ELECTION CENTER
National Association of Election Officials

28th Annual
National Conference
Boston, MA

# 2012 Professional Practices Program

# Petition Verification System

## Maricopa County, Arizona


Submitted by:

Jasper Altaha
Voter Registration Manager
602-506-2269
jaltaha@risc.maricopa.gov

David Fee
IT Development Manager
602-506-2996
dfee@risc.maricopa.gov

111 S 3rd Avenue
Phoenix, AZ 85003
www.recorder.maricopa.gov

# Petition Verification System

## Recorder/Elections
## Maricopa County, Arizona

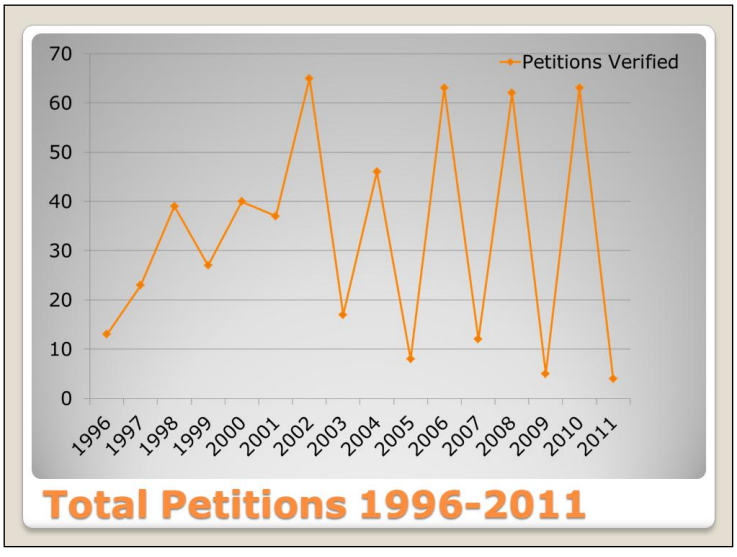
## 1. Abstract

The basis for much of our ballot content in Arizona stems from petitions gathered to nominate a candidate or a put a proposition to the voters. Depending on the type of petition there is either a random sample or the totality of the petitions are verified to ensure that the voter is registered, eligible, and that the signature is valid. In Maricopa County this means volume: from 1996 to the summer of 2011 this meant 528 separate petition campaigns, 603,270 petition pages, and more than 724,251 signatures verified.

## 2. Need

The accuracy of petition verification is critical; this is the bedrock of how a candidate gets on the ballot and ultimately represents the constituency of the district. This requires the identification of voters who sign multiple petitions for a single candidate, or who sign competing candidate's petitions, as well as eliminating signatures based on the voter's eligibility qualifications. The accuracy of our work is often utilized in litigation between candidates as they challenge one another's legitimacy on the official ballot.

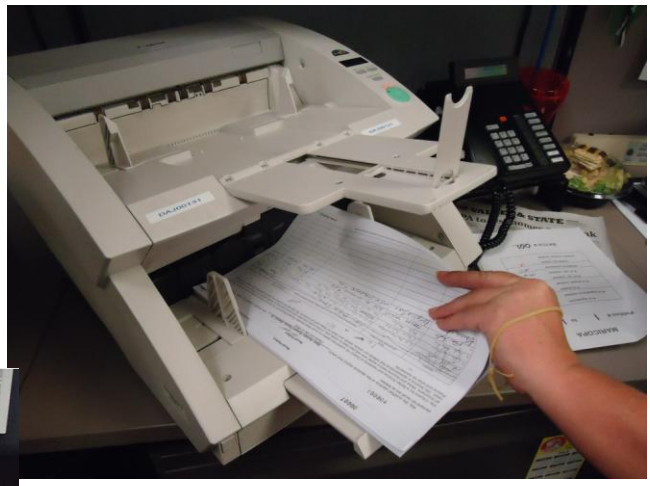
The verification of petitions must be done within a limited period, and time constraints can loom ominously as ballot printing deadlines near. By having this system in place it allows for the secure distribution of workload electronically to staff without compromising the actual petitions and jeopardizing chain of custody of the source documents.



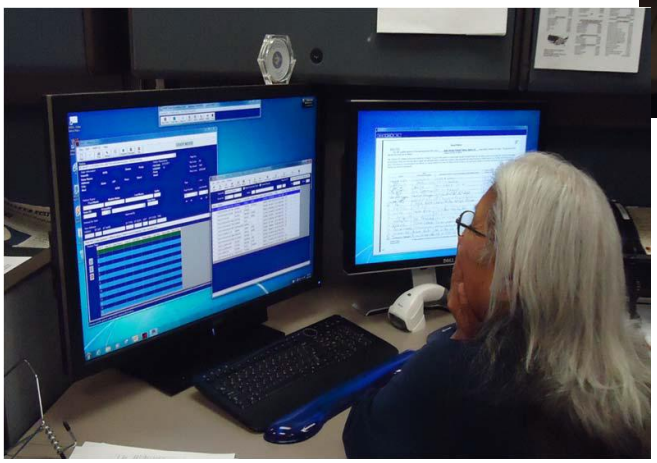
## 3. Description

Traditionally submitted petitions were processed by the distribution of the physical petition papers to staff, many of whom were temporary employees and may not share the vested interest our permanent staff has. In order to eliminate the possible misplacement of petitions and to streamline procedures, an online Petition Verification System was developed.

Petitions are scanned and digitally available for viewing by staff as they manage each in an associated data-entry screen. All physical petitions are kept in a single location, but staff throughout our three facilities can access the system and process without the necessary transport of papers.



Here the original petitions are being scanned into the verification system.



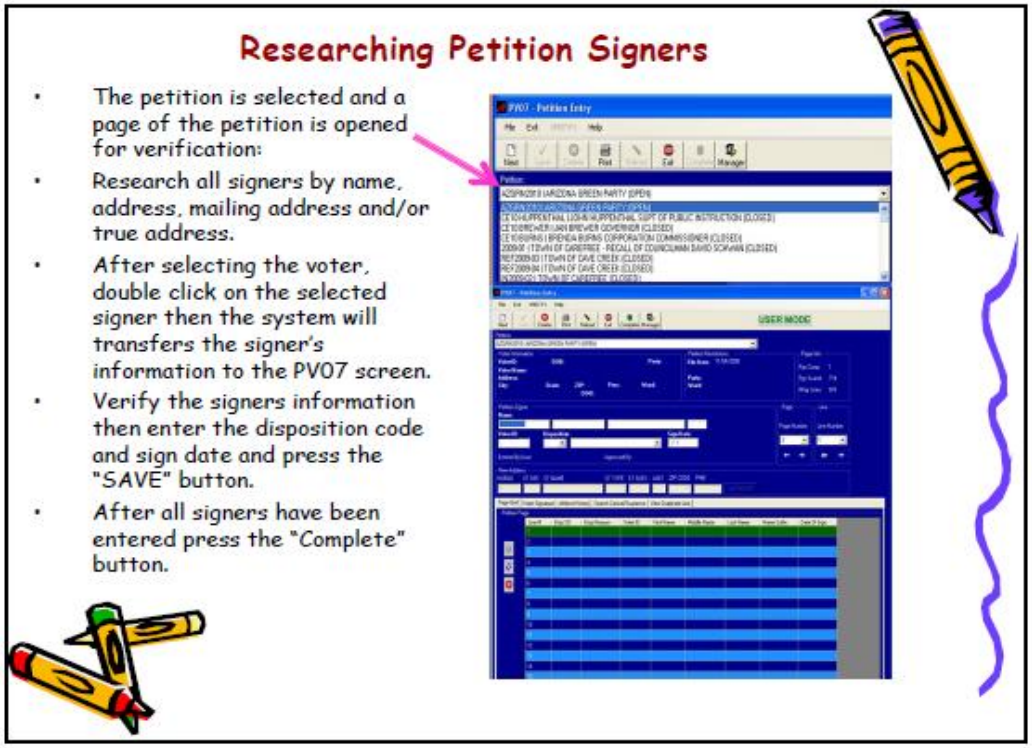
Scanned image of the petition is viewable on the right-hand screen with the system on the left.

## 4. Worthiness

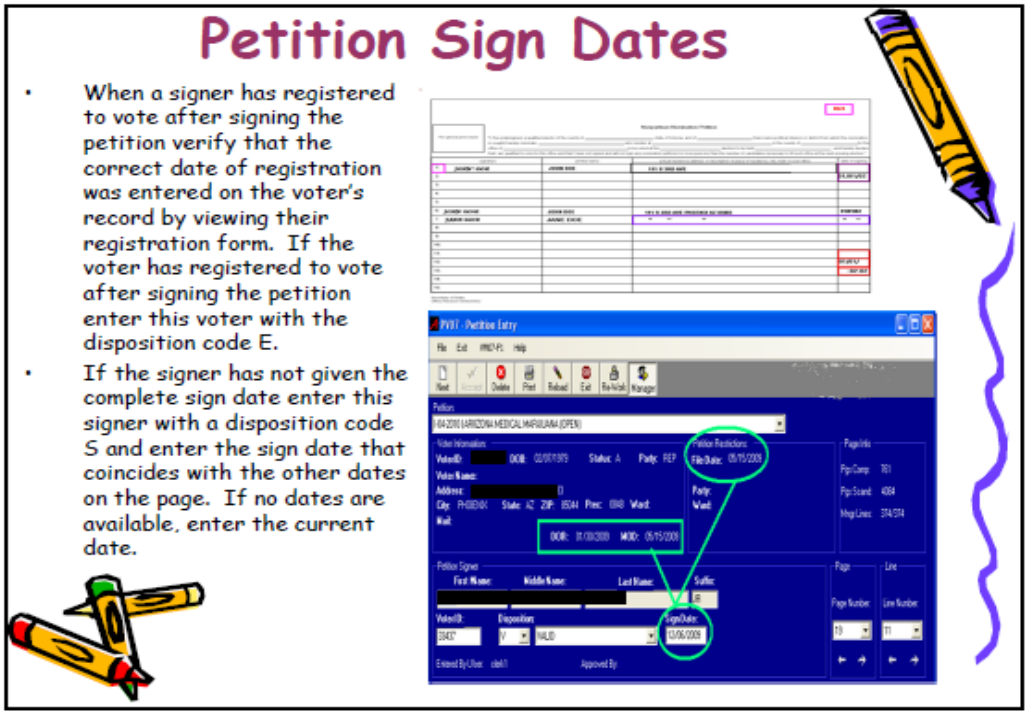
By assuring that the ballot contains those candidate and issues legitimately placed by the voters, the integrity of the electoral process is maintained. Utilizing the Petition Verification System allows the Department to best steward the County's resources while increasing the level of service our voters receive.

# Supporting Documentation

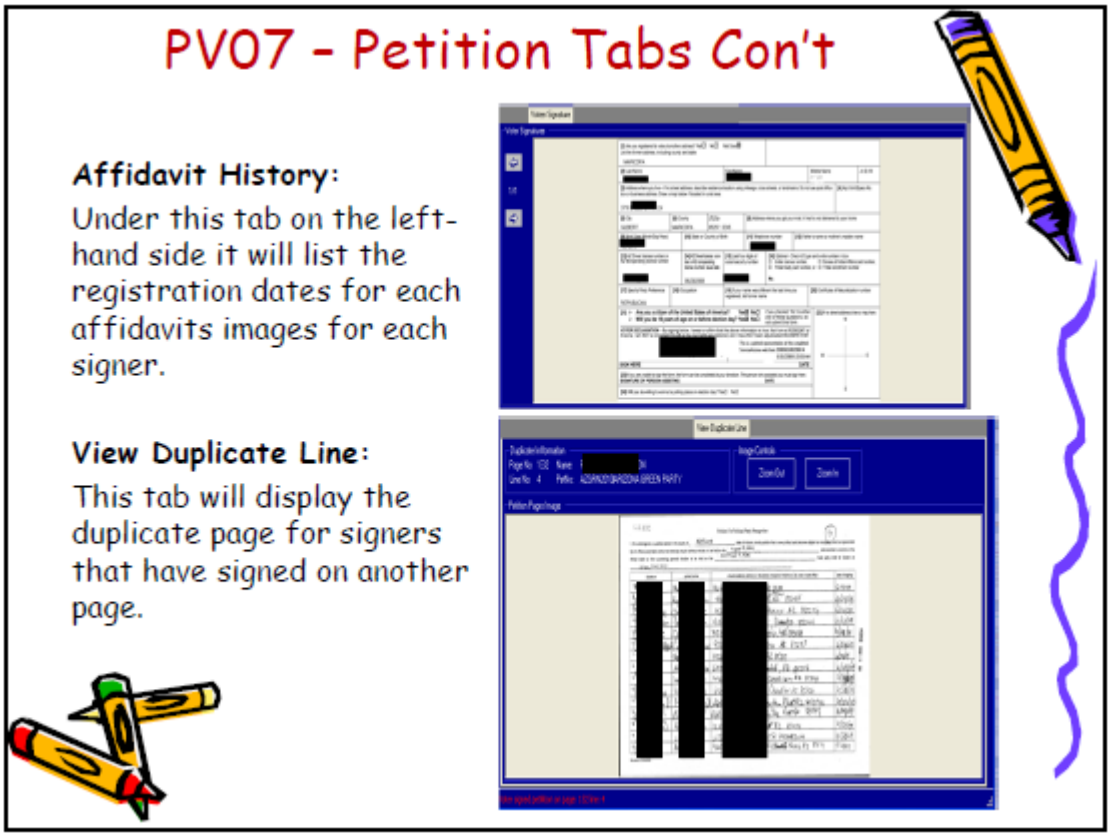
Once the petition is scanned staff is able to process the petition by following simple steps:



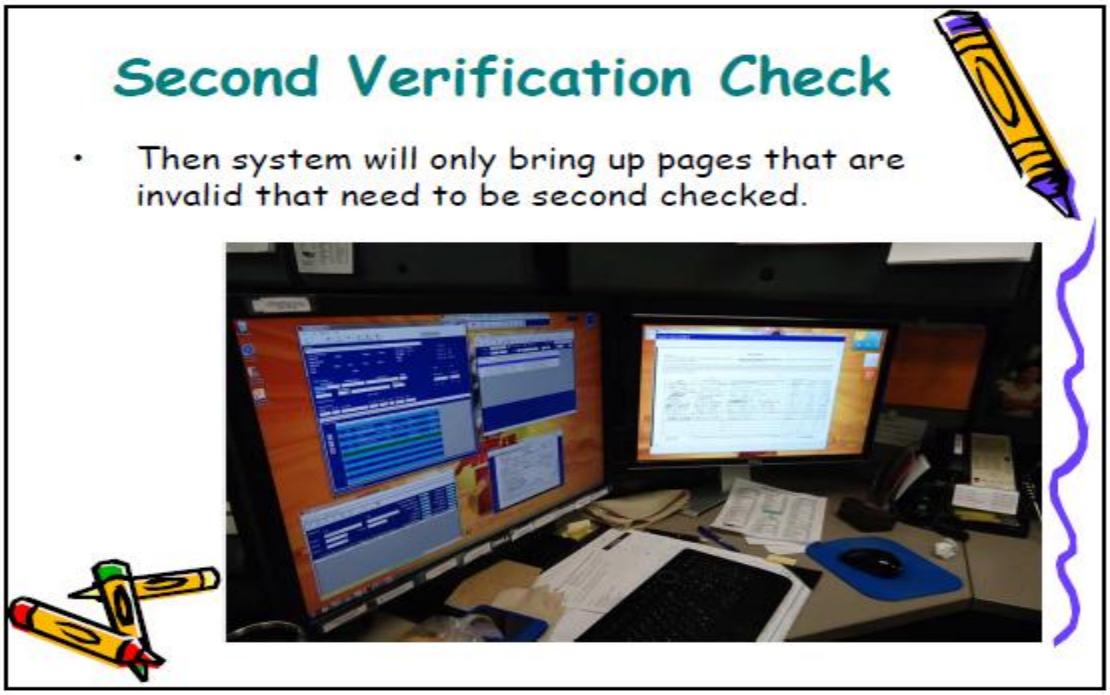

The system checks the date of the signature compared to the voter's registration date:



The system interfaces with the archived images of voter registration affidavits and is also able to identify when a signer has signed multiple petitions:




Quality control and second validations are readily accomplished because the system is set to only bring up invalidated signatures for managerial review:



## 5. Cost

The costs incurred in creating the Online Mapping Tool include planning & programming costs for the upgrades provided to our existing election management system. These costs are not reflective of what it would take if starting without that base. However, any elections department would already have a similar election management system.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 243 hours programming for implementation = | | $ 8,227.09 |
| 143 hours programming upgrades = | | $ 5,207.44 |
| | TOTAL: | $13,434.53 |

## 6. Results

We have been able to cut our staffing in half. Previously we hired more than two dozen temporary workers who, on average, worked 12 hour days, 6 days a week, for approximately 3 months: roughly a quarter million dollars. Unless we see an inordinately high number of petitions, we anticipate that we will continue to save more than a hundred thousand dollars each year with the use of the Petition Verification System.