

Maryland State Board of Elections

Blank Ballot Process

November 8, 2023

The Election Results (EL45A) report indicates “Blank Ballots Cast”. This is the total number of **blank pages/sheets** on a multi-page ballot, and it is not necessarily an entire blank ballot that was cast by a voter.

How does Maryland manage multi-page ballots being cast on the DS200 and DS850?

- The DS200 scanners have a “public count” and “protected count” indicator on the screen that voters can see.
 - Public count = number of ballots scanned into the DS200
 - Protected count = number of ballots scanned into the DS200 over the scanner’s lifetime
- When page 1 of a multi-page ballot is inserted, the “public count” AND “protected count” are incremented by one.
- If page 2 is inserted into the DS200, the “public count” will not increment, but the “protected count” will increment by 1.
 - If a voter **does not make any selections** on page 1, the **DS200** will record the ballot to be a “blank ballot”; although, its subsequent page votes are counted appropriately. *Due to the parameters of the voting system, “blank ballot” essentially means a “blank page” of a multi-page ballot.*
 - Particularly during mail-in ballot canvass, Maryland’s policy is for the local board of elections to scan a blank page 1 in order to have consistent incrementing for the ballot statistics.
- Incrementing the public count by page 1 only makes the reconciliation of ballots cast to pollbook check-ins more feasible for election judges and audits.