

DIRECTIVE 2025-53

October 3, 2025

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

Re: Canvass and Certification of the November 4, 2025 General Election

SUMMARY

This directive outlines the procedures that boards of elections must follow when conducting both the Unofficial and the Official Canvasses of the November 4, 2025 General Election.

To assist boards of elections with any problems, questions, or concerns on Election Day, the Secretary of State's office is staffed on Election Day from 6 a.m. until all boards report their unofficial results to our office.

All directors, deputy directors, and board members must ensure that they are able to receive emails and other communications sent from the Secretary of State's office via a .gov email address on November 4, 2025 (including after the polls close).

PART ONE - UNOFFICIAL CANVASS

The Unofficial Canvass of the November 4, 2025 General Election must be conducted on election night in accordance with state law¹ and the processes and procedures outlined in [Chapter 10, Section 10.03](#) of the Election Official Manual (EOM). Each board of elections must ensure all eligible Election Day and absentee ballots are tabulated and reported in its Unofficial Canvass. Each board must ensure all memory cards containing tabulated results are properly processed into its election management system (EMS). The board must have a document in place to ensure it meets this requirement (e.g., a checklist or chart to check off when a memory card is processed).

¹ [R.C. 3505.27](#) (counting regular ballots that were cast at precinct polling locations); [R.C. 3505.28](#) (ballots not counted); [R.C. 3509.06](#) (counting absentee ballots); [R.C. 3509.07](#) (rejection or challenge of absentee ballots); and [R.C. 3511.11- 3511.13](#) (uniformed service and overseas voter absentee ballots).

The Unofficial Canvass must be conducted in full view of the members of the board of elections and any appointed observers, and the board must continuously count the ballots during the Unofficial Canvass.²

I. PROCESSING ABSENTEE BALLOTS

Boards of elections may begin processing (including scanning, but not tabulating) absentee ballots on October 7, 2025, the day after the close of voter registration. Boards must begin this process prior to Election Day to ensure the Unofficial Canvass includes all absentee ballots received by the close of polls on November 4, 2025. Ohio law prohibits boards from tabulating any absentee ballot prior to 7:31 p.m. on Election Day.³ If a court orders polls to remain open later than 7:30 p.m. on Election Day, boards will receive a directive with alternate instructions.

II. SUMMARY AND FINAL REPORTS

Boards of elections must follow the procedures outlined in [Chapter 10, Section 10.03](#) of the Election Official Manual for reporting summary results and submitting final summary reports in odd-numbered year elections. The required reports and forms (listed below) for the Unofficial Canvass as well as the instructions and deadline for submission will be provided to boards of elections via email before Election Day:

- Unofficial Vote Total Summary Report
- Group Detail Report (if not included with Summary Report)
- Signature Form

The following reporting requirements must be followed by each board of elections conducting an election on November 4, 2025:

1. **On election night**, after a board has completed its Unofficial Canvass, it must email the Secretary of State's office and attach a copy of the unofficial vote total report generated by the board's EMS. This report must be clearly labeled "[County]'s Unofficial Canvass," and it must contain only vote totals for that county. The Unofficial Certification of Results Signature Form and Group Detail Report must also be submitted on election night. Send reports to Results@OhioSoS.gov.

² [R.C. 3505.27](#), [R.C. 3505.29](#), and [R.C. 3505.30](#).

³ [R.C. 3509.06\(F\)](#).

After the Secretary of State's office receives the correct reports, a Secretary of State staff member will contact the director **via email** for release.

The director and deputy director **must not leave** the office until Secretary of State staff contacts the director to confirm that the board's reports have been received. The director is responsible for releasing the board's staff.

2. **By noon on November 5, 2025** (the day after the election), each board must complete and submit an Unofficial Certification of Results Supplemental Data Form to provide the following statistics:

Counted Ballots:

- ☐ Total number of Election Day Ballots (regular ballots cast at polling locations on Election Day)
- ☐ Total number of Non-UOCAVA Absentee Ballots Counted (as reported in the board's voter registration (VR) system)
- ☐ Total number of UOCAVA Absentee Ballots Counted (as reported in the board's VR system)

Outstanding Ballots (ballots issued but not yet counted):

- ☐ Total number of Outstanding Non-UOCAVA Absentee Ballots (as reported in the board's VR system as having been issued by the board but not returned or returned but not counted (for which Form 11-S is provided to the voter))
- ☐ Total number of outstanding UOCAVA absentee ballots issued by the board (as reported in the board's VR system as having been issued by the board but not returned or returned but not counted (for which Form 11-S is provided to the voter))
- ☐ Total number of provisional ballots cast on Election Day
- ☐ Total number of provisional ballots cast before Election Day

3. **By noon on November 5, 2025** (the day after the election), the board of the most populous county of any multicounty district must generate a separate summary report showing the combined vote totals for its county and the overlapping county that reports the most populous county for that contest, question, or issue. This report must be clearly labeled "[County]'s Unofficial Canvass – Most Populous County." The board may use its voting system, the

relevant Secretary of State Form, or some other form to provide this information.

4. **By noon on November 5, 2025** (the day after the election), the Unofficial Vote Total Summary Report and Group Detail Report statement of results must be transmitted to the administrative director of the Supreme Court of Ohio at JudicialElectionResults@SC.Ohio.gov.⁴

PART TWO - POST-ELECTION CURE PERIOD

I. DAYS AND HOURS

Each board of elections conducting an election must be open to the public on each of the four calendar days immediately following Election Day and during the hours specified below to allow voters to cure a deficiency on an absentee or provisional ballot, as provided for in state law:⁵

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| • Wednesday, November 5, 2025 | 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. |
| • Thursday, November 6, 2025 | 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. |
| • Friday, November 7, 2025 | 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. |
| • Saturday, November 8, 2025 | 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. |

If a board of elections has no voters with a deficiency on their absentee or provisional ballot after Election Day (i.e., there is nothing *possible* to cure for any voter that cast a ballot in the election) or all deficiencies have been cured, the board may return to its normal operating hours for the remainder of the cure period.

I. AFFIDAVITS OF RELIGIOUS OBJECTION⁶

A provisional voter who failed to provide a valid photo ID has four days after Election Day to either appear at the board of elections office to show a valid photo ID or complete an affidavit of religious objection ([Form 12-O](#)).

To cure a provisional ballot for lack of valid photo ID, it is not sufficient to provide a copy of the photo ID, the Ohio driver license number, or the state ID card number, or the last four digits of the voter's Social Security number (SSN). The voter must show a valid photo ID (and not a copy) by the fourth day after Election Day.

⁴ [R.C. 3505.30](#).

⁵ [R.C. 3505.181\(B\)\(7\)](#) and [R.C. 3509.06\(D\)\(3\)](#).

⁶ [R.C. 3505.181](#), [R.C. 3505.182](#), [R.C. 3505.183](#), and [R.C. 3505.19](#).

If the voter did not have a photo ID because of a religious objection to being photographed and the voter did not complete [Form 12-O](#) at the time they voted a provisional ballot, the voter must appear at the board office and complete the affidavit by the fourth day after Election Day (**Saturday, November 8, 2025**).

No later than 6 p.m. on Saturday, **November 8, 2025**, boards of elections must transmit the information in the completed affidavits to the Secretary of State's office, which then must consult the Bureau of Motor Vehicles' (BMV) database to determine whether the BMV issued a currently unexpired photo ID to that voter. The Secretary of State's office will complete this verification no later than the sixth day after Election Day (Monday, **November 10, 2025**). The affidavit of religious objection is not valid if the BMV has issued a currently unexpired photo ID or if the last four digits of the voter's SSN provided on the affidavit do not match those digits in the Statewide Voter Registration Database (SWVRD). To compile the information for each voter, each board must supply the necessary data either by export from the voter registration system or by completion of a spreadsheet that will be provided with instructions under separate cover.

II. EXAMINING AND COUNTING PROVISIONAL BALLOTS

Boards of elections must follow the "Mandatory Step-by-Step Process for Determining Eligibility" procedures outlined in [Chapter 8, Section 8.05](#) of the Election Official Manual. Board staff, working in bipartisan teams, may begin examining provisional ballot envelopes the day after the election, as long as the board has adopted a provisional ballot policy allowing its staff to do so. The bipartisan teams may categorize provisional ballots into groups of like ballots (e.g., ballots that have been verified and eligible to be counted, provisional affirmations that are missing the voter's signature, etc.) for the board to consider. However, the board must not examine the provisional ballot affirmation of any provisional ballot cast by an individual who must provide photo ID, complete an affidavit of religious objection, or provide additional information to determine the individual's eligibility until the individual does so or until the eighth day after Election Day, whichever is earlier.⁷

It is important to remember that only the board members themselves can determine the validity of each provisional ballot. The board must, by a majority vote, determine whether to accept and count the provisional ballots in a properly noticed public

⁷ [R.C. 3505.183\(G\)](#).

meeting. No provisional ballot envelope may be opened or counted until the board has voted on the eligibility of every provisional ballot cast in the election.⁸

III. CURING ABSENTEE BALLOT DEFECTS

Whenever a board of elections receives an absentee ballot identification envelope that is missing required information or that contains information that does not conform to the voter's registration record, the board of elections must contact the absentee voter to provide an opportunity to supplement their identification envelope so the voter's ballot can be counted. The board must meet this requirement by issuing [Form 11-S](#) to the voter, according to the following schedule:

- [Form 11-S](#) must be issued no later than two business days after a "defective" absentee ballot identification envelope is received by the board of elections from the start of absentee voting through the third Saturday prior to the election.
- [Form 11-S](#) must be issued no later than one calendar day after a "defective" absentee ballot identification envelope is received by the board of elections between the third Monday and last Friday prior to the election.
- [Form 11-S](#) must be issued on the same day that a "defective" absentee ballot identification envelope is received by the board of elections between the Saturday prior to the election and through the third day following Election Day.

When a phone number or email address is on file with the board of elections, the board must use that contact information to quickly notify the voter about the deficiency on their identification envelope. The absentee voter must provide the missing required information in writing on [Form 11-S](#), either by in-person delivery or by mail, by the fourth day after the election (**Saturday, November 8, 2025**).⁹

PART THREE - OFFICIAL CANVASS

I. SCHEDULE FOR OFFICIAL CANVASS¹⁰

Boards of elections must begin counting cured absentee ballots and absentee ballots that arrive after Election Day no later than the fifth day after Election Day (**Sunday,**

⁸ [R.C. 3505.183](#).

⁹ [R.C. 3509.06\(D\)\(3\)\(b\)](#).

¹⁰ [R.C. 3505.32\(A\)](#).

November 9, 2025).¹¹ All other activities relating to the Official Canvass must be conducted on the timeline described below. Board members and employees are prohibited from disclosing partial or final results of any contest in the election between the completion of the Unofficial Canvass and the certification of official results.

A board must begin the Official Canvass no earlier than the fifth day after the election (**Sunday, November 9, 2025**) nor later than the fifteenth day after the election (**Wednesday, November 19, 2025**). Each board must complete its Official Canvass and certify no later than the twenty-first day after the election (**Tuesday, November 25, 2025**).

II. INSTRUCTIONS FOR OFFICIAL CANVASS

Each board of elections must follow the instructions for pre-canvass activity outlined in [Chapter 10, Section 10.04](#) of the Election Official Manual. Boards must also follow the rules and procedures outlined in [Chapter 10, Section 10.05](#) of the Election Official Manual for conducting the Official Canvass. Each board must reconcile results with records from the pollbooks and voter registration system to ensure that only one ballot per voter is counted.¹² This includes ensuring that all returned absentee ballots are entered in the voter registration system and reconciling the list of voters whose ballots were returned with the number of physical ballots returned.

III. FORMS FOR OFFICIAL CERTIFICATION

After the Unofficial Canvass, the Secretary of State's office will provide the forms for reporting official results. All certifications and reports must be signed by the appropriate board personnel before the board submits them to the Secretary of State's office, another board of elections, or another public entity.

Each board of elections must submit the signature form to certify the official election results, including the absentee and provisional ballot reports, to the Secretary of State's office.

A. Certification and Reporting of Official Results¹³

Each board of elections must complete and provide **all** the following the same day it completes its official certification and no later than **Tuesday, November 25, 2025**:

¹¹ [R.C. 3509.05\(D\)\(2\)](#).

¹² [R.C. 3505.32\(D\)](#).

¹³ [R.C. 3505.32](#); [R.C. 3505.33](#); [R.C. 3505.36](#).

- Official Vote Total Summary Report
- Group Detail Report (if not included with Summary Report)
- Signature form
- Report forms
- Absentee and provisional ballot workbook.

Each board of elections must submit these reports to Results@OhioSoS.gov as soon as the board completes its official certification. The Official Vote Total Summary Report must be clearly labeled “[County]’s Official Canvass,” and it must contain *only* vote totals for that county. Boards must not delay submitting the official certification forms because of a potential recount. Every board must maintain a copy of each of its completed certification and report forms.

The board of elections for the most populous county of any multicounty jurisdiction or district must generate a separate report from its voting system, create a report outside of its voting system, or use a reporting form that will be provided after the Unofficial Canvass. This report must be clearly labeled “[County’s] Official Canvass – Most Populous County.” The report must include the total number of votes recorded for the office, question, or issue from each county in a multicounty jurisdiction and the sum total for all counties. The board must clearly mark the contest(s) for which a board is the most populous county to clearly identify it as a contest containing vote totals from other counties. The board must email the report(s) to Results@OhioSoS.gov.

State law requires the Secretary of State to publish a report on the number of absentee and provisional ballots cast and counted for the election in each county.¹⁴ Each board of elections must provide this data for absentee and provisional ballots. The Secretary of State’s office will provide the reporting forms after the Unofficial Canvass.

B. Certificate of Official Summary Results for Liquor Option Questions and Local Questions and Issues

Each board of elections, if applicable, must send a completed copy of Secretary of State [Form 126-B](#) to the Secretary of State’s office via email to Results@OhioSoS.gov and a copy of the completed form to the Ohio Division of Liquor Control via email: LocalOption@com.Ohio.gov or by mailing to the following address:

Division of Liquor Control
6606 Tussing Road

¹⁴ [R.C. 3501.05\(Y\)](#).

Reynoldsburg, Ohio 43068-9005

Each board of elections, if applicable, (most populous county only if it is a multicounty issue) must certify the results of an election on tax levies and bond issues to the following offices and agencies:

- county auditor of each county in which the election was held
- fiscal officer of the subdivision in which the election was held
- tax commissioner of Ohio via email at: DTE@Tax.State.oh.us
- Secretary of State

The board of elections of the most populous county must certify the results of an election on a school district income tax on Secretary of State [Form 125-A](#) to the following offices and agencies:

- board of education that placed the issue on the ballot
- tax commissioner of Ohio via email at DTE@Tax.State.oh.us
- Secretary of State¹⁵

PART FIVE - POST-CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

I. CERTIFICATES OF NOMINATION

Each board of elections must follow the instructions for issuing certificates of nomination that are contained in [Chapter 11, Section 11.12](#) of the Election Official Manual. The candidate's name on the certificate of election must match the name as it appears on the ballot. Certificates of nomination should not be issued before the expiration of the time by which applications for recounts may be made. Boards of elections may not issue a certificate of nomination in a contest for which a recount is requested or conducted automatically until after the recount is complete.

II. RECOUNTS

Before scheduling and conducting a recount, boards of elections must review the procedures set forth in state law and [Chapter 11, Section 11.03 – 11.09](#) of the Election Official Manual. The deadline for a candidate or group to request a recount is five days

¹⁵ [R.C. 3505.33](#); [R.C. 5748.03\(C\)](#).

after the certification of official results.¹⁶ A recount must take place no later than 10 days after an application for a recount is filed or an automatic recount is declared.¹⁷

The Secretary of State's office will provide the boards of elections with a spreadsheet, along with the Official Canvass report forms, to notify the Secretary of State of a recount.

If the recount to be conducted is for a multicounty jurisdiction, the Secretary of State's office will issue the notice of recount after receiving notice from the most populous county. Multicounty recounts will not be ordered until all counties in the district have certified their official results. If a recount changes vote totals, the board of elections must submit a properly completed and signed amended certification and abstract to Results@OhioSoS.gov

III. POST-ELECTION AUDITS

Boards of elections must perform a post-election audit after the November 4, 2025 General Election. When a board conducts an audit, the board must follow the procedures outlined in [Chapter 11, Section 11.10](#) of the Election Official Manual. Additional instructions will be provided after the Unofficial Canvass.

IV. VOTER HISTORY

All boards of elections must upload voter history for the November 4, 2025 General Election to the SWVRD no later than 14 days after the board's official certification. Counties with more than 100,000 registered voters must email Lauren Price at LPrice@OhioSoS.gov to schedule their upload in advance.

After voter history is transmitted, the Secretary of State's office will compare the total ballots cast to the total number of voters participating in the election. Boards must not resume voter registration activities until release by the Secretary of State's office.

For purposes of assigning voter history, each board of elections must follow the instructions outlined in [Chapter 11, Section 11.02](#) of the Election Official Manual. The election name to submit the history for the election is **2025_NOV_GEN**.

¹⁶ [R.C. 3515.02](#)

¹⁷ [R.C. 3515.03](#)

I. RETENTION OF BALLOTS

Because ballots for the November 4, 2025 General Election do not include candidates for election to federal offices, each board of elections is required by law to retain all ballots prepared for the election – both used and unused – for 81 days following the election.¹⁸ If the board uses a voting system and software that captures images of ballots as they are scanned by a high-speed scanner, those images may be subject to disclosure pursuant to a public records request and must be retained. Accordingly, consult with the county prosecuting attorney regarding the retention of those images.

If you have any questions regarding this directive, please contact the Secretary of State's Elections Counsel at 614-728-8789.

Yours in service,



Frank LaRose
Ohio Secretary of State

¹⁸ [R.C. 3505.31](#)