



Lee Burgess: Welcome to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today we're talking about something totally different – we are sharing our experiences about being poll workers in the last election in San Francisco. Your Law School Toolbox hosts are Alison Monahan and Lee Burgess, that's me. We're here to demystify the law school and early legal career experience so you'll be the best law student and lawyer you can be. We're the co-creators of the [Law School Toolbox](#), the [Bar Exam Toolbox](#), and the career related website [CareerDicta](#). Alison also runs [The Girl's Guide to Law School](#). If you enjoy the show, please leave a review or rating on your favorite listening app. And if you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to us. You can reach us via the [contact form](#) on LawSchoolToolBox.com, and we'd love to hear from you. And with that, let's get started.

Alison Monahan: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today we're talking about something a little bit different – our experience as poll workers. Yes, Lee and I both worked at a polling station in the last election in San Francisco. It was actually a very interesting experience and one you might even want to try out. Lee, I think you were the first one who became interested in this. What brought it to your attention?

Lee Burgess: I did, I think I roped you into this.

Alison Monahan: Actually, I think I got an email from the Board of Elections just randomly, and I was like, "Oh, this sounds kind of cool." And you were like, "That's weird. I'm signing up for that."

Lee Burgess: I know. It's because we're kind of like the same person. So, I went to a talk from Stacey Abrams last winter, I guess. And one of the things she was talking about, because she's doing a lot of work around fair elections, I think Fair Fight is her organization – and she was talking about the importance of the people who are part of the election process. I hadn't really thought of that before, that there are all of these people, there's literally like an army of people in every community that are kind of processing the elections. So, we were at this talk and it was with a group of people and we all were like, "Who are these people who are working as poll workers?"

Alison Monahan: Right, I remember thinking it's like the old people sitting in the garage.

Lee Burgess: Right. So, one of the things a friend of a friend suggested, she was like, "We should all be poll workers because you actually want people who are engaged and interested, and maybe even people who have special skills to be a part of this poll worker population." So, you and I ended up talking about it and then we both signed up to be poll workers. I didn't really know what I was signing up for. I did not fully appreciate it was going to be... Oh my gosh, how many hours were we there?



- Alison Monahan: It was a very, very long day.
- Lee Burgess: We were at different locations, but it was a very long day. Yeah, I think I had to be there at like 5:30 in the morning or something like that.
- Alison Monahan: Something, I think I've kind of blocked it out. But yeah, I think you're there from like 6:00 in the morning, because the polls in California, at least in San Francisco, are open – I know this because I just got the little brochure for the next election – I think they're open from 7:00 AM until 8:00 PM. That's just the time they're open.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, we had to go like an hour, hour and a half early and we're there... I think I was there until about 10:00, maybe?
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, 10:30. There was a discrepancy in one of our numbers. I'll talk about that later. We had to sit and, yeah, it took us a long time. I think we were the last poll in our area to close. Well, the poll was closed, but to pack up all of our stuff. And so, I think that one of the things that has been interesting now is it really did get me thinking about how important each person in this process is.
- Alison Monahan: Oh, yeah.
- Lee Burgess: It's one of the things we're going to talk about, about who shows up to do this work and why many of us need to consider taking a day off and doing this sort of work.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, I completely agree. I guess my experience previously, other than being a voter, with polls at all was once in law school I was an election observer in Ohio. We kind of went and observed what was going on, and here were a lot of issues.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: You immediately saw there were some major issues. You saw when people would have a problem, they weren't necessarily getting the correct advice on what they were allowed to do or not do. It turns out, I definitely did not fully appreciate just how complicated all of this stuff really is.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, and the process for the chain of custody was just really intense.
- Alison Monahan: It's super intense.
- Lee Burgess: Super intense.



Alison Monahan: But also, it needs to be that intense. In San Francisco, they do it for a reason because not that long ago some ballots kind of showed up in the Bay, and that's a problem. Actually, I was really impressed really, I have to say, by all the logistics of this. I'm kind of a process person in general and the logistical process of the training and just the... People have really thought through this.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: Here, none of the voting machines are connected to the Internet at all.

Lee Burgess: And they had brand new voting machines when we did this.

Alison Monahan: Oh, yeah. They were totally new.

Lee Burgess: Totally new.

Alison Monahan: No one ever used them before. So, you basically had a paper ballot and you have the electronic version, and at the end of the night, the different pieces go with different people. I think it would be pretty hard to cheat.

Lee Burgess: I think it would be pretty hard to cheat, but it felt pretty easy to screw up.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, very easy to screw up.

Lee Burgess: I think that was the thing. Alright, so let's talk about the whole process. You and I have this discussion and we both fill out... I think you had to answer an online questionnaire to be considered to be a poll worker. There was a lot like, "Do you have a pulse and can you follow directions?"

Alison Monahan: Right. It was like, "Can you read this paragraph and tell us what this paragraph said in a series of multiple choice questions below the paragraph?"

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And then I was your run-of-the-mill poll worker.

Alison Monahan: Then we had to do an interview.

Lee Burgess: Oh, then we also had to do an interview. And I remember the question being like, "Can you work long hours and have you ever..." I think it was like, "Can you handle talking to people who have different needs?", because you have a lot of people who vote in person with ADA accommodations and things like. So you kind of have this interview and then you get assigned. I was your run-of-the-mill poll worker, and you were a poll inspector.

Alison Monahan: Yes, I was a supervisor.



Lee Burgess: Oh, the supervisor.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, so in my interview on the phone, somehow we started discussing what I do and the fact that I used to be a lawyer and now I have this business. And this guy who sounded like he was 25 or whatever, was like, "Oh, maybe you should be an inspector." I'm like, "Really? Do you think I'm qualified to be an inspector? I've never done anything. Shouldn't you have the basic level of poll working first?" He's like, "Oh, no, no, no, you'll be totally qualified for this. Let me ask you a few more questions." They were basically like, "Could you supervise other people?" I'm like, "Yeah, sure. Okay." I think I got paid 20 extra dollars.

Lee Burgess: Ooh!

Alison Monahan: Yeah.

Lee Burgess: So, we get assigned to our role, and then, in San Francisco, you go to a couple hour training; at least I went to a couple hour training. Was your training the same?

Alison Monahan: It was the same, yeah. So basically, it was maybe an hour and a half, two hours in a classroom, and then we went and practiced on the machines.

Lee Burgess: Yep, setting up.

Alison Monahan: Did you practice?

Lee Burgess: We did practice. We got a team. We had to set them up. We practiced using our handbook. They told us to do all the different pieces. And then we filled out all our paperwork so we could get our whopping \$120 or \$180. I can't even remember what it was.

Alison Monahan: Polls are actually a pretty expensive process when you start scaling it up.

Lee Burgess: It's a super expensive process, and then when you consider, I think we were there for 16 hours or something like that.

Alison Monahan: Plus the pay has to cover your three hours of training too.

Lee Burgess: Right, exactly. You're kind of volunteering. And I think now I read the paperwork, you actually can volunteer and they won't pay you. I didn't realize that.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think what it is, is that some companies will give you the day off, but they won't do that if you're getting paid.



Lee Burgess: I see.

Alison Monahan: Basically, you donate your salary to some fund or something.

Lee Burgess: Got it. Alright, so the idea is we did our training. I will be honest, I did not feel like I had a super great grasp of exactly everything that was going to happen, but I had my handbook.

Alison Monahan: In our training, the machine didn't work.

Lee Burgess: Oh, that's not a good sign.

Alison Monahan: We were like, "Oh, I guess this could really happen. It's not booting; what do we do?"

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So we get our assignments and then we roll in.

Alison Monahan: I mean, you think you didn't know what to do; I'm supposed to be supervising this thing. They're like, "You should call your workers and see if they're coming." I'm like, "Okay." Luckily, it turned out that actually, I think, two of the people out of the four that were working in my station had already been there before, so they actually knew well more than I did.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, it was good. Yeah, we didn't have a lot of knowledge base in my poll location, which was at a firehouse, which is very exciting.

Alison Monahan: I was at a school, so we had kids coming through to the principal's office all day.

Lee Burgess: So, you get there super early, crack of dawn early. You have to have all your food for the day.

Alison Monahan: I had to bring the ballots.

Lee Burgess: Oh, that's right. You had to bring the ballots.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, that's what the supervisor does. In your training, they give you this enormous suitcase, basically. I think actually that was one of the key questions he asked me, is, "Do you have a car?" I'm like, "Yes, I have a car." "Great, then you're qualified." I was at a school, at the top of a really steep hill in San Francisco. There was no way to get there without a car.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: So, I'm like wheeling at 6:00 in the morning, wheeling my giant suitcase of ballots up the hill.



Lee Burgess: And then you have to set these whole things up.

Alison Monahan: It's a lot.

Lee Burgess: It's a lot. You have to set up all of the places where you are actually filling out the polls, and then there's this huge machine that counts the polls in San Francisco that is standalone, and then there are all of these security measures. So, there are these tiny tabs and you have to track all of the chain of command.

Alison Monahan: I had one of mine, the printer, the numbers didn't match, and they made this whole big deal, you have to call them immediately. So I call them immediately and I'm like, "The number doesn't match." They're like, "Oh, it's fine."

Lee Burgess: I know. Our station had all this trouble; they had these different colored, almost like baby zip ties, that were locking things in place. And one of the zip ties broke and then they're like, "Oh no, the zip tie broke."

Alison Monahan: That's bad.

Lee Burgess: It's bad, because then how are you to carry things? There was a main number that you had to keep calling over and over again to get all of your questions answered so they could track. Basically, they were writing down every single...

Alison Monahan: Yeah, every interaction.

Lee Burgess: Every interaction.

Alison Monahan: They have a guy who's going around to check in on you and make sure everything's... Yeah, in my case, I don't remember what it was. The space we were in was not big enough, basically, so we were trying to figure out how to get all this stuff set up in there, and then I'm focused on getting all of the machines turned on because that was my job. I had some secret code, and on and on and on. I'm not really paying that much attention to what the people who are setting up the table are doing. They have their own instruction sheet; I assume they're following it. Bad assumption. At some point, I think an hour or two in, someone, somehow I asked them for a sample ballot in a different language or something, and they were like, "Oh, we don't have that." I'm like, "What do you mean you don't have that? That's literally in what I brought you. If you don't have that, something is wrong." And it turned out that this guy had dropped off a different set of ballots that they weren't really supposed to be using, and then they did use them, and he was freaking out about that. In the end, it turned out it didn't matter anyway. But it was just all these things where we were like, "Oh, this whole process just totally derailed because somebody opened the wrong box."



- Lee Burgess: Right. We had issues. One of the things I didn't realize caused a lot of issues were soiled ballots or people screwing up their mail-in ballot, so they'd bring it in person and they're trading it in.
- Alison Monahan: That was a complicated process.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. Or they lost that ballot and then you're trying to prove where you live and what documentation is okay. We do not have ID rules in San Francisco, so you don't need an ID. Then you're checking names off one list, and every hour you're updating them and checking them off on another list. There's a ton of process, and I think one of the things that I didn't really appreciate was the immense attention to detail...
- Alison Monahan: It's crazy.
- Lee Burgess: ... that is required, and then how specific you're supposed to be. One of my jobs for part of the day was to stand next to the voting machine, where you're supposed to tell...
- Alison Monahan: The scanning one?
- Lee Burgess: The scanning machine, yeah. It was like people walk up with their ballots and all you're allowed to say is, "You may place your ballot. It doesn't matter if it goes this way or that into the machine, and wait for the ding." But there were all these very specific rules, like make sure you don't suggest that you know what's on the ballot, or make any suggestions about how they could do this or what they could do. Then, if there's an error, you can't give them an opinion. You can be like, "Read the screen and answer yes or no", because they really don't want you influencing somebody's actions. Especially if you're kind of a helpful person, it can be hard to be like, "I can't answer that for you. You can read the screen and choose yes or no, because I don't want to influence your decision."
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, no, it's absolutely true. I felt the stuff around the mail-in ballots and what was going on with those, because if you have your mail-in one and you just have filled it out, you can just drop it off, no problem. Plus, sometimes people would come in and they'd say, "Oh, I made a mistake and now I need to trade this in" or, "I have the ballots but I don't have the envelope", and then that's a whole different scenario. That whole stuff was very complicated, because then people end up having to vote with provisional ballots and stuff, and then they don't like that. It's like, "Well, then go find your envelope. I don't know what to tell you."
- Lee Burgess: Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: You cannot submit this without this. We are not allowed to take this from you.



Lee Burgess: Right. And it was an interesting assortment of people who work as poll workers. In my polling place, there was someone who was a journalist who was our poll inspector, who'd never done anything like this before. There was myself who is a lawyer, there was somebody who worked in tech who I think got the day off, there was somebody who was retired. And it was kind of an interesting assortment of people who kind of had to dive down and figure this stuff out.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. We had a retired woman, another young-ish tech person, and then a high school student, who was actually fantastic. She was probably the most knowledgeable person because she had done this three times and thought it was super fun.

Lee Burgess: Oh, interesting.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, it was definitely a very interesting cross section of the community of people like, "Oh, these are not people I normally hang out with, but let's all figure it out."

Lee Burgess: Exactly.

Alison Monahan: Even, we had a security person who they didn't tell her to bring lunch. So, at some point I was like, "Alright, why don't I drive and get coffee and lunch at the Safeway and I'll take you with me?" You're trying to solve all these types of problems because there's really not lunch up in these hills and there's not public transit, you have 45 minutes and you're not going to get up and back. Alright, let's go. Let's figure this out.

Lee Burgess: Yep. I had to pump breast milk in the middle of my poll working day. And I was at a firehouse and I was like, "I don't know." Luckily, the fire chief was a woman and was basically like, "You can use my office while I'm gone." I was like, "Thanks." You're just kind of rolling with it, because everybody's trying to make accommodations for everybody, and take breaks. And there are all these rules about how many people have to be on the floor, and if the inspector's gone...

Alison Monahan: Oh yeah, the break thing was a whole other level.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, there's a lot of attention to detail.

Alison Monahan: You get your 15 minutes, and then this other person gets their 15 minutes, then you get your 30, and they can't overlap. And then one person is like, "Well, what if I want to combine my two fifteens into one 30?" You're like, "Oh, my God. Just don't fight the system."

Lee Burgess: I know, exactly. And there was a lot of hurry up and wait. A lot of the time we were just hanging out.



- Alison Monahan: Right, this was also a very slow election.
- Lee Burgess: It was a slow election. It was a local election, which one of the reasons why they, I think, chose to roll out those new machines that election was because it was not the upcoming presidential primary election, which is going to be crazy.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, I've signed up to do this again. I don't know if you did.
- Lee Burgess: I can't do this one, but maybe I'll do November.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, so I'm kind of hoping that if they do send me back to the same physical location, that we do not have the exact same spot because there is literally no way that we can have a busy election in this tiny, tiny little zone. We need the gymnasium.
- Lee Burgess: Right, yep. So, one of the things that I thought it was interesting, because we were also texting each other, comparing our experiences throughout the day...
- Alison Monahan: Being like, "How many people are at your place? We've had like a hundred."
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, exactly. I think it was interesting to really realize what people were curious about and how we knew what to do. And I really appreciated how hard it is to protect the system, protect the process, to keep everybody impartial and to not have any influence.
- Alison Monahan: Right. I think definitely just the logistics of, like you said, you have all these lists of people coming in. And at the end of the day, it was pretty stressful because at the end of the day you have this whole detailed process to go through to count each and every single ballot, whether it was submitted or spoiled or never used. Do those numbers match up with the numbers that are on your piece of paper? If not, you're going to have problems.
- Lee Burgess: Yep.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, it was kind of a nail biter to see are these numbers going to match up.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. And you'd have it in all of these different boxes. I think, had we started the day doing that kind of stuff, that would have been one thing, but it's 10 o'clock at night. It was freezing in the firehouse where I was working.
- Alison Monahan: It was freezing.
- Lee Burgess: And so, it's like you're freezing, my hands are literally numb.
- Alison Monahan: Everyone's tired.



Lee Burgess: Everybody's exhausted because we've been there since 6:00 in the morning, and you're trying to count and reconcile everything and follow these directions, which I thought San Francisco did a nice job of really trying to document. They did do a lot of documentation. They worked very hard on that, clearly. But still, going step-by-step when you're exhausted, I was kind of shocked more mistakes weren't getting made.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I was actually really astonished when our numbers lined up at the end. I was like, "Yes!"

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm.

Alison Monahan: Then it was fascinating because they've done this whole process where a different set of people come to get your paper ballots that come for the... Basically, they put somebody, they scan the ballot, so you've got the paper copy and you've got this digital version, basically, the memory card. So the Sheriff had to come and the Sheriff's deputies had to come and get the memory cards. And then for some reason, they send somebody from the bus company.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, the transit association, MTA.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, the transit authority basically comes to get your paper ballots. You're like, "Okay, this is just all very weird."

Lee Burgess: It's all very strange, but they're just trying to make sure that stuff doesn't get spoiled.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and we're all signing off on everything. It's like, "Alright, this is indeed what went with this guy and this is what this lady picked up. We're all agreeing to this. And then if it goes missing, we've got to figure out what happened."

Lee Burgess: Yeah, and then there's a whole team of people at the Elections Department who then have to deal with our handwritten forms, where we totaled everything up. It's pretty intense. Afterwards, we talked a little bit about what we thought of the process and whether it was kind of sustainable. I think, for me, what I think was pretty stunning is what you were trying to do with that length of time. That's a very, very long day – 16 hours, 17 hours is a super long day. We've been on our feet a lot of the day. I think we got what, a dinner, a lunch break? Did we even get a dinner and a meal break? I don't know.

Alison Monahan: I think you got 30 minutes for lunch and then a few 15-minute breaks.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, but we really didn't get that many breaks.

Alison Monahan: No.



- Lee Burgess: And you're putting an awful lot of faith into the fact that people can be very detail-oriented after 16 hours. I don't know, one thing I kept thinking about is there's got to be a better way to have people help with especially the custody piece, that aren't so exhausted.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, I was like, "Maybe we should have two shifts", but then you've got to recruit and train twice as many people.
- Lee Burgess: Which is super intense. I think they have a hard time filling these roles.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, and that's a strong argument for why we should make Election Day a holiday, so then a lot more people would actually be able to help out here.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah. I think with knowing that it is not an easy day, I think that I also really felt that there was kind of a call to duty of people who are process-oriented, that can work long days, and/or have the ability to carefully follow directions, because that's not the easiest thing to do.
- Alison Monahan: No, it's not, but it's also you don't really have to know... I guess I was more concerned that I don't know anything, and they're like, "We tell you everything." Basically, the question the guy asked on the phone were more or less like, "Will you follow a detailed process?"
- Lee Burgess: And call if there are problems?
- Alison Monahan: And he was like, "What would you do if you don't know what to do?" I'm like, "I would call you." He was like, "Yes, correct answer." It's like, "Would you make a guess?" I'm like, "No, I would not make a guess. I would call you."
- Lee Burgess: Right. I think that law students and lawyers are uniquely outfitted for that, because we like a good process.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. We're good at following directions, exactly.
- Lee Burgess: We're very good at following directions.
- Alison Monahan: And we can make other people follow directions and make them be like, "No, no, no, you need to... What do you mean you're using the wrong box of stuff?"
- Lee Burgess: There's not a lot of discussion about voter tampering or the inability for people to access voting in San Francisco. It's a pretty liberal state.
- Alison Monahan: They make it pretty simple.



Lee Burgess: We don't have ID laws, it's pretty simple. But in these areas of the country where there is some discussion about whether or not the voting system is working, I think that even makes it more important for folks to not just be poll watchers, like you were.

Alison Monahan: Right, because we couldn't do anything.

Lee Burgess: Because you didn't do anything. You were just watching.

Alison Monahan: We were basically like, "Oh, it sounds like they're giving you bad information. Go back and talk to them again. You should be able to submit a provisional ballot. Good luck."

Lee Burgess: Right, good luck. Whereas, there is also the person who's sitting making that decision, if they should give you the provisional ballot, and is following those rules as they've been stated, and that's a very powerful role. I think I didn't fully realize how powerful these poll worker roles really are when it all comes down to it, because they are the gatekeepers to the democracy.

Alison Monahan: Oh, absolutely. I think there's also a question of how hard are you working to try to get that person the ability to vote?

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm.

Alison Monahan: You can make that decision of, "Anybody who comes in here should have every possible opportunity to cast their vote", or you can not make that decision.

Lee Burgess: Yep.

Alison Monahan: I think it's very eye opening just to see that it is a very powerful role.

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm. And I think one of the things that we're probably going to see with the next few elections are longer lines, and who is going to be in charge of moving people through so people don't leave? Because we don't have the day off. I think that it was also a great advertisement for me about how important it is to do mail-in ballots.

Alison Monahan: Right.

Lee Burgess: Because then that removes a lot of this opportunity for struggle, because I think there's less human element with a mail-in ballot. I assume it just goes and gets opened and gets counted. I assume.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think they just separate it. Basically they just check the outside and separate it.



- Lee Burgess: Right, but you're not necessarily having all of these different points where things can go awry.
- Alison Monahan: Right. And I think it's also worth having people think about, as a voter, "What are things I can do to ensure that I'm not going to end up in a scenario where I can't cast my ballot?"
- Lee Burgess: Good point.
- Alison Monahan: It's like, if you have the opportunity to vote early, maybe you want to do that, so then you can do something else on poll day or that you can just know that your ballot went in. I think sometimes people are just like, "Oh, I can only do it that day." Again, it depends where you are. These are things you could be advocating for, is, "Should there be early voting in my community to alleviate that crush at the last minute?"
- Lee Burgess: Right, or just encourage your own little circle of people, like, "Let's all do mail-in ballots."
- Alison Monahan: I had to go to City Hall, I guess, the day I did training. You do this at City Hall and they had the early voting stations open in there. Actually, no, I don't think they did. I think I did it the next day. Anyway, point being, I voted early in person, and even then there were issues because I'd been out of the country and they didn't have the right address. It was on and on and on. I'm like, "Okay, I'm a person who thought I had this together."
- Lee Burgess: "I'm literally working in the election."
- Alison Monahan: I'm literally a supervisor at the poll, and it turns out that actually they think I still live out of the country. They're like, "Huh. Yeah, we're going to have to get that corrected for you." I think all these things, like you want to plan early as a voter, and then also try to get involved. You hear these stories about different jurisdictions who maybe don't have paper trails and their things are connected to the Internet. And it's definitely, really important stuff.
- Lee Burgess: It is really important stuff. I think that so often we get caught up in the big elections, the presidential elections, or this or that. But really, in our communities, it's what's happening the day of that really makes a difference.
- Alison Monahan: Interestingly enough, we were kind of like, "Oh my gosh, 200 people showed up all day. This is so boring. Whatever, it doesn't matter." But then it turned out that I think it took weeks to get some of these local...
- Lee Burgess: Our DA race.



- Alison Monahan: Yeah, the DA resolved, because it was ranked choice voting and it was a very, very, very close election.
- Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm.
- Alison Monahan: And that, arguably, will have a fundamental impact on the community, because the DA who got elected was very interesting.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, super progressive, even for San Francisco. To have a couple of San Franciscans be like, "Wow, this DA is super, super progressive."
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, super progressive by San Francisco standards. So, that'll be very interesting.
- Lee Burgess: Didn't he just eliminate... I think he just eliminated cash bail.
- Alison Monahan: Yes.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. I was actually happy that there were some close races because then I felt like every ballot that we helped count actually may have impacted this race.
- Lee Burgess: You mentioned the ranked voting – this is something I think that San Francisco is kind of a special snowflake about. That's actually kind of weird the first time you learn about it. Again, there was some confusion by people who were voting maybe for the first time about what to do with that.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, because you get to pick more than one option.
- Lee Burgess: Right, you get to pick more than one option. And there were very specific rules about what you could say about the ranked choice voting to not change somebody's outcome.
- Alison Monahan: Right, but we get confused like, "Do I have to pick all of these people or do I... " I'm like, "Read the sign."
- Lee Burgess: Read the sign, or I'm going to read you my script explanation. So, it really instilled upon me that there are so many parts in this democratic process that actually can really compound to make a change, like you said. I think they were just like a thousand... It was a very small number of votes.
- Alison Monahan: Oh, I think way under.
- Lee Burgess: Way under that.



- Alison Monahan: It was a handful.
- Lee Burgess: In a community like ours – and San Francisco is not a huge community compared to other metropolitan areas – but we saw a couple of hundred people at our ballot places.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah.
- Lee Burgess: Just the people who worked at our ballot places had the power to shift an election if it wasn't done correctly. We didn't.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah.
- Lee Burgess: We followed all the rules.
- Alison Monahan: Don't worry.
- Lee Burgess: We were very careful. Don't worry. But I think it really showed to me that we all need to own being part of this process to protect the nature of the elections. If you really want to invoke change besides, I think, supporting people like what Stacey Abrams is doing and what's happening on the national stage, what's happening in some of these states, I think if you're worried, let's say, about what's happening in Georgia, where Stacey Abrams could be argued lost the governor election because of the way that they were running their elections; if all the law students in Georgia – and there are a few law schools in Georgia – signed up to be poll workers, I wonder how that would change the way that the institution is interacting with people.
- Alison Monahan: I think it just changes people's perspectives, too, when you actually look at it from the inside and realize, "Wow, this is..." I have a lot more respect for it. It's just a very, very complicated process.
- Lee Burgess: Yeah, really, really hard; really hard to get done right. And there are a lot of people who are working really hard to get it done right. I really think the Department of Elections in San Francisco is working really hard to get it right, and it's still very hard.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. And yeah, they're trying their best.
- Lee Burgess: They are really trying their best.
- Alison Monahan: And they're really actually not trying to suppress any votes.
- Lee Burgess: No, they're really trying to make sure everybody votes. Even if you aren't a citizen, you can still vote for our school boards. We are really trying hard to have



everybody be able to vote and to have their voice heard, and it is still very complicated.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. It was definitely an interesting experience. I recommend it.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So, one day, maybe a training one day, but I think if you have the opportunity to pull some people together, you can go to the training as a group, you can all sign up for the same training. But I think that it could actually really change your community. I think it's kind of an exciting thing.

Alison Monahan: I agree.

Lee Burgess: Alright, I think we're out of time.

Alison Monahan: We are.

Lee Burgess: But if you have more questions about poll working...

Alison Monahan: Yeah, write to us.

Lee Burgess: You're welcome to write to us. So, I hope you enjoyed this episode of the Law School Toolbox podcast. If you did, please take a second to leave a review and rating on your favorite listening app. We'd really appreciate it. And be sure to subscribe so you won't miss anything. If you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to reach out to Alison or myself at alison@lawschooltoolbox.com or lee@lawschooltoolbox.com. Or you can always contact us via our website [contact form](#) at LawSchoolToolbox.com. Thanks for listening, and we'll talk soon!

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