not the name you are looking at, it comes out of your mouth anyway. This is the same with marking. Your hand and eye are used to going to one place on the tally sheet no matter what. As an observer you fall into the same traps.

These are physiological and cognitive realities. The sort and stack method handily removes these challenges, and therefore removes these high-risk avenues for human error.

- Counters and observers are looking at only one candidate or question on the ballot.
- Counters' and observers' eyes do not have to move to different locations on the ballot and on the tally sheet.
- Counters and observers have to focus on getting only one thing right. When looking for evidence of only one mark on one precise location on the ballot, it is harder to make mistakes.
- Recording the number of votes for a candidate or question is done when the stack is counted.
- Other methods rely on a separate mark on a tally sheet being made with each ballot. This requires more sets of eyes to track accurately.

The Sort and Stack Method for Hand Counting

**Adapted from the NH Department of State: Hand Count Methods and Costs, Address to Democracy Fest Annual National Convention, June 10, 2007*

How the Sort and Stack Method Works

Ballots are sorted into piles:

- Counters sort ballots into piles, creating one pile for different categories
- Each candidate or alternative on a question
- Overvotes (defective in that contest)
- Undervotes (skipped races)
- Write-ins
- Ballots requiring voter intent judgment calls for the moderator (local election manager)
- Sorted piles are counted to create piles of 10, 15, 20 or 25 ballots per pile.

The lower the number of ballots in a pile the easier it is to trace counting errors. For instance, when counting into piles, it is easy to miscount and end up with a pile that has 11 instead of 10. During final reconciliation of the count, if the count of registered voters is 100, then the final count of ballots needs to also be 100.

With the counting error described above, the final ballot count will be 99. It is a relatively simple task to go back through the piles of 10 to find the error. It is more difficult to go back through piles of 25.

Therefore, the recommended best practice is to sort into piles of 10.

Rule of Thumb for Sort and Stack

- Aim for at least 2-4 sets of eyes on each ballot, and each vote recording.

- Using a 2-person team, that might mean that both members watch as one member sorts the ballots.
- Using a 4-person team means you have two counters and two observers (each watching one of the counters).
- Each counter views the voter marks once while sorting the ballots into the separate piles for each candidate in the contest.
- A best practice is to have each counter swap piles after sorting, so the ballots in each pile are viewed at least twice to ensure the sorting is accurate.
- Each counter checks the marks again when counting the number of ballots in the stack.
- Both members count each pile and record and check the sum on the tally sheet.
- A best practice is to swap the piles again after counting so each ballot and the number of ballots are viewed at least twice to ensure the counting is accurate.
- A best practice is to have each observer following each step (sort, count, and tally) so each step in the process is viewed by four sets of eyes.

Choosing Number of Sort and Stack Observers

- The more sets of eyes on a single ballot, the greater certainty in the results.
- Generally, this means the more observers, the greater degree of certainty in the results. (Still, using the sort and stack method, 2 counters (no observers) can apply 3-4 sets of eyes to each ballot, and still achieve accuracy.)
- An extra set of observers for 7 teams would cost \$240 (8 observers X 3 hours X \$10/hour) in an average U.S. polling place counting a 20-contest ballot without volunteer help.