Florida 2023 Election Security Report

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1. Objectives

The objectives of the 2023 Florida election security risk assessment are:

- Identify potential threats and vulnerabilities in Florida's election systems and processes.
- Prioritize election security efforts based on the most likely threats with the highest potential to compromise election outcomes.
- Proactively identify solutions, legislation, and process improvements.
- Enable principled system acquisition and legislative decisions.
- Enhance communications between election officials, legislators, and election integrity advocates.

2. Executive Summary

A formal security risk assessment of Florida's election process using observational data captured over three elections and public records including completed chain of custody forms and security plans was completed with experts from across the state. Over 200 risks were identified, and five legislative initiatives are proposed to address the most likely risks with the highest negative impact. The five legislative initiatives in priority order are:

- Strengthen and Enforce Chain of Custody and Physical Security with Statewide Standards
- Increase Voter Roll Accuracy & Enhance Signature Verification
- Strengthen Vote-by-Mail Process Transparency
- Expand Technology Certification Program to Cover All Systems Used in Elections & Make Certification More Robust
- Enhance Governance with State Monitoring and Procedural Audit of Elections and Expansion of Canvassing Board or Reduction in Workload Through Qualified Vote-by-Mail

Priority #1: Strengthen and Enforces Chain of Custody and Physical Security Statewide Standards. Each Florida county has different forms and procedures for ballot chain of custody and physical security. **Eight out of ten large counties whose completed drop box chain of custody forms were analyzed had major gaps in their process that could result in tens of thousands of ballots being inserted or deleted without detection – compromising the outcome of elections for all levels of government.**

The chain of custody process is not formally audited to ensure compliance and there is no reconciliation required by law that would enable detection and correction of vote-by-mail ballot insertion or deletion.

SB 369 puts controls in place to address vote-by-mail ballot chain of custody and physical security risks.

Priority #2: Increase Voter Roll Accuracy and Enhance Signature Verification.

There are many risk areas we must mitigate by improving voter roll accuracy and enhancing signature verification:

a. The more accurate our voter rolls are, the lower the likelihood an illegal ballot will be cast.

Florida has an unacceptable number of deceased and out-of-state movers on its voter roll. Deceased individuals and out-of-state movers can be identified by bad actors and be "voted for" with a low likelihood of detection by the voter themselves or by our signature verification process.

SB1602 (’24) enables timely detection and removal of deceased and out-of-state movers with due process by leveraging DMV and other state databases.

b. ***Signature verification is our primary method of detecting someone impersonating a registered voter - it is vulnerable to erroneous acceptance or rejection due to voter signature variations, poor quality or outdated signatures used for comparison, and reviewer bias and training deficiencies.***

The majority of voters in Florida register to vote at the DMV. The DMV collects signatures on a tablet rather than pen and paper (wet signature). Signatures captured on a tablet lack the clarity to reliably verify signatures.

Additionally, there are technologies and network communications in use that bring a risk of enabling bad actors to obtain electronic copies of voter signatures. An electronic copy of a voter's signature can be used by impersonators, making fake signature detection more difficult. Technology advances have also made it possible to print a signature that looks like the real thing unless viewed under a magnifying glass.

The signature verification issue is addressed in SB 369, by requiring a copy of a current photo ID with vote-by-mail ballots.

c. ***Safeguards are needed to ensure only U. S. citizens can register to vote and cast a ballot.***

The U. S. Census indicates that over 8% of Florida residents and 10% of the voting age population are non-citizens. Legal social security numbers, state ID, and driver licenses are regularly issued to non-citizens. **Millions of non-citizens could register to vote in Florida because of the lack of safeguards in Florida's voter registration process.**

There are many ways non-citizens can register to vote in Florida without citizenship verification, including using a driver license number, a state ID, the last four digits of a social security number, and No ID. The No ID registration option also opens the risk of fictitious persons being registered to vote. These risks are amplified by the availability of an on-line Federal Postcard Application, published in 14 languages, that also allows voter registration with No ID.

Florida's current voter registration process relies heavily on the honor system with criminal penalties for making false claims on the application. There are no Florida laws in place to require citizenship verification for new applicants or identification of non-citizens currently on the voter roll, even those who apply using the Federal Postcard Application.

SB 1602 ('24) puts controls in place to mitigate the risks of non-citizen and fictitious voter registration.

Priority #3: Strengthen Vote-by-Mail Process Transparency. Many parts of the vote-by-mail ballot distribution and counting process are not observable by the public, have limited report availability, and limited oversight. The degree of transparency and reporting varies greatly by county. Florida needs to make vote-by-mail ballot processing as transparent as in-person ballot processing in all counties to reduce risk and increase voter confidence in the election process.

SB369 addresses these issues with the requirement for rules to ensure uniform vote-by-mail transparency and reporting across counties.

Priority #4: Expand and make technology certification more robust. As part of the security risk assessment ***several technologies*** were identified that are used in Florida's election process that, ***by statute,*** are ***not required*** to be certified by the state, not required to have pre-election testing conducted (with or without public observation), cannot be observed by the public, heavily utilize data network communications, have no known measures to detect if they have been compromised during the election, are not required to be audited pre or post-election certification, and have no purchasing regulations. The narrowly defined "voting systems" that are required under current law to be certified and have pre-election and post-election testing utilize outdated certification and testing standards.

Florida's laws and rules have not kept pace with technology adoption and advancements. **The risk of Florida's election systems being hacked to compromise election outcomes is high due to lack of controls.**

SB 364 puts the controls in place to address technology-related risks. It is essential that the Governor establish an election technology advisory board to provide guidance on Florida election technology policies.

Priority #5: Enhanced governance with state monitoring and auditing of elections and expansion of canvassing board or reduction in vote-by-mail workload.

In the 2022 General Election, the twelve largest Florida counties processed 2/3 of the vote-by-mail ballots – this was 20% of all ballots cast in the 2022 General Election. The controls to ensure vote-by-mail security are lacking in many of these large counties, based on an analysis of their completed chain-of-custody forms and security plans.

The volume of vote-by-mail ballots to be processed has grown so fast that current three-person canvassing boards in some large counties do not have the capacity to carry out their statutory duties, resulting in canvassing board duties being delegated in some cases with limited oversight.

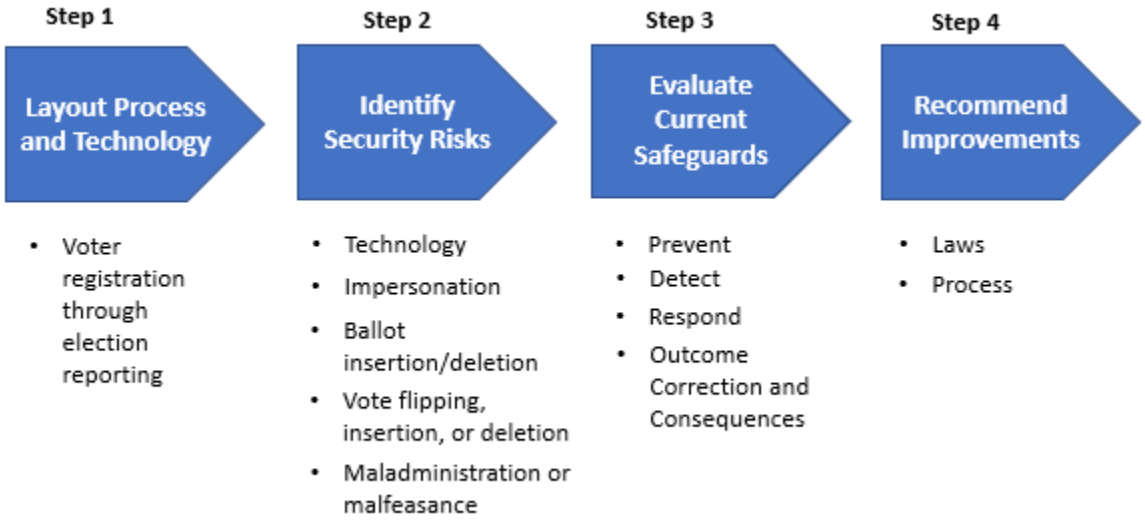
Temporary employees are widely used in vote-by-mail ballot processing and current statutes do not require vote-by-mail processing workers to be electors in the county they are employed in, do not require them to be residents of Florida, or even require them to be U.S. citizens. There is a statute which requires that poll workers be electors in the county that they work in. However, our interpretation is that this does not cover vote-by-mail ballot processing workers and that interpretation appears to be shared by SOE who have utilized workers from other counties and even other states.

SB 369 enhances governance by expanding the canvassing board and making it bi-partisan while requiring their increased oversight of the vote-by-mail process, including ballot chain of custody. It also reduces canvassing board workload and increases security by requiring qualified vote-by-mail. Additionally, SB369 creates vote-by-mail parity with in-person voting statutes on employment, transparency, and purchasing controls.

A proposed enhanced governance bill (House draft# 94145 and senate draft# 01635) create daily reconciliation, procedural audit, and public observation controls to prevent, detect, and correct operational or technology failures before they impact election outcomes. These enhanced governance measures increase election accuracy and voter trust.

3. Methodology and Team Composition

The security risk assessment team followed industry best practices and utilized CISA, & NIST guidelines. A 4-step process was utilized:



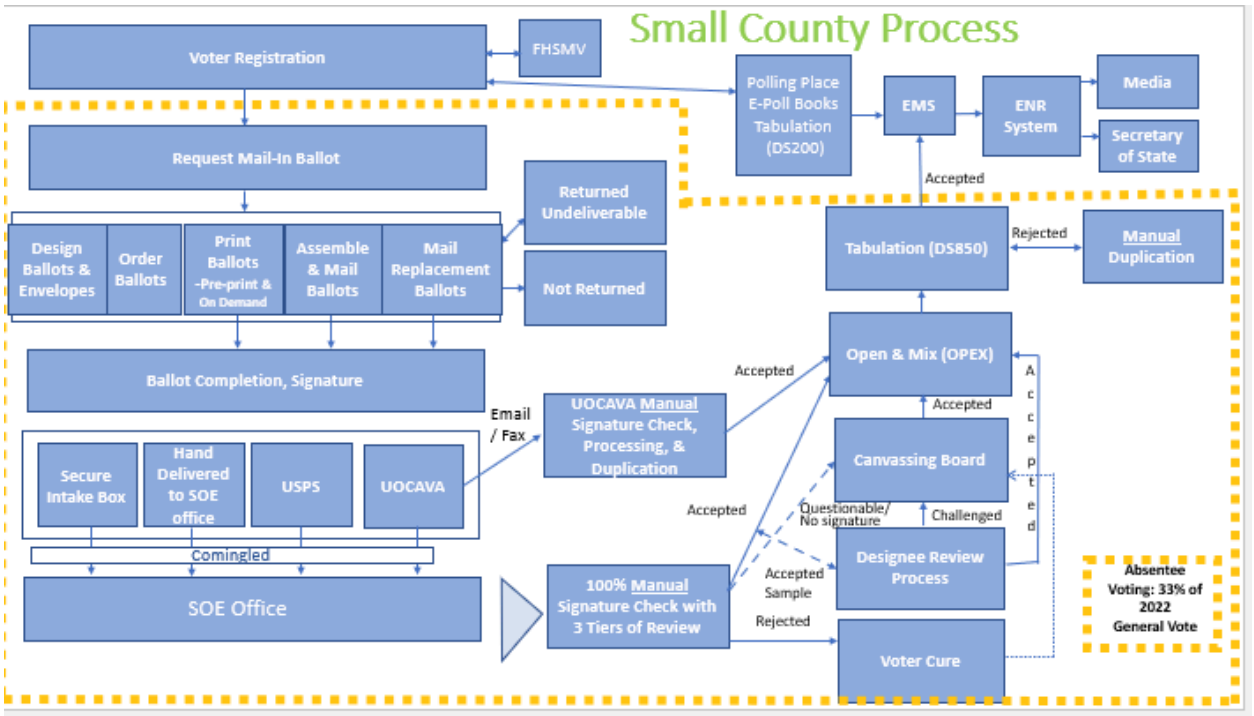
Because this was a citizen-led initiative it was not possible to get direct participation from vendors or supervisors of election. Therefore, the findings were validated using official government and vendor documents and reviewed with the Department of State and supervisors of election. All feedback was incorporated in the findings.

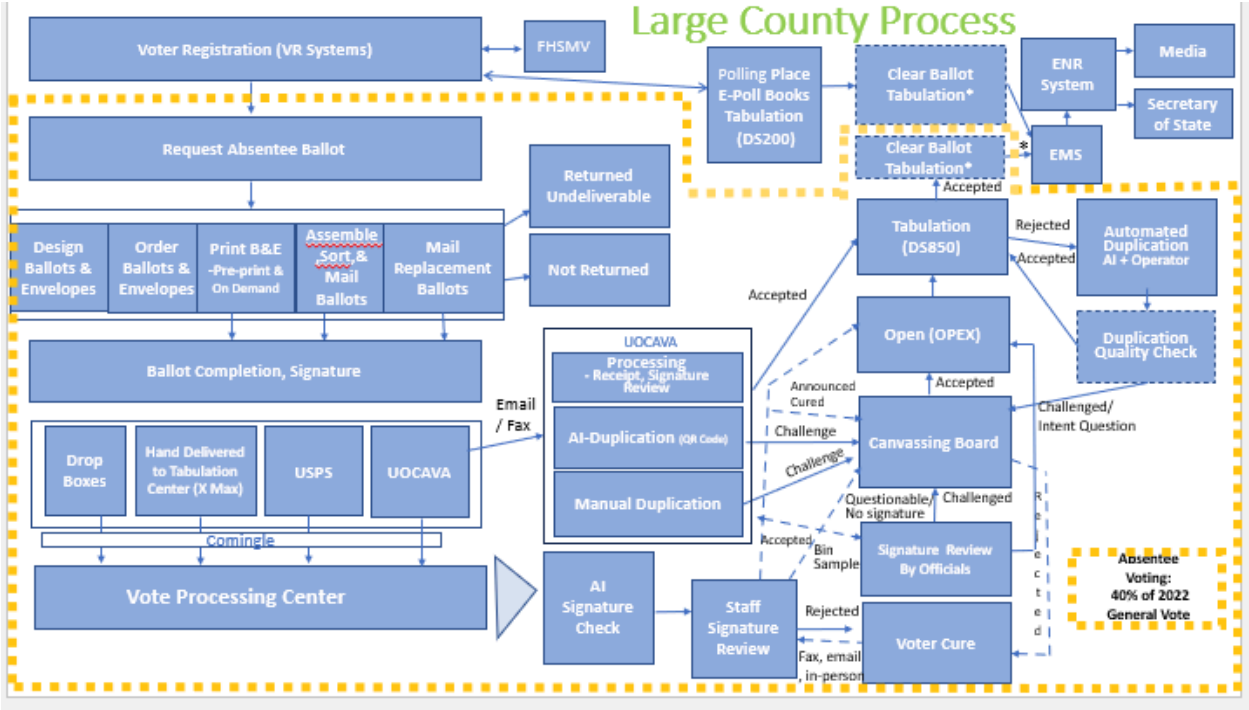
The security risk assessment team members had Florida election process knowledge from in-depth voter roll analysis, poll worker/watcher experience, Florida election statute review, or a combination of the above. The team included members with diverse industry experience including the Post Office, military, public safety, healthcare, communications, and financial. It had representation from multiple election integrity groups, political parties, and backgrounds.

There were 5 technology experts on the team, including a solutions architect, a software Engineer, a data network specialist, and a cyber specialist. The team also included a retired Postmaster.

4. Election Process and Technology

In step 1, the election process and technology utilization for a small and large county was documented and verified. The small county and large county process had many commonalities, but the large county process had a more complexity and higher utilization of technology.





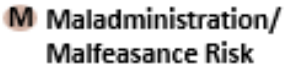
The process steps unique to vote-by-mail are within the yellow dotted line. Because the vote-by-mail process has many more steps and greater technology utilization than the in-person voting process it inherently has a higher degree of risk.

Likewise, the larger county because it has more process steps and technology utilization will have more risk than a smaller county. Thus, the rest of this report will focus on the risks identified in the larger county process.

5. Identification of Security Risks

Five types of security risks were considered:

- **T** Technology Risk
- **I** Impersonation Risk
- **B** Illegal Ballot Insertion/ Deletion Risk
- **F** Vote Flipping Insertion/ Deletion Risk


M
Maladministration/
Malfeasance Risk

Technology risks considered include:

- Defects of architecture, hardware, software, configuration, or services that impact vote counting.
- Malicious software inserted in development or after purchase to delete, add, or modify votes.
- An unauthorized actor changes system settings, modifies votes, counts, or steals data to impact vote or favor one party.
- Insecure local or remote wireless network communications enables bad actors and data disclosure or theft.

Impersonation risks considered include:

- Individual or group registers to vote and/or votes using another persons' identity, false citizenship claim, fake documentation, or fictitious person/address.

Illegal ballot insertion/deletion risks considered include:

- Legal ballots discarded and not counted.
- Illegal ballots inserted and counted.

Vote flipping, insertion, and deletion risks considered include:

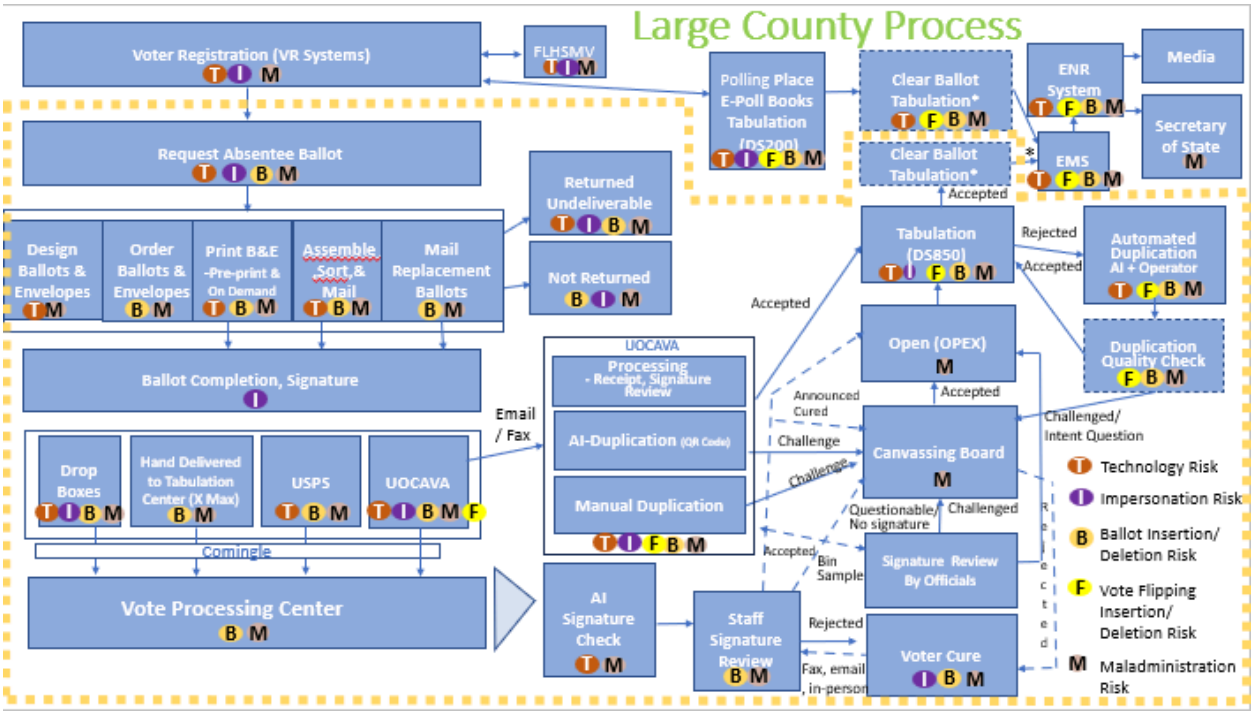
- Flip a vote from one candidate to another (software, adjudication, duplication).
- Insert a vote where none existed (fill in undervotes or create an overvote).
- May be done by an individual or an organized group.

Maladministration and Malfeasance risks considered include:

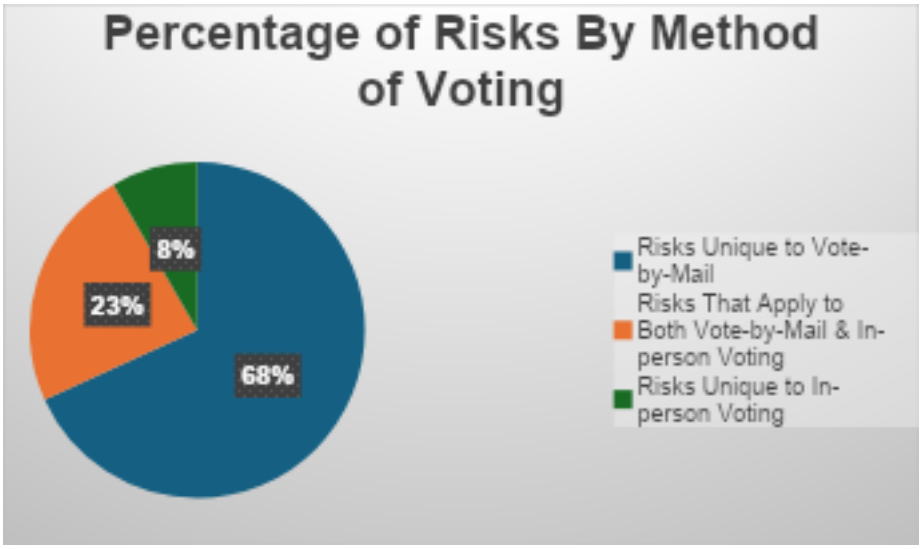
- System configuration or training gaps that lead to error or fraud (e.g., ballot design, signature matching).
- Laws or prescribed processes not followed (e.g., chain of custody, USB handling) lead to error or fraud.
- Manual or machine duplication that doesn't match voter intent (in error or intentionally).
- The supervisor of elections, permanent employee, temporary employee, or vendor employee steals data used for election/voter fraud, inserts malware, changes settings, or takes other action that adds or deletes ballots, or modifies votes.

- Vendor shares data with unauthorized individuals/groups who use data for fraud or is hacked.

Each step in the election process was evaluated for the presence of these risks. The outcome is illustrated in the following chart:



Each icon in the chart represents multiple specific risks, as described above. Over 200 specific risks were identified. Two thirds of the risks identified were unique to the vote-by-mail process:



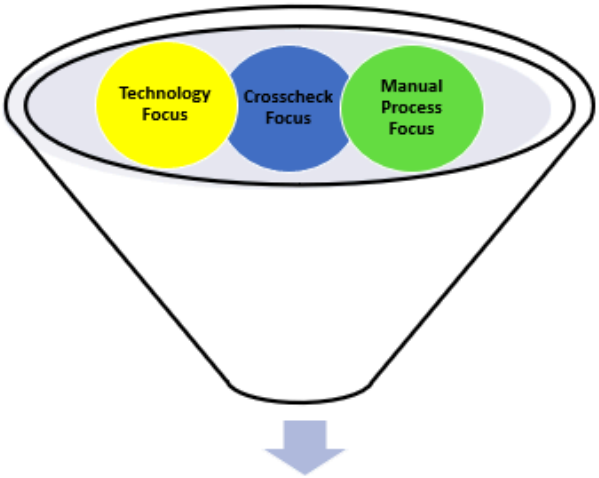
6. Evaluation of Current Safeguards

Required election security controls were identified for all 200+ risks that will prevent, detect, respond to, and correct/issue consequences if risk realization occurs. Current statutes and procedures were evaluated to determine if required controls are in place. Statute proposals and process change recommendations were developed to implement missing controls.

A separate report on the detailed control analysis using best practices in the corporate auditing industry will be issued. However, it is important to note in this report that less than 40% of the needed detailed controls were determined to be in place. If proposed legislation discussed in this report is enacted, the percent of the required controls in place will increase to 90%

7. Recommendations

Three strategic alternatives were considered for mitigating risks:



Technology Focused Strategy: **Maximize technology use for efficiency with increased security (NIST/EAC), reporting, and observation**

– *Machine Count Only*

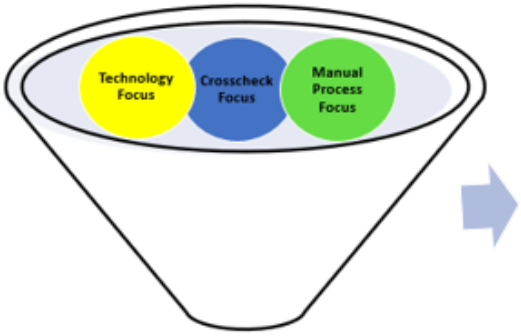
Crosscheck Focused Strategy: **Parallel technology and manual processes to increase security without impacting timeline or cost**

– *Parallel Machine and Random Hand Counts*

Manual Process Focused Strategy: **Use manual methods where cost effective without impacting timeline to increase security and reduce costs**

– *Hand Count Only with Single Day Holiday In-Person Voting*

Based on an assessment of the likelihood of risk realization and the negative impact if not mitigated 5 key legislative priorities were identified that are common across the 3 alternative approaches:



Recommendations Common Across Strategies

- ✓ **Strengthen Chain of Custody and Physical Security with statewide standards, CoC application, & work ticket system**
- ✓ **Increase Voter Roll Accuracy & Enhance Signature Verification**
- ✓ **Strengthen Absentee Voting Process Transparency**
- ✓ **Expand and Make Technology Certification More Robust**
- ✓ **Enhanced Governance with state monitoring and audit of elections and expansion of Canvassing Board or reduction in workload**

The bills that have been filed or drafted to implement these recommendations and video reports supporting each bill can be found here:

Legislation Topic	Legislative Proposal	Video Report
Citizenship verification	SB 1602 (myfloridahouse.gov) – updated version to be filed soon	Citizenship v3.mp4
Voter roll accuracy		
Vote-by-mail	Vote-by-Mail Security Bill	Absentee Voting Packet Overview 1.2.24 mini.pptx (9-minute video) Vote-By-Mail Bill v3.mp4 (24-minute video)
Technology	Technology Security Bill	Election Technology Security Bill Video
Enhanced Governance with Procedural Audits and Reconciliation	Enhanced Governance	Reconciliation Video