SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY

SIGNATURE VERIFICATION TRAINING

Presidential Primary Election

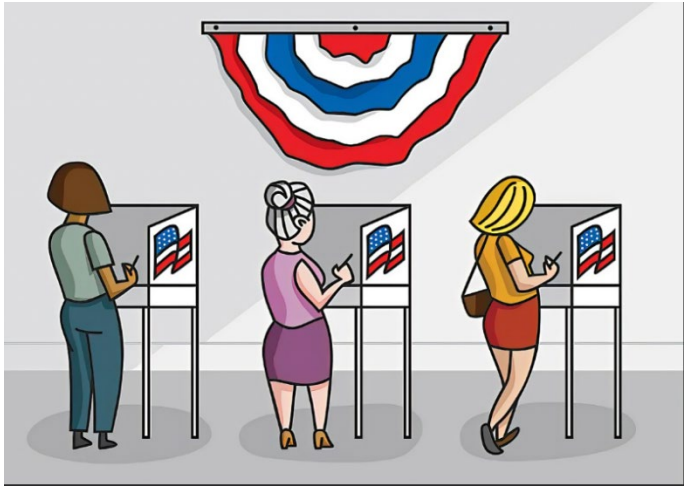
March 5, 2024

Objectives of Signature Verification Training

- To explain and understand the Signature Verification process
- To ensure a uniformed standard for Signature Verification of mail ballots
- To produce consistent results in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and best practices

Presidential Primary Election, March 5, 2024

- Over 1.1 million registered voters
- 293 Polling Places
- Approximately 3,000 Poll Workers
- Federal, State and Local Contests
- State Propositions
- Local Measures
- Expected Returns….



How Will People Vote?

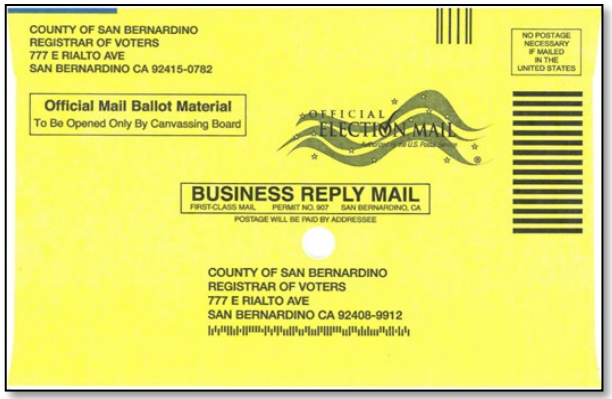
- Mail in their Ballots
- Vote Early at the Registrar of Voters office or the Early Vote Sites
- Place their Mail Ballots in Drop Boxes and Drop-Off Locations throughout the County
- On Election Day at any polling place in the County

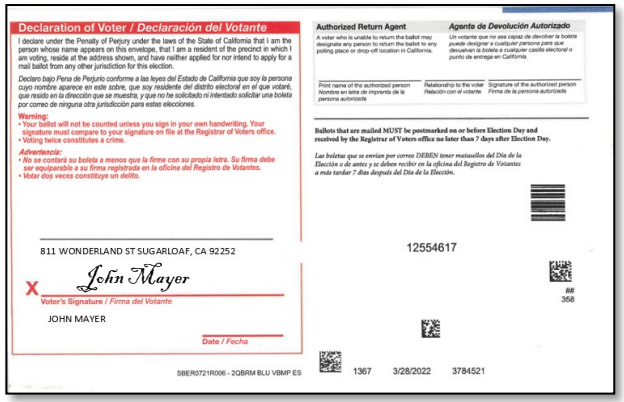
Election Day, March 5, 2024

- **What will voters vote on?**
  - Paper Ballots
  - Ballot Marking Devices to meet Help America Vote Act requirements
- **How will ballots be counted?**
  - On high-speed scanners at the Registrar of Voters Office

Definitions and Terms

- **Mail Ballot Voter:** A voter who receives and submits their ballot via mail rather than voting at a polling place on Election Day.
- **Signature Verification:** The process of comparing signatures from the returned Official Mail Ballot Return Envelope to the signature on file in the Registrar of Voters voter registration system.
- **Official Mail Ballot Return Envelopes:** Envelopes used for the return of mail ballots. They contain voter identification information and the voter's signature.





Mail Ballot Returns Statistics

Presidential Primary Election March 3, 2020	Voter Count
Total Registered Voters	1,020,924
Total Mail Ballots Issued	680,941
Mail Ballots Returned	265,530
Percent of Mail Ballots Returned	**38.99%**

Presidential General Election November 3, 2020	Voter Count
Total Registered Voters	1,092,843
Total Mail Ballots Issued	1,007,620
Mail Ballots Returned	711,037
Percent of Mail Ballots Returned	**70.57%**

Mail Ballot Returns Statistics

Statewide Direct Primary Election June 7, 2022	Voter Count
Total Registered Voters	1,149,364
Total Mail Ballots Issued	1,139,045
Mail Ballots Returned	235,085
Percent of Mail Ballots Returned	**20.64%**

General Election November 8, 2022	Voter Count
Total Registered Voters	1,138,702
Total Mail Ballots Issued	1,107,998
Mail Ballots Returned	398,975
Percent of Mail Ballots Returned	**36.01%**

Vote by Mail Ballots

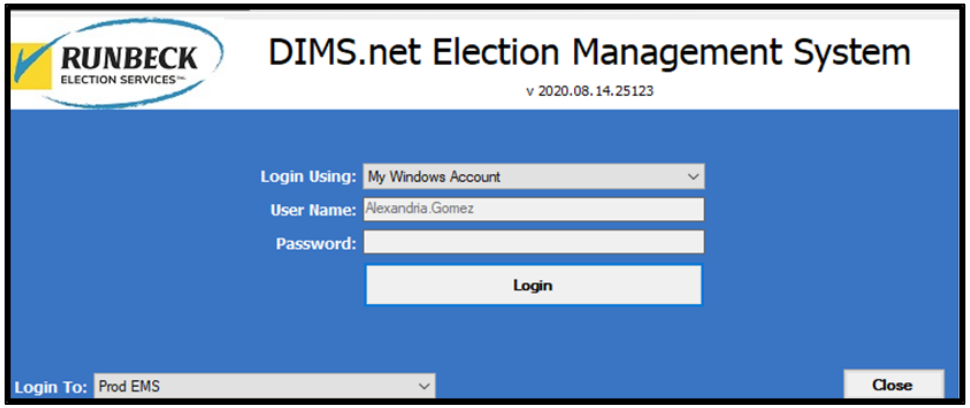
- All registered voters will receive a Mail Ballot.
- Ballots will start being mailed to voters on E-29.
- We will receive voted Mail Ballots between E-29 to E+7.
- The projected returns is 324,687 Mail Ballots.
- We will begin processing returned Mail Ballots on E-29.
  - Signature Verification can begin
  - No Voter Signature Letters and Unsigned Identification Envelope Statements are sent to voters that did not sign their return envelope.
  - Non-Matching Signature Letters and Signature Verification Statements are sent to voters whose signatures did not compare to the signatures on file.

Voter Signature

- California law requires each voter to sign their Official Mail Ballot Return Envelope with their own handwriting.
- Registrar of Voters office must then compare that signature to the voter's signature on file.

Signature Verification

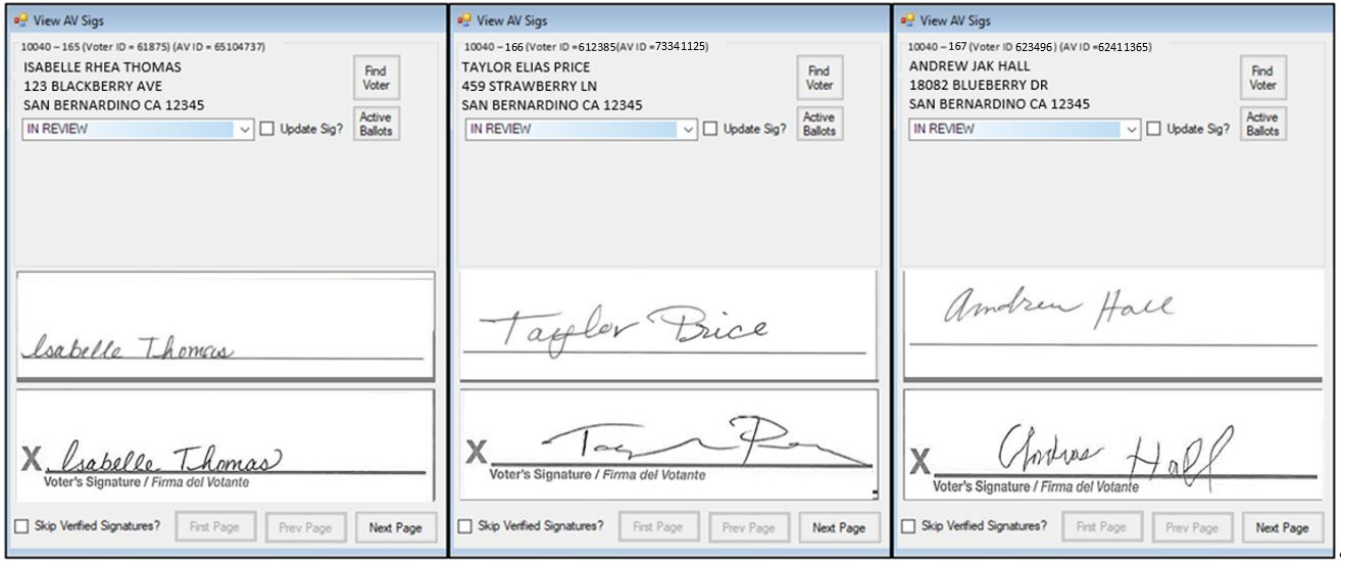
- **Signature Verification** at the Registrar of Voters office is performed by using two similar, but separate, processes:
  - Side-by-side Scanned Image Verification
  - Physical Envelope/Scanned Image Verification
- Both processes are performed in conjunction with the election management system known as DIMS.net



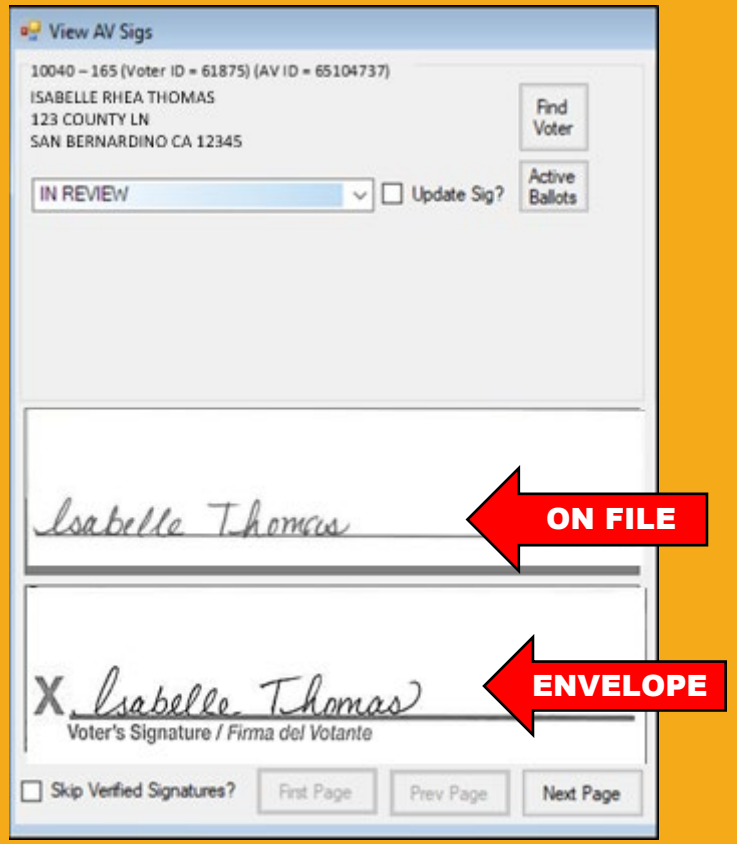
Methods of Signature Verification

Side-by-Side Scanned Image Verification

- This screen in DIMS.net is also called batch mode. It displays the Official Mail Ballot Return Envelope signature and signature on file for the voter.



- When comparing signatures, note that the top signature is what we have on file.
- The bottom signature is on the returned envelope that we have scanned.
- Always compare the bottom (envelope) to the top (on file) signature.
- If the bottom signature compares to the top, it is then a valid signature.
- To view more signatures on file, double click on the top signature.
- DO NOT click on the bottom signature. You will get a signature that does not belong to the voter.



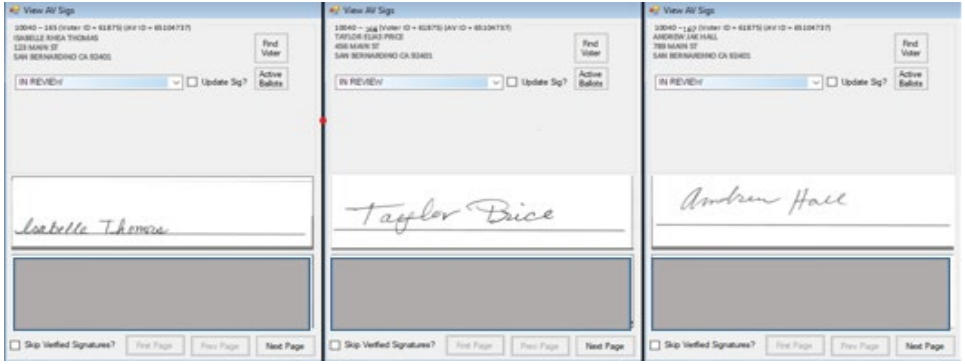
Signature Verification Process

Physical Envelope/Scanned Image Verification:

- This verification process is utilized for elections with low return quantities.
- Signatures on the physical *Official Mail Ballot Return Envelopes* are compared against the signature on file.

Physical Envelope/Scanned Image Verification:

- The Signature Verification screen displays the signatures on file that are then compared with the signatures on the physical envelopes.



Signature Verification Process

According to the California Elections Code:

- The signature verification process “shall be liberally construed in favor of the vote-by-mail voter” (EC3000).
- Presume that the signature on the ballot envelope is the voter’s signature.
- When comparing signatures, do not review or consider a voter’s party preference, race, or ethnicity (EC3019).

Principles of Handwriting

Three Main Principles of Comparing Handwriting

- No two skilled writers will have identical handwriting features.
- Every person has a range of natural variation.
- No writer can exceed his, her, or their skill level.

Signature Variations

- Two similar characteristics between a signature being compared and any signature in the voter's registration record are sufficient to determine a signature is valid.

- The voter's registration record contains the signatures from:
  - their voter registration affidavit, DMV, and any forms issued by an elections official that contains the voter's signature.
- Signatures that do not contain the similarities should be challenged.
- In the scenario that the voter signs with just one mark the signature is presumed valid if the voter's record has that mark on file.

Signature Variations - Characteristics

- Slant of the signature
- Signature is printed or in cursive
- Size, proportion, or scale
- Individual characteristics, such as how the “t’s” and “x’s” are crossed, “i’s” and “j’s” are dotted, or loops are made on the letters b, d, f, g, h, j, p, q, y, or z
- Spacing between the letters within the first and/or last name and between first and last name
- Line direction
- Letter formations
- Proportion or ratio of the letters in the signature
- Initial strokes and connecting strokes
- Similar endings such as an abrupt end, a long tail, or loop back around
- Speed of the writing
- Presence or absence of pen lifts
- Misspelled names

Signature Variations - Characteristics

Proportion or ratio of the letters in the signature	
Initial strokes and connecting strokes	
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Presence or absence of pen lifts	
Misspelled names	

Signature Variations - Reasons

- Signature style may have changed over time
- May have been written in haste
- Signature on file may have been written with a stylus pen or other electronic signature tool
- Surface used may have been hard, soft, uneven, or unstable
- A different pen, or the pen may have malfunctioned or ran out of ink
- Age, injury, or disability may have affected a voter's ability to sign

Signature Variations - Challenges

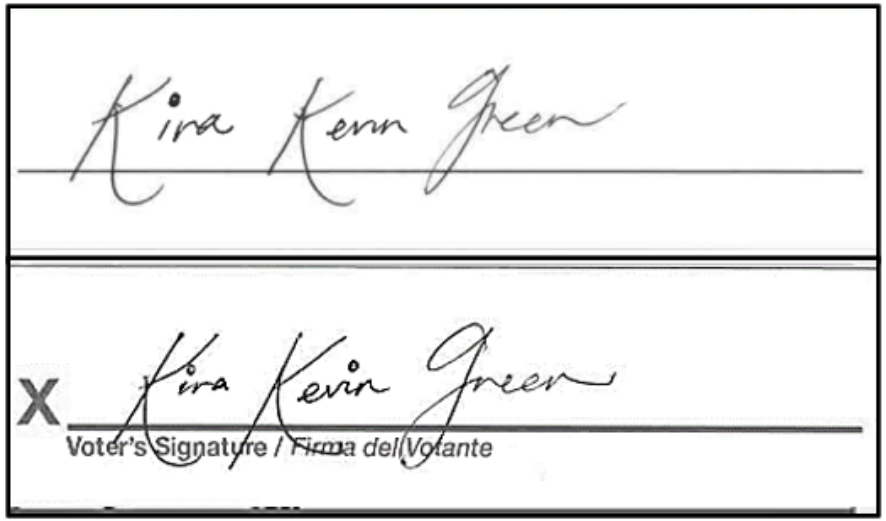
Recap:

- Signatures that do not contain at least 2 similarities should be challenged.
- A signature identified by an initial reviewer as having multiple, significant, and obvious differences "…shall only be rejected if two (other) different elections officials unanimously find beyond a reasonable doubt that the signature differs in multiple, significant, and obvious respects from all signatures in the voter's registration record."

Similarity in Writing

Identifiable Similarities – Letters within Signatures

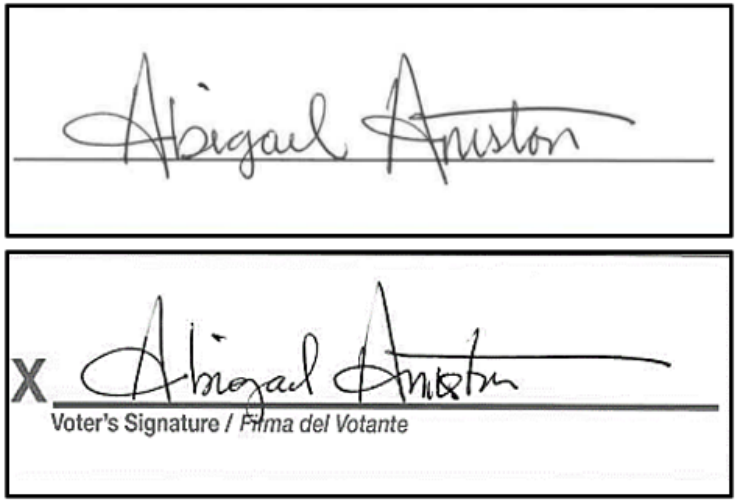
- The letter “K” and the “I” of the first name
- The letter “G” and the loops of the “N” in the last name



Similarity in Writing

Identifiable Similarities – Writing Style

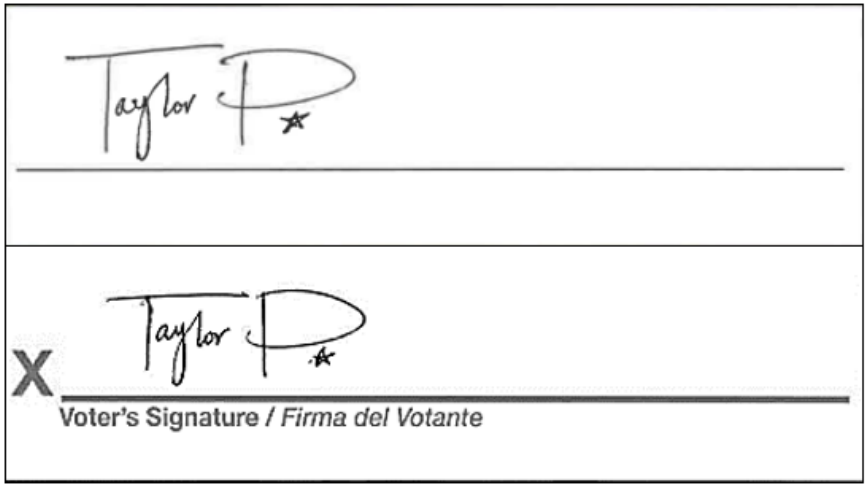
- The cursive loops, and strokes of the signature
- Specifically, the letters “A” and “T”



Similarity in Writing

Identifiable (Unique) Similarities – First or Last Name

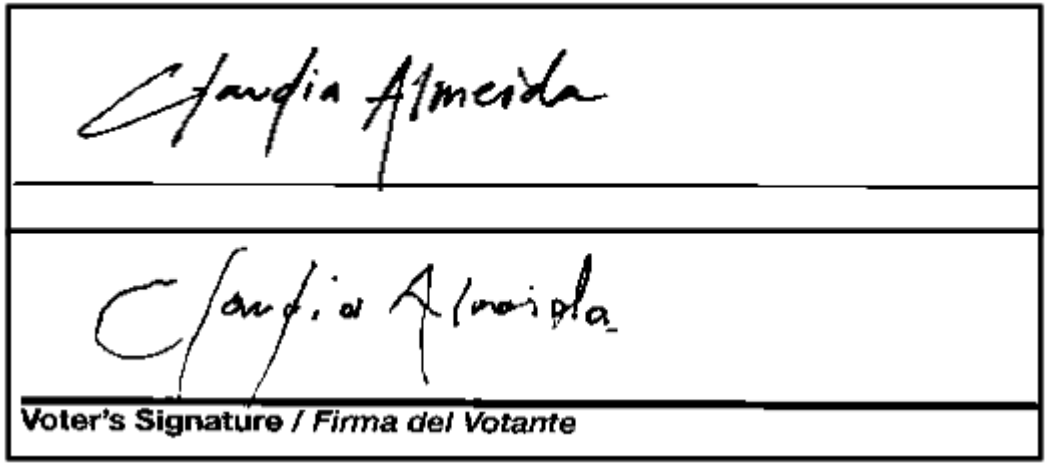
- The overall body of the signature shows similarities in both the first and last name.
- The signature contains an identifier, the star.



Similarity in Writing

Identifiable (Unique) Similarities – Letters within Signatures

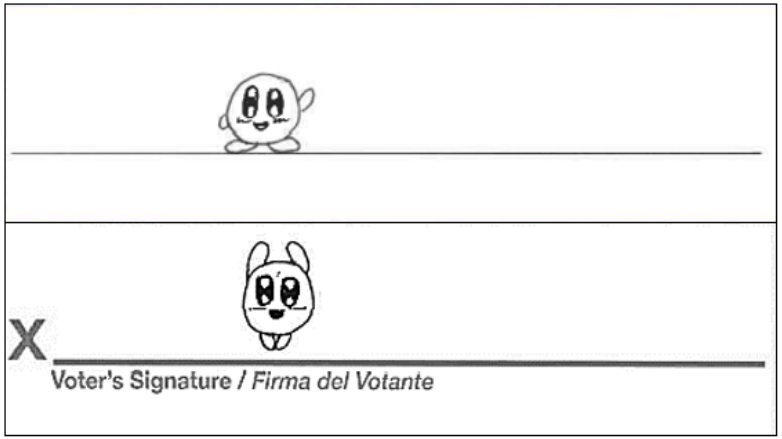
- The letters “L” and “D” of the first name
- The letter “A” of the last name



Similarity in Writing

Identifiable (Unique) Similarities – No Letters

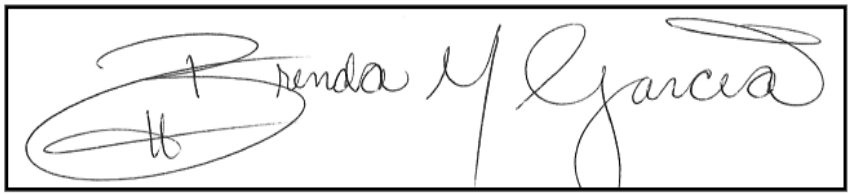
- Pictures or Symbols can be used as valid signatures
- Since we have this symbol on file, it is considered valid

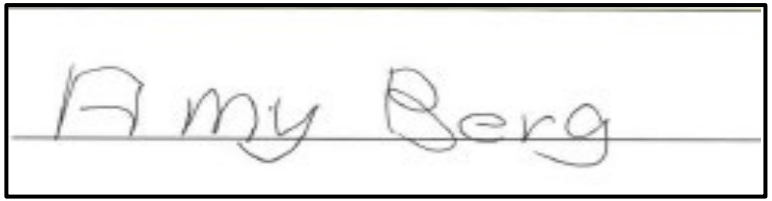


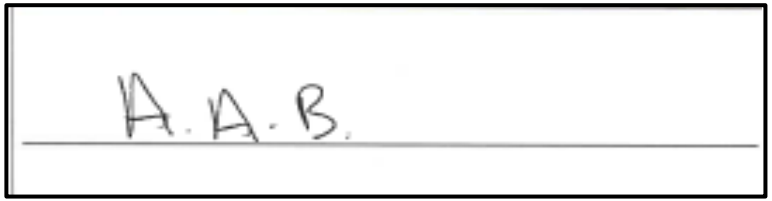
Partial or Incomplete Signatures

These signatures contains only the voter's initials.

- Unique similarities in letters within the signatures can be identified.
- The "B" and "G" in the first example.
- In the second example there are no unique similarities.



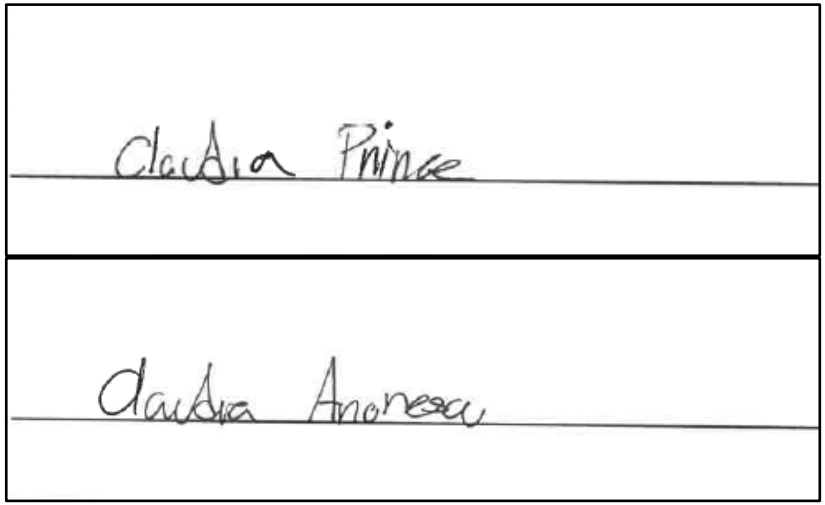




Partial or Incomplete Signatures

The signature contains the voter's maiden name.

- Identifiable similarities in the first but last name is different.
- Specifically, the entire first name.

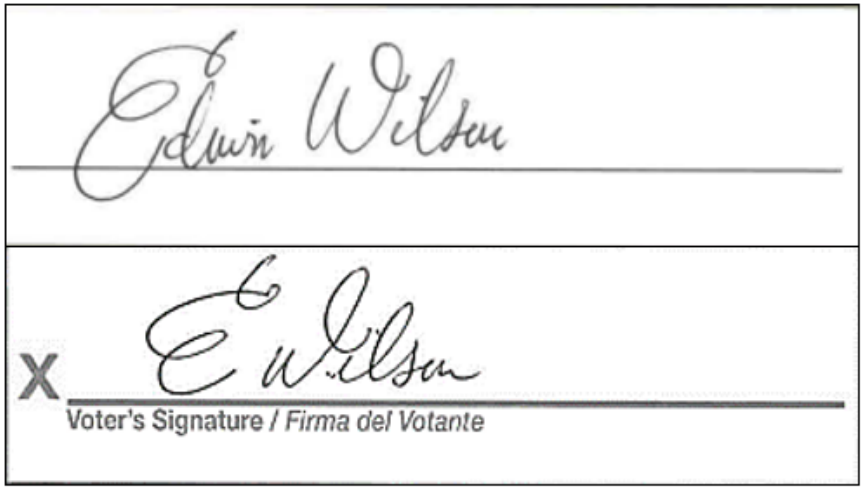


Partial or Incomplete Signatures

This signature only contains a portion of the voter's name.

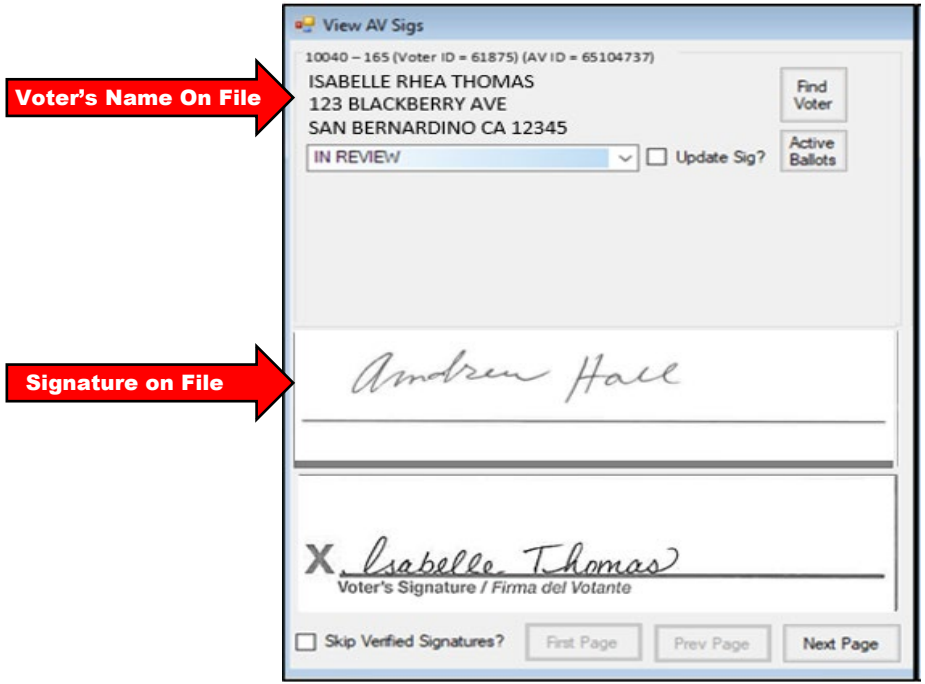
Identifiable similarities that can be seen:

- The "E" on both signatures is identical.
- The "W" and style of the last name is identical.



Example of Bad Signatures on File (BSF)

- This signature should be challenged as a BSF, because the Voter's Name on File does not match the name on the Signature on File.
- Double-click the Signature on File to make sure there are no other valid signatures.
- If there are no other attached signatures, challenge this as a BSF.



Examples of Bad Signatures on File (BSF)

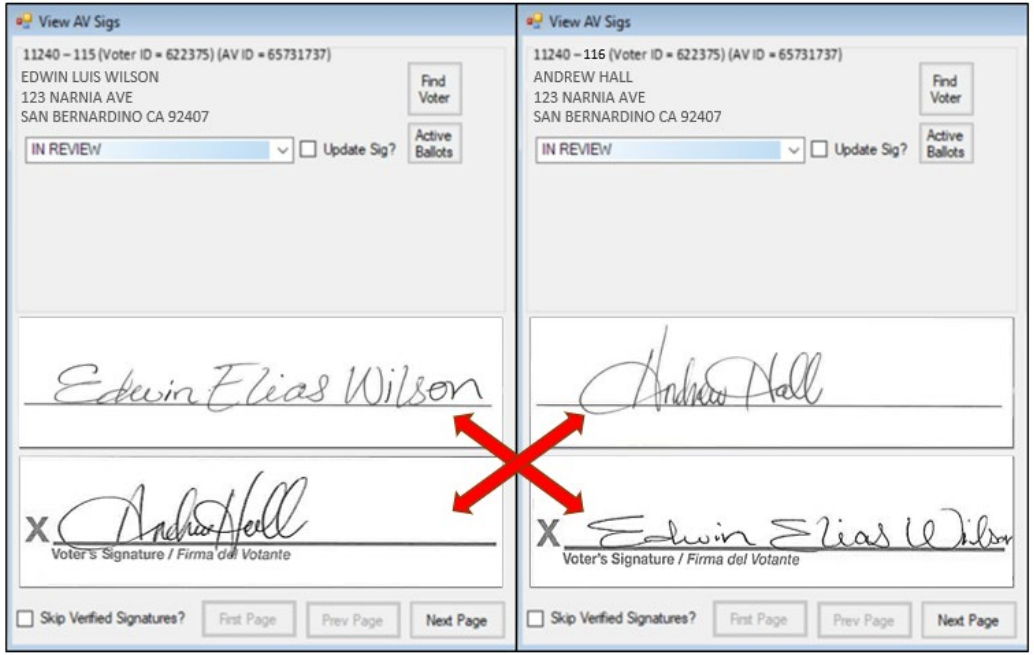
- The top signature box contains the signatures attached to the voter's record.
- The 1st example shows there is no signature on file to compare.
- The 2nd example shows the signature on file has been cut off.

Example of Bad Signatures on File (BSF)

- The signature on file is blurry and not readable.

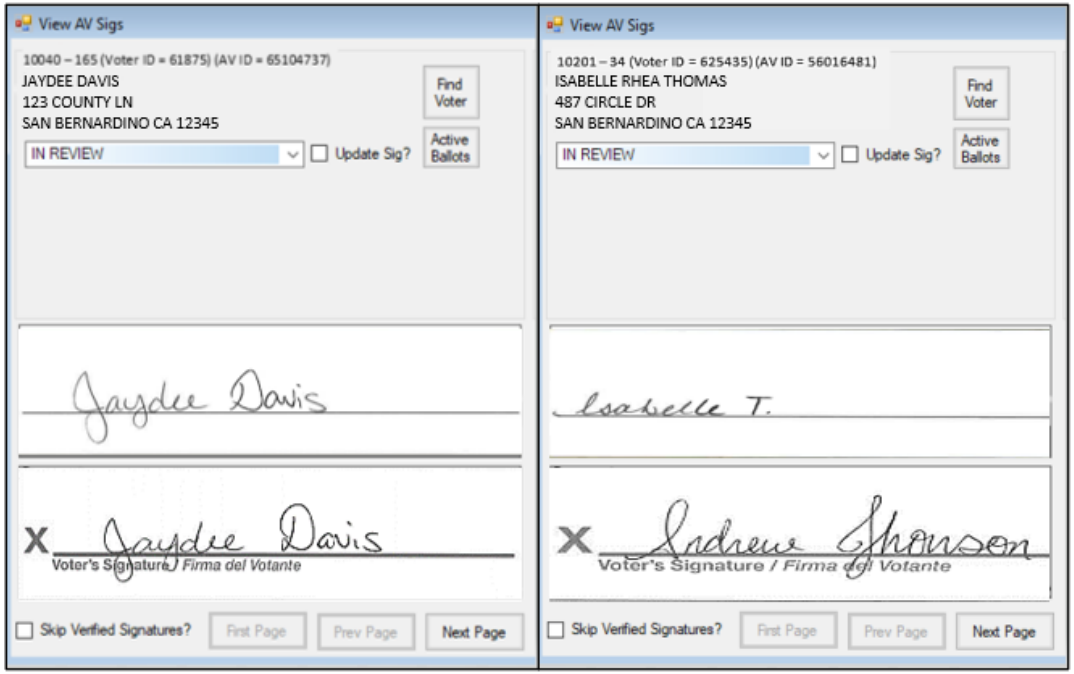
Example of Unpaired Signature (UNPRD)

- When you come across a signature that has a completely different name to what's on DIMS.net, but it compares to a signature on a different Envelope, then you have an UNPAIRED (UNPRD).



Examples of Signature Variations

Would you accept these envelopes based on these signatures?



Examples of Signature Variations

Identifying Mark

- When a voter is unable to sign their envelope, the voter can make a mark of an “X”, however, this mark must also be on file in DIMS.net.

Examples of Signature Variations

Non-Roman languages

- Some voters may have as their primary language an entirely different set of characters in their alphabet.
- Example: Chinese, Tamil, Arabic, Mediterranean, Greek, Cyrillic alphabets.

Other Marks or Images

- Cattle brand
- Three cat faces
- Artistic liberty, such as a heart or emoji

Questions about the Signature Verification Process?

SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY

YOUR TURN!!

REMEMBER:

** If you have to spend more than a few ** seconds reviewing it…

CHALLENGE IT!

QUIZ: SIGNATURE VARIATIONS

Would you accept this envelope based on the signature on file?

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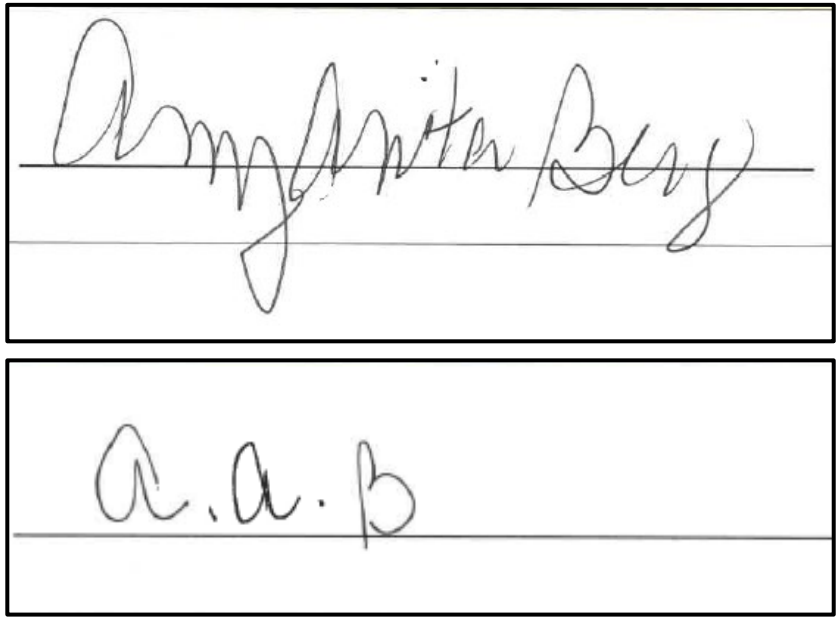

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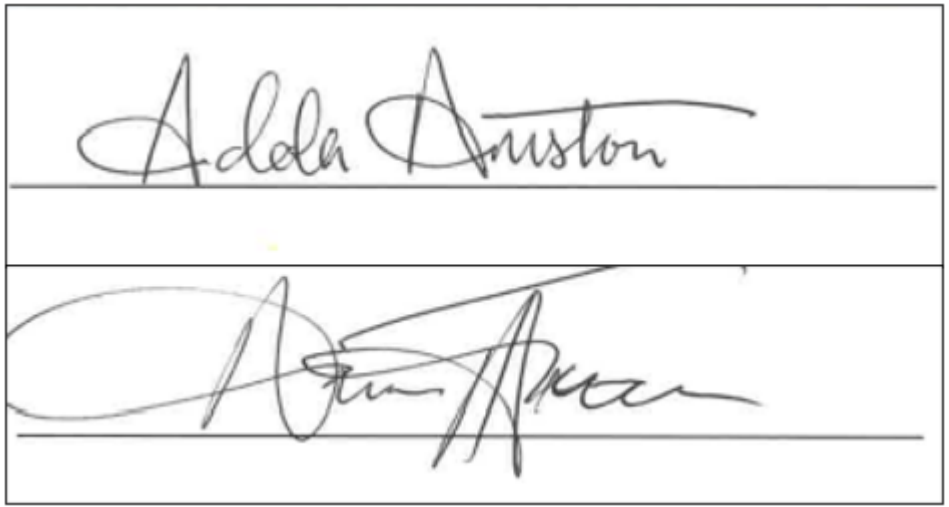

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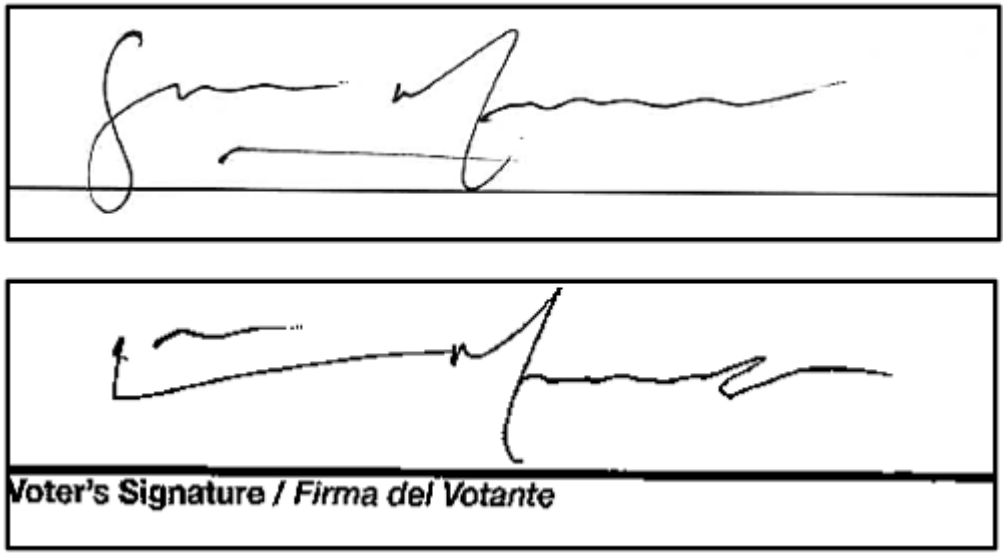

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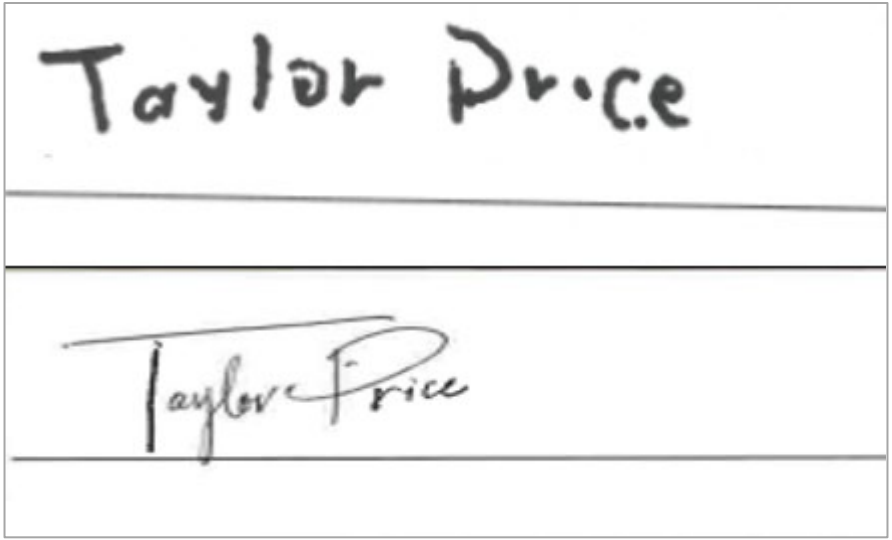

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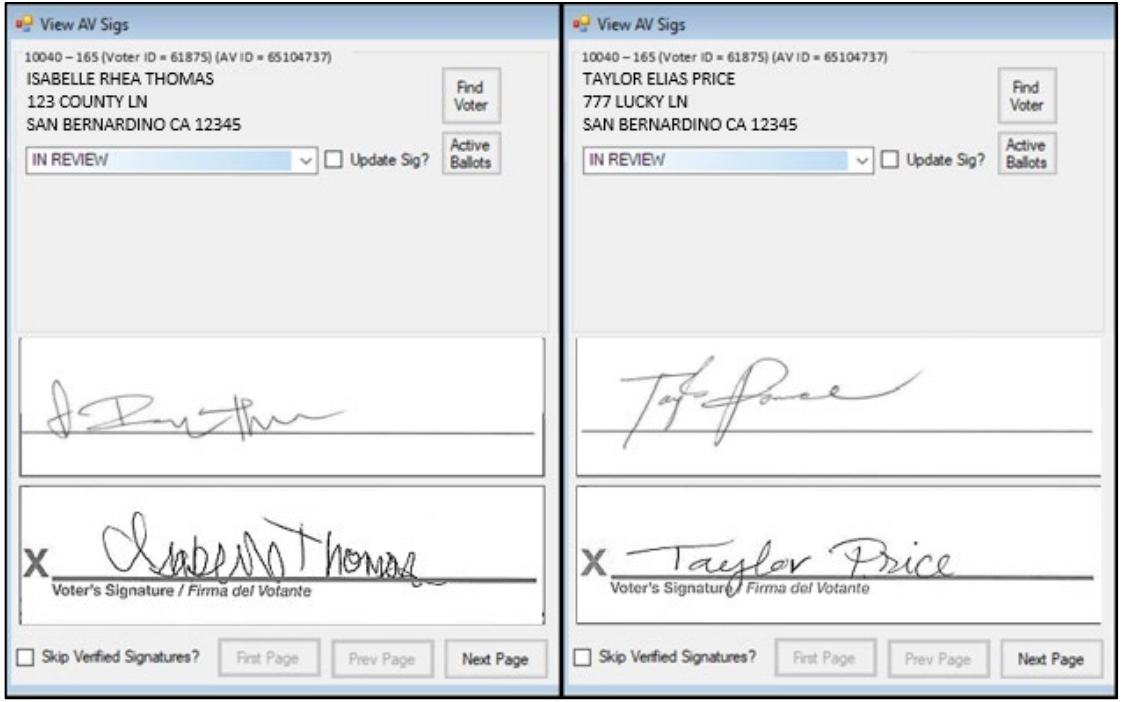

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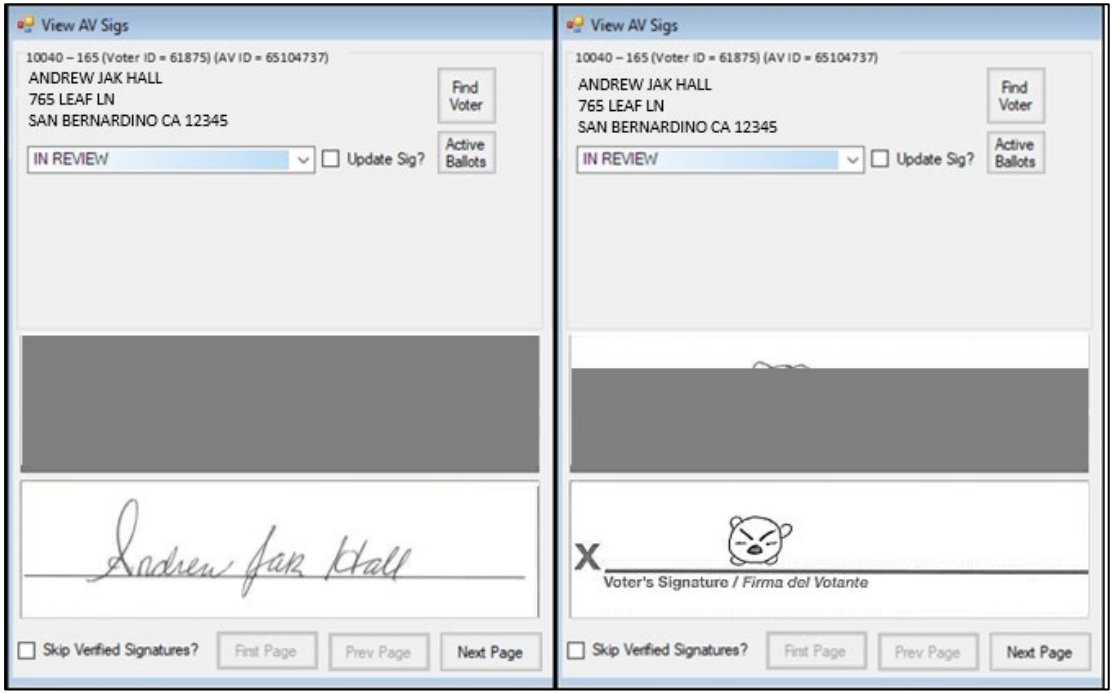

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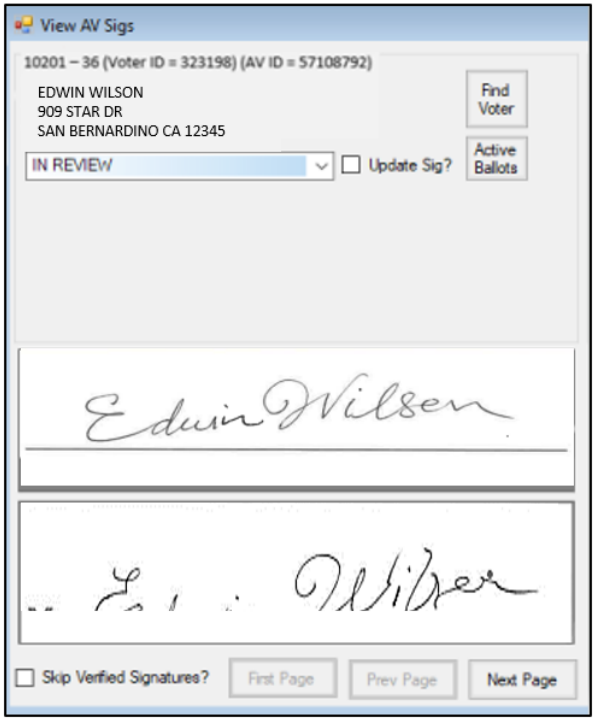

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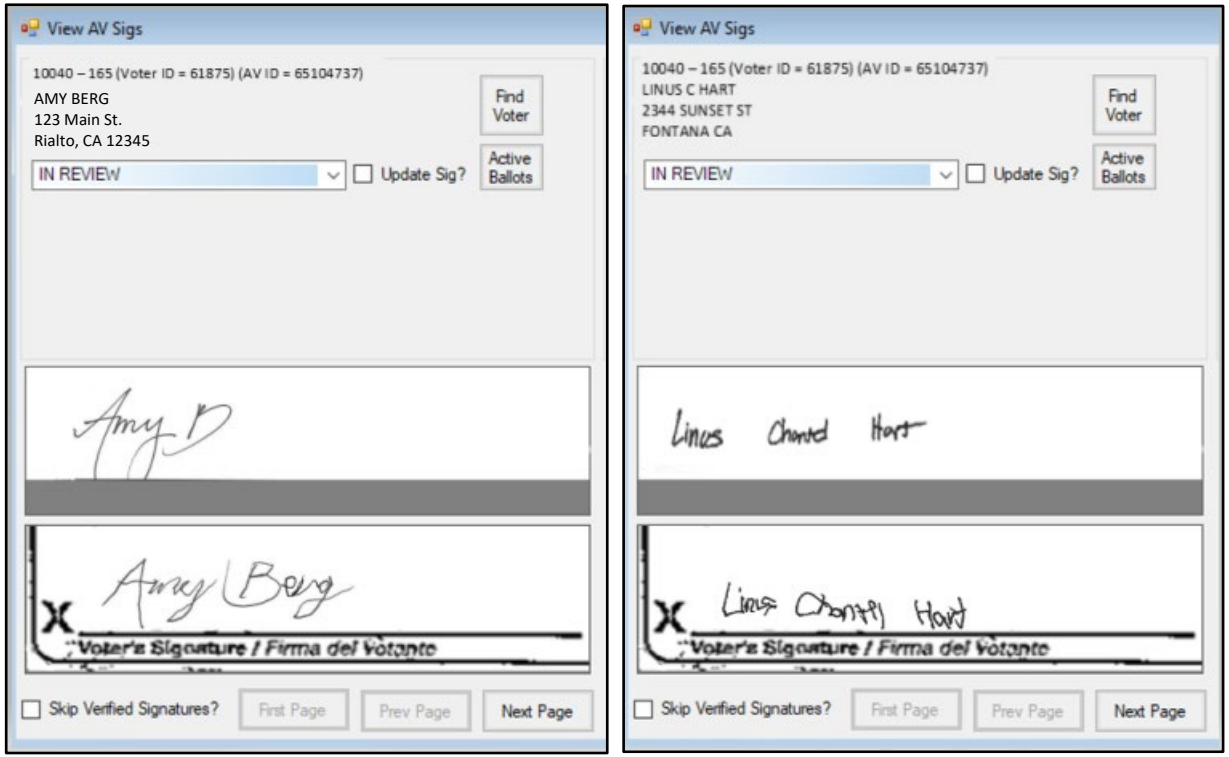

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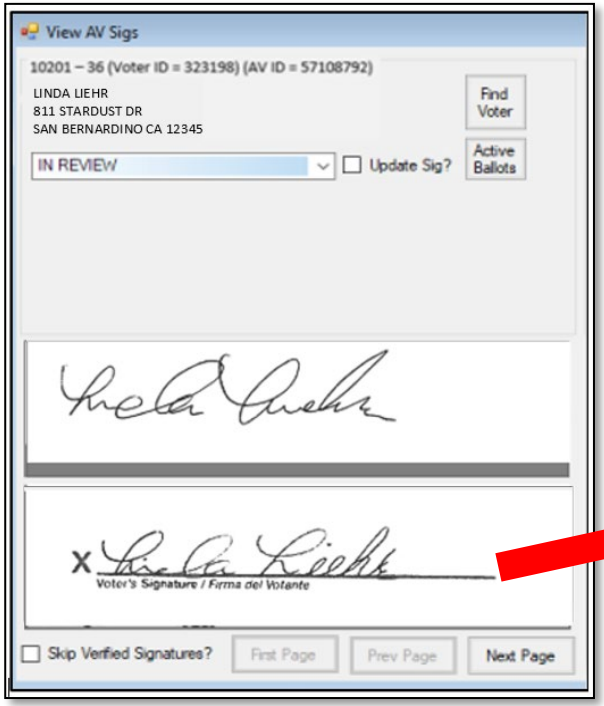

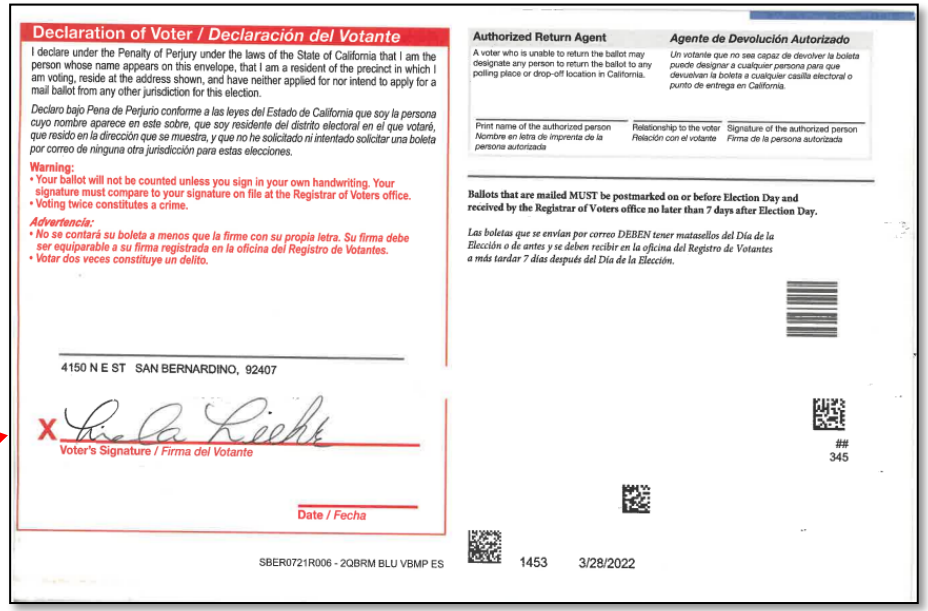

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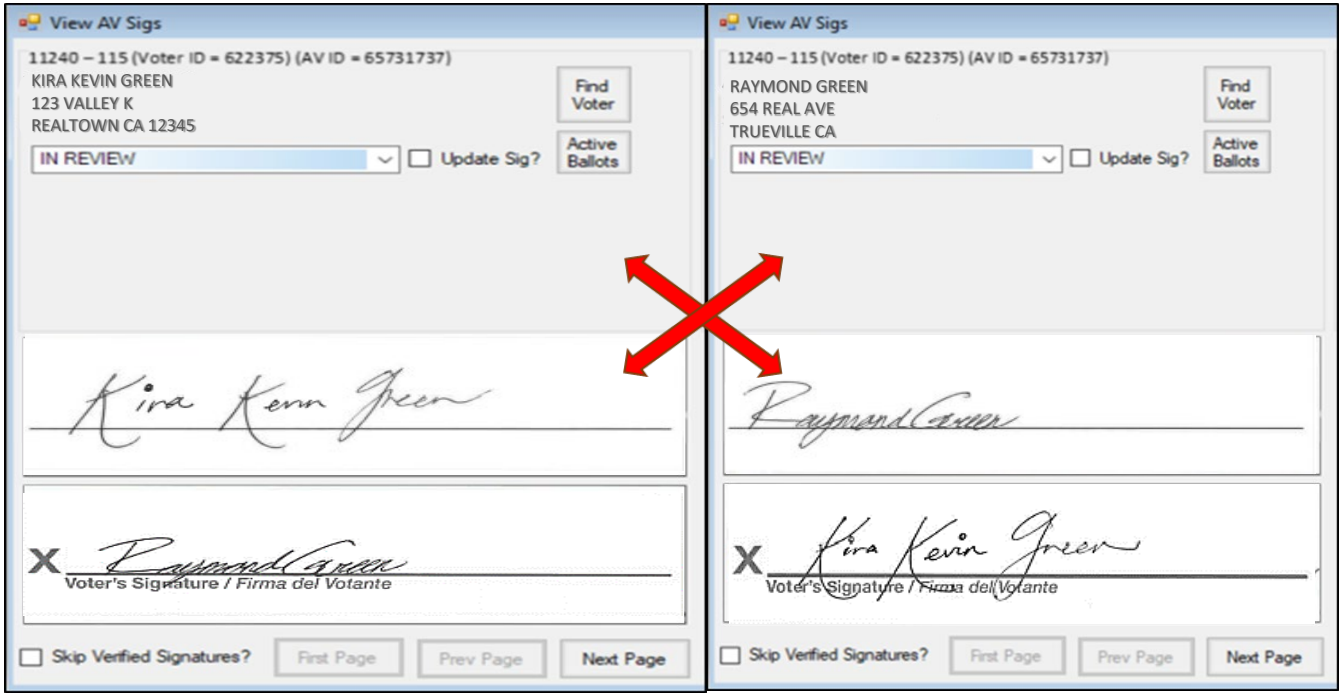

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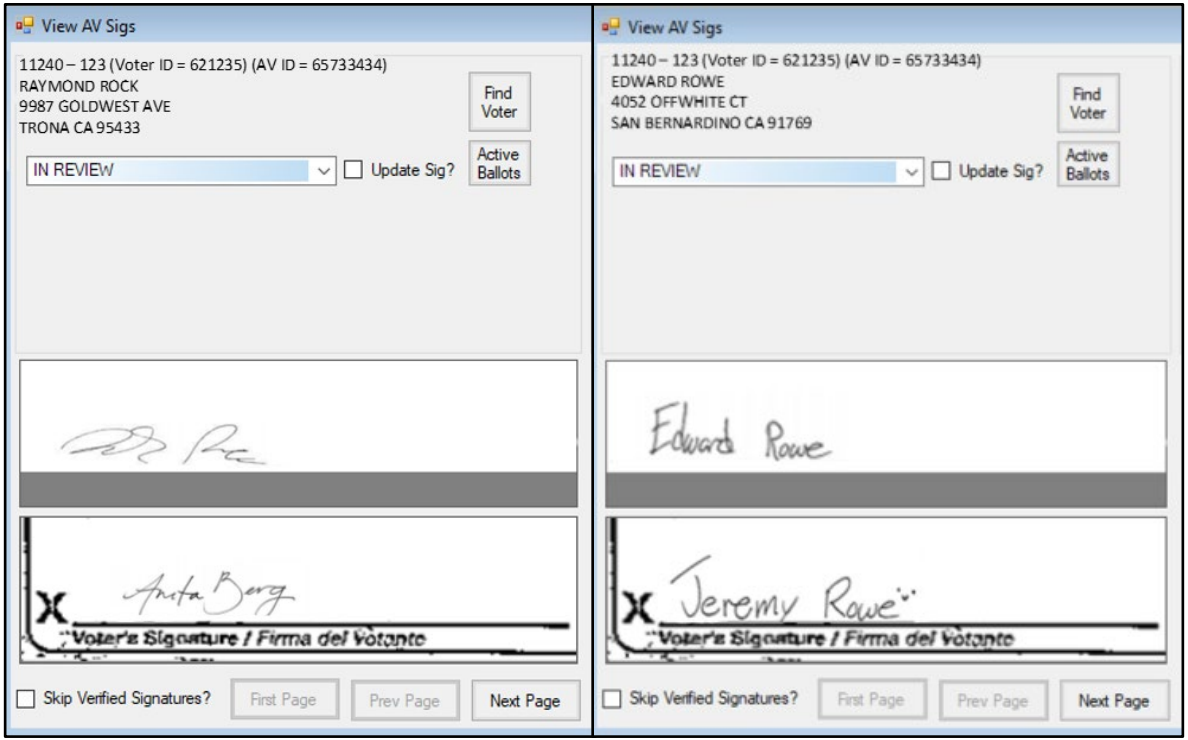

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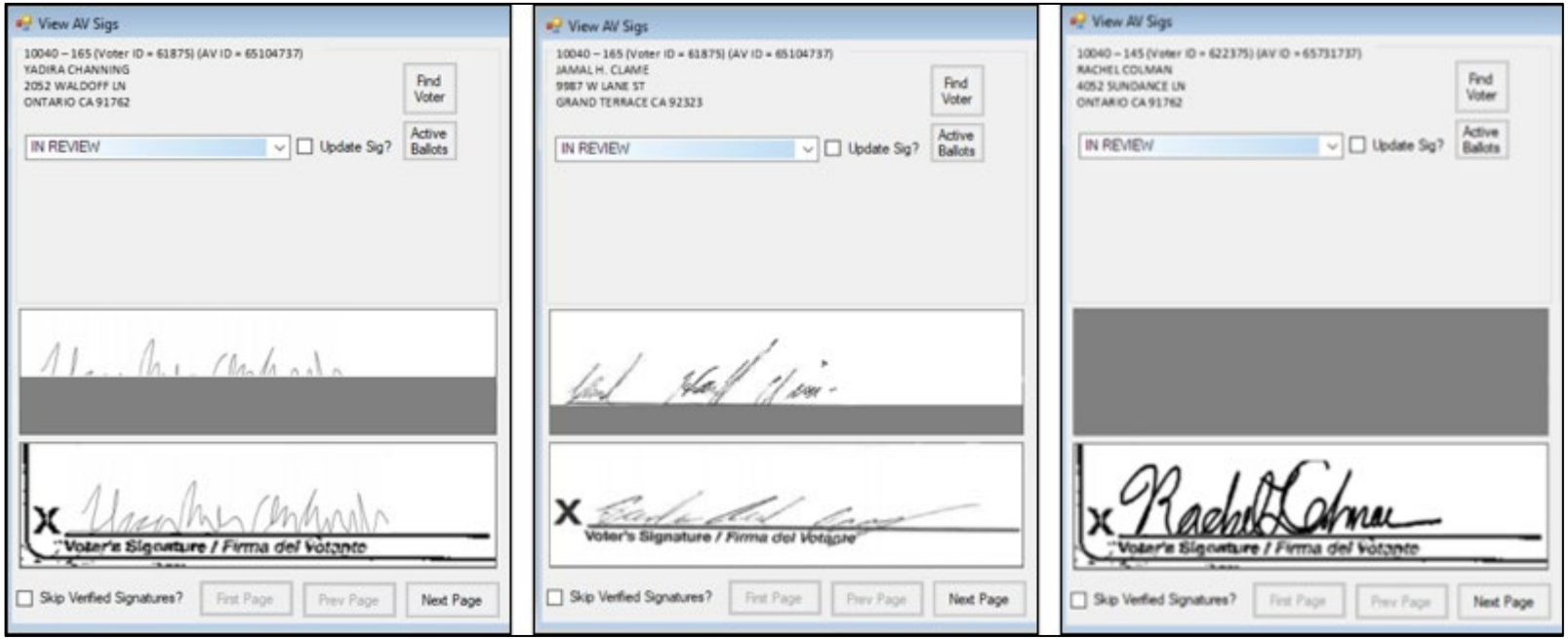

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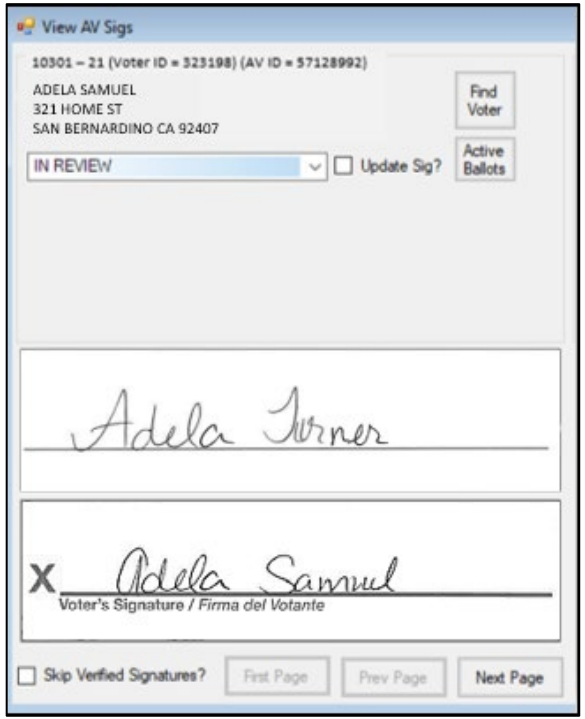

Thank You!!!

Thank you for participating in today's training and joining our team for the

March 5, 2024, Presidential Primary Election