

Ballot Shredding in Carbon County

Federal Violations, Tabulator Anomalies, and Safeguards for 2026

A Shocking Discovery on November 8, 2022

WRITTEN BY
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Surveillance footage from Carbon County’s election office captured Administrator Crystal Roascio feeding at least 21 batches of folded documents—indistinguishable in size and fold pattern from absentee and mail-in ballots—into a commercial shredder after polls closed. Citizens obtained the video through public-records requests, prompting parallel investigations by the Red Lodge Police Department and the Montana Division of Criminal Investigation.

Macque L. Bohleen’s Razor-Thin Win
On that same ballot, Macque L. Bohleen—running for Clerk and Recorder—clinched victory by just 87 votes. In a race decided by such a narrow margin, every shredded or manipulated ballot carries the potential to flip the outcome.

Tabulator Usage Discrepancies: A Statistically Impossible Surge
It is particularly striking that the two ES&S DS200 tabulators processing Carbon County’s remaining ballots after 8 p.m. were used almost equally until about 1 a.m., each logging roughly half the votes. Yet one machine stayed powered on all night and posted 1,000 more ballots than its counterpart. This defies logic: 75 percent of ballots (absentee and mail-in) were counted earlier in the day, and precinct ballots were tallied that morning—leaving fewer than 1,000 ballots to be processed that evening. One tabulator simply could not have legitimately recorded that many additional votes.

Missing Machine Tapes and Zero-Out Logs
State law and county procedure mandate critical records from each tabulator:

- Batch tapes detailing precinct-level vote totals.
- Zero-out tapes confirming each machine began at “000000” before tabulation.

In Carbon County’s November 2022 election:

- One tabulator’s batch tapes are incomplete, omitting the initial zero-out figures that would confirm the machine was reset to zero after testing and that no votes were preloaded.
- One ES&S DS200 tabulator is missing its initial zero-out tape, suggesting it may not have been cleared before counting began and could have contained preloaded votes—potentially explaining why it recorded 1,000 more ballots than the other machine. This discrepancy could have skewed contest totals, particularly the Clerk and Recorder race, where Macque Bohleen’s margin of victory was just 87 votes.

With Bohleen’s 87-vote margin, these missing records aren’t clerical—they’re essential forensic evidence.

Federal 22-Month Record-Retention Mandate
Under 52 U.S.C. § 20701, every election officer must “retain and preserve, for a period of twenty-two months from the date of any election, all records and papers” relating to voting, including ballots, tabulator tapes, zero-out logs, and poll books. Willful destruction or concealment is punishable by up to one year imprisonment and a \$1,000 fine. Carbon County’s clandestine shredding and erasure of digital tabulator records flagrantly violated this clear federal requirement, obliterating the only trail for any legitimate audit or recount.

DOJ’s Renewed Focus on Election Fraud and Record-Tampering
In its April 29, 2025 press release announcing the Election Integrity Task Force, the Department of Justice pledged to enforce statutes under the Help America Vote Act and the National Voter Registration Act, prosecuting willful interference with ballots and election records. Carbon County’s shredding, missing tapes, and tabulator anomaly align



precisely with the misconduct the DOJ has vowed to investigate and punish.

Why Carbon County Must Be on the DOJ’s Radar

1. Video evidence of election-night ballot destruction.
2. Clear breach of 52 U.S.C. § 20701’s 22-month retention rule.
3. Statistically impossible tabulator surge in a race decided by 87 votes.
4. Lost ballots and missing records that undermine public confidence and may have altered the result.

Recommendations and Next Steps

- Urge the Civil Rights Division to open a § 20701 enforcement investigation for willful destruction of election records.
- Demand Montana’s Secretary of State audit every tabulator’s memory cards, maintenance logs, zero-out tapes, and batch tapes from November 2022.
- Amend MCA 2-3-214 to require livestreaming of all ballot-handling and tabulator setup procedures, tamper-evident access logs, and steeper penalties for noncompliance.

Safeguarding the 2026 Election: Open, Observed Count Sites
To prevent future misconduct, the 2026 ballot counting process must move out of closed-door basements and off-camera areas where poll watchers cannot observe. All ballots—absentee, mail-in, and precinct—should be stored and tabulated in fully public, surveilled venues such as the county fairgrounds building or high school gym. This transparency ensures every table, tape, and tally remains in plain sight, restoring voter confidence and deterring would-be manipulators.

Take Action Now: Demand an Open Venue for 2026 Ballot Counting
Our democracy depends on transparency and public trust. After the troubling shredding incident and tabulator irregularities in Carbon County’s 2022 election, we cannot allow the 2026 ballot count to happen behind closed doors again. We need your voice to insist that all absentee, mail-in, and precinct ballots be counted in a fully public, easily accessible venue—like the county fairgrounds building or the high school gymnasium—with live video streaming and tamper-evident procedures.

What You Can Do Today

- Find your county commissioners’ and Secretary of State’s contact information.
- Call each office and politely but firmly demand a change of venue for the 2026 ballot count.
- Use this simple talking points script:

1. “Hello, my name is [Your Name] and I live in [Your Town].”
2. “I’m concerned about the lack of transparency in our last ballot count.”
3. “I request that Carbon County move its 2026 ballot counting to a public venue—such as the fairgrounds or a school gym—live stream every step, and implement tamper-evident logging.”
4. “This change will restore trust and ensure every vote is visible to citizens and certified observers.”
5. “Thank you for safeguarding our election integrity.”

Spread the Word

- Share this call to action on social media pages and local community groups.
- Text friends and family with a direct link to this petition or a simple reminder to call today.
- Bring neighbors together to plan group calls or drop-in visits to county offices.

Your participation can redefine how Carbon County conducts elections—turning suspicion into confidence and closed rooms into open halls. Pick up the phone now and demand a transparent, observed ballot count in 2026.

Who to Lobby

1. **County Commissioners**
Scott Miller (Bridger District #1)
Phone: (406) 425-3104
Email: smiller@carbonmt.gov

Scott Blain (Joliet District #2, Presiding Officer)
Phone: (406) 698-7692
Email: sblain@carbonmt.gov

Bill Bullock (Red Lodge District #3)
Phone: (406) 425-4517
Email: bbullock@carbonmt.gov

2. **Clerk & Recorder**

Macque L. Bohleen
Phone: (406) 446-2282
Email: clerkrecorder@carbonmt.gov

What to Say
Hi, I’m [Your Name] from [Your Town]. I’m calling to request that the Carbon County Board of Commissioners—and the Clerk & Recorder—move the 2026 ballot counting out of closed, unobserved areas and into a public venue, like the county fairgrounds building or high-school gym.

- Emphasize that open counting with live video and poll-watcher access is essential after the 2022 shredding and tabulator irregularities.
- Stress that this change will restore voter confidence and ensure every ballot is visibly handled.
- Ask them to place “2026 ballot-count venue change” on the next Commissioners’ agenda and to direct the Clerk & Recorder to implement it.
- Require the Carbon County Election Administrator follow standard security protocols regarding seals used on tabulator equipment and ballot envelopes instead of her creating her own “homemade” Avery label stickers that do not ensure any security at all:

The security stickers that should be used in Carbon County Montana elections have serial numbers and are signed and dated and are called **tamper-evident seals** or **election security seals**. The seals’ design and the procedures for using them are intended to detect and deter tampering with voting equipment and ballots.

Key features and protocols for these seals include:

- **Tamper-evident design:** The seals are designed to show visible damage or a “VOID” message if they are removed or otherwise compromised.
- **Unique serial numbers:** Each seal has a unique, non-repeating serial number that is logged by election officials to track and verify the seal’s integrity throughout the election process. Some also include scannable barcodes.
- **Signing and dating:** Election workers often sign and date the seal’s log to create a clear paper trail, which is a key part of the chain of custody procedure.
- **Application:** Seals are used on various election materials, including ballot boxes, voting machines, and ballot transport containers.
- **Protocol:** Simply applying a seal is not enough for security. Election officials must also follow a strict protocol for applying, recording, inspecting, and storing seals and their serial numbers.

Next Steps

- Call each commissioner and Macque Bohleen today.
- Follow up with short, polite emails repeating your request—subject line: “Public Venue for 2026 Ballot Count.”
- Forward this to friends and neighbors: urge them to make the same calls/emails before the next BOCC meeting.

Our democracy demands daylight on every ballot. Pick up the phone now. 📞