Principle 10
Ballot Secrecy
The voting system protects the secrecy of voters’ ballot selections.

Requirements for Principle 10

Principle 10 Ballot Secrecy
The voting system protects the secrecy of voters’ ballot selections.

10.1 - Ballot secrecy is maintained throughout the voting process.
   10.1-A – System use of voter information

10.2 - The voting system does not contain nor produce records, notifications, information about the voter, or other election artifacts that can be used to associate the voter’s identity with the voter’s intent, choices, or selections.
   10.2.1 – Voter associations
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10.1 - Ballot secrecy is maintained throughout the voting process.

10.1-A – System use of voter information
The voting system must be incapable of accepting, processing, storing, and reporting identifying information about a specific voter, with the exception of blank ballot distribution and online ballot marking systems.

Discussion
Examples include first name, last name, address, driver’s license, and voter registration number. The voting system cannot prevent a voter from self-identifying within write-in fields.
10.2 - The voting system does not contain nor produce records, notifications, information about the voter, or other election artifacts that can be used to associate the voter’s identity with the voter’s intent, choices, or selections.

10.2.1 – Voter associations

10.2.1-A – Direct voter associations
The voting system must not create or store direct associations between a voter’s identity and their ballot.

Discussion
A direct voter association would be the voting system storing that John Smith voted for George Washington. Other examples of a direct association would include tying ballot selections to a social security number, voter identification number, or driver’s license number. (This is not an exhaustive list of direct voter association examples.)

10.2.1-B – Indirect voter associations
Only E2E voting systems may use indirect associations; other systems must not.

Discussion
Certain channels of voting require indirect associations so that ballots can be removed before the ballot is read and counted. Some reasons include signature mismatch or death of a voter. Once a ballot is read and counted, the ballot is permanently stripped of its identifier. The most common example of indirect association would be a randomly generated number. Ballots with indirect associations are not considered read or counted until the association is removed.

Applies to: E2E voting system architectures

10.2.1-C – Use of indirect voter associations
The voting system must only use indirect associations for situations when a voter needs to fill out a ballot before their eligibility is determined.

Discussion
Certain channels of voting require indirect associations so that ballots can be removed before casting for a variety of reasons including signature mismatch or death of a voter. The act of casting the ballot permanently strips it of an identifier.

The most common example of indirect association would be a randomly generated number. Ballots with indirect associations are not considered cast until the association is removed.
Best practice would ensure that indirect voter associations are only available to authorized election personnel.

Applies to: E2E voting system architectures

10.2.1-D – Election worker selection of indirect associations
When the use of an indirect association is needed, an election worker must select the option for using an indirect association at the beginning of each new voting session.

Applies to: E2E voting system architectures

10.2.1-E – Isolated storage location
Ballots that are not cast and contain an indirect association must be stored in separate storage locations from cast ballots.

Discussion
Ballots that contain an indirect association are not considered cast. Cast ballots and ballots having their eligibility considered need to be kept separate from each other. Although not the only way of meeting this requirement, one example would be storing cast ballots in a different directory from ballots not yet cast.

Applies to: E2E voting system architectures

10.2.1-F – Confidentiality for indirect association
Ballots that are not cast and contain an indirect association must be encrypted.

Discussion
Encryption of the ballot preserves the confidentiality of the voter’s ballot selections while the ballot is tied to an indirect association to the voter.

Applies to: E2E voting system architectures
Related requirements: Data Protection

Requirements for VVSG 2.0
Principle 10 – Ballot Secrecy
Draft: March 20, 2019
10.2.2 – Identification in vote records

10.2.2-A – Identifiers used for audits
Identifiers used for tying a cast vote record (CVR) and ballot images to physical paper ballots must be distinct from identifiers used for indirect associations.

Discussion
For the purpose of these requirements, associations between physical ballots and CVRs are not considered direct or indirect identifiers.

Related requirements: Auditability

10.2.2-B – No voter record order information
The voting system must not contain data or metadata associated with the CVR and ballot image files that can be used to determine the order in which votes are cast.

10.2.2-C – Identifying information in voter record file names
CVR and ballot image file names must not include any information identifying a voter.

Discussion
This helps to ensure that information that could accidently be used to reference a voter is not used within a file name.

10.2.2-D – Non-memorable identifiers and associations
Unique identifiers and associations must not be displayed in a way that is easily remembered by the voter.

Discussion
Unique identifiers on the paper record are displayed or formatted in such a way that they are not easily remembered by voters, such as by obscuring them in other characters.

Related requirements: 9.4 Efficiency

10.2.2-E – Aggregating and ordering
Aggregated and final totals:

1. must not contain voter specific information, and
2. must not be able to recreate the order in which the ballots were cast.
10.2.3 – Access to cast vote records (CVR)

10.2.3-A – Least privilege access to store
The directory or storage location of CVRs, ballot images, and ballot selections on the voting system must be subject to the principle of least privilege.

Discussion
NIST SP 800-12 defines “least privilege” as, “The security objective of granting users only those accesses they need to perform their official duties.”
Nieles, Dempsey, and Pilliteri, Special Publication (SP) 800-12 Revision 1, An Introduction to Information Security, National Institute of Standards & Technology (NIST), Gaithersburg, Maryland, June, 2017. https://nvlpubs.nist.gov/nistpubs/SpecialPublications/NIST.SP.800-12r1.pdf

External references: NIS SP800-12 Revision 1
Related requirements Access Control

10.2.3-B – Limited access
Permission to access the directory or storage location for CVRs, ballot images, and ballot selections must be assigned to as few entities as possible.

Discussion
Entities include people and applications or processes running on the voting system.

Related requirements Access Control

10.2.3-C – Authorized access
Permissions to access the directory or storage location for CVRs, ballot images, and ballot selections must be validated and explicitly authorized before access is given.

Discussion
Modern operating systems often have sufficient mechanisms in place to accomplish this, but these security capabilities need to be configured and enforced.

Related requirements Access Control

10.2.3-D – Digital voter record access log
The voting system must log all access to the directory or storage location for CVRs, ballot images, and ballot selections in addition to logging access to all actions occurring within the system.

Discussion
This ensures that any person, process, or other entity reading, writing, or performing other actions to the electronic audit trail is properly logged.

Related requirements
Access Control, Auditing

10.2.4 – Voter information in other devices and artifacts

10.2.4-A – Voting information in receipts
Receipts produced by a voting system must not contain voter information.

10.2.4-B – Ballot secrecy for receipts
The voting system must not issue a receipt to the voter that would provide proof to another of how the voter voted.

Applies to: E2E voting system architectures
Prior VVSG Source: 2007 Vol 1: 3.2.3.1-A.4

10.2.4-C – Logging of ballot selections
Logs and other portions of the audit trail must not contain individual or aggregate ballot selections.

Discussion
The voting system needs to be constructed so that the security of the system does not rely upon the secrecy of the event logs. It will be considered routine for event logs to be made available to election officials, and possibly even to the public, if election officials so desire. The system will be designed to permit the election officials to access event logs without fear of negative consequences to the security and integrity of the election. For example, cryptographic secret keys or passwords will not be logged in event log records.

10.2.4-D – Activation device records
Activation devices must not create or retain information that can be used to identify a voter’s ballot, including the order and time at which a voter uses the voting system.

Discussion
Information such as the time the voter arrived at the polls or the specific vote-capture device used by the voter may be used to link a voter with their specific ballot and violates the principle of ballot secrecy.