RETURN TO HAND COUNTING

Missouri Method Hand Count Process

Myth-Debunking Workbook

FINDING:
Election Day or Same Day Results

Linda Rantz

Note on Links:

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Page numbers correspond to page locations in the full eManual, available in paperback or hardcover from Amazon.com, or downloadable from ReturntoHandCounting.com/eManual

The hand-counting process and commentary in this manual reflect a layperson's interpretation of Missouri statutes and rules by someone not qualified as a legal authority. This content is not offered as legal advice and should not replace advice from a licensed attorney. Readers are encouraged to consult a licensed attorney for legal guidance on Missouri's (or other states') laws, statutes, and rules, and to verify compliance with local election regulations before applying these methods. The author has made every effort to ensure the information in this book was correct as of August 2025. However, the author does not assume, and hereby disclaims, any liability for loss, damage, or disruption caused by errors, omissions, misuse of this manual, or unauthorized alterations, whether resulting from negligence, accident, or any other cause.

Names appearing on sample forms are fictional. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or deceased, is purely coincidental.

FINDING: ELECTION DAY

OR SAME DAY RESULTS

Myth: Hand Counting Takes Too Long

I took a tour of the St. Louis County elections facility the week before the mid-term election in November 2022. A voter who resided in the county was also on the tour and commented that they believed the voting equipment could be hacked and the county should hand-count election results. The Democrat Director of Elections for the county asked, in what seemed to be a mocking manner, if the voter wanted to wait months for election results.

This response was a noteworthy moment for me because the director did not offer anything that explained or validated his comment; it was meant to be believed because the director said it. In November 2022, I was designing the hand count process and writing this eManual. I was not prepared, as I am now, to reply to these myths.

How Long Does It Take to Count All Votes on a Ballot?

On page 34, the myth that it would take days, weeks, or even longer to hand count ballots was discussed. There is a possibility that other hand-count processes may take longer to count ballots, but we have tried and tested the hand-count process in this eManual and use those tests as the basis for our findings.

The "French Model"

It is not unusual to hear public comments that France can count all the ballots in their country on election day, announce the winner(s), and get home in time for a late dinner. That might not be true for all elections. I recommend researching before using or opposing the French analogy.

We ran our first tests on what we decided to call the "French Model": one race on a ballot with 'vote for one.' One vote per ballot means every ballot is one tally per ballot. In this case, it took 1 second per ballot.

1 race with 1 vote on the ballot = 1 second per ballot

Time = Potentially 3,600 ballots per hour per counting team

The "Missouri Method"

While there are some elections in Missouri, such as municipal, where a Missourian might only have one race on their ballot, it is more common to have "multi-race" ballots. We created mock ballots like the one used in the 2022 General election and marked them with votes for practice.

To establish a base time, we ran the tests without considering write-in candidates, reviewing for voter intent, mistakes, etc. We did 100 ballots, and it took 2 seconds per tally.

Multiple races/questions per ballot = 2 seconds per tally

A multi-race ballot could have, for example, four races or twenty-four races. No matter which variations we tried, our tests showed it was best recommended as an hourly range. This range **included** the considerations we skipped in the preceding example. When timing the whole ballot, not just the individual tallies, 50 to 100 ballots could be counted per hour, depending on the ballot length.

Time = 50 to 100 ballots per hour per counting team

We refer to this as the "Missouri Method."

The Missouri Method was used to hand-count the April 2023 Municipal election in Osage County, Missouri. A municipal election has a shorter ballot than a general election in paper size and number of races. For the 2023 hand counted election, there were 13 ballot variations with anywhere from 1 to 7 races on the ballot.

The Hand Counted Election in Osage County Averaged 100 Ballots Per Hour

The Westphalia polling place had the largest turnout, with 481 ballots cast. The counting team was at the polling place for approximately 8 hours. By subtracting downtimes (no ballots to count) and meal breaks, the team estimated they were engaged in counting activities for 5 hours. That real-life experience validates the estimate of being able to count 100 ballots per hour per team for particular elections. Other polling places report similar counting times.

It should be noted that because the clerk forgot to format the ballots for the hand count process, transparent overlays were created for counting judges to call a number for a vote (rather than the name). This extra step added time to the counting process as the correct overlay had to be selected and used for every ballot.

Conservative Approach to Estimating Ballots to Be Counted Per Hour

The conservative estimate for Missouri clerks for general and primary elections would be 50 ballots per hour – or even lower to be more conservative. For municipal and special elections in Missouri, which usually have ballots with few races or questions, the counting teams will likely count as many as 100 ballots per hour.

Hand Count Estimator Tool for Projecting Costs and Counters

To calculate how many teams are needed and the labor costs, the Clerk must anticipate the expected number of ballots to be cast at the polling place. This calculation is based primarily on historical voter turnout for similar elections. **We have made it easy for clerks from here with The Hand Count Estimator Tool.** This Tool is explained in detail on page 262.

Counting Any Number of Ballots in a Specific Period is a Math Equation

The Hand Count Estimator Tool is an Excel spreadsheet, but it is not even advanced Excel because it does not require advanced math. The clerk inputs the historical voter turnout data and variables, such as how many hours to complete counting, the number of persons on the counting team, ballots per hour estimate, etc. The tool returns the estimated labor cost and details for the clerk to staff the counting locations adequately. **Completing the count is as simple as ensuring polling locations are staffed with enough counters.**

AUTHOR BIO

Linda Rantz

In October of 2022, in response to Mike Lindell's call to "get rid of machines," Linda Rantz asked herself, "and replace them with what?" She took action to find out, starting with a visit to Louisiana where that team was demonstrating their hand count method. Returning to Missouri, Linda immersed herself in Missouri's laws, learning that not only was hand counting permitted in her state, but the laws dated back to 1977 (and probably even earlier).

Based on Missouri statutes, Linda began to write an 'outline' of the Missouri Method hand count process. It grew into a 300-page eManual, which includes 60 pages of process and a multitude of links to supporting documents and laws, all with the hopes of giving others the information they need to speak with their election officials. The guide, *"Return to Hand Counting,"* is available in paperback, hardcover, digitally, and a downloadable PDF at ReturntoHandCounting.com/eManual.

Linda, with her husband Craig Rantz, continues to promote and teach hand counting around the country. Together they have already trained groups, in person or online, in more than half the states, including Georgia, Pennsylvania, Nevada, Oregon, and New York!

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From the Author, Linda Rantz:

Return to Hand Counting is a resource dedicated to sharing a hand-counting process for elections, based on my layperson's interpretation of Missouri statutes. This eManual, available in print and digitally, is the result of my efforts to design and document a complete hand count process: from opening of polling places to delivering election results to the clerk.

The Missouri Method hand count process is easy to learn, taking less than 60 pages of this publication (Section 5, pages 70 to 128). The other 200 or so pages contain additional commentary, illustrations, and resources.

All hand count forms and instructions provided in this eManual or as downloadable files were created by me, including the distinctive ballot tallying form design with oval-style vote marking. These forms may be printed and used as provided, but they must not be altered in part or in whole (including their design style) or claimed as new works without permission.

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Election Officials

The Missouri Method is very adaptable and could potentially be used in many other states. If you are an election official interested in using the Missouri Method hand-counting process at no charge for non-commercial election purposes, I invite you to contact me for permission. Please submit a permission request form (available at ReturntoHandCounting.com/Copyright) detailing your intended use and acknowledging the manual's disclaimers. Upon review, I will grant written permission with specific conditions, such as attribution to Linda Rantz and verification of local legal compliance. The permission process ensures the Missouri Method is used responsibly and allows me to offer guidance where needed.

Not Intended as Legal Advice

This work is not legal advice, and readers are encouraged to consult a licensed attorney to ensure compliance with local election laws before applying the process. I have made every effort to ensure accuracy as of August 2025, but I disclaim liability for any errors, omissions, misuse, or unauthorized alterations.

Let's work together to promote transparent elections—feel free to reach out with questions or feedback!