

DIRECTIVE 2025-49

August 26, 2025

To: All County Boards of Elections
Board Members, Directors, and Deputy Directors

Re: Ballots for November 4, 2025 General Election

SUMMARY

This directive provides the certified forms of the official ballots to be used in the November 4, 2025 General Election.

INSTRUCTIONS

Please note that, in lieu of issuing a separate directive with specific details covering ballot layout, proofing, and quantities, the Secretary of State's office is issuing only this directive, which must be used in conjunction with [Chapter 5](#) of the Election Official Manual (EOM) when preparing ballots for this election. [Chapter 5](#) of the EOM provides specific instructions on the following subjects:

- ballot format
- voter instructions
- ballot stubs
- partisan primary elections
- seventeen-year-old voters
- candidate ballots (names, restrictions, political party, rotation, etc.)
- questions and issues ballot
- ballot proofs
- overlaps
- bid requirements
- ballot quantities
- logic and accuracy testing
- public testing

I Verifying District Relationships

Before programming any aspect of the central tabulating system for the November 4, 2025 General Election, boards of elections must verify the accuracy of district relationships in the central tabulating system against the county's voter registration system (VRS). This is to ensure that each voter receives the correct ballot style (that is, the correct combination of candidate offices and issues) based upon that voter's residential address.

As a part of the review for accuracy of district relationships between the county's voter registration system and its tabulating system, the board must ensure the following by September 12, 2025:

- The Secretary of State's precinct codes (three alphabet letters) are accurate in the tabulating system and, if appropriate, the county's voter registration system.
- The precinct names correspond between the two systems.

Note: It is imperative that boards of elections upload to the Statewide Voter Registration Database (SWVRD) any changes to district relationships (including wards and precincts) that have been made locally in each county's voter registration system. Using the report provided by Allison Scott on Wednesday, September 3, 2025, each board must review the report to ensure that all Secretary of State Precinct ID Codes provided on the report match the board's voter registration system. Boards will have until Friday, September 12, 2025, to return the reviewed report noting any changes. In addition, each board must verify at least one voter record for each precinct in the SWVRD against its county's VRS to ensure accuracy.

In addition to reviewing the accuracy of district relationships between the county's voter registration system and its tabulating system, each board must also review [Chapter 5, Section 5.06](#) of the EOM, which covers Multicounty District Overlaps. Each board must maintain a list showing all districts in the county:

- That overlap with other counties.
- Where the board is the most populous county.
- Where the board is a less populous county.

Each list must include the other counties in each district. It must also note the most populous county in each district and indicate which precincts or precinct splits are part of a multicounty district.

For a multicounty district election, the board of the most populous county must notify all other boards in that district of the candidates or ballot questions and issues appearing on the ballot for that district.

However, each board of a less populous county has the responsibility to verify what overlaps onto its ballots.

II Official Ballot Forms

The certified form of the official ballot accompanying this directive is for offices to be elected at the November 4, 2025 General Election. The names of all candidates who have not withdrawn pursuant to [R.C. 3513.30](#) must be arranged, rotated, and printed upon the ballot in accordance with the provisions of Ohio Revised Code Chapters [3505](#), [3506](#), and [3513](#) and [Chapter 5](#) of the Election Official Manual.

If your county has partisan and nonpartisan city and village offices, please pay particular attention to the order of offices for each precinct. The ballot order must have the partisan offices listed first, followed by Judge of the Municipal Court and Clerk of Municipal Court, which are followed by the other nonpartisan offices.

A. Statutory Municipalities versus Home Rule Municipalities

A statutory municipal corporation is a city or village that is governed by the general laws of Ohio. In comparison, a municipal corporation that has adopted a form of limited home rule may have adopted provisions governing elections for municipal offices or issues that differ from general statutory provisions. If specific home rule provisions relating to elections cannot be harmonized with the statutory provisions, the home rule provisions will control the elections of the home rule municipality. Questions about the applicability or implementation of home rule provisions should be directed to the municipal corporation's legal counsel.¹

B. Order of Offices for all Candidate Ballots²

1. Partisan City Offices

City offices must be listed in the following order:

¹ See [Chapter 1](#), Section 1.02 and [Chapter 2](#), Section 2.03 of the Election Official Manual for additional guidance on municipal and county charters and corresponding legal counsel.

² [R.C. 3505.03](#); [R.C. 3505.04](#): If a city or village has adopted a charter or one of the three alternate forms of home rule government set forth in Revised Code Chapter 705 (i.e., commission plan, city manager plan, or federal plan), you must refer to the charter or appropriate provisions of R.C. Chapter 705 to determine the following: what officers are to be

1. Mayor
2. President of Council
3. Auditor
4. Treasurer
5. Director of Law
6. Member of Council at Large
7. Member of Council – Ward

2. *Partisan Village Offices*

Village offices must be listed in the following order:

1. Mayor
2. Clerk-Treasurer
3. Clerk
4. Treasurer
5. Member of Council
6. Member of Board of Trustees of Public Affairs

3. *Nonpartisan Offices*

Nonpartisan offices must be listed in the following order:

1. Judge of the Municipal Court
2. Clerk of the Municipal Court
3. City Offices (order of offices same as above)
4. Village Offices (order of offices same as above)
5. Township Trustees
6. Township Fiscal Officer (if a vacancy occurred that requires an unexpired term)
7. Member of Governing Board of Educational Service Center
8. Member of Board of Education (City, Local, and Exempted Village)

4. *Write-In Vote Blank Spaces*

A write-in space must be provided on the ballot for every office for which the board of elections has received a valid declaration of intent to be a write-in candidate.³ If there is both a full and an unexpired term for the same office, place the full term first, followed by the unexpired term.

elected; the term of each office to be elected; the method of nomination (e.g., partisan primary election, nonpartisan primary election, or nominating petition) for each office; and the form of the ballot, if such ballot is prescribed by charter.

³ [R.C. 3513.041](#); [R.C. 3513.14](#).

C. Official Questions and Issues Ballot⁴

Offices for which candidates may be nominated or elected are presented on the ballot first, followed by the questions and issues. The Official Questions and Issues Ballot must be used for all voting systems. The attached ballot form contains examples of some of the local questions and issues that may appear on the ballot in your county. Not every category or type of question/issue will appear on every ballot in every county, so please apply as much of the form as is appropriate to the ballots in your county.

[Chapter 5](#) of the Election Official Manual provides additional instructions on headings, ballot language, and percentage of votes.

Questions and issues must be grouped together in the following political subdivision order for elections held in 2025:

1. State: Note there are no statewide issues on this ballot.
2. County
3. Municipal
4. Township
5. School and Other Districts

Each board of elections may determine the specific order in which the questions/issues within each group are placed on the ballot in that county; however, a board should adopt a method for doing so (for example, ordered alphabetically or by date filed, etc.). Absentee ballots must contain identical ordering of issues within groups to regular ballots.

Please review the appropriate sections of the Ohio Revised Code, local charter (if applicable), and the [Questions and Issues Handbook](#) for ballot language and formats that are not in the attached Official Questions and Issues Ballot.

As a reminder, boards must review and comply with [Chapter 5](#) of the Election Official Manual. Each board of elections must thoroughly and promptly check every detail of its ballots from the creation of the ballot to submitting the ballot files to the printer to be produced.

⁴ [R.C. 3505.06](#).

III Absentee ballots⁵

Each board of elections must have absentee ballots printed and ready for use by Friday, **September 19, 2025**, (46 days before the November 4, 2025 General Election) for Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) voters, and by Tuesday, **October 7, 2025**, for regular, non-UOCAVA absentee voters.

As provided in [Chapter 5](#) of the Election Official Manual, boards may not outsource the printing and mailing of absentee ballots to vendors or any other third party without prior written authorization from the Director of Elections. The deadline to request outsourcing of absentee ballots is Friday, **September 5, 2025** (60 days before the election).

Additionally, each board must ensure that:

- The ballot file is provided to the ballot printing vendor, if applicable, to produce absentee and Election Day ballots, and all such ballot files are reviewed and approved before production.
- Any absentee ballot that is printed and mailed by a vendor is properly proofed and tested according to the instructions in [Chapter 5](#) of the Election Official Manual.
- The sample ballot on the board's website is updated by Friday, **September 19, 2025** (at least 46 days before the election).⁶
- The absentee ballot proofs must be provided to the Secretary of State's office at least 47 days before the election (**September 18, 2025**) using SharePoint.
- The remote ballot marking system is updated to include all eligible candidates.

If you have any questions regarding this directive or [Chapter 5](#) of the Election Official Manual, please contact the Secretary of State's elections counsel at 617-728-8789.

Yours in service,



Frank LaRose

Ohio Secretary of State

⁵ [R.C. 3509.01](#); [R.C. 3511.04](#).

⁶ [R.C. 3511.04\(B\)](#).