



**WILLIAMSON COUNTY (TENNESSEE) ELECTIONS HAVE IMPROVED SOME, BUT NOT ENOUGH:
*Five years after a disastrous election, the Williamson County Election Commission
is still having executional issues. And citizens still have concerns.***

Executive Summary

Five years ago, the October 26, 2021 Franklin, Tennessee municipal election was deeply concerning with issues that ranged from machines running an unknown software, to machines that stopped tabulating votes on the tabulator tapes (the machines of which ultimately had to be jettisoned from the county), to poor quality of election officer reconciliation reports and open records request responses to a lack of transparency when it came to citizens documenting problems that should have stopped the certification of the election.

Our concerns were documented in detail [in this report](#).

In the years since, some problems have drastically improved, such as better documentation of each election, a more open performance concerning machines and their software verification, more transparency and a greater willingness to work with citizens on their election concerns. That has been great to see. But some problems from that 2021 election have never been addressed by the Williamson County Election Commission (WCEC). And new ones have cropped up.

So, has the WCEC learned much in the ensuing years to make elections safer and more secure?

Well, if you take into account the incidents within the May 5, 2026 Williamson County Primary Election, we're not there yet. Both poll watchers and post-election "citizen auditors" have continued to identify problems that need to be resolved and we continue to push the WCEC for process changes that would move the county closer to the promise of safe, secure, accurate, accountable and transparent elections.

Specific election integrity concerns that the [Tennessee Voters for Election Integrity \(TVEI\)](#) documented within this May 5, 2026 primary election include:

- **Various documentation issues**, such as the security seal numbers on tabulators that changed and were never explained why, as well as clearly incorrect numbers of applications to vote throughout early voting in two vote centers. No one within the WCEC appears to be checking the math of these election forms, while still signing/initialing them as correct and official.
- **The fact that every tabulator used in every early voting and election day vote center required a special administrative code** from the Election Office added into the shutdown process in order to force the tabulators **to close at the end of voting day**. If not for the efforts of four poll watchers, this problem would never have been known since it was never reported to the county as an election incident by any poll officials. Fortunately, the WCEC is taking ownership to this issue, which is gratifying to see. But questions still linger, such as if this shutdown problem was evident in all of the early voting vote centers... for 14 consecutive days... why wasn't the problem diagnosed, addressed and all subsequent poll officials informed about the need of a override code to shut machines down? And why wasn't it reported as an incident?

- Documented examples of **specific crossover voting incidents** -- which are illegal in Tennessee according to Tennessee Code Annotated 2-7-115(b) – and which were incorrectly explained by election workers to voters as to what this action actually entails from a personal standpoint.
- **Missing evening configuration tapes at the end of the voting day** that help document the settings and performance of the tabulators throughout the voting day. The tapes have been requested but as of this writing, we've yet to see them – or even the mornings' configuration tapes -- to verify the day's tabulator settings and numbers.
- And an **increase in the number of incidents involving the voting machines**. From ballot marking devices (BMDs) that couldn't read the ballot, BMDs needing hard re-boots long after the vote centers were opened for the day, missing security seals and tabulators rejecting ballots, to name a few. 296 such incidents in the May 5th election alone. There was even one report of "Wifi being down." Wait a moment, I thought these machines don't need or use wifi? Does this poll captain even know what he/she is talking about? Conclusion: We wouldn't have these problems if we moved away from these machines that can't be internally inspected by anyone and back to high security hand-marked paper ballots counted by hand.

Our group and other Williamson County citizens continue to be concerned about the use of these voting machines that have proven to be hackable. Not to mention troublesome. Our research persists with more experts affirming these machines and their voting processes are highly risky.

For instance, this [document that summarizes a lot of our researched concerns in one page](#). Or that these machines can unfairly and [inaccurately cost candidates their election](#)... unless a hand recount corrects it. Or the fact that the Williamson County Election Commission (WCEC) has refused to implement [US Election Assistance Commission-approved hash verification security procedures for every machine in every election since first being asked for the 2022 election](#). Or that we have no confirmation if the machines are penetration tested. Or that neither the WCEC nor the Tennessee State Election Commission (SEC) plan to do anything to implement and enforce President Trump's Election Security Executive Order #14248 (2025) as [their refusal to answer my questions which I sent to them demonstrates](#). Or the fact that according to a recent national survey, [most Americans do not trust these election machines](#) on which we're forced to vote.

Unfortunately, the WCEC knows all this, but they refuse to do anything about it. And we don't know exactly why. At this rate, they'll never recover the lost confidence – or the drop in election participation -- that Williamson Countians have experienced since the October 2021 Franklin Municipal election.

Discussion

Tuesday, May 5, 2026 was primary election day in Williamson County, Tennessee, where county voters went to the polls to elect a new county mayor, new county commissioners, several school board members and other county office holders. Early voting had run from April 15, 2026 to April 30, 2026, attracting 15,770 voters, or a measly eight percent of the county's voting population. On election day, 10,286 or another five percent of voters voted, for a total of 13.94% turnout for the entire primary

election. That's abysmal. But could it be that voters are trusting the election process less and less because of the risk in the current election process? That has to at least contribute to the downturn in participation.

As a typical post-election procedure, the [Tennessee Voters for Election Integrity \(TVEI\)](#) files public records requests with the Williamson County Election Commission for a number of election artifacts/documents that can help citizens better understand what occurred in the election. But that's where the concern always start. And that concern has yet to be fully resolved.

Various documentation issues.

Before each election, our group requests the machine certification sheets filled out by IT techs as they set up each BMD and tabulator for election performance. Those sheets contain all the tabulator serial numbers, its protective count numbers (which becomes the starting count for the election on each machine), and all the various security tags/seals on every tabulator – and four spare tabulators -- that will be used in the election.

We also seek the manifest of all BMDs, tabulators, ExpressVote activation card printers (used at registration to print the ballot/activation card that is inserted into the BMD) and the manifest of all off-the-shelf Dell registration laptops used by the registrars. The laptops of which have been proven to contain Qualcomm wireless chips. Yes, really.

We additionally secure the documentation of security tags for all gray provisional ballot boxes that go into each vote center, the list of all election workers and absentee counting board workers, the list of all certified candidates for the election and a copy of all pre-election Logic and Accuracy testing reports on all tabulators and spares. We request verification [that penetration testing has been performed](#) on the machines as per what the [December 7, 2025 National Defense Authorization Act](#) demands. But, for some reason, the WCEC will not confirm that that security step is being taken. If it is being taken.

This process is meant to be something of an auditor's process to lay a foundation of what is being done by who in the election so citizens can see post-election what machine/process changes, if any, have occurred. And to ask questions that could help citizens see if the election was truly secure, fair, accurate and trustworthy. There were a few concerning documentation issues in the May 5th election, such as:

- The red security tag on the auxiliary bin on tabulator B (#DS0321390367) used in early voting at the Election Office for some reason changed numbers on the first day. From #755007 when the machine was set up in April to #010721. Additionally, the blue security tag that secures the compartment where ballots fall once they're counted also changed its security tag number. From #010721 to #0277137. There was no explanation on the daily technician certification form or the incident report as to why or when either was noticed or what might have been the reason for the change.
- The green security tag on machine A (#DS0321390416) used in the Nolensville Rec early voting vote center, which documents that the top of the tabulator has remained closed and locked since set up, changed numbers. From #0504388 to #0504376 on the day the tabulator was first

opened. Why and when was it noticed that the tabulator might not have had a green security tag and might have been opened sometime between set-up and the opening day of voting? It was never documented so there is no way to know if that machine had been tampered with prior to the election. Keep in mind, all of these forms compile the official documentation of the election to verify exactly what happened in the election should there ever be a question from a candidate or citizen. That's why little things like this need to be documented more thoroughly.

- The same thing happened on machine B (#DS0321390501) in the same vote center, which had tag #0504402 on the green security tag locking the top down on the tabulator at set up. It changed to #0504366 when the vote center opened for the first day of early voting. No explanation on the form so, again, how does one know if that machine had been tampered with and malware inserted into the machine prior to the election to change how it operates? Like others, this is a chain of custody concern.
- On election day, tabulator A (#DS0321380412) at the Westwood Elementary School vote center encountered the same issue. The original green tag (#0504346) for the closed lid was gone and there was no documentation of when its absence was first noticed. Meaning the security tag could have been gone following machine set-up on April 1, 2026 to May 5, 2026, election day. Was the machine tampered with?
- Tabulator B (#DS0321390443) in the Clovercroft Elementary vote center had the same problem – there was no security tag on the lid to the tabulator when delivered. On April 13, 2026, Frank Limpus had inspected a random number of tabulators for the Williamson County Republican Party, including this tabulator. And the security tag was present on that tabulator when he did so. When and how did it disappear? There is no chain of custody explaining the situation.
- That tabulator B in the Nolensville Rec early voting vote center also had a machine serial number documentation issue. The daily technician certification form used by poll workers to track the daily vote totals said the machine B serial number was #DS0321380443. But a post-election question by citizen auditors affirmed that the machine's number was really #DS0321390501 as marked on the tabulator's certification number form filled out by IT technicians when setting up the machine. The #443 tabulator was later affirmed to be tabulator B at the Clovercroft election day vote center. The problem is that this mistake wasn't caught by the Nolensville vote center poll workers as they set up the equipment each day of early voting. All of them are supposed to be checking all machine numbers and security seals/tags when preparing and opening for the election. This may seem a minute issue, but chain-of-custody in an election is exceptionally critical to affirming the election was secure throughout its duration. Workers obviously aren't checking these numbers like they should. So, chain-of-custody is at risk here. Again, future auditors should be able to check this documentation and know precisely what occurred in the election and where certain machines were located.
- To verify that this checking can and is being done thoroughly on occasion, the Grassland Middle School and Arrington Elementary School vote center election day machine certification forms

had a check mark by every tabulator serial number and security seal/tag on the form, verifying that at some point the machines and seals were all checked and all checked out. Additionally, the Grassland Middle School form also contained the signature and initials of every election worker in that vote center. That's the way to execute the election's chain-of-custody. It is being done, just not in every vote center.

- The early voting documentation at Longview Recreation Center is questionable... and it was not documented nor explained. Throughout the 14 days of early voting, tabulator B (#DS0321390083) had consistent use, growing from a starting protected count of 80 to 1,399, meaning 1,319 votes were tabulated on that machine. But tabulator A (#DS0321390477) had only 160 votes counted on that tabulator for the first six days of early voting. Then went three days with no activity, followed by one day of 20 votes, followed by three days of no voting activity, and then followed by one day of 1 vote. A total of 181 votes on that machine. By process, poll workers alternate ballots inserted and counted on the two tabulators in a vote center to keep the protected count of both fairly identical. That helps keep utilization over the life of the machine even. But this sudden stoppage twice on tabulator A, with no explanation is quite unusual. It doesn't mean that the tabulator was tampered with. It just means that poll workers are not documenting the election and its aberrations sufficiently to allay any post-election concerns.
- Both tabulators throughout early voting at Franklin Recreation Center exhibited a bazaar accounting of the number of applications-to-vote. On the daily technician certification form, the daily number of applications-to-vote should equal the number of daily protected count (ballots counted) on the tabulator. However, the totals for applications to vote on both tabulator A (#DS0321390360) and tabulator B (#DS0321390380) were identical. And they never matched the daily protected vote numbers on either machine. Over the 14 days of early voting they both totaled 2,896 registrations, while the number of protected count votes totaled 1,448. This implied there were 5,792 total people who registered to vote in that vote center but only 2,896 of those votes were actually voted. This makes no sense because the numbers can't be explained... only guessed at. So, who is checking the math on these forms... both daily during the election and on election night when this documentation is supposed to substantiate the numbers of the machines? Things like this throw doubt on what actually occurred in a vote center.
- Tabulator B (#DS0321390380) in this Franklin Rec early vote vote center also had an unexplained security seal change on an important compartment holding a back-up/auxiliary USB stick that tracks all votes and activity on the machine behind the main USB stick. The original seal number for this compartment according to the machine certification form was #755015. While checking into the vote center for his poll watch stint on April 21, a poll watcher noticed that this lock had a seal that appeared to have been rubbed off. He reported it to the vote center's officer of elections and the issue was addressed with a new security seal (#755064) later that day. However, how did this security issue go unchecked during the election? And when did the seal get torn off? It was set-in-place at set-up on April 1, 2026 and obviously wasn't checked until April 21, twenty days after being applied and six days after the start of early voting. Remember, it is the job of the poll workers to check all security seals/tags before the

poll ever opens for the first day and every day after that. But its not being done consistently. This is also a vote center in a lightly secure facility with access to door keys possibly among a number of Rec Center staffers and facility visitors. A highly questionable combination if you're concerned about election security.

- Documentation of the applications-to-vote in both tabulators A (#DS0321390069) and B (#DS0321390516) in the College Grove early voting vote center experienced the same issue of incorrect tracking of the number of voters who voted. Both columns on the daily technician certification form for both tabulators turned the column into a cumulative tracking of applications-to-vote, rather than reporting each day's total as a single total of applications for each day. Again, who is checking the math on these forms, both at the vote center and at the election office when these forms come in on election night? Another chain of custody issue.
- According to a note on the election day machine certification form for the tabulators in the Longview vote center, Chad Gray at some point affirmed that tabulator B (#DS0321380484) rejected ballots so that tabulator was not used as much. One would wonder if the tabulator was not working well, why was it used at all with a few pre-tested spare scanners available? No other information about the problem was provided on the form.

As some documentation in the election indicates, filling out these forms and checking the math can be done as it should be and chain-of-custody would be upheld. Yes, these workers are human and may possibly make a mistake, but where is the backup people double checking the math to ensure the documentation is correct? Or searching down something that's not right and documenting the issue? It is incumbent on the Williamson County Election Commission to do a better job instructing these poll workers on documenting the election fully and correctly. If it's not done and mistakes continue like this in future elections, citizens will continue their distrust of what likely went on during an election. And what truly was its outcome.

An overriding code was needed to shut down every tabulator in both early voting and on election day.

Were it not for the efforts of four poll watchers during the closing of the election on election day at four different vote centers, this issue would have gone totally unnoticed and unreported. Though it affected all 68 tabulators in a way neither poll workers nor poll watchers had seen before, the incident was never documented by any election official in the WCEC's official Incident documentation procedure as an incident. Which should frighten citizens since it makes one wonder what other issues have occurred that have never been tracked or addressed? And why wasn't it addressed?

The problem: None of the tabulators would close at closing. They all needed a special overriding administrative code inserted into the machine to force them to shut down. What we later learned was that this affected all machines in both early voting and election day voting in every vote center.

When the problem was noticed at closing of election day while poll workers were hurrying to get the poll closed and go home, little information was shared with some of the poll watchers about what was happening. However, the four texted each other and ultimately pieced together the problem.

Upon arriving home that evening, Poll Watcher Frank Limpus sent emails to several national voting machine expert colleagues. One a certified ethical hacker and voting machine tech expert witness who for nine years worked at [one of the two firms that test all voting equipment for the US Election Assistance Commission \(EAC\)](#) and a second who is a Republican [election judge for Travis County, Texas](#), which uses the exact same ES&S election machinery as Williamson County, Tennessee. He asked both if what he witnessed was a problem with which to be concerned. Both said yes. One, especially, said a possible root cause could be a bug in the tabulation software, a hardware issue (possibly failing storage) or malicious software had been introduced into the system via tampering.

The four poll workers [compiled affidavits and sent them to the WCEC](#). A day later the chairman of the WCEC confirmed that it was an election programming problem. When setting up the tabulators for the election, the WCEC techs turned on an option to require an override password in order to close the election and shut down the tabulators. In previous elections that setting was not turned on.

The WCEC graciously took responsibility for the problem and is working to ensure it doesn't happen again. The resolution makes citizens feel more at ease about this problem as we can again affirm that poll workers and techs are human.

But there has never been an explanation of why... if this problem affected early voting machines... it wasn't diagnosed THEN and its resolution shared with poll officials during subsequent early voting days and, certainly, by election day voting? The four poll watchers noticed that all election night poll workers appeared to be completely caught off guard by the situation. It has also not escaped our attention that not a single poll official in either early voting or election day documented this as a problem in their incident reporting system.

We wonder if they were instructed not to report the problem. If the four watchers not been on duty, this issue – which is not one that the WCEC would encounter if we were using high-security hand-marked paper ballots being counted by hand and not using machines -- could well have been swept under the rug. Not saying it was, but it sure makes one wonder. And their action hides machine problems if you love machines.

Crossover voting is a problem that the Republican Party is beginning to demand be dealt with.

Crossover voting – requesting and voting a primary ballot of the party opposite the party the voter belongs to or has pledged allegiance to – is illegal in Tennessee. [Tennessee Code Annotated 2-7-115](#) states that this is a crime and section (b) affirms that when the voter is doing this he/she IS declaring allegiance to the political party in whose primary the voter seeks to vote. It also states that by this action, the voter is intending to AFFILIATE with that party. But most voters only want to use crossover voting to select the opponent most easily defeated by their own party's nominee in the general election.

The act has been equated to the local Methodist church picking the preacher/pastor for the Baptist church down the road! The problem is that the act of crossover voting, in essence, cancels out the votes of true party members who have the right to select their own primary candidates because each political party is a private entity. A single illegal vote annuls a legal vote.

For years both parties have wanted to enact closed primary elections where voters can only vote in their own party's primary election. This would stop most, if not all, crossover voting because voters could only vote the ballot of their selected party. Unfortunately, several Williamson County state lawmakers in 2025 were able to selfishly establish a law that took away the right of every Republican and Democrat party across the state to hold a caucus/convention of their own voters to select their own primary candidates. So, for now selecting primary candidates must be done in open primaries (which usually aids those candidates not interested in party values... and allowing crossover voting).

Since 2025, the Williamson County Republican Party (WCRP) has made getting rid of crossover voting a focus and had been working with the Williamson County Election Commission. There were a number of reports of crossover voting in this May 5 2026 election.

One excellent [affidavit documenting this issue](#) was filed this year post-election by a Republican voter who did a fine job profiling the problem and documenting with much specificity what occurred and which she witnessed. The most distressing act in this situation came when the vote center registrar enabled the voter not only to crossover vote, but explained to the woman requesting a ballot opposite of her usual party that she was NOT swearing allegiance or affiliating with the party of the ballot she chose. Completely contrary to what the law says.

That drove the affidavit voter to return to the vote center later in the day to discuss the law and the registrar's actions. Despite the fact that the affidavit author was able to cite the specific Tennessee Code Annotated law on her phone, the registrar and a visiting Election Office worker both said the affidavit writer was mistaken. But it was they who were completely wrong as here is the law:

TCA 2-7-115: A registered voter is entitled to vote in a primary election for offices for which the voter is qualified to vote at the polling place where the voter is registered if:

- **(1)** *The voter is a bona fide member of and affiliated with the political party in whose primary the voter seeks to vote; or*
- **(2)** *At the time the voter seeks to vote, the voter declares allegiance to the political party in whose primary the voter seeks to vote and states that the voter intends to affiliate with that party.*

Fortunately, the WCRP and the WCEC are discussing what can be done to remedy this issue in future elections. One suggestion the affidavit author made was to have a smaller version of the TCA law placard at every registrar's station and to have each registrar ask the voter to read the law when they request the primary ballot. Even better would be to have a statement affirming the voter read the law on the registration form to be initialed by the voter.

We await a decision from the WCEC about what it intends to do to stop this practice. But the option of closing the primaries is not on any legislator's mind at this time.

Citizen auditors requesting to see tabulator configuration tapes from the end of the voting day are being denied that documentation.

Every morning that a tabulator is opened and turned on for an election, it automatically prints a configuration tape that documents a number of facts about the tabulator. Its serial number, its public and protected vote counts, its firmware and software configurations, ballot and machine settings, whether or not a modem is present and active, among other data. All data that needs to be checked to be sure the machine is operating as it was programmed and as best as one can tell has not been hijacked to perform differently. No other tape printed by the tabulator contains all of this necessary information.

When checking the tabulator tapes following the May 5, 2026 election, Tennessee Voters for Election Integrity auditors did not see configuration tapes for the 54 election day tabulators. (Actually we did see one that had been printed and included with the other tapes so we know it is possible to produce end-of-day configuration tapes.) So, we requested it in writing and even filed an additional public record request just for these tapes. We have also requested these tapes be available going forward.

We have verified that the ES&S DS200 tabulator system is able to run evening configuration tapes as our Travis County, Texas colleague has confirmed he and his Democrat judge request that particular tape for every machine at the end of both early voting and election day voting. He also shared with us the details [from the Travis County ES&S election manual of how that tape can be generated as part of the daily closing process.](#)

WE have submitted a second public record request and are awaiting the chance to review the tapes to ensure there were no unusual settings on the machines. The fact that we have had to go to such lengths and wait so long on this election artifact makes one naturally wonder what is the WCEC hiding?

Unfortunately, it's situations like this where citizens have to push the WCEC hard for documents from the election to help them further judge an election's cleanliness. Any hesitancy on the part of the WCEC pokes holes in the claims of election transparency by WCEC officials.

Finally, this election saw an increase in the number of incidents involving the voting machines.

From ballot marking devices (BMDs) that couldn't read the ballot, BMDs needing hard re-boots long after the vote centers were opened for the day, missing security seals and tabulators rejecting ballots, to name a few. There was even one report of "Wifi being down." Wait a moment, I thought these machines don't need or use wifi?

One of the election documents/artifacts that the Tennessee Voters for Election Integrity requests post-election is the election's incident reports. It is from these reports that we continue to compile the incidents that these voting machines have caused during the election process.

This election saw at least 296 incidents of all types, including those already mentioned in this report. Its frightening and continues to contribute to the fading consumer confidence in our elections, regardless what the WCEC and election officials may say.

[Here is a cumulative report of all incidents that have been reported](#) in those elections where we were given a copy of the WCEC's incident report. But, do not forget that the overriding code issue which affected every single tabulator in the election in every single vote center... was never reported as an incident. So, what else is happening that citizens are not being informed about?

A simple conclusion: We wouldn't have these problems if we moved away from these machines that can't be internally inspected by anyone and back to high security hand-marked paper ballots counted by hand the day after the election to assure the machines are giving us accurate numbers.

Conclusion

The Williamson County Election Commission is quick to claim that their elections are safe, secure, accurate, trustworthy and transparent. But, as this report documents, they're not. And, in reality, they haven't improved that much from the October 26, 2021 Franklin Municipal election with its myriad of documented problems.

Tennessee Voters for Election Integrity continues to work with the Williamson County Election Commission to improve our elections with the goal of getting closer to that promise of safe, secure, accurate, trustworthy and transparent elections, but the May 5th 2026 election proved the WCEC still has a long way to go.

[Tennessee Voters for Election Integrity](#) will continue to monitor Williamson County elections as deeply as we can to help our elections come ever closer to that goal. In our judgment, we can achieve that goal by:

- Returning to neighborhood precinct voting with paper registration (no epollbooks), which Williamson County did up to 2020, and remove vote center voting which will remove the internet from the voting location;
- Removing all ballot marking devices (BMDs) (except for one/precinct for ADA needs);
- Implementing [high-security hand-marked paper ballots](#) -- in place of BMDs -- containing security technology similar to that used in our currency;
- Double or triple the number of per-voting location privacy booths in which voters can mark their ballots with a pen and greatly speed up the voting process;
- Hand-count ballots the day after the election to check the accuracy of the tabulator machines/election;
- Continue use of the voting machine tabulators for the time being because the law forces them on us. However, because citizens or election workers can't inspect them for nefarious components, take them through stringent pre-election testing. That would include a [Security Risk Evaluation](#) (as developed by TVEI), L&A testing, [hash validations](#) before and after each election on every machine, and black box [penetration testing](#) before both early and election day voting;
- Reduce the number of voters per precinct (from 6,000 to 2,000-3,000) and increase the number of smaller, neighborhood voting precincts to better enable hand-counting ballots, especially [since vote centers have not increased voter turnout or saved election commissions money](#).

- Smaller precincts with neighborhood voters will also better enable poll workers to recognize and challenge [unusual “voters” or unusual actions before a suspicious voter votes](#);
- Reduce the early-voting period to three days prior to election day (Thursday, Friday, Saturday?) (versus 15 days early voting and 1 election day), which will save the county money (estimated to exceed \$192,000/election in Williamson County);
- Implementing a full post-election audit of the voting system after EVERY election. Check ballots against the tabulator tapes, but, also, rectify the applications to vote against the number of votes as well as the number of blank ballots against the number used (voted, provisional, voided, remaining), the cleanliness of the voter roll, the security of each machine and the various election processes; and
- Ultimately removing all electronic tabulators (which, right now, by law, must be used in many counties) from the voting process.

Citizens are urged to get involved with us in this quest.

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