

53.23 Special precinct election board.

1. The election board of the absentee ballot and special voters precinct shall be appointed by the commissioner in the manner prescribed by sections 49.12 and 49.13, except that the number of precinct election officials appointed to the board shall be sufficient to complete the counting of absentee ballots by ten p.m. on election day.
2. The board's powers and duties shall be the same as those provided in chapter 50 for precinct election officials in regular precinct polling places. However, the election board of the special precinct shall receive from the commissioner and count all absentee ballots for all precincts in the county; when two or more political subdivisions in the county hold elections simultaneously the special precinct election board shall count absentee ballots cast in all of the elections so held. The tally list shall be recorded on forms prescribed by the state commissioner.
3. The commissioner shall set the convening time for the board, allowing a reasonable amount of time to complete counting all absentee ballots by ten p.m. on election day. The commissioner may direct the board to meet on the day before the election solely for the purpose of reviewing the absentee voters' affidavits appearing on the sealed ballot envelopes. If in the commissioner's judgment this procedure is necessary due to the number of absentee ballots received, the members of the board may open the sealed ballot envelopes and remove the secrecy envelope containing the ballot, but under no circumstances shall a secrecy envelope be opened before the board convenes on election day. If the ballot envelopes are opened before election day, two observers, one appointed by each of the two political parties referred to in section 49.13, subsection 2, shall witness the proceedings.

If the board finds any ballot not enclosed in a secrecy envelope, the two special precinct election officials, one from each of the two political parties referred to in section 49.13, subsection 2, shall place the ballot in a secrecy envelope. No one shall examine the ballot. Each of the special precinct election officials shall sign the secrecy envelope.

4. The room where members of the special precinct election board are engaged in counting absentee ballots during the hours the polls are open shall be policed so as to prevent any person other than those whose presence is authorized by this subsection from obtaining information about the progress of the count. The only persons who may be admitted to that room are the members of the board, one challenger representing each political party, one observer representing any nonparty political organization or any candidate nominated by petition pursuant to chapter 45 or any other nonpartisan candidate in a city or school election appearing on the ballot of the election in progress, one observer representing persons supporting a public measure appearing on the ballot and one observer representing persons opposed to such measure, and the commissioner or the commissioner's designee. It shall be unlawful for any of these persons to communicate or attempt to communicate, directly or indirectly, information regarding the progress of the count at any time before the polls are closed.
5. The special precinct election board shall preserve the secrecy of all absentee and special ballots. After the affidavits on the envelopes have been reviewed and the qualifications of the persons casting the ballots have been determined, those that have been accepted for counting shall be opened. The ballots shall be removed from the affidavit envelopes without being unfolded or examined, and then shall be thoroughly intermingled, after which they shall be unfolded and tabulated. If secrecy folders or envelopes are used with special paper ballots, the ballots shall be removed from the secrecy folders after the ballots have been intermingled.
6. The special precinct election board shall not release the results of its tabulation on election day until all of the ballots it is required to count on that day have been counted, nor release the tabulation of challenged ballots accepted and counted under chapter 50 until that count has been completed.

90 Acts, ch 1238, § 30; 92 Acts, ch 1163, § 13; 95 Acts, ch 189, §16; 97 Acts, ch 170, § 73