



Publishing Results Tapes Online

Innovations or New Practices in Election Administration



Summary: Transparency = Confidence

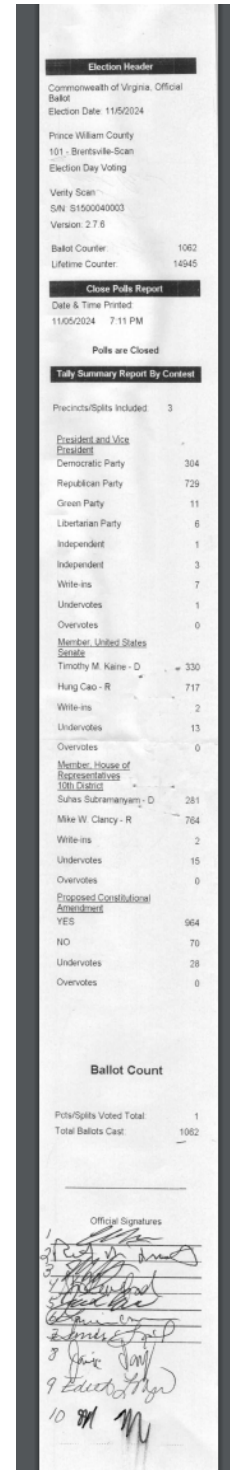
Prince William County was the first county in Virginia and one of the first in the nation to publish all officer-signed results tapes online, giving the public access to primary sources of election results.

In recent years, concerns about election integrity have been voiced regarding the accuracy of results, effectiveness of voting machines, etc. The most effective way to combat disinformation and concerns at the local level is to provide heightened levels of transparency that allows the public access in new and unprecedented ways.

This has two significant impacts – (1) it builds confidence by allowing skeptics to access the source of concern and (2) the act of supplying public access to such data/ documentation builds confidence even if never acted upon.

While the public having the ability to verify a particular precinct’s results match the reported totals is valuable as a validation test, the confidence gained in the knowledge it is available is just as meaningful, if not more so.

“The most effective way to combat disinformation and concerns... is to provide heightened levels of transparency.”



Creativity and Innovation

Posting results tapes online is simply applying a cost-effective tool (scanning documents) to the primary documentation of election results (results tapes) in a way not previously utilized.

While results are reported online on state and local websites and consequently through the media on election night, the public does not generally have access to the reports or the sources of that original data. It is taken on faith that the results the officers oversee are accurately being translated to those larger pools of data.

While this is true 99.9% of the time, providing tools to allow the verification of the data allows the public to have 100% confidence in those results.

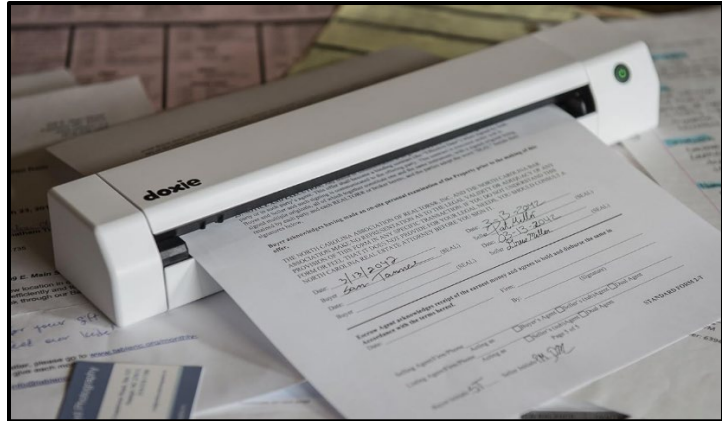


The screenshot shows the Prince William County Office of Elections website. At the top, there is a blue banner with the county seal and the text "Prince William County Office of Elections". Below this is a red heading "November 2024 Presidential General Election Results" and a large black heading "ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS". A paragraph explains that these are original documents including tally tapes and hand count forms. Below the text is a table with four columns: Title, Precinct, Location, and Results. The table lists three items: 101 (Brentsville, Brentsville District High School, Tape), 102 (Cedar Point, Cedar Point Elementary School, Tape), and 103 (Glenkirk, Glenkirk Elementary School, Tapes). A link "View State Results here." is also present.

Title	Precinct	Location	Results
101	Brentsville	Brentsville District High School	Tape
102	Cedar Point	Cedar Point Elementary School	Tape
103	Glenkirk	Glenkirk Elementary School	Tapes

Can it be Replicated

Yes, while the approach itself is novel, the execution of publishing results online is very easy and straightforward. A few states may have laws that prohibit the publishing of these documents, but most do not. With a slight modification to the post-election process, any county or state could easily add this as a feature to their web site.



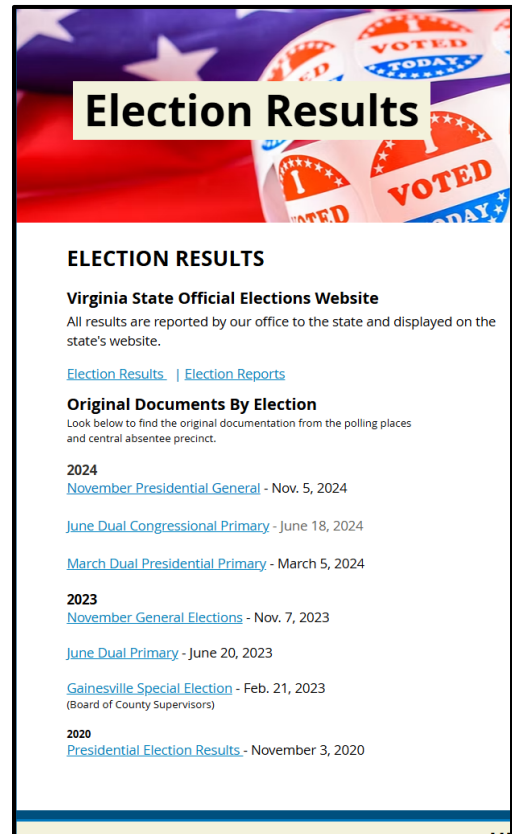
Meets Category Requirement

This program is emblematic of this category because it is simply looking at a way of doing things differently.

Organizations typically focus on what they do and how they do it, but the real question is why - **why is our procedure built this way?** While there may be valid historical reasons, people, environments, and organizational needs evolve. Processes must evolve in step with those changing needs.

While publishing results tapes online may not have been necessary or feasible two decades ago, whether due to cost or lack of technology—those limitations have changed. Today, there’s no reason any organization shouldn’t embrace this simple yet powerful practice.

The principle of examining how you do things is as important in this instance as the actual result.



Outcomes for Voters/Election Officials

This program has been beneficial for voters as it allows them to audit election results and have confidence in the transparency in the PWC Office of Elections.

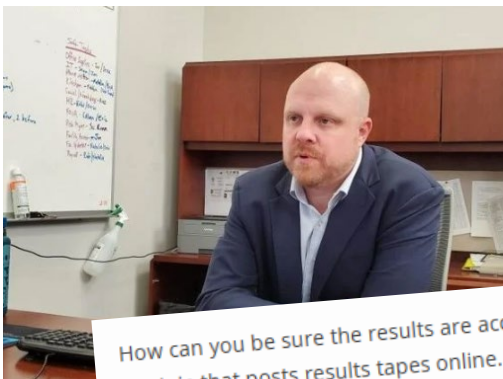
For election officials, not only does it alleviate concerns and skepticism regarding elections, but it has saved time and money. FOIA requests dropped from 123 in 2023 to only 88 in 2024 despite the latter being a presidential election year. That is a nearly 30% drop in FOIA requests and allows our staff to focus their time and attention on assisting voters.

Our office has increasingly moved documentation online for public use. In addition to results tapes being posted online, officer manuals, Board policies, FOIA policies, and more have all migrated to public view.

I would encourage every county to pursue this practice and to think of ways this approach could be expanded. Election offices around the country do excellent work and administer accurate and fair elections. There should be no hesitation in demonstrating that excellence for the public.

GUEST OPINION: How Prince William County's Office of Elections ensures elections are fair, accurate

By Eric Olsen Nov 1, 2023 Updated Nov 6, 2023 0



How can you be sure the results are accurate? Because Prince William County is the first county in Virginia that posts results tapes online. You can see them after any election at pwcvotes.org/results and compare them to the reported results on the state website. This is one of many changes implemented since I started this position two years ago and was re-hired by the Electoral Board this past summer.

More Information

To see the program in action, simply go to pwcvotes.org/results. All tapes from all 2023 and 2024 elections are posted.

