



A MACHINE SECURITY ISSUE: EVERY EARLY VOTING AND ELECTION DAY ES&S TABULATOR IN A 2026 WILLIAMSON COUNTY (TENNESSEE) ELECTION REQUIRED A SPECIAL OVERRIDING CODE FROM THE ELECTION OFFICE TO FORCE THEM TO CLOSE DOWN

And the election incident was never reported by any election officers as an election incident.

Following are three affidavits from four poll watchers who witnessed the election day closing of the polls throughout Williamson County in the May 5, 2026 primary election. They reported an unusual situation where every tabulator at their four polls required a special overriding code to force the machines to close down at the end of election day. The watchers speculated that this may have occurred with all tabulators involved in the election. Consultations with two national machine experts election night indicated this needed to be quickly and thoroughly researched as it could be a symptom of a serious security issue.

Affidavit of Frank Limpus regarding voting machines in May 5, 2026 election
May 17, 2026

My name is Frank Limpus and I am a citizen residing at 614 Gleneagle Lane, Franklin, TN 37067. I voted in the May 5, 2026 Williamson County election.

I am a bona fide member of the Williamson County Republican Party and lead an independent, citizen-directed group which for five years now has remained dedicated to researching and tracking election integrity in both Williamson County and Tennessee. [Tennessee Voters for Election Integrity](#). As stated on our website, our purpose is:

To share with state legislators, election commissions and government officials opportunities that we have uncovered in our research to plug holes we've found in Tennessee's election systems. And for these leaders to make (and lead) necessary changes in machinery and methods that will strengthen Tennessee's leadership in election integrity while improving citizen trust and support of our election processes.

On Tuesday, May 5, 2026 I was poll watching during the closing of the Academy Park Gym from 4 p.m. to closing at 7:00 p.m.

At approximately 6:45 p.m., a ballot was stuck in tabulator B and poll officials had to walk through a process (on the phone with the election office) of unlocking the laptop portion of the tabulator, pulling down a restraining bar and then sliding out the laptop screen in order to dislodge the ballot. The tabulator was put back in its completed form and because officials didn't want to encounter the issue again, the machine techs asked subsequent voters to place their ballots in tabulator A only.

This is confirmed by the closing public count of tabulator A during my poll watch stint (262) outweighing the closing public count of tabulator B (254). Election officials always try to keep the two counts balanced to elongate the machine's life.

I'm unsure if an incident report was made of this situation but believe one should have been documented as this is an unusual problem.

After closing, I began watching the tear down of the BMDs and tabulators as well as checking with the registrars to obtain the day's registration count. I had earlier told the poll captain/officer of the election (Paul Bonifield) that I wanted to obtain that number when the time was right and before the registrars closed their machines. He blew me off saying he was busy... which, definitely, he was. But all I wanted to do is alert him to my request... not that it needed to be done immediately. Unfortunately, he never gave me that number after tearing down.

(The day's total registration number can be found on each of the registrar's laptops in the upper right of their screen, as I had learned in previous elections.) That registration number should equal the number of voters who registered to vote today minus the number a poll watcher reported from the end of the previous day.

About the same time, I received a text from Elise Ferrall who was poll watching at Pearre Creek vote center along with a message from a poll watcher at Westwood Elementary in Fairview reporting that in both locations tabulators were not shutting down and were requiring an override code to force shutdown. The poll worker there, Sarah Busch and her husband, Jeff, who was watching the Fairview Rec vote center confirmed the issue with us, and in their affidavit. I saw the same thing on both machines at the Academy Park Gym vote center. So at least four vote centers from across the county – all where poll watchers were present – were experiencing this problem. I am not positively aware of others, but since it was a critical event, I would expect that other poll officials would be reporting this to the Williamson County Election Commission. Is that the case?

That evening, I sent to several national experts in election voting machines the following question:

“We had reports at closing that in a number of vote centers across the county the tabulators had trouble shutting down. Poll workers had to put in an override code in order to get them to close. Is this a sign of an issue we should be concerned with... and perhaps raise an issue with our election commission?”

I asked [Clay Parikh](#), who is a national machine engineer expert witness who spent a decade as a certification engineer for the EAC certification lab Pro V and V and [Dan Teal](#), a Cal Berkley mechanical engineer in Austin, TX who is a Republican election judge for the county that uses the same ES&S machines as we do. Both are experts with ES&S machines. Their quick replies:

Clay: “Yes, (this) is (a problem). And yes, you should look into it. Was this on the poll closing or actual shutdown of the tabulator? Either way this issue is a sign another process was still running. Worse is that whatever process it was had a fairly high priority level, if an override had to be used.”

Dan: “I have seen DS200 tabulators take a long time to close polls when there are LOTS of ballots. For example, we use DS200s at our early vote centers and some sites might have

10,000+ ballots over a couple of weeks. One system took over an hour to close polls. This is an excellent question to ask the ES&S vendor representative as to why it can take so long. Here are my technical thoughts as to causes of the delay:

- The DS200 might cryptographically sign every ballot image and associated CVR and this could take a while because the CPU used by the vendor is not very powerful. *(I don't think this is the cause as we had such a light election turnout.)*
- A bug in the tabulation software.
- A hardware issue – most probable would be failing storage for the DS200 system itself or the USB drive used to hold the scanned ballot images. This might be detected if the OS system logs record write errors, etc. This data is probably not available without a forensic examination.
- Malicious software was introduced into the system via tampering.

“Unfortunately, these systems are extremely proprietary, there is little technical documentation, and the vendor may not be able to determine what is going on. The county election department might conduct a test using a sample election with a similar number of races and candidates and generate sample ballots for scanning. Use the same batch of sample ballots on DS200 tabulators that exhibited the issue and others that did not and look at the results. Texas election law stipulates a Logic and Accuracy test before the election and we generate sample ballots for the election under test. These ballots could be used for this type of test.”

I have the original emails of their replies if I need to verify their responses. And Dan Teal has offered to speak with anyone on the phone about his insights into this situation. I can set that up if anyone desires talking with an expert on this matter.

The possible eight tabulator serial numbers are:

Academy Park Gym machine A: DS0321390502	Firmware according to the WCEC: 3.0.0.0
Academy Park Gym machine B: DS0321390004	Firmware according to the WCEC: 3.0.0.0
Fairview Rec machine A: DS0321380419	Firmware according to the WCEC: 3.0.0.0
Fairview Rec machine B: DS0321390445	Firmware according to the WCEC: 3.0.0.0
Westwood Elementary machine A: DS0321380412	Firmware per WCEC: 3.0.0.0
Westwood Elementary machine B: DS0321390081	Firmware per WCEC: 3.0.0.0
Pearre Creek machine A: DS0321390080	Firmware according to the WCEC: 3.0.0.0
Pearre Creek machine B: DS0321390483	Firmware according to the WCEC: 3.0.0.0

I am not aware that the officer of election at Academy Park wrote an incident report about this as it appeared workers just simply wanted to pack up and get out of the vote center.

Concerns:

- National experts who have a long history of inspecting and working with ES&S DS200s have affirmed **this could be a significant problem and doesn't need to be glossed over**. It needs to be looked into for the safety of future elections. Especially since one expert affirms it could be:

- A bug in the tabulation software;
 - A hardware issue; or
 - Malicious software introduced into the system via tampering.
- **All of the ES&S election machines were completely updated by ES&S on January 9, 2026.** So, ES&S had their hands on the software and hardware of all of these machines. The new numbers of the system given to me at the April 13, 2026 inspection by the Williamson County Election Commission are: System: 3.2.0.0; DS200 firmware: 3.0.0.0; and BMD firmware: 4.2.1.0. And for some reason, during this upgrade process **all of the tabulators had their protected counters wiped clean and numbers re-set** to either 80, 83, 85, 86, 90, 95, 86, 95 or 100. This deserves greater explanation.
 - From others who have been inside the room where the BMDs and tabulators are stored after being set up, we suspect there is **no video security in the storage room**. So should a nefarious individual gain unintended or unreported access to the room, there is no record of what is done in there behind closed doors. (If this is not true, the WCEC could show the chairmen of the two parties security video dated long before this election.) Additionally, the storage area appears to be accessible on the outside by a simple garage door to the right where vote center ballot boxes are stored after the close of the election/vote centers. Aside a number coded lock on the door in the WCEC hallway and into the storage area, election observers do not know what security measures are there.
 - We know hash verifications – a [security process recommended by the US Election Assistance Commission](#) (EAC) to be done in elections -- **is not used in the WCEC elections** and we have **no date confirmation that penetration testing was done** on these machines, especially after they were upgraded. It would seem any of these testing efforts and the shutdown process of L&A testing, which is done when the machines were set up and then shut down after being tested (approximately March 30-April 1, 2026), **would have caught this shutdown-related issue**.
 - It appears this incident occurred in every vote center where there was a poll watcher. Plus, in Sarah Busch's report she mentions that at her husband's vote center "one of the workers was mentioning that **'everyone was having trouble closing**, that it was hard to get the commission on the phone because they were busy.'"
 - So, one would expect that this issue, indeed, could **occur in all 27 vote centers**. I would hope that means that every poll election official filed an incident report on this which I have asked to see. This happening at one or two machines could be understandable, but eight tabulators or more? Highly unusual. But voters and citizens need to publicly know the extent of this issue.

Recommendation:

- While some may attempt to minimize the issue, this should be completely checked out since, as Clay Parikh said, **there may be a deeper issue below the surface** that could have affected the machines from naturally shutting down. **This could potentially affect future elections.**

- One of the experts, Dan Teal, offered in his comment **a test the WCEC might execute to uncover the issue and determine its seriousness**. Mr. Teal has also offered to get on the phone with WCEC and all interested individuals to discuss this further. While I have not heard back from Mr. Parikh following his initial message, I would expect he could even be brought in from Huntsville, AL **to additionally consult on the issue**.
- I recommend an **open discussion about this as soon as possible to identify the root cause and determine next steps**. Ideally it should be done **before the election is certified** on Tuesday, May 19, 2026 at 4:00 p.m. and not rushed through as was done following the October 2021 election following the written notification of an unexplained election issue.
- The process should be open to at least one of these two national experts **to ensure the problem is adequately examined and explained**.

Frank Limpus

Frank Limpus
2026
614 Gleneagle Lane Franklin, TN 37067 615-668-9938

May 17,

Affidavit of Elise Farrell regarding voting machines in May 5, 2026 election
May 14, 2026

My name is Elise Farrell. I live at 220 Messenger Lane in Franklin.

I have served as a poll watcher for the Williamson County Election Commission (WCRP) for a number of years.

On Election Day, May 5, 2026, I poll watched at Pearre Creek Elementary School in Westhaven. At 7:00 pm the doors of the vote center were locked and an elderly male poll worker began the process of shutting down the tabulators. He tried twice to shut down the left machine, each time following the protocol, and the machine would not shut down. The female Election Official tried as well. Neither machine would shut down.

Eventually, she called the Election Office and obtained an "override code." When that code was entered into each tabulator, the machines closed out and the printout was made of the results.

I do not recall this incident occurring in previous elections. I do not know if the election officer created an incident report for this. I would assume so since this was an election incident.

Affidavit of Sarah and Jeff Busch regarding voting machines in May 5, 2026 election
May 14, 2026

Sarah Busch
7294 Old Franklin Rd
Fairview Tn 37062

This is a review of what I observed during my time as Poll Watcher on election day May 5th 2026. I was an observer at the Fairview Elementary voting location. My husband, Jeff Busch was Poll Watcher at the Fairview Rec Center the same day. We both observed the closing of our respective poll location.

For informational purposes I will be specific regarding what I observed directly vs what was told to me by my husband and his location.

I reported to the elementary school location a little before 5pm and signed in, verified my credentials and obtained my lanyard from Linda Ross. I advised Linda I would be staying until the closing of the poll and I would include in my report anyone who asked for a different party ballot after declaring and obtaining a ballot to vote. I was immediately informed by Linda and 4 other poll workers this action was ok per their training. I simply said I understood, however, I would include the actions in My Poll Watcher report. I Address | City, St Zip Code then took my seat.

Poll worker "Doug" advised me that when some of the Democrat voters obtained their ballot and it was inserted into the voting machine they didn't understand why the ballot was empty. The poll worker then said they advised the voter they could do one of three options. They could cast an empty ballot, they could write in a name or they could change ballots. I gave no opinion, neither did I ask any further details.

What I did observe during my observation time included three Democrat voters who did write in names before submitting their ballot into the tabulators. I only know this because of the comments of the voters before they submitted their ballot. I also observed two men who when asked what primary they would be voting in, pointed at their choice and the poll worker advising them they might want to review the ballot first. They stepped over to the posted ballot which appeared to be about 30 feet from the poll sign in area. Once they reviewed the ballot they came back to the poll worker and advised they would vote in the Republican primary. The poll workers were not advising all voters to review the ballot before they made their primary choice I did not observe anyone "spoiling" a ballot while I was there.

My husband Jeff told me his experience was a little different at his location. He said when he signed in for his time he was advised by Tetra Walker that they had 2 people spoil ballots and receive new ballots before Jeff arrived. He also did not observe any spoiled ballots to change parties while he observed. The sample ballot at the rec center was in the hallway outside of the voting area.

At the time of closing at the elementary school, I observed the poll workers start the closing of the tabulator "B" it was not generating a report. They tried three times before they were locked out. At that time, they went to machine "A". The codes were not working on that machine either, so they called the election commission for direction. One of the workers was on their cell phone with the commission inputting an override code of "Override#1" this didn't work on either machine.

At this time my husband sent me a text saying the rec center wasn't closing properly and Tetra was asking for an override code. I sent a text back and we were not tallying either. My husband then sent me a text stating they were now able to produce the needed tallies it was now a little before 8pm and one of the workers said "everyone " was having trouble closing, that it was hard to get the commission on the phone, they were busy and might need someone to come to the elementary school location since the override wasn't working.

At this time, I advised Linda that she might contact Tetra and ask what override code they used to close out the rec center. Perhaps my location wasn't typing in the code correctly. Linda did so. The worker at the elementary school had not typed the code in the same as the rec center. Apparently the correct code for all machines regardless of the location was "Override1" once they determined this, they were able to close the 2 tabulators with tallies. I left the location at approximately 8:10 pm.

Sincerely
Sarah Busch
7294 Old Franklin Rd
Fairview, TN 37062

These three affidavits were sent to Jonathan Duda, chairman of the Williamson County Election Commission, on May 17, 2026 with the following cover email:

On Sun, May 17, 2026 at 6:37 PM <frank.limpus@comcast.net> wrote:

Jonathan,

During election day of the May 5, 2026 election, four poll watchers, including myself, observed a problem with the tabulators in the process of shutting down. Both tabulators in each vote center would not shut down until an override code was inserted to force shutdown. Had this occurred in only one vote center we would have thought nothing about it. But the fact that it occurred in four disparate vote centers and it didn't occur during shutdown of the machines during L&A testing makes it highly suspect.

Plus, one of the poll watchers documented that he overheard poll workers saying this was happening "everywhere." I have an open records request for a copy of all incident reports before Chad but have yet to receive them. I would hope the poll captains would have all filled out an incident report as this appears a little more serious than a jamming BMD.

Our affidavits affirming this are attached.

Two national election machine experts that work with the ES&S DS200 have indicated to me that this is indicative of a problem. One of these individuals, Clay Parikh, who is a national machine engineer expert witness who spent a decade as a certification engineer for the EAC certification lab Pro V and V, indicated that it was an issue to check out. And the second, Dan Teal, a Cal Berkley mechanical engineer in Austin, TX who is a Republican election judge for the county that uses the same ES&S machines as we do, agreed, offering several possible root causes for the issue. This is all documented in my affidavit.

I believe it would behoove the Williamson County Election Commission to check this issue out in a public setting before the election is certified on Tuesday. Please don't wipe it away like was done in October 2021 when my colleagues and I had documented that 19 of the 20 tabulators used during the election were running different software than the version we were informed would be running when we inspected the machines less than a month earlier. No explanation of that issue has ever been addressed for citizens and candidates.

If not addressed, this issue could affect future elections.

I am happy to set up a call with these experts. And await word of you digging into this issue.

Regards,

Frank Limpus
[Tennessee Voters for Election Integrity](#)
 Franklin, TN

Later that evening, Mr. Duda replied with the following:

From: Jonathan Duda <jdudawcec@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, May 17, 2026 11:24 PM
To: frank.limpus@comcast.net
Cc: Donna Choate <kdchoate@yahoo.com>; wanda graham <wanda.bruce.graham@gmail.com>; Rod Williamson <rodwilliamson72@gmail.com>; jburnett5719@gmail.com; Chad Gray <chad.gray@williamsoncounty-tn.gov>; Steve Hickey <steve@williamsongop.org>; Diane Chenard <diane@williamsongop.org>; elise farrell <ejfarrell34@gmail.com>; Sarah B <sarahbee2u@gmail.com>; Robert Cook <rcook@buengerlaw.com>
Subject: Re: An election day issue affecting the tabulators in multiple vote centers

Mr. Limpus, Ms. Farrell, and Mr. and Mrs. Busch,

Thank you for your email and for providing your statements of what was observed during the Election Day for the May Williamson County Republican and Democrat Primaries. We take

these observations seriously, and I appreciate each of you bringing the matter forward in a detailed way.

Frank, please send me the best contact information for Clay Parikh and Daniel Teal. I would like to follow up with them directly to determine whether they have any additional insights or concerns that we should be aware of as we review this matter.

We are aware of the override password situation that occurred during the election closing process for each of the DS200 scanners and tabulators used in both Early Voting, and voting at all polling locations on Election Day.

I have researched the issue and consulted with WCEC staff and ES&S. Based on what we have confirmed, the election was programmed with the option turned on to require the override password of the DS200 in order to close the election and shut down the scanners and tabulators. I can confirm that the setting applied to all DS200 scanners used on Election Day and during Early Voting. In previous elections, that setting was not turned on.

The explanation is straightforward: the option to require the password, a process we had not used previously, was enabled in programming.

Given the nature of this password, it is not provided to poll workers. It is a master equipment password retained by the machine technicians and election staff responsible for technical support. It should not be required for poll workers to close down the election.

The Williamson County Election Commission does have a systematic Logic and Accuracy testing program, which includes a prepared set of test ballots for each election. However, the real issue is that during the L&A process, had the technicians and WCEC staff tested the documented election shutdown instructions provided to the officers of election, this would have been identified before Election Day because the required override step was not included in the shutdown procedure.

Based on the information available to me at this point, I am confident this was not a technical issue with the tabulators. Rather, it was a process failure and a gap in the completeness of our L&A testing procedures. That does not make it unimportant. It means we need to address the procedure, testing checklist, and staff verification process so this does not occur again.

The affidavits also include additional situations that I find concerning and am still researching. I will continue to review those items as part of our broader assessment.

I believe we share a commitment to election integrity, even when we may not always agree on every issue or process. My goal is to ensure that Williamson County elections are conducted with integrity, security, transparency, and professionalism in a way that all citizens can be proud of.

I plan to address this issue at the next Election Commission meeting and as part of our Performance Audit. We will address this transparently. We will also review how our L&A procedures can be strengthened to ensure the full opening and closing processes are tested against the written instructions provided to election officials.

Thank you again for bringing this forward.

You are welcome to give me a call at 615.557.8400 should you have any questions.

Best,

Jonathan Duda
Chairman, Williamson County Election Commission
JDudaWCEC@Gmail.com
615.557.8400

The next morning, Frank Limpus replied with the following observations via return email.

Jonathan, thanks for your reply. I hope you received the contact information on both Clay and Dan that I sent earlier this morning.

Regarding your explanation about the override problem, I think there are three points that still don't add up to me that I think you'll need to address:

- Why didn't your IT guys employ the full Logic & Accuracy testing process... which would have revealed this override code issue when they shut down the tabulators after performing L&A testing? I know you indicated there were holes in what was done in L&A testing. I think this needs to be explained because as a citizen, I'm depending upon your team to thoroughly perform the necessary security steps every election.
- I would still like an answer concerning penetration testing... and if it was done following the upgrade of the system. And when will the hash verification procedure be instituted into our election process? What is taking so long to do this?
- Also, I'm aware that ES&S upgraded our BMDs and tabulators to system 3.2.0.0 on January 9, 2026, but why would ES&S leave instructions in the tabulator software that required an override code in every tabulator shutdown process if Williamson County has never had that process engaged before? As you said, in previous elections that setting was not turned on. From your comments, it sounds like ES&S added a process step into a process that had never been structured that way before. That doesn't make sense.

Thanks.

Frank

Conclusion

As Jonathan Duda's note indicated, the issue was not the result of some behind-the-scenes program still running and preventing shut down. Nor was it a problem with either an overloaded election, a bug in the tabulation software, a hardware issue or malicious software in the system via tampering.

It appears that the WCEC technicians set up this election (and not ES&S) and as Mr. Duda said the problem was a programming error. The techs had left the option turned on to require the override password of the DS200 in order to close the election and shut down the scanners and tabulators. He confirmed the setting applied to all DS200 scanners used on Election Day and during Early Voting. In previous elections, this setting was not turned on.

It is commendable that Mr. Duda and the WCEC are owning the issue and correcting it for the future. And for that, citizens are grateful.

However, there remain some unanswered security questions this situation generated.

- **Why was this situation – which affected every single tabulator in both early voting and on election day – not reported as an incident in your incident report process?**
- **We continue to wait for the WCEC to confirm the EVS system number, as well as the BMD and DS200 firmware numbers following the January 9, 2026 upgrade of the machines by ES&S.**
- **We have also asked the following question twice and await an answer: Why did all but a few of the tabulators end up with a protected count of 80 (other numbers were 83, 85, 86, 90, 95 or 100) after they were upgraded on January 9, 2026 by ES&S?**
- **Concerning transparency, why are registrars/officers of elections prevented from sharing the day's registration number for both early voting and election day with poll watchers?**
- **Concerning machine security, why is there no video security in the storage room where BMDs and tabulators are stored after being set up and after elections? (We know this from others who have been inside the room and have asked the same question.) And what is to prevent a nefarious individual from cutting open either one of the two aluminum garage doors and gaining entrance into the same storage room that houses the voting machines?**
- **Also concerning machine security, as we've asked the question multiple times, you've talked and talked about implementing a hash verification as part of your security steps... this one [recommended by the US Election Assistance Commission](#) (EAC) to be performed in elections. So, when are you going to take this step? What are you waiting for?**

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