

# What is the Belize election process?

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The election process in Belize is quite comprehensive.

Whenever a new voter is registered in a division, or a voter transfers from one division to another, that is published in the Gazette and can be objected to by either party. It is then challenged in court.

On election day, aside from the polling officers (government employees hired to oversee the election process), each candidate is allowed to have a "scrutineer" inside the polling station to ensure transparency. The "scrutineers" gather at the ballot box at the start of the voting to confirm that it starts the day off empty.

Once the voting starts, only one voter is allowed into the polling station at a time. It is the scrutineers' job to ensure that each voter that enters a polling station to vote is legitimate. They do this by double-checking the voter rolls (which each scrutineer has on hand), to ensure the voter is legitimate to vote in that jurisdiction. If there is the slightest hint of a doubt, any scrutineer can call for a further verification.

The polling agents have with them a complete list of voters which also has photos of the voters that were taken when the voters got their ID. Scrutineers and polling agents then match the photo and voter information with the person waiting to vote. If one scrutineer disagrees as to a match, they argue it out with the polling officer as if in a court and the polling agent makes a final decision as to the person's eligibility to vote. I have not known any election that has resulted in alleged voter fraud because the truth is that a party's scrutineer is usually a seasoned election veteran area captain with first hand knowledge of every voter on his/her list.

As yesterday's election has shown, you cannot "pay" a voter to vote for anybody and be sure that this was done. It is a foolish risk.

Once the polling stations have closed, the ballot boxes are then escorted under police guard, and accompanied by agents for each candidate to the counting station. Everything is done transparently.

As to miscounting, if that happens, it is rectified on the spot by the candidate's "counters" who should object to the miscount. If a candidate does not send an observer to the count, that is hi/her prerogative

and their own detriment, because they have that option.

A candidate may request as many recounts as necessary to verify with certainty a winner. I believe the Collet division that once won by one vote was re-counted at least five times. Once there is consensus that a winner has emerged, the polling agent then closes the counting and announces the results.

There is hardly room for error in the process, but when it comes down to the wire, it sure helps to have someone savvy and competent counting for you.

In a recount of ballots the candidate's chosen monitors would witness the votes being recounted. If a ballot is singled out as spoiled for whatever reason, the monitor on behalf of the candidate can challenge the election officials' decision to void the ballot.

Posted : **Marty Casado** - Fri, Feb 8, 2008 4:13 PM. This article has been viewed 7201 times.

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