

Ohio

Election Official Manual



This document contains permanent directives 2026-28 through 2026-43 as issued on August 5, 2026. Visit OhioSoS.gov/Directives for the most recent version.

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CHAPTER 1: ELECTION OFFICIAL MANUAL (EOM) INTRODUCTION¹

Forward

Millions of registered voters in Ohio depend on a small number of election professionals to ensure secure and convenient elections. We have established a reputation for thoroughness, professionalism, and hard work, making our elections the benchmark that other states aspire to achieve. In short, Ohio's elections are America's gold standard. This Election Official Manual (EOM) provides the necessary tools for our dedicated election officials to uphold and enhance the high standards that Ohioans expect and deserve.

The EOM is the "permanent directive"² under Ohio law and provides a formal guide issued by the Secretary of State to boards of elections. It gives instructions for how to manage the board office and elections for board members, directors, and deputy directors.

Sometimes, additional directives are provided throughout the year to update or supplement the EOM. In urgent situations, special interim directives may be issued that take precedence over the information in the EOM.

When reading the EOM, it's important to understand how the plain English words "must," "should," and "may" relate to you and your board responsibilities under Ohio election law.

- "Must" means you or your board is required to do something. It is similar to saying "shall." Required tasks may also be phrased as imperative sentences.³

¹[Directive 2026-28](#)

²[R.C. 3501.053\(A\)\(1\)](#)

³Imperative sentences use active voice and the subject is understood. For example, "you must use the following rules" is presented as "use the following rules" in some cases and the reader should understand that these statements are required actions of you or your board.

- “Should” indicates that you or your board is encouraged to do something, but it is not mandatory.
- “May” signifies that you or your board has permission to do something or that it is a possibility.

Remember that the EOM is updated regularly. Check the Secretary of State’s website to find the most recent version of the manual.

Section 1.01 A Legacy of Trust in Your Hands, an Introduction to Your Role

Your promise to support the United States Constitution and the Ohio Constitution is the same one made by many officials throughout history. This promise protects one of our most basic rights — the right to vote. This manual will help you do this important job.

Our election system is built on three key parts:

- The U.S. Constitution (1789) set up our system of government. Changes to it have made sure all citizens can vote, no matter their race, gender, or wealth.
- The Ohio Constitution (1851) created the rules for our state and explains how Ohioans choose who represents them.
- State implementation of federal laws such as the Voting Rights Act (1965) and the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) (2002) helps ensure fair and accessible elections.

As an election official, your job is to turn these laws and rules into real-world practices on Election Day.

Section 1.02 Oath of Office

Ohio election officials must take an oath to support the laws of the U.S. Constitution and the Ohio Constitution. These laws, along with the revised and administrative code, directives from the Secretary of State, and local charters help guide you and your board in your work. As board members, you hold ultimate responsibility for how elections are conducted in your county. Your signature on the election results represents your ownership of the process and reflects the integrity of the elections in your county.

Election officials must take an oath prior to beginning official work of the board.⁴ Your oath is a solemn commitment that is both legally binding and carries a moral obligation to do your best for the people you serve. Oaths for board members must be filed with the clerk of court of common pleas of the county where the member resides within 15 days of appointment. Election officials also receive a formal copy of their oath from the Secretary of State's office. The text of the oath is included for your reference.

Election Official - An "election official" includes: (1) Secretary of State; (2) Employees of the Secretary of State serving in an elections-related capacity; (3) Members, director or deputy director, and/or employees of a board of elections (including part-time and temporary employees); and (4) Voting location manager and other precinct election officials (PEOs).

⁴[R.C. 3501.08](#); [R.C. 3501.14](#); [R.C. 3501.01\(U\)](#).

BOARD OF ELECTIONS OATH OF OFFICE ⁵

State of Ohio

_____ County.

I, _____, do solemnly swear that I will support the Constitutions of the United States and of the State of Ohio, that I will faithfully perform all the duties of _____ of the Board of Elections of _____ County to the best of my ability, enforce the election laws, and protect and preserve all records, documents, and other property pertaining to the conduct elections placed in my custody, , so help me God.

Signed, _____
(Signature of Official Taking the Oath)

Sworn to and subscribed before me, this _____
day of _____, in the year two
thousand and _____.

(Title of Official Administering the Oath)

(Signature of Official Administering the Oath)

⁵ [R.C. 3501.13\(B\)](#); [R.C. 3501.14](#)

Section 1.03 Election Laws

The oath you take connects you to the U.S. and Ohio Constitutions. Your work follows federal laws like the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the Help America Vote Act of 2002. Ohio Revised Code (mainly Title 35) provides your authority, and local charters may have additional rules that apply to your county.

Below is more background information on these laws and guidelines.

THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION

Adopted in 1789, the U.S. Constitution is the highest law in the country. It outlines the structure of our federal government. The first 10 amendments, known as the Bill of Rights, protect citizens' freedoms. Later amendments expanded voting rights to women, 18-year-olds, and people of all races, and banned poll taxes.

THE OHIO CONSTITUTION

Adopted in 1851, the Ohio Constitution is the foundation of the state's laws and government. It guarantees rights for the people of Ohio and outlines election laws.

Initiative and Referendum (Article II) -

Allows citizens to propose or repeal laws through a vote.⁶

Elective Franchise (Article V) - Establishes who can vote⁷ and sets term limits for Ohio lawmakers.

Vacant public offices - Various sections cover how to fill government vacancies.

US Constitution - Federal Elections

[Article I, Section 4](#) allows each state to set its own election procedures, including determining the time, place, and manner of holding the election, but Congress can make changes. For example, Congress set the federal election date as the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November of even-numbered years.

[The Right to Vote](#)

1870 - 15th Amendment
(Prohibits discrimination.)

1920 - 19th Amendment
(Grants women the right to vote.)

1964 - 24th Amendment
(Eliminates poll taxes.)

1971 - 26th Amendment
(Lowers the voting age to 18.)

⁶[Ohio Constitution, Article II.](#)

⁷[Ohio Constitution, Article V, Section 1.](#)

You can use the hyperlinks throughout this manual to find specific sections. You can also find the [full text of the Ohio Constitution](#) on the Secretary of State's website, [OhioSoS.gov](#).

FEDERAL LAWS

There are several federal laws that affect elections. Federal laws are cited in this manual as "U.S.C.A." followed by the section number.

STATE LAW

Ohio Revised Code

The Ohio Revised Code contains all state laws. Election laws are mainly in [Title 35](#), which has 14 chapters, but other titles also include election-related rules. For example, [Title 57](#) covers ballot language for tax levies, and [Title 43](#) has laws about local liquor options.

Ohio laws are cited in this manual as "R.C." followed by the section number. You can use the hyperlinks to find specific statutes or search the entire [Ohio Revised Code](#).

Ohio Administrative Code

The Ohio General Assembly assigns certain offices or agencies to create administrative rules that provide details on how laws are implemented. These rules, which can be complex, go through a review process by the Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review (JCARR) to be sure that an office or agency has not exceeded its authority.

[Chapter 111 of the Ohio Administrative Code](#) contains the Secretary of State's administrative rules. Specifically, [Chapter 111:3](#) contains the rules for elections.

Federal Election Laws

- [Voting Rights Act of 1965](#)
- [Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act \(52 U.S.C.A. § 20301\)](#)
- [Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act \(52 U.S.C.A. § 20301\)](#)
- [Americans with Disabilities Act \(52 U.S.C.A. § 20101\)](#)
- [National Voter Registration Act \(52 U.S.C.A. § 20503\)](#)
- [Help America Vote Act \(52 U.S.C.A § 20901\)](#)

State Election Laws and Rules

- [Ohio Revised Code Title 35](#)
- [Ohio Administrative Code Chapter 111](#)

These rules are cited as “O.A.C.” followed by the chapter and rule number. You can use the hyperlinks to find the rule being cited. You can also search the entire [Ohio Administrative Code](#).

Municipal and County Charters

Cities or villages (as defined in [R.C. 703.01](#)) can create or amend **municipal charters** under [Article XVIII, Section 8 of the Ohio Constitution](#).

County voters can create or amend a **county charter** for their county government under [Article X, Section 3](#).

Details on how to frame a municipal or county charter can be found in Chapter 10 of the [Ohio Ballot Questions and Issues Handbook](#). You should consult with your municipality’s or county’s legal counsel when you have questions about charter provisions.

Opinions of the Ohio Attorney General

The Ohio Attorney General issues opinions to public officials on legal issues they face while doing their jobs. These opinions are not binding laws, but they can help guide public officials.⁸

For example, the Ohio Attorney General has provided many opinions on compatibility of public offices and positions. If you or your board needs guidance, refer to these opinions and seek private legal counsel for advice.

Attorney General opinions are cited throughout this manual as “(the year the opinion was issued) Op. Att’y. Gen. No.” followed by the opinion number. You can use the hyperlinks to access the opinion or search the opinions at the Ohio Attorney General’s website, [OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov](https://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov).

⁸See <https://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/About-AG/Service-Divisions/Opinions>.

Section 1.04 Types of Elections

ELECTION CALENDAR ESSENTIALS⁹

Type	When	What
General	First Tuesday after the first Monday in November	Choose representatives at different levels of government. Applies to federal, state, and county on even-numbered years. Applies to city, village, township, and school board on odd-numbered years. State, county, district, and local issues can be on the ballot at any general election.
Primary	First Tuesday after the first Monday in May (non-presidential years) or third Tuesday after the first Monday in March (presidential years)	Vote to elect the candidates that represent political parties for different offices in the general election. Also, elect members of the political party controlling committee and delegates and alternates to party conventions. Some issues can be on the primary ballot. Charter municipalities may have different primary dates.
Special	The same day as a primary or general election, per R.C. 3501.02 , per municipal charter, or in August per R.C. 3501.022 where a political subdivision has a fiscal emergency.	Fill a vacancy in the office of a U.S. Representative. Vote on constitutional amendments submitted by the general assembly. A question or issue of a county, township, city, village, or school district.

⁹ [R.C. 3501.01](#); [R.C. 3501.02](#).

Advisory		Only applies to municipalities. Hold a non-binding vote on a question to gauge voter opinion. These do not result in a change in the law. Include “Advisory Election” in the issue's title on the ballot. See also Chapter 16, Section 16.04.
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NOTIFICATION

Boards of elections must notify the Secretary of State’s Elections Division in writing about any election in a charter municipality held outside of a regularly scheduled election. This notification must be sent to Intake@OhioSoS.gov at least 46 days before the election or as soon as the charter timeline allows. The notification must include any changes to the early in-person absentee voting schedule. All voting schedules must be made public.

Chapter 1 Checklist: EOM Introduction

Key Takeaways on Your Role and Oath

- ☐ Take your oath to support the U.S. and Ohio Constitutions.
- ☐ Know that you are promising to protect election records and property.
- ☐ Sign your oath document and keep it on file.
- ☐ Know that you will follow directives from the Secretary of State.

Key Takeaways on Laws and Rules

- ☐ U.S. Constitution - Sets up our voting system.
- ☐ Ohio Constitution - Creates state election rules.
- ☐ Federal Laws - Including Voting Rights Act and Help America Vote Act.
- ☐ Ohio Revised Code - Especially Title 35 for election laws.
- ☐ Local Charters - Check if your county or city has special rules.

Key Takeaways on Important Election Types and Dates

- ☐ General Elections: First Tuesday after first Monday in November.
- ☐ Even years: Federal, state, and county positions.
- ☐ Odd years: City, township, and school board positions.
- ☐ Primary Elections: First Tuesday after first Monday in May.
- ☐ Presidential Primaries: Third Tuesday after first Monday in March.
- ☐ Special Elections: Can be held in May, August, or November.
- ☐ Check for special rules during presidential election years.
- ☐ Advisory Elections: For cities/towns only, non-binding.

Key Takeaways on When to Get Legal Help

- ☐ Talk to your county prosecutor about charter questions.
- ☐ Check with the county prosecutor about advisory elections.
- ☐ Look up Attorney General opinions for help on compatible office questions.

Key Takeaways on Required Notifications

- ☐ Tell the Secretary of State about any charter municipality elections that will take place outside of the regular schedule.
- ☐ Send notice to Intake@OhioSoS.gov at least 46 days before the election.
- ☐ Include any changes to early voting schedules.
- ☐ Make all voting schedules public.



CHAPTER 2: BOARD OF ELECTIONS ORGANIZATION AND OPERATIONS¹

Section 2.01 The Board of Elections Operations², Introduction

This chapter describes how boards of elections are organized, who serves on them, and what their core responsibilities are. This chapter covers the rules for meetings, hiring staff, managing money, and working with legal counsel. Also, discover how to properly plan for elections, handle legal notices, and ensure fair and efficient elections.

Section 2.02 The Board of Elections³

The Secretary of State appoints the members of the county boards of elections.⁴ Each board has four board members, two Democrats and two Republicans.⁵ Board members serve staggered four-year terms.⁶

The board's main jobs are to:

- Run elections according to state and federal law.
- Follow Secretary of State directions.
- Create and follow board policies.

The board must hire a director to run its daily office operations.⁷ The board must also hire a deputy director unless three board members vote not to have one.⁸ It can hire

¹[Directive 2026-29](#)

²[R.C. 3501.06](#); [R.C. 3501.07](#); [R.C. 3501.09](#); [R.C. 4117.03\(D\)](#).

³[R.C. 3501.06](#); [R.C. 3501.07](#); [R.C. 3501.09](#); [R.C. 4117.03\(D\)](#).

⁴[R.C. 3501.06\(A\)](#).

⁵[R.C. 3501.06\(B\)\(1\)](#).

⁶[R.C. 3501.06\(B\)\(2\)](#).

⁷[R.C. 3501.09](#).

⁸[R.C. 3501.09](#).

other staff as needed. Directors and deputy directors serve for two years at a time.⁹ All staff serve at the board's pleasure.¹⁰

State law blocks collective bargaining between a board and its employees.¹¹

All board members and staff must:

- Act in a professional way.
- Be courteous to everyone.
- Help anyone who asks for information.
- Treat all people the same, regardless of political party.

BOARD MEMBERSHIP

How Members are Appointed

The Secretary of State appoints two members, one from each major political party. Terms last four years and start March 1 in odd-numbered years.¹² The terms are staggered so that two board members are appointed every two years.

County executive committees (Democrat and Republican) must each meet 15 to 60 days before terms end. They recommend qualified voters to the Secretary of State to serve as a board member.¹³

Everyone recommended (including current board members seeking additional terms) must:

- Complete a background check.
- Fill out [Secretary of State Form 307](#).
- Report any criminal history.

Criminal convictions matter because they can reduce public confidence in the integrity of election officials. Criminal convictions and elections or ethics law convictions may disqualify someone from serving as a member of a board.

⁹[R.C. 3501.09](#).

¹⁰[R.C. 3501.09](#).

¹¹[R.C. 4117.03\(D\)](#).

¹²[R.C. 3501.06\(B\)\(2\)](#).

¹³[R.C. 3501.07](#).

County party executive committees must submit:

- An Executive Committee Recommendation for Full Term Appointment ([Form 306](#)), completed by the chairperson and secretary of the executive committee, and the prospective appointee.
- A questionnaire for Prospective Appointment as a Member of the County Board of Elections ([Form 307](#)), including the Background Check Disclosure and an Authorization and Release for Prospective Appointment as a Member, Director, or Deputy Director of the Board of Elections, completed by the prospective appointee.
- The resume of the prospective appointee showing qualifications to be a board member, including education and work history.

Each county party executive committee must send forms in one of two ways:

- **Email:** BoardInfo@OhioSoS.gov
- **Mail:**

Ohio Secretary of State Elections Division
P.O. Box 2828
Columbus, OH 43216

New board members are:

- Notified by mail.
- Sent a certificate of appointment.
- Required to take the Oath of Office.

Members must take the oath before a person authorized to give oaths, such as a sitting or retired judge. File the oath with the clerk of the court of common pleas in the county within 15 days after appointment.¹⁴

¹⁴[R.C. 3501.08](#).

Filling Vacant Positions

When a board position becomes vacant, the appropriate political party has 15 days to file a recommendation with the Secretary of State. If it doesn't, the Secretary of State will pick someone to finish the term.¹⁵

Board Member Pay

Board member pay depends on the county population based on the most recent federal census.¹⁶ Ask your county prosecutor about pay questions.

ORGANIZATION MEETING

Biennial Organizational Meeting

Boards must meet every two years for a biennial organizational meeting. This meeting must occur within five days of the Secretary of State appointing board members.¹⁷

At the meeting, follow these steps in order:¹⁸

1. Select a Temporary Chair

The current chair or most senior member calls the meeting to order. Elect a temporary chair by majority vote.

2. Appoint a Director

Nominate people for director. The nominee must be a resident of the county within 30 days of appointment and may not be a current board member. The nominee must be from the same party as the board member who nominates them. See also **Section 2.04** on qualifications of the director.

- a. The board needs three yes votes to select a director. Vote up to five times.¹⁹
- b. If no one gets three votes after five tries, send the names of people nominated on the fifth ballot and the names of the board members who

¹⁵[R.C. 3501.07.](#)

¹⁶[R.C. 3501.12;](#) [Ohio Attorney General Opinion 1941-4042.](#)

¹⁷[R.C. 3501.09.](#)

¹⁸[R.C. 3501.09.](#)

¹⁹[R.C. 3501.09.](#)

nominated them to the Secretary of State. The Secretary will pick a director from the board's list.²⁰

- c. If the Secretary thinks no nominee is qualified, he or she must notify the board in writing. Then, the board must nominate new people. If it still can't agree after five votes, the Secretary will pick both the director and deputy director from those nominated.²¹

3. Appoint a Deputy Director

Nominate people for deputy director. The nominee must be a resident of the county within 30 days of appointment and may not be a current board member. The nominee must be from the same party as the board member who nominates them. The deputy director must be from the opposite party as the director.²² See also **Section 2.04** on qualifications of the deputy director.

- a. The board needs three yes votes to select a deputy director.
- b. If it can't get three votes after five tries, send the names to the Secretary of State for the deputy director.
- c. If the board doesn't want a deputy director, three board members must vote to eliminate the position.²³ The board can change its mind later with three votes.

4. Appoint a Chairperson

After selecting the director and deputy director, nominate people for chairperson. The chairperson must be a board member from the opposite party of the director.

If no one gets a simple majority vote on the first vote, the board member from the opposite party of the director with the shortest remaining term to serve on the board becomes the chairperson.²⁴

²⁰ [R.C. 3501.09](#)

²¹ [R.C. 3501.09](#); [R.C. 3501.16](#)

²² [R.C. 3501.09](#).

²³ [R.C. 3501.09](#).

²⁴ [R.C. 3501.09](#).

5. Report Results

After the meeting, send the following to the Secretary of State:

- [Form 308](#) for all directors, deputy directors, and chairpersons.
- [Form 350](#) for any new director, deputy director, or board member.²⁵

Send reports in one of two ways:

Email: BoardInfo@OhioSoS.gov

Mail:

Ohio Secretary of State Elections Division
P.O. Box 2828
Columbus, OH 43216

6. Failure to Select a Director or Deputy Director

If the board can't pick a director or a deputy director after five votes, send to the Secretary of State:

- a. Names of all nominees voted for on the fifth ballot.
- b. Names of the board members who nominated them.

The Secretary will pick a director or deputy director from the list.²⁶

Reorganization²⁷

After the board has organized, it can vote (with three yes votes) to replace the director or chairperson with someone from the opposite party. If it does this, the board must reselect all officers again using the steps above. Officers will serve out the rest of the outgoing officers' terms.

This doesn't change how long board members serve.

The board may also vote (with three yes votes) to fill a vacant chairperson or director position with someone from the opposite party of the outgoing officer.²⁸ After such a

²⁵[R.C. 3501.09.](#)

²⁶[R.C. 3501.09.](#)

²⁷[R.C. 3501.091.](#)

²⁸[R.C. 3501.161.](#)

vote, fill the vacancy and select all other officers as described above.²⁹ The new person serves the rest of the outgoing officer's unexpired term. This doesn't change board members' terms.

BOARD DUTIES

Main Duties

County boards of elections must run fair, orderly, and efficient elections. To accomplish this, [R.C. 3501.11](#) gives the board several important responsibilities, outlined below.

Ethics³⁰ and Compliance

- Follow election laws and Secretary of State directives.

Personnel Management

- Hire and fire the director, deputy director, employees, and all registrars, precinct election officials (PEOs), and other election workers, and designate the ward or district and precinct where they'll work.
- Give oaths related to elections.
- Create rules that follow state law to help guide election officers and voters.

Operational Administration

- Make annual reports to the Secretary of State, which include the number of registered voters, elections held, votes cast, moneys received, expenditures made, and other information as required.
- Create and submit elections budgets.
- Submit required reports on elected officials to the Secretary of State.
- Prepare an Election Administration Plan (EAP) (see in this chapter **Section 2.09**) and send it to the Secretary of State at least 75 days before a presidential primary election and 120 days before general elections of even-numbered years.
- Submit tie votes during board activity to the Secretary of State within 14 days for final decision.

²⁹[R.C. 3501.091](#).

³⁰<https://ethics.ohio.gov/education/factsheets/EthicsLawOverview.pdf>.

Voter Registration

- Check voter residence qualifications.
- Create and maintain voter registration database.
- Update voter registration records.
- Help area agencies with voter registration and forward those from outside the county to the appropriate board within five days.

Petitions

- Review and certify petitions and nomination papers; return forwarded materials to the Secretary of State.

Preparing for Elections

- Buy and maintain election equipment.
- Choose places for registration and elections.
- Set up and adjust election precincts.
- Send out required notices, ads, and publications concerning elections.
- Advertise and contract ballot printing and other election supplies.
- Provide proper voting equipment to each precinct. Take a full board vote during a public session on the distribution of equipment for county precincts.
- Approve ballot language for local questions or issues and send a copy to the Secretary of State for final approval.

Administering Elections

- Arrange for the delivery of materials and equipment to polling places.
- Help military and overseas voters register and vote.
- Post notices about illegal voting in every polling location.
- Follow rules for in-person voting sites at the board office when that office serves as a polling location.
- Count votes and report results to the proper authorities.

Post Election Activities

- Investigate problems or violations of election laws ([Title 35 of the Revised Code](#)).
- Issue certificates of election on Secretary of State forms.³¹

Investigatory Responsibilities

The board must investigate:

- Irregularities.
- Failure to perform duties by election officers and other persons.
- Violations of Title 35 of the Ohio Revised Code.
 - Trying to intimidate voters.³²
 - Delaying delivery of absentee ballots.³³
 - Blocking the delivery or counting of an absentee ballot.³⁴
 - Intimidating an election officer or preventing an election official from performing the official's duties.³⁵
 - Voting more than once in the same election.³⁶
 - Having someone else's absentee ballot without permission.³⁷
 - Knowingly registering in the wrong precinct.³⁸
 - Registering under more than one name.
 - Making false statements on registration or ballot forms.

Ohio law prohibits any person from voting or attempting to vote more than once at the same election. Violators are guilty of a felony of the fourth degree and shall be imprisoned and additionally may be fined in accordance with law.

³¹[R.C. 3501.11M](#).

³²[R.C. 3599.01\(A\)\(2\)](#).

³³[R.C. 3599.21\(A\)\(5\)](#).

³⁴[R.C. 3599.21\(A\)\(6\)](#).

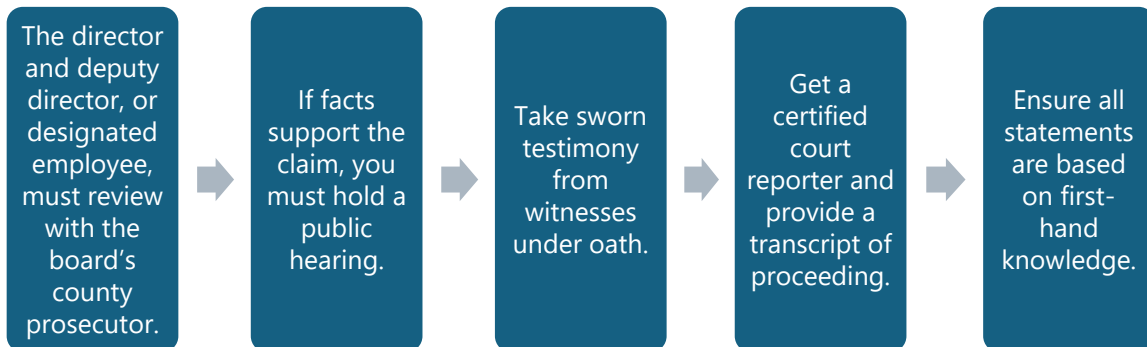
³⁵[R.C. 3599.24\(A\)\(3\)](#).

³⁶[R.C. 3599.12](#).

³⁷[R.C. 3599.21\(A\)\(9\)](#).

³⁸[R.C. 3599.11\(A\)](#).

When investigating alleged voter fraud and/or suppression, boards should follow these steps:³⁹



After the hearing, vote whether to send the matter to the county prosecutor for investigation or to resolve it at the board level.

Tell the Secretary of State's elections counsel and Public Integrity Division about any referrals to the prosecutor.

QUASI-JUDICIAL ROLE

When the board holds a hearing as part of an investigation or protest, it acts like a court. This is called acting in a "quasi-judicial capacity."⁴⁰ The board is acting as judge and jury in a trial court, so it must be fair and follow due process. Ask the county prosecutor how to conduct the hearing properly.

Not every complaint needs a hearing. For example:

- A protest that does not specify its legal grounds is invalid.
- Some matters have legal deadlines that have passed.
- Some issues are outside of the board's authority.

Again, work with your legal counsel throughout the entire process.

³⁹[R.C. 3501.11\(J\)](#).

⁴⁰Definition of "quasi-judicial" taken from Merriam-Webster, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/quasi-judicial>.

Due Process Requirements⁴¹

As a government body, the board must follow state and federal constitutional requirements. When a board's decisions affect rights like voting or running for office, it must ensure fair treatment.⁴²

Before a hearing:

1. Give notice to all parties about when and where the hearing will be held.
2. Explain what's being alleged.
3. State the grounds for the allegation.

The board must hold a hearing before taking final action. This hearing must be conducted fairly and scheduled at a reasonable time.

The board must be impartial. It should ignore anything heard outside of the hearing and focus only on the evidence presented. Board members with conflicts of interest may need to step aside.

Anyone at the hearing may have an attorney, including:

- The accused person.
- The accuser.
- Witnesses.

An accused person has the right to question the person making the accusation.

⁴¹A board may be required to conduct a quasi-judicial hearing. See *State ex rel. City of Upper Arlington v. Franklin County Bd. Of Elections*, 119 Ohio St. 3d 478 (2008).

⁴²Due process and equal protection requirements apply to states. [U.S. Const. Amend. XIV, §1](#).

Quasi-Judicial Hearing Checklist

Before a hearing:

- ☐ Inform the county prosecutor.
- ☐ Pick a reasonable time and place for the hearing.
- ☐ Send notice to all parties. If the hearing is during a regular meeting, the board may need to provide public notice.
- ☐ Hire a court reporter to transcribe the hearing.
- ☐ Place anyone testifying under oath.⁴³

During a hearing:

- ☐ Make copies of the evidence.
- ☐ Follow Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.
- ☐ Decisions must be based only on the evidence presented and any relevant information the board has, such as voter registration data. Focus on answering specific questions based on the evidence.

Note: Others may review the board's decision later, either the Secretary of State when breaking a tie vote or a court.

⁴³[R.C. 3501.13\(C\)](#). Before testifying, a witness shall be sworn to testify the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. [R.C. 2317.30](#).

Section 2.03 Board Meeting Procedures

BOARD PROCEDURES

Public Meetings⁴⁴

The Ohio Open Meetings Act requires public bodies to:

- Take official action in open meetings.
- Conduct all business deliberations in open meetings where the public can attend.

Under this law, the board is a public body. All its meetings — regular, special, and emergency — must follow Ohio’s Open Meetings Act.

The board must:

- Give advance notice of meeting time and place.
- Take full and accurate minutes.
- Make minutes available to the public.

It may discuss certain limited topics in executive session, but only during regular or special meetings. For more information, see the section on *Executive Session* below, [R.C. 121.22](#), and the [Ohio Sunshine Law Manual](#).

The Secretary of State’s office cannot advise boards on Open Meetings questions. Instead, ask your county prosecutor. The [Ohio Sunshine Law Manual](#), prepared by the Ohio Attorney General and the Ohio Auditor, is a helpful resource.

Use basic parliamentary procedures in board meetings. Take action by majority vote (unless the law requires more) when a quorum is present. See **Rules of Order** below.

Quorum

A quorum refers to the number of members present, not the number actually voting. Usually, a majority vote of the quorum is needed to act. Some actions need at least three yes votes, such as:

- Removing the director or deputy director.

⁴⁴[R.C. 121.22](#); [Ohio Sunshine Laws 2026: An Open Government Resource Manual](#).

- Setting pay.
- Appointing someone from a different party as director or chairperson.⁴⁵

Example: All four board members attend a meeting to vote on removing the deputy director, who is a board member's child. The related board member must not vote. Therefore, all three of the other board members must vote yes for the removal to pass. For other employees, only a simple majority vote is needed. Thus, a clerk who is related to a board member can be removed if two of the three eligible board members vote yes.

Types of Public Meetings

State law establishes three types of public meetings that a public body, such as the board of elections, may conduct.

Regular Meetings

These are meetings held on a schedule. Create a reasonable way for the public to learn the board's regular meeting schedule.⁴⁶ Establish a schedule of regular monthly meetings.

Special Meetings

Special meetings are any non-scheduled meetings. Create a way for the public to learn the time, place, and purpose of special meetings. Give at least 24 hours' advance notice to media who have requested it and post the notice at the board office. The purpose statement must say exactly what the board will discuss. Stick to only those topics during the special meeting.⁴⁷

Emergency Meetings

This is a type of special meeting for urgent matters. Immediately notify media who have requested advance notice of emergency meetings and post the notice at the board office. The purpose statement must say exactly what the board will discuss. Discuss only those topics.⁴⁸

⁴⁵[R.C. 3501.14](#); [1978 Op. Att'y Gen. No. 78-047](#).

⁴⁶[R.C. 121.22\(F\)](#).

⁴⁷[R.C. 121.22\(F\)](#).

⁴⁸[R.C. 121.22\(F\)](#).

Executive Session

An executive session is a private portion of a meeting. Only board members and invited guests may attend. The Open Meetings Act strictly limits the use of executive sessions.⁴⁹

Hold executive sessions only during regular or special meetings. Always begin and end in open session. To start an executive session:

1. Make a proper motion.
2. Get majority approval.
3. Use a roll call vote.

The motion to go into executive session must specify which law allows the session and what issues the board will discuss.

The board cannot take any formal action in an executive session.

Actions are invalid if:

- They weren't adopted in a properly noticed public meeting.⁵⁰
- They resulted from discussions held in a meeting not open to the public, unless the discussions were:
 - For an allowable executive session topic listed in [R.C. 121.22\(G\)](#).
 - Conducted at an executive session held in compliance with the Open Meetings Act.
- The board failed to follow legal notice requirements.

Executive Session Topics

In an executive session, the board may only discuss:

- Certain personnel matters.
- Property purchases or sales for public purposes at competitive bidding.
- Pending or imminent court action involving the board.
- Matters legally required to be kept confidential.
- Details of security arrangements.
- Hospital trade secrets.
- Confidential business information for economic development.

Consult with board legal counsel for more information on topics and matters appropriate to discuss in executive session.

⁴⁹[R.C. 121.22\(G\)](#).

⁵⁰[R.C. 121.22\(H\)](#).

Attendance

Board members must be physically present to:

- Be counted as present.
- Count toward quorum.
- Vote on motions.

Board members who are not physically at the meeting cannot be considered “present” for determining quorum, offering or seconding motions, or voting on any motion.⁵¹

Minutes⁵²

Substantive Minutes

Keep full and accurate minutes of all meetings.. Minutes must include:

- Enough facts and information so that anyone reading them will understand the issues.
- What action the board took.
- Why the board made those decisions.

Because executive sessions are private, the minutes only need the general subject matter. Prepare and file them promptly and maintain them for public inspection.

The director must keep a full and true record of board proceedings.

Sending Minutes to the Secretary of State

The board must email approved minutes to the Secretary of State’s regional liaison and the Elections Division (BoardInfo@OhioSoS.gov) within 10 days after approval.

It is permissible to include board members’ names at the end of the minutes; signatures are not required.

Do not send unapproved minutes unless specifically requested.

⁵¹[R.C. 121.22\(C\)](#).

⁵²[R.C. 3501.13](#); [R.C. 121.22\(C\)](#); *White v. Clinton Cty. Bd. Of Commrs.*, 77 Ohio St. 3d 1267 (1997).

Signature Stamps

The board may use signature stamps for convenience. Each board member is responsible for how their signature is used.

Before using stamps, the board must do both of the following:

- Ask the county prosecutor.
- Create a policy saying when stamps may be used and who can use them.

Board members must attend board meetings in person, regardless of the signature stamp policy. The board cannot hold meetings virtually. Board members cannot misuse a signature stamp or use it to avoid their duties.⁵³ Signature stamps must be secured when not in use.

RULES OF ORDER

State law doesn't set specific rules of order for board meetings. Boards can adopt their own methods for running meetings. Many boards follow Robert's Rules of Order.

TIE VOTES

Generally

Sometimes the four board members will vote 2-2 on a motion. For tie votes that the Secretary of State must break (see Limitations below), the director or chairperson must send the matter to the Secretary within 14 days of the tie vote. The Secretary of State will decide the question, and that decision is final.⁵⁴

Limitations

Some issues cannot go to the Secretary of State as tie votes. They need at least three board members to agree to pass, and a 2-2 tie on these motions means it fails.

Examples include:

- Setting pay for the director, deputy director, or board employees.⁵⁵

⁵³[R.C. 3501.16](#) permits the Secretary to "summarily remove or suspend any member of a board of elections, or the director, deputy director, or any other employee of the board, for... malfeasance, misfeasance, or nonfeasance in office, for any willful violation of Title XXXV of the Revised Code, or for any other good and sufficient cause."

⁵⁴[R.C. 3501.11\(X\)](#).

⁵⁵[R.C. 3501.14](#).

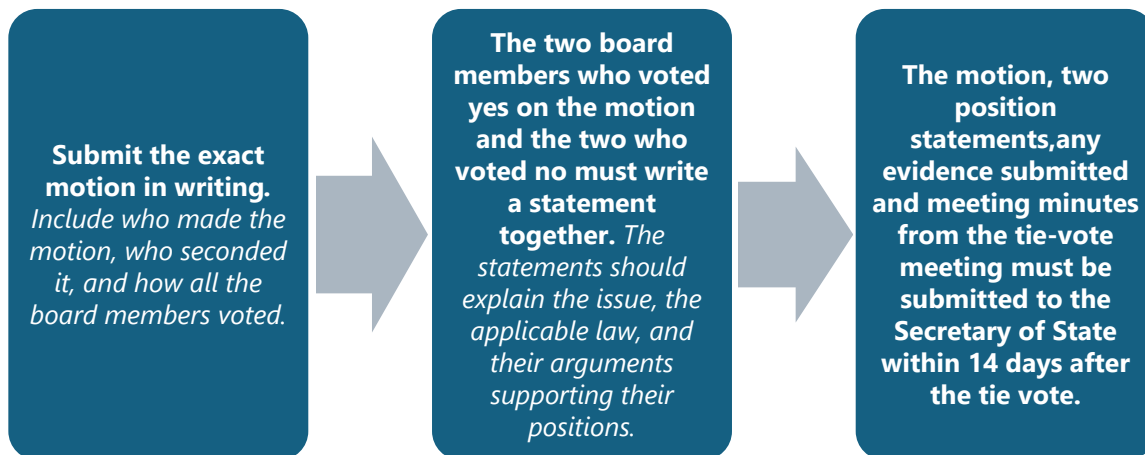
- Eliminating the deputy director position.⁵⁶
- Replacing the chairperson or director with someone from a different party.⁵⁷

Also, the tie vote procedure isn't used when:

- The board lacks authority to act.
- The issue relates to internal operations.
- The issue doesn't involve substantive election law.

Tie Vote Procedure

For proper tie votes:



Send:

1. Email:

The Secretary of State's elections counsel at Intake@OhioSoS.gov.

2. By U.S. Mail:

Office of the Ohio Secretary of State
Attn: Director of Elections Division
P.O. Box 2828
Columbus, OH 43216

⁵⁶[R.C. 3501.09](#).

⁵⁷[R.C. 3501.091](#).

3. In person or other form of delivery:

Office of the Ohio Secretary of State
Attn: Director of Elections Division
180 Civic Center Dr.
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Decision

The Secretary of State may decide before receiving position statements from the board. The board will get a written opinion explaining:

- The facts.
- Applicable law.
- Reasons for the Secretary's decision.

Section 2.04 Board Director and Deputy Director

DIRECTOR AND DEPUTY DIRECTOR REQUIREMENTS

Minimum Qualifications

Education

Candidates for director or deputy director must have a high school diploma or GED. A college education is preferred.

Election Skills

Candidates for director or deputy director must understand:

- How to use county voting machines and office equipment.
- How to manage a database.
- Election law terminology.
- Ohio's Sunshine Laws on open meetings and public records.
- How to follow board and Secretary of State instructions.

Management Skills

Candidates for director or deputy director must show they can manage the daily operations and should have:

- Good communication skills.
- Strong organizational skills.
- Attention to detail.
- Knowledge of relevant state and federal human resources and labor policies and laws.
- Ability to manage budgets.
- Ability to perform duties including:
 - Giving and managing assignments.
 - Understanding informational documents.
- Ability to perform under stress.
- Professional and courteous conduct at all times.

Background Check

Candidates must complete [Form 307](#) and pass a criminal background check, paid by the board. Keep the completed form on file and send a copy to the Secretary of State.

NOTE: The Secretary of State doesn't do background checks for directors and deputy directors. The board should work with the county prosecuting attorney and the county sheriff for background checks for these positions.

Appointment Rules

The director must:

- Live in the county within 30 days of hiring.
- Have all required qualifications.
- Be nominated by a board member of the same party.

- Not be a member of the board.⁵⁸

Three board members must vote yes to select a director. Directors are not public officers.⁵⁹

When Positions Open Up

Job Descriptions

Create a written job description that lists:

- Minimum qualifications.
- Required duties.
- How candidates will be evaluated.

Director and deputy director job descriptions must list duties, including:

- Running all elections held in the county.
- Processing and reporting election results.
- Recruiting and training PEOs.
- Managing voter records.
- Keeping board meeting records.
- Tracking money received and spent.⁶⁰
- Filing and keeping all election records in the board office.
- Preparing meeting minutes.
- Auditing campaign finance reports.
- Calculating election costs for political subdivisions.
- Managing board property and materials.⁶¹

⁵⁸[R.C. 3501.09.](#)

⁵⁹[R.C. 3501.14.](#)

⁶⁰[R.C. 3501.13\(A\).](#)

⁶¹[R.C. 3501.13\(A\).](#)

- Handling other duties assigned by the board or Secretary of State.⁶²
- Following all Secretary of State directives and materials.
- Managing staff and assigning work.
- Creating and monitoring annual budgets.

Advertising

When a director or deputy director job opens:

- Advertise for at least one week in the county's biggest newspaper.
- Advertise in election publications, on the Secretary of State's and the board's website, on social media, and on job boards, if desired.

All job ads must include:

- An explanation of how to get the job description and evaluation criteria.
- A notice that applicants need a background check.

Applications

Candidates must submit:

- Written application (in a form of the board's choosing).
- Current resume.
- Completed [Form 307](#).

Evaluation Criteria

Create a predetermined scoring system based on standard questions related to the job description. The board may ask for extra information about qualifications to consider all experience, education, and skills related to the position.

Give priority to candidates with previous election administration experience. If no candidates have all the minimum qualifications, evaluate them as if they did.

⁶²[R.C. 3501.13\(A\)](#).

DIRECTOR AND DEPUTY DIRECTOR DUTIES⁶³

The director serves at the pleasure of the board for a two-year term, beginning in March of odd-numbered years.⁶⁴ The director:

- Serves as the board's chief administrator.
- Serves as an election official.

Director duties include:

- Performing duties assigned by the board.
- Reviewing all Secretary of State communications.
- Sharing information with board members and staff and taking appropriate action.
- Writing meeting agendas and minutes.
- Keeping records of board proceedings and finances.
- Managing board property.
- Tracking inventory.
- Handling office mail, including getting documents to the correct county board of elections.
- Helping with personnel policies and procedures.
- Developing and managing budget and payroll.
- Supervising and managing staff.
- Auditing campaign finance reports.
- Calculating election charges to political subdivisions.
- Helping local liquor option petitioners.
- Recruiting, hiring, and training PEOs.
- Running all primary, general, and special elections held in the county.

⁶³[R.C. 3501.01\(U\)\(3\)](#); [R.C. 3501.13](#).

⁶⁴[R.C. 3501.06\(B\)\(2\)](#).

- Processing and reporting election results.
- Supervising the processing of voter records.
- Filing and keeping election records.

When a director plans to retire under [R.C. 145.38](#), they must inform all the board members.⁶⁵

The deputy director must:

- Help the director.
- Fill in when the director is absent.
- Perform other duties assigned or required by the board, director, or Secretary of State.

The director, deputy director, and other board employees are not public officers.⁶⁶

Working Together

State law doesn't define different duties for the director and deputy director. The board must create local policies about how they work together. Three common approaches:

- **Hierarchy** – deputy director reports to the director.
- **First-among-equals** – director and deputy director work together on everything, with the director having final say.
- **Division-of-labor** – director and deputy director split responsibilities, each having control of their areas.

Regardless of the approach, each one must be able to step in for the other if needed.

The director and deputy director must work as a team. Elections have many details, deadlines, and changes that require a team effort for success.

⁶⁵[R.C. 3501.13\(D\)](#).

⁶⁶[R.C. 3501.14](#).

CLERKS AND OTHER BOARD EMPLOYEES

The board can hire other employees, assign their duties, and set their pay with at least three board member votes.⁶⁷ These employees are election officials, but not public officers.⁶⁸ They serve at the board's pleasure and take the same oath as the director for the performance of their duties. The board can remove any of these employees by majority vote. It can also hire additional staff when needed.

All permanent board employees must have a background check. Create a policy for reviewing these checks and deciding if convictions should bar employment. Types of offenses that would bar employment include any election-related convictions and certain felonies and misdemeanors. Background checks must be conducted at least every 10 years.

Certain employees, including the director and deputy director, may need access to Secretary of State systems. The board should use the Board of Elections Account Management form, available on the Board of Elections Portal, to onboard and offboard employees from these systems. The Secretary of State's staff must be notified of the employment separation of a credentialed user no later than 24 hours after the separation.⁶⁹

Employees work under the director or deputy director, as the board authorizes. All personnel matters must be reported to the board.

The law doesn't require staff, other than the director and deputy director, to be evenly split between parties. The board doesn't need equal numbers of Democratic, Republican, or recognized minor party clerks. However, it may choose to keep party balance among staff.

⁶⁷[R.C. 3501.14.](#)

⁶⁸[R.C. 3501.14.](#)

⁶⁹[Board of Elections Account Management Policy.](#)

Section 2.05 Oaths, Ethics and Training

ALL BOARD EMPLOYEES

Oath of Office

Before starting work, the director, deputy director, and all board employees must take an oath to:

- Support the U.S. and Ohio Constitutions.
- Perform all duties to the best of their ability.
- Enforce election laws.
- Preserve all records, documents, and other property in their care.⁷⁰

Chapter 1, EOM Introduction includes a copy of this oath as an example. Keep the signed oath at the board office.

Ethics

All board members and employees must follow [Ohio ethics law](#) and the [Secretary of State's Ethics Policy](#). All current and future members and employees must complete [Form 350](#), acknowledging the Ethics Policy. Send a copy of the completed form to the Secretary of State's Elections Division.

Report Ethics Policy violations to the director of elections at the Secretary of State's office, the board's regional liaison, or Secretary of State's elections counsel.

The board can also mail anonymous reports in writing. Send them in a sealed envelope to the Secretary of State's office, to the attention of the director of elections.

Board members should abstain from participating in board matters in which they have a conflict of interest as described in the Ohio Secretary of State's Ethics policy. However, board members should not abstain unless they have a direct conflict.

⁷⁰[R.C. 3501.13](#); [R.C. 3501.14](#).

Ethics violations may result in disciplinary action in accordance with the Secretary of State's statutory authority under [Title 35 of the Ohio Revised Code](#), including removal from office.

Report Ohio ethics law violations to the Ohio Ethics Commission: [Ethics.Ohio.gov](https://ethics.ohio.gov) or 614-466-7090. Violations of Ohio ethics laws may be crimes with criminal penalties.

Prohibition Against Candidacy for Public Office

No person can serve as a member, director, deputy director, or employee of the board of elections if they are a candidate for elected office.⁷¹ The only exceptions are candidates for:

- Delegate or alternate to a political party convention.
- Member of a county agricultural society board.
- Presidential elector.
- Political party committee member.

A board member or employee who runs for office must resign from the board when his or her candidacy is certified.

Board Members Holding Other Public Offices

[Title 35](#) doesn't stop board members from holding other public offices. However, the two offices must be compatible.

[The Attorney General has issued opinions on which offices can be held simultaneously.](#)

Direct questions about the compatibility of public offices and positions to the board's legal counsel or the Ohio Attorney General.

Suspension and Removal

The Secretary of State may remove or suspend any member, director, deputy director, or other employee of the board for:

- Neglect of duty.

⁷¹[R.C. 3501.15.](#)

- Malfeasance (negligent action), misfeasance (illegal action), or nonfeasance (nonaction) in office.
- Willful violation of election laws in [Title 35 of the Revised Code](#).
- Any other good cause.⁷²

Fill vacant chairperson, director, or deputy director positions the same way as original selections, with people from the same party as the outgoing officer. If the board can't fill vacancies this way, the Secretary of State will fill them for the board.⁷³

⁷²[R.C. 3501.16](#).

⁷³[Art. II, Sect. 38 Ohio Const.](#); [R.C. 3501.16](#); State ex rel. Hughes v. Brown (1972), 31 Ohio St. 2d 41.

TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

The Secretary of State has a training program on election rules, procedures, and laws. Each member and employee must:

- Complete the training program within six months after starting.
- Update their knowledge once every four years or more often as required.⁷⁴

Failure to meet these requirements will affect reappointment.

The requirements are considered minimum. Board members, directors, and deputy directors may need more training to keep up with election changes, especially in even years.

New Officials Training

Newly appointed members, directors, or deputy directors must:

- Complete at least six hours of “New Election Official Training” within six months of appointment.⁷⁵
- Get eight more credits of training in their first full year.
- Earn a total of 14 credits.

The New Election Official Training Program:

- Is held at locations chosen by the Secretary of State.

Who is Required to Take Training?

Members of boards of elections:

Anyone appointed by the Secretary of State to a county board of elections under [R.C. 3501.07](#).

Employees of boards of elections: For [R.C. 3501.27\(D\)](#), “employees of boards of elections” means **only directors or deputy directors**. The board may require other employees to take the same training.

Newly appointed members, director, or deputy director: Someone who has never served before or previously served but has had at least a four-year break.

Incumbent or reappointed members, director or deputy director: Someone who has served and will continue with no break or had a break of less than four consecutive years.

⁷⁴[R.C. 3501.27\(D\)](#).

⁷⁵[R.C. 3501.27\(D\)](#).

- May include virtual courses and participation in Secretary of State programs may also be required.
- Awards a certificate of completion by the Secretary of State.

Continuing Education

Incumbent or reappointed officials must attend and complete at least eight credits of training each calendar year.

Extra hours don't carry over to the next year. This ensures up-to-date knowledge of election law changes.

Incumbent and reappointed members may attend the New Election Official Training Program if there is enough space. However, they will not get continuing education credits for attending.

In addition to the hourly requirements listed above, all board members, directors, and deputy directors must complete annual cybersecurity training as required in Chapter 3, Security. Boards must train all staff yearly on both cyber and physical security.

Approved Continuing Education Training Programs

The board may need to attend specific events, trainings, or meetings throughout the year. Mandatory events will be marked as such in the invitation. Appendix A of this manual includes a list of programs that count for training credits.

Training Exemptions

The Secretary of State may exempt someone from training for two reasons:

- Physical inability to attend (illness, weather emergency, etc.).
- Other good cause.

Training Costs and Fees

No registration fee will be charged for the Secretary of State's New Election Official Training Program. Participants pay their own travel, lodging, and meals unless otherwise provided by the Secretary of State. [Attorney General's Opinion No. 2046 \(1930\)](#) states that the county treasury may pay expenses for meetings called by the Secretary of State.

Section 2.06 Board Office Operations

FACILITIES

The board must provide:

- Suitable rooms for offices and records.
- Necessary furniture and supplies.⁷⁶

The board may lease offices for up to 15 years. Before signing a lease:

- Give county commissioners 30 days written notice.
- Include all terms and conditions of the lease.
- Give county commissioners up to 30 days to decide on the proposed lease.

If they reject the lease, the board can immediately seek another one using the same process.⁷⁷

The board can also adopt a resolution in accordance with [R.C. 133.18](#), requesting that the county commissioners let voters decide on issuing bonds to:

- Buy real estate.
- Build a suitable building with needed furniture and equipment.⁷⁸

The board may have permanent or temporary branch offices anywhere in the county. If the board allows voters to vote at a branch office, they cannot vote at any other branch or board office.⁷⁹

For office security requirements, see [Chapter 3, Section 3.02](#).

If the board office plans to move, alert the Secretary of State's office 12 months in advance so they can help with obtaining internet service and checking physical security and Americans with Disabilities Act compliance. See the **Board Move Checklist** at the end of this chapter.

⁷⁶[R.C. 3501.10\(A\)](#).

⁷⁷[R.C. 3501.10\(A\)](#).

⁷⁸[R.C. 3501.10\(A\)](#).

⁷⁹[R.C. 3501.10\(C\)](#).

BOARD HOURS

Set regular office hours based on the board's needs.⁸⁰ It must have extended hours for voter registration before a primary or general election and for early in-person absentee voting.

Extended Hours for Voter Registration

The board's main office, or at least one branch, must remain open until 9 p.m. on the last day to register before a primary or general election.⁸¹

Extended Hours for Early In-Person Absentee Voting

See [Chapter 7, Section 7.04](#) for required hours for early in-person absentee voting. Early in-person voting starts the day after registration closes.

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Pay and Benefits

The board sets the pay of the director, deputy director, and other employees with at least three board votes, subject to budget availability. Don't send tie votes or disagreement regarding staff pay to the Secretary of State.⁸²

Create personnel pay and benefit policies for:

- Wages.
- Sick leave.
- Vacation time.
- Comp time.
- Other staff matters.

Get county employee policies from the county commissioners or the county auditor. Federal employment rules should also be available from these offices or the state auditor.

⁸⁰[R.C. 3501.10\(B\).](#)

⁸¹[R.C. 3501.10\(B\).](#)

⁸²[R.C. 3501.14.](#)

The board may provide insurance for board members and their families with the county commissioners' approval.⁸³

For Human Resources (HR) questions, talk to the county prosecutor or commissioners.

For retirement system questions, talk to the Ohio Public Employees Retirement System (OPERS) agency or private legal counsel.

Hiring Family Members

Ohio ethics law forbids board members and employees from:

- Authorizing a family member's employment.
- Using their position to get a family member hired.⁸⁴

This means board members cannot take any part in hiring their family members as board employees.⁸⁵

Board members cannot hire relatives of board members, directors, and deputy directors, except as PEOs (including rovers, scouts, and similar temporary positions).⁸⁶

If a board member's relative is being considered and that member properly steps aside, the other members may hire PEOs who are family members of officials or employees.

The individual must not:

- Take part in hiring their own family member.
- Make decisions about their family member's job terms.

Officials cannot delegate hiring to a subordinate so that a family member can be hired.

Ohio ethics laws apply after the family member is hired. Officials cannot:

- Take part in decisions affecting their family member's job ([R.C. 2921.42\(A\)\(1\)](#)).

⁸³[R.C. 3501.141](#).

⁸⁴[R.C. 2921.42\(A\)\(1\)](#).

⁸⁵See OEC Advisory Op. 80-001. "Family member" is defined as spouse, domestic partner, mother, father, step-mother, step-father, brother, sister, step-brother, step-sister, half-brother, half-sister, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, grandmother, grandfather, mother-in-law, father-in-law, child, step-child, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, or other family member living in the same household.

⁸⁶[OEC Informal Opinion Letter 1992-INF-1009-1](#).

- Participate in any decision directly affecting a family member's employment ([R.C. 102.03\(D\)](#)).

As public servants, always consider how hiring family members might look to the public.

Section 2.07 Board Finance, Advertising, and Records

BUDGET AND EXPENDITURES

Appropriations for Elections Board

The board must prepare and submit a budget estimating the next fiscal year's election cost and submit it to the county commissioners.⁸⁷

Expenses Paid by the County Commissioners

Certain expenses are paid by the county and can't be charged to other entities. The costs of these expenses are paid from the county treasury. Those expenses are listed later in this section.

Form of Payments

Pay expenses using vouchers signed by the board chairperson (or acting chairperson) and director (or deputy director), with warrants of the county auditor. Don't commit to spending money unless the board has enough funds.

When submitting budget estimates each year, give each subdivision an estimate of how much the board will withhold, per precinct, during the next fiscal year for a special election (e.g., August Special Election) if they ask.⁸⁸

Court Action for Additional Funds

If county commissioners don't give the board enough money, the board may apply to the court of common pleas within its county. The court will set the amount necessary to be appropriated, and that amount shall be appropriated by the county commissioners..⁸⁹

⁸⁷[R.C. 3501.11\(O\)](#); [R.C. 3501.17](#).

⁸⁸[R.C. 3501.17](#).

⁸⁹[R.C. 3501.17\(A\)](#).

Establish Elections Revenue Fund

If a majority of the board requests it, the county commissioners may create an election revenue fund. This fund holds money for the board's expenses under [R.C. 3501.11](#). The fund cannot pay regular salaries from this fund, only overtime.⁹⁰

The county commissioners can transfer money to this fund from any other lawful source. After a majority vote of the board of county commissioners, they can rescind an election revenue fund and move the money to the county general fund.

Chargebacks and Payments for an August Special Election

Chargebacks

"Chargebacks" means billing political subdivisions for their share of election costs. The law outlines what can and cannot be "charged back" to the appropriate subdivisions.

Payments for an August Special Election

Political subdivisions must prepay part of August special election costs.⁹¹

For each special election:

1. Estimate the cost for one question or race per precinct.
2. Divide that cost by the number of registered voters in the county.
3. Give this estimate to the Secretary of State and county commissioners at least 15 business days before the filing deadline for that special election using Secretary of State [Form 76](#).⁹²
4. The board must also give an estimate to any political subdivision wanting to be on the ballot at the special election. To calculate the estimate, use one of the following methods:

"Political subdivision" and **"subdivision"** in this context means any entity that can levy taxes or receive tax money, such as:

- Board of County Commissioners.
- Township trustees.
- City or village councils.
- School boards.
- Other boards, commissions, or authorities.

⁹⁰[R.C. 3501.17\(I\)](#).

⁹¹[R.C. 3501.17\(J\)\(2\)](#).

⁹²[R.C. 3501.17\(J\)\(1\)](#).

- a. Multiply the number of registered voters in the political subdivision and the cost estimate.
- b. Multiply the number of precincts in the political subdivision and the cost estimate.

The political subdivision must pay 65 percent of this estimate, not less than 10 business days after the filing deadline for that special election. The payment must be made to the county elections revenue fund.⁹³

Within 60 days after the special election:

- Tell each political subdivision their actual cost (this may be by email or U.S. mail).
- If the political subdivision paid too little, it must pay the balance within 30 days.
- If the political subdivision paid too much, the board must notify the county commissioners, and they must refund the difference within 30 days.⁹⁴

The “true and accurate cost” is determined the same way as costs are determined for a chargeback for that election.

Items Never Charged to Subdivisions

These costs stay with the county:

- pay for board members, director, deputy director, and regular staff (except overtime)
- office rent, furniture, and equipment for the board
- office supplies for the board
- acquiring and maintaining polling locations
- voting booths, guardrails, and polling place equipment
- tally sheets, maps, flags, ballot boxes
- all other permanent records and equipment

⁹³[R.C. 3517.01\(J\)\(2\)](#).

⁹⁴[R.C. 3517.01\(J\)\(3\)](#).

- costs for state and county elections
- all other expenses not chargeable to a political subdivision

Items That Can Be Charged to Subdivisions, Special Election Only (No Primary or General Election)

Charge the subdivision the entire cost of special elections, including:

- PEO pay.
- Temporary office staff pay.
- Contractor pay for voting equipment work.
- Polling place rental, heating, and lighting.
- Moving equipment, including voting machines, marking devices, and automatic tabulating equipment.
- Printing and delivering ballots.
- Instruction cards and supplies such as notices, supply envelopes, secrecy sleeves, pens, and tape.
- Registration lists required under section [R.C. 3503.23](#).
- Absentee voting supplies including envelopes and postage.
- Provisional voting supplies.
- Other election supplies, including paper trail supplies (see [R.C. 3506.01\(H\)](#)).
- Advertising.
- All other expenses for odd-numbered year primaries and elections.

Special Circumstances

Special Election with Even-Year Primary or General Election

If a special election is held on the same day as an even-year primary or general election, charge the subdivision only for:

- Ballots.
- Advertising ([R.C. 3501.17\(D\)](#)).

Special Election with Odd-Year Primary or General Election

If a special election is held on the same day as an odd-year primary or general election, charge the subdivision for:

- Ballots and advertising for the special election.
- Plus the subdivision's share of candidate election costs ([R.C. 3501.17\(D\)](#)).

State Constitutional Amendments

For a special election held on a primary day for state constitutional amendments proposed by the general assembly:

- The state pays for ballots and advertising.
- The state reimburses counties for all expenses from opening precincts only for the special election.

For precincts that are open for other elections in addition to the statewide special election, costs are handled according to [R.C. 3501.17](#).

If a subdivision also has a special election on the date of a primary election, split costs between the state and subdivision based on a ratio of the number of issues placed on the ballot by each.

This split happens only if state funds are available.

If a primary election is also happening in the subdivision, costs follow regular rules (see [R.C. 3501.17](#)).

When a precinct opens only for a statewide ballot issue, the state pays the entire cost.⁹⁵

⁹⁵[R.C. 3501.17\(E\)](#); [R.C. 3501.17\(F\)](#).

Suggested Chargeback Steps

Contact the county auditor for tax schedule deadlines to process chargebacks for the targeted tax duplicate. Most will give the board a preferred submission date for reporting the chargeback costs.

Suggested steps for tracking and preparing chargebacks:

1. Beginning in January and moving forward, mark each paid invoice with PSC (Political Subdivision Charge) or CC (County Charge). Enter each PSC invoice in a chargeback book at the end of the month.
 2. After each election, list each subdivision to be charged with its precinct count.
 3. Calculate advertising costs separately for each subdivision.
 4. Calculate ballot costs separately for each subdivision. Charge the total cost of ballots in odd-numbered years and for all special elections.
 5. Calculate other costs for each precinct (like transportation of voting equipment, PEO pay, polling place rental, postage, and supplies).
 6. If a precinct has items for multiple entities, split the cost:
City and county 1/2 each
County, village, and township 1/3 each
County, village, township, and school district 1/4 each
County, city, township, school district A, and school district B 1/5 each
 7. Tell the county auditor the total for each subdivision to withhold the charges from moneys due at the next tax settlement.
-
-

PREPARING AND ADVERTISING BIDS

Supplies Other Than Ballots

For contracts over \$25,000 for supplies (other than official ballots) needed under [R.C. 3501.30](#), either:

- Publish one notice in a newspaper with county circulation.
- Mail notices to responsible suppliers in the state.

The board may require each bid to include a bond, with:

- At least two individual sureties or a surety company.
- Double the amount of the bid.
- Terms to ensure performance and cover the excess costs if the bidder fails to complete the contract.

The contract must be awarded to the lowest and best bidder.⁹⁶

Consult Legal Advisor

Ask the county prosecutor if the board should have written contracts with the successful bidder.

OUTSOURCING REQUIRED MAILINGS OTHER THAN ABSENTEE BALLOTS

Boards will sometimes need to mail notices to voters. The board may have to use an outside vendor to print and mail the notices (not absentee ballots). The board must:

- Have a contract with the vendor reviewed by the county prosecutor that includes:
 - Instructions and requirements for the production of the notices.
 - Information on how data files are provided to the vendor.
 - Timelines and deadlines for production, proofing, and mailing.
 - Sign-off procedures requiring the director's approval before final production.
 - The vendor's commitment to fix errors promptly and within deadlines.

⁹⁶[R.C. 3501.301](#).

- Check sample proofs to ensure data maps correctly.
 - Test enough notices against the board data file.
 - Verify data is mapped appropriately in the right places on the notice.
- Make sure information meets all requirements.

If the notice follows a directive, give the vendor a copy before entering the contract and make sure the notice meets the directive's requirements.

PUBLICATION OF LEGAL ADVERTISEMENTS

Format of Ads

Legal ads must be:

- Compact without unnecessary spaces, blanks, or headlines.
- Printed in at least six-point type.
- Type set in proper proportions (capital letter "M" no wider than it is high).

All ads or notices about proposed constitutional amendments, ballot language, arguments, referenda, or laws proposed by initiative petitions must be in newspapers published in the English language only.⁹⁷ Forms related to the publication of legal advertisements are available on the Secretary of State's [website](#).

Place of Publication

Publish legal ads in general circulation newspapers (newspapers that bear a title or name and are regularly issued, with at least a weekly circulation) that meet all of the following requirements:

- Printed in English with at least eight broadsheet pages or 16 tabloid pages.
- Contains at least 25 percent editorial content (local news, politics, sports).
- Published continuously for at least three years.
- Can add subscribers.

⁹⁷[R.C. 7.10](#); [R.C. 7.101](#); [R.C. 7.12](#).

- Circulated by mail or carrier in the board's area, proven by filing of [USPS Form 3526](#), or by proof of an independent audit of the publication within the last 12 months.⁹⁸

Reducing Costs of Publication

[Ohio Attorney General Opinion No. 91-059](#) says counties may share costs of advertising by using large metropolitan newspapers circulated in multiple counties. A newspaper is published in a county when it is circulated there, regardless of where it's printed. However, that doesn't automatically make it a "general circulation" newspaper. This must be considered on a case-by-case basis under the previous guidelines. Contact the county prosecutor for help.

Another way to save is to print inserts with legal ads to be included in local newspapers.

Timing of Publication

Voter Registration

Six weeks before any election, publish notices in newspapers of general circulation advertising the places, dates, times, methods, and qualifications for registration.⁹⁹

Election

At least 10 days before an election, either post notices of proclamation in the courthouse and city hall or publish once in a county newspaper.

If no newspaper is published in the county, use one with general circulation in the county.¹⁰⁰

Other

For tax levies and certain questions and issues, publication times vary based on the:

- Revised Code.
- Ohio Constitution.
- Local charter.

⁹⁸[R.C. 7.12.](#)

⁹⁹[R.C. 3503.12.](#)

¹⁰⁰[R.C. 3501.03.](#)

Requirements range from one notice to four consecutive weeks' notice before the election. Check the [Ohio Ballot Questions and Issues Handbook](#) and relevant section(s) of the Revised Code, Ohio Constitution, or charter for ad requirements.

ONLINE PUBLICATION

Post information from legal notices, emergency changes to polling places, or other important notices on the board's website and social media accounts.

Online posting adds to, but cannot replace, legal obligations to post in a newspaper.

PUBLIC RECORDS

The Ohio Public Records Act lets anyone ask to see or copy public records.¹⁰¹ The board is a public office under this law.

A public record is a record kept by a public office.¹⁰² A record is "any document, device, or item, regardless of physical form or characteristic, including an electronic record, created or received by or coming under the jurisdiction of any public office of the state or its political subdivisions, which serves to document the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the office."¹⁰³

The board must:

- Organize records so they can be available for public records requests.
- Create and adopt a policy for handling public records requests.

The Secretary of State's office can't advise boards on Ohio Public Records Act questions. Instead, contact the county prosecutor. The [Ohio Sunshine Law Manual](#) can help.

The [Ohio Secretary of State's office has a records retention schedule](#) that sets the minimum time the board must keep election records. For unlisted records, work with the county prosecutor to create a retention schedule and ask the prosecutor about the proper disposal of records.

¹⁰¹ [R.C. 149.011](#); [Ohio Sunshine Laws 2025: an Open Government Resource Manual](#).

¹⁰² [R.C. 149.43\(A\)\(1\)](#).

¹⁰³ [R.C. 149.011\(G\)](#).

Section 2.08 Legal Counsel and Law Enforcement

COUNTY PROSECUTOR

Under Ohio law, the board's legal counsel is the county prosecutor.¹⁰⁴ The board may ask for written opinions or instructions on matters connected with the board's official duties. The prosecutor must:

- Prosecute actions the board directs.
- Defend suits where the board is a party.

The board cannot hire other legal counsel at county expense without approval from the county commissioners and the court of common pleas.¹⁰⁵

MUNICIPAL LEGAL COUNSEL

Cities and villages have their own lawyers, such as city attorneys, law directors, or village solicitors.¹⁰⁶ In charter municipalities, their legal counsel interprets their charter.

Generally, defer to a charter municipality's interpretation of its charter. However, the board still must fulfill its duties under the election laws. Consult the prosecutor.

SECRETARY OF STATE

As Ohio's Chief Election Officer, the Secretary of State oversees:

- Election administration.
- Voter registration.
- Election conduct.¹⁰⁷

The Secretary issues instructions through:

- Directives.
- Advisories.

¹⁰⁴[R.C. 309.09](#).

¹⁰⁵[R.C. 305.14](#).

¹⁰⁶[R.C. 705.11](#); [R.C. 733.51](#).

¹⁰⁷[R.C. 3501.04](#); [R.C. 3501.05](#).

- Other communications¹⁰⁸ (such as methods for registering voters, maintaining, correcting, and updating voter registration records, and conducting and canvassing elections).

These instructions guide the board on proper election methods.

The election attorneys on the Secretary of State's staff are the Secretary's legal counsel. They can clarify the guidance the Secretary provides to boards through directives, advisories, and other communications. However, they cannot give legal advice on a board's specific situation; board legal counsel is the county prosecutor.

CONFLICTING OPINIONS

The board often consults both the Secretary of State's office for guidance and the prosecutor for legal advice on a particular issue

The Supreme Court of Ohio holds that when an election statute has two equally reasonable interpretations, the Secretary of State's interpretation gets more weight.¹⁰⁹

LAW ENFORCEMENT AND ELECTIONS

The board and its staff are essential to every election. The board must be allowed to do its duties to ensure fair, orderly, and efficient elections.

As election officials, board members and employees must:

- Prevent violence and disorder at the polls.
- Call on the sheriff or police to help enforce the law.
- Request the arrest of violators.¹¹⁰

Law enforcement must respond immediately to such requests.¹¹¹

The law ([R.C. 3501.34](#)) says that the police or sheriff must provide forces at polling places when requested by the board or Secretary of State. On Election Day, they must have a special force ready for emergencies or duties at polling places. At least one

¹⁰⁸[R.C. 3501.053](#).

¹⁰⁹*State ex rel. Herman v. Klopfeisch*, 72 Ohio St.3d 581, 586 (1995).

¹¹⁰[R.C. 3501.33](#).

¹¹¹[R.C. 3501.33](#); [R.C. 3501.34](#).

officer shall work at each precinct when requested. Officers shall have access to polling places and must arrest violators of Title 35 of the Revised Code.

Officers must obey voting location managers asking for help enforcing election laws.¹¹²

Ohio's election laws prohibit:

- Hindering voters from entering or leaving a polling place.
- Loitering or soliciting voters in the neutral zone.¹¹³

On Election Day, the board may ask law enforcement to:

- Keep polls open.
- Transport ballots.
- Help voting location managers.

On election night, law enforcement may help secure:

- Ballots.
- Election records.
- Equipment.
- Supplies.¹¹⁴

When asked to assist in securing ballots, law enforcement should help board employees lock all ballots and election materials in a safe place with double locks securing the door where they are stored.

Give one key to the director or a board member of the same party.

Give the second lock's key to the deputy director or a board member of the opposite party.

Keep additional or duplicate keys with the individuals who have control of the original keys.

¹¹²[R.C. 3599.31](#).

¹¹³[R.C. 3501.30\(A\)\(4\)](#); [R.C. 3501.35](#).

¹¹⁴If the office of Sheriff is on the ballot, to avoid appearance of impropriety, the Sheriff should send a deputy or another representative who is not a candidate on the ballot.

This double-lock system prevents one party from controlling access to ballots and election materials.

Section 2.09 Election Administration Planning and Contingency Plans, After Action Reviews

ELECTION ADMINISTRATION PLANS¹¹⁵

The board must submit an election administration plan (EAP) to the Secretary of State's office:

- 75 days before each presidential primary.
- 120 days before each general election in even-numbered years.¹¹⁶

Each board must use the EAP Template when drafting its EAP. The EAP template and submission instructions are provided to the board by email at least 60 days before the deadline. Unless a new template is provided, boards should continue working from their current EAP. Updated templates will be distributed only when revisions are made.

¹¹⁵[R.C. 3501.11\(BB\)](#).

¹¹⁶[R.C. 3501.11\(BB\)](#).

The board may add more content, but it must include at least what's in the template. The response "not applicable" is unacceptable.

The EAP must be signed by:

- Board members.
- The director.
- The deputy director.

The board must submit its EAP electronically as:

- An unrestricted PDF file.
- A second PDF, with permitted redactions (must cite legal authority and be approved by the county prosecutor)

The Secretary of State's office will use the redacted file for public records requests for copies of an EAP.

CONTINGENCY PLANS

Various problems can happen on Election Day. No law allows postponing or suspending an election for severe weather (flood, blizzard, tornado).

The only provision for postponing an election ([R.C. 161.09](#)) says that in an emergency resulting from enemy attack, the governor may postpone any state or local election up to six months. If an election can't be held because of an enemy attack, the current officeholders continue serving until their successors are elected.

EAP Template Contents

The EAP must contain these 13 sections:

1. Precinct Election Official Recruitment, Training, and Accountability
2. Resource Allocation
3. Pre-Election Day and Election Day Communication Plan
4. Materials
5. Contingencies and Continuity Planning
6. Security
7. Voter Registration
8. Absentee Ballots
9. Polling Locations and Accessibility
10. Ballot Preparation
11. Pre-Election Testing
12. Reconciliation and Audits, and
13. Master Calendar

The board should work with public officials and agencies to create contingency plans for various situations. Adopt plans that comply with the Homeland Security Act to help prepare in case there is a disturbance at a polling place.

Include contingency planning in the board's election administration plan. Even for elections not requiring an EAP, the board still needs to have one in place.

AFTER ACTION REVIEWS

Each board is required to conduct an after-action review (AAR) within 45 days after each election. The review should identify:

- What went well.
- Areas for improvement.
- Corrective actions.

Within the 30 days before each election, the board must review recent AARs to ensure that corrective actions were taken. Also, reinforce any previous strengths to ensure continued success.

An After Action Review (AAR) is a structured debriefing process that analyzes past events to identify lessons learned and improve future performance. It promotes continuous learning by helping teams understand what happened and how to refine their strategy.

Section 2.10 Ohio Election Integrity Commission and Election Integrity Unit

This section outlines the responsibilities of boards of elections under the new election integrity framework established by House Bill 96. The legislation replaces the former Ohio Elections Commission process with the Ohio Election Integrity Commission and Election Integrity Unit (EIU), establishing updated procedures for investigating and resolving election and campaign finance violations and clarifying boards' reporting responsibilities.

ROLES OF THE BOARDS OF ELECTIONS

When the boards of elections become aware of a suspected violation of election and campaign finance laws, it must submit a complaint alleging the violation to the Election

Integrity Unit (EIU) pursuant to R.C. 3517.16(A)(2). This means election officials are required to report such potential violations to the EIU. To do so, boards will visit the [Ohio Election Integrity Commission website](#), complete the designated complaint form, and include a certification that the information provided is true and correct to the best of the filer's knowledge, information, and belief. Election officials are required to file complaints when violations of campaign finance laws or applicable election statutes are found.

Examples of violations to report include, but not limited to:

- Failure to file required campaign finance reports
- Failure to file complete and accurate campaign finance reports
- Conversion of campaign funds for personal use
- Acceptance of prohibited contributions
- Use of campaign funds for prohibited purposes

For campaign finance complaints, boards shall attach a copy of (1) the committee's most recent designation of treasurer, (2) the most recent campaign finance report, (3) documented communications with the committee, and (4) any other relevant supporting documentation. A list of election law violations, possible penalties, and code citations can be found at the end of the Campaign Finance Handbook in Chapter 15. Once a complaint is filed, the matter is handled by the EIU and, if applicable, the Commission.

FILING FEES

The following table shows the total cost for each filing fee pursuant to R.C. 3513.10.

Filing fees collected by the board of elections pursuant to R.C. 3513.10(B) must be paid to the Ohio Election Integrity Commission Fund by the County Auditor.

Type of Candidate	Total Filing Fee	Amount Paid to OEIC
For district office, including members of the United States House of Representatives and members of the General Assembly	\$85	\$35
For court of appeals judge	\$80	\$30
For court of common pleas judge	\$80	\$30
For county court judge	\$80	\$30
For municipal court judge	\$80	\$30
For county office	\$80	\$30
For city office	\$45	\$25
For village office	\$30	\$20
For township office	\$30	\$20
For member of local, city, or exempted village board of education or educational service center governing board	\$30	\$20

Chapter 2 Checklist: Board of Elections Organization and Operations

This checklist is not complete, but covers the major responsibilities in Chapter 2. Always refer to the full Election Official Manual, Ohio Revised Code, and Secretary of State directives.

Board Organization

- ☐ Hold an organizational meeting within five days after Secretary of State appointments.
- ☐ Select a temporary chair to run the meeting.
- ☐ Choose a director (needs three votes).
- ☐ Choose a deputy director from the opposite party of the director (needs three votes).
- ☐ Select a chairperson from the opposite party as the director.
- ☐ Send [Form 308](#) and [Form 350](#) to the Secretary of State.
- ☐ Make sure all members and employees complete ethics forms.

Staff Requirements

- ☐ Create clear job descriptions for the director and the deputy director.
- ☐ Get background checks for all permanent employees.
- ☐ Have all staff take oaths of office.
- ☐ Set pay rates with at least three board votes.
- ☐ Create personnel policies (wages, leave, benefits).
- ☐ Avoid hiring family members except as poll workers.

Training

- ☐ New officials: Complete six hours of New Election Official Training within six months.

- ❑ New officials: Get eight more credits in the first year (14 total).
- ❑ Experienced officials: Get eight training credits each year.
- ❑ All officials: Complete annual cybersecurity training.
- ❑ Train all staff on security practices each year.

Office Setup

- ❑ Set regular office hours.
- ❑ Plan for extended hours during voter registration and early voting.
- ❑ Make sure facilities meet all requirements.
- ❑ Give 30 days' notice to commissioners before signing leases.

Meetings

- ❑ Create a schedule of regular meetings (monthly recommended).
- ❑ Post notice of all meetings.
- ❑ Keep detailed minutes of all meetings.
- ❑ Send approved minutes to Secretary of State within 10 days.
- ❑ Follow Open Meetings Act requirements.
- ❑ Start and end all meetings in public session.

Financial Management

- ❑ Prepare annual budget for commissioners.
- ❑ Track which expenses can be charged back to subdivisions.
- ❑ Properly advertise for bids on contracts over \$25,000.
- ❑ Calculate proper chargebacks after elections.
- ❑ Get August Special Election prepayment if needed.
- ❑ Follow proper voucher procedures for all payments.

Legal Requirements

- ❑ Publish required notices for voter registration and elections.
- ❑ Post notices on the board website and social media.
- ❑ Create a public records policy.
- ❑ Follow the records retention schedule.
- ❑ Consult with the county prosecutor on legal matters.
- ❑ Send tie votes to Secretary of State within 14 days.
- ❑ Properly investigate any alleged violations.

Election Planning

- ❑ Submit the election administration plan 75-120 days before major elections.
- ❑ Create contingency plans for various emergencies.
- ❑ Develop a master calendar of all deadlines.
- ❑ Conduct AARs within 45 days after elections.
- ❑ Review previous AARs before each election.
- ❑ Implement corrective actions from previous AARs.

Security

- ❑ Use double locks on ballot storage.
- ❑ Have keys held by officials of different parties.
- ❑ Train staff on cyber and physical security annually.
- ❑ Contact law enforcement for security help when needed.

Hearings and Investigations

- ❑ Consult with the prosecutor before hearings.
- ❑ Send proper notice to all parties.

- ❑ Arrange for a court reporter.
- ❑ Swear in all witnesses.
- ❑ Document all evidence.
- ❑ Be impartial and focus only on evidence presented.
- ❑ Report findings to prosecutor when appropriate.

Board of Elections Location Move

Secretary of State/Board Coordination Checklist and Timeline

When your Board moves locations, there are a number of details related to Secretary of State security requirements, Americans with Disabilities Act compliance, and dedicated IT circuits that must be completed before the move takes place.

Providing information and meeting with Secretary of State representatives early in the process helps ensure a smooth transition to your new location and minimizes rework, delays, or possible changes.

One Year Before the Move

Complete and Submit Board of Elections Location Move Management Form to Help@OhioSoS.gov.

- ❑ Complete as much information as you know when planning the move.
- ❑ Notify your regional liaison about the planned move and tentative dates.
- ❑ If your county is considered small or rural, coordinate with Secretary of State IT to hold the AT&T site location meeting as soon as possible, as last-mile local carrier installations can delay your move.

9 Months Before the Move

Send proposed site plans (building plans for new buildings or remodeling plans for existing buildings) to Help@OhioSoS.gov.

- ❑ Make sure to highlight secure areas/rooms, tabulation, and server rooms in the plans.

If the Secretary of State team notes any areas of risk or that may not meet Secretary of State requirements, your board will be notified early in the process so adjustments can be made.

If there is a project plan for the move, share it with Help@OhioSoS.gov to aid in Secretary of State resource scheduling.

Discuss the planned move date with Secretary of State's Elections Division to ensure the move will not interfere with an election.

6 Months Before the Move

Schedule Secretary of State Physical and Cyber Security, Secretary of State IT, and ADA meetings.

Meetings should be at the planned new location site or, if the new location is being built, at your board of elections to review the site plans.

Holding these meetings early in the move process can help with room layout, camera placement, and other security and ADA requirements.

- ❑ Schedule DHS site review.
- ❑ Provide monthly updates on move progress to Help@OhioSoS.gov.
- ❑ Confirm the status of the circuit installation with Secretary of State IT.
- ❑ Rural areas or those requiring last-mile local carrier connections may take longer to set up than locations in an urban or suburban setting.

3 Months Before the Move

Participate in a stakeholder meeting with Secretary of State IT, Security, Elections, and your regional liaison.

This meeting serves as a touch base to confirm plans and timelines are still on target or make adjustments if an aspect of the move has fallen behind schedule.

1 Month Before the Move

- ❑ Coordinate turn-on with Secretary of State IT.
- ❑ Schedule or coordinate the Palo Alto move.

Day of Move

- ❑ Test secure connection with Secretary of State IT.
- ❑ Celebrate your new board of elections space!



CHAPTER 3: SECURITY¹

Section 3.01 Election and Board Security Overview

This chapter discusses how to keep elections secure. It covers both physical and information technology (IT) security. It also covers how to keep the board office, equipment, and computer systems safe. It also includes what to do if something goes wrong. These rules protect elections and help voters trust the process.

This chapter is supported by Directive 2026-20 – *Security of Critical Infrastructure at Ohio's Boards of Elections*, 2026-20 *Security Directive Technical Document*, the 2026-20 *Security Directive Guidebook*, and the 2026-20 *Security Directive Checklist*.

Section 3.02 Security of the Board Office, Voting Systems, and Ballots

SECURITY OF THE BOARD OFFICE

Keeping the board office secure is crucial to protect staff, voting equipment, and IT systems. This helps ensure that elections remain confidential and trustworthy. The board must do its best to prevent unauthorized access and minimize risks such as damage from fire or water.

Board offices must have exterior lighting focused on entrances, exits, and the external drop box. This lighting should be inspected regularly to ensure it works properly.

Each location must also have adequate fire suppression equipment that is regularly checked to ensure it functions correctly. Portable fire extinguishers should be visually inspected every month for physical damage, such as corrosion, leaks, or dents, and to make sure the pressure gauge is in the correct operating range.

¹[Directive 2026-30](#)

Boards must also have approved video monitoring systems for both the interior bipartisan rooms and the exterior drop box. These systems should keep footage for at least 14 days and be checked regularly to ensure they are working as expected.

Each board must create an office security policy that covers, at a minimum:

- How to keep unauthorized people out of the board office.
- How staff will register and monitor visitors.
- How to restrict access to areas that have voting equipment, election materials, voter registration servers, networks, and computers.
- How to check that people are following security rules.
- How to report if someone breaks the rules.

Review the board's security policies and procedures every six months to make sure they are current and being followed.

STORAGE OF VOTING EQUIPMENT

The board must use the following rules for storing voting equipment at the board office or other secure place:

- Store it in a secure, clean, and climate-controlled area.
- The voting equipment must be secured at all times. Access must be limited to as few board employees as possible, and video monitoring should cover the entrance and exit to the bipartisan storage areas.
- Equipment storage rooms must have alarms that detect if someone enters without permission.
- If a security alarm goes off, the director and deputy director must be notified. They must tell the Secretary of State's office through the Security Event email box.
- Use a dual-control lock system that requires a bipartisan team to unlock. The director (or designee from their party) must keep possession of one key or lock combination, and the deputy director (or designee from their party) must keep the other one.

- Check ID before letting any visitor, vendor, or repair person into equipment storage areas. Keep a log of the names and when they enter and leave. Watch visitors at all times. The best systems (badges or video monitoring systems) track exactly who enters and log the date and time of access.
- Install smoke alarms and fire extinguishers. Train staff on what to do if a fire occurs in the storage area.
- Follow the manufacturer's storage guidelines for voting equipment. Storing equipment improperly may affect its warranty.
- Keep the storage area clean. Do not store equipment in damp areas or on floors that might flood.

TAKING VOTING EQUIPMENT OFF-SITE

Sometimes, boards take voting equipment off-site for demos, public events, or because of an emergency.

Bipartisan control must be maintained at all times, even during transport and demos, unless the board hires a private delivery company. Follow rules from [Chapter 9, Section 3](#), of this manual, including using tamper-evident seals. If a bipartisan team member must leave, a qualified person of the same party must step in.

Keep records in the board inventory control process of who has the equipment and when.

INVENTORY OF VOTING EQUIPMENT

The board must inventory all its voting equipment and keep a list of each piece and its serial number. For each piece of equipment, also keep:

- Proof of purchase (invoice, purchase order, etc.).
- Chain of Custody Log for at least two years after each election.²
- Usage records (when, where, and who used it).
- Reports of any damage or mishandling.
- Any repair records (when, where, who did the repair, reason, and outcome).

²[See County Board of Elections Record Retention Schedule.](#)

The director and deputy director must maintain and check the list often.

SECURE STORAGE OF BALLOTS AND ELECTION DATA MEDIA

Ballots and election data media include:

- Optical scan ballots made by a vendor or printed in-house.
- Blank ballot paper.
- Spoiled and/or unused ballots.
- All removable media cards.
- CDs or USB drives with results.
- Paper vote records, also known as voter-verified paper audit trails (VVPATs).
- Ballot access devices (such as Personal Electronic Ballot cartridges or access cards).

Store these materials in a clean, climate-controlled room that has proper smoke alarms and fire extinguishers. Don't store them in areas that may flood or get wet. No food or drinks are allowed in storage areas.

Only authorized staff may access these items. Keep them in a separate, locked room or storage unit that is for that purpose. Just like the voting equipment, ballots and election data media must be locked under a dual-control system.

Store ballots as the printer recommends or follow manufacturer recommendations for blank ballot stock. Use protective cases, containers, or original packaging if that is what the printer or manufacturer recommends.

Put removable media in a labeled sleeve or case.

INVENTORY OF BALLOTS

For outside-printed ballots:

- Boards must keep a list of the ballot styles and the number of ballots for each style that they get from the printer.
- Keep track of any difference between what was ordered and what was received. Show any steps board employees took to fix the problem.

- The board must maintain a list of each of the following:
 - The sequence numbers of the ballots received.
 - The number and sequence number range of the ballots given to each precinct.
 - The number and sequence number range of the ballots for absentee and provisional voting.

The board must document what happened to each ballot (voted, unvoted, or spoiled).

For ballots printed in-house with a ballot-on-demand (BOD) printer, the board must document the use of each sheet of blank ballot stock.³

Use a Chain of Custody Log to track the delivery of optical scan ballots to each precinct.

SECURITY OF VOTING SYSTEM AND TABULATION PROGRAMS/SOFTWARE

Ohio law states that voting machines must never be connected to the internet⁴. This includes all equipment and software used to set up elections, create ballots, collect data and count votes, tabulate results, and keep audit records. The board's voter registration server is not considered part of the voting system for this section.

Boards are prohibited from connecting the following devices to the internet: voting machines, marking devices, tabulating equipment, direct recording electronic (DRE) voting machines, election management systems, and central tabulating systems.

Voting machines or parts of the system must only connect to the central tabulating system through an air-gapped network for things like uploading memory cards, ballot definitions, and precinct results. Never download or install software or firmware on voting machines that has not been approved by the Board of Voting Systems Examiners (BVSE).

DAILY BACKUPS

Boards must back up the voter registration server and any data it processes every day. Other important systems, such as file servers, must be backed up at least once a week.

³No board of elections shall use a ballot-on-demand system unless each ballot printed by the system includes a tracking number.
[R.C. 3506.20\(B\)](#).

⁴[R.C.3506.23](#)

These backups must be stored securely at an off-site, off-network location. Boards must keep backup copies for at least three weeks. At least once a year, boards need to test the backups to make sure they can fully restore the voter registration server and other critical systems using the off-site backup.

PASSWORDS

The board and its employees must use strong passwords. Set a basic input/output system (BIOS) password for all vote tabulation server systems. This forces users to enter the correct BIOS password to boot the machine.

All central tabulating systems must have passwords that:

- Are split between parties (a board employee from the Republican Party has half of the password, and a board employee from the Democratic Party has the other half of the password).
- Are at least 15 characters long or the minimum number that the system will allow, whichever is greater.
- Include a number in each half.
- Include a symbol in each half.
- Include both uppercase and lowercase letters in each half.
- Do not repeat the same character more than twice in a row.
- Do not use simple letter substitution (for example, "D1ct10n4ry").

Change both the BIOS and central tabulating system software passwords before every election.

Only authorized users can have passwords for the BIOS and central tabulating system. Never put any part of a password on a monitor or keyboard or anywhere it can be seen.

How do split passwords work?

A split password has two separate 15-character passwords.

The employee representing the Republican Party knows one of them, and the employee from the Democratic Party knows the other.

Each employee enters his or her password without the other employee observing them enter it.

The voting system vendor may set these up for the board.

Some voting systems have bipartisan controls, with two separate passwords entered in separate boxes or on separate screens.

Set systems to log out users after five minutes of no activity.

USER ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT

For all systems with voter information and central tabulating systems, every user must have their own user ID and personal password.

Require these IDs and passwords for multiuser access to computers and networks.

All users of board systems, email, and official social media must:

- Have a unique username and password/passphrase.
- Never share passwords or security devices.
- Use strong passwords that:
 - Are at least 15 characters long.
 - Contain three out of the following four items: number, lowercase letter, uppercase letter, and a symbol.
 - Doesn't contain the user's name or username.
 - Aren't simple dictionary words.
 - Aren't simple letter swaps (like "D1ct10n4ry").
- Use different passwords for different systems. For example, the passwords for personal email accounts and board of elections email accounts cannot match.

More Password Tips:

Avoid common or easily guessed passwords like these:

12345
12345678
password
iloveyou

To create a strong password:

Longer is better.

Use uppercase, lowercase, and numbers.

Use a passphrase like

ThebestpartofthedayiswhenItakemy1stspof
coffee.

- Passwords/passphrases must be encrypted while stored in a format prescribed under the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) [800-53 5.1.1.2](#).⁵
- Change user passwords every 90 days and do not reuse passwords.

Multifactor authentication must be used for all accounts that access voter data, election systems, email, admin access, or remote connections. Any [multifactor solution must follow government standards](#) (found in [NIST 800-63b](#)), by using hardware authentication devices, one-time use password tokens, or biometrics.

Password Tip

Using multifactor authentication (MFA) reduces the need to change passwords frequently.

Boards using social media accounts must use multifactor authentication.

The board must review user accounts quarterly, remove access for people who don't need it, and deactivate unneeded accounts.

ADMINISTRATIVE ACCOUNTS

Administrative accounts can install updates, manage user accounts, and change system settings. After each quarterly review, determine everyone who has an administrative account and remove accounts that aren't needed.

Administrative accounts must be separate from accounts used for email, internet, and voter registration processing. Work with board IT staff to make sure employees with admin accounts only have access to systems needed for their role.

ALL OTHER PASSWORD GUIDANCE

For all other guidance on password creation and management, refer to the most recent Secretary of State *Security of Critical Infrastructure Security Directive*.

ACCESS LOGS

Directors and deputy directors must regularly check access logs kept by their voting system servers, voter registration servers, computers, firewall, and networking devices. Look for any strange activity on the system, such as access at odd hours or too frequently.

⁵SP 800-53 Rev. 5, [Security and Privacy Controls for Information Systems and Organizations](#) | CSRC.

For security, keep these logs on a separate system if possible. Save all access logs for 90 days. Electronic logs must not be turned off.

THIRD-PARTY PERSONNEL ACCESS TO VOTING SYSTEM

Board policies must prohibit anyone who is not a board employee, contractor, or consultant of the board or the Secretary of State's office from accessing election systems or networks without written approval from both the board chairperson and the director.

Remote access to board systems must use secure technologies (such as TLS v1.2+ or IPSEC) with multifactor authentication. Remote access must:

- Use VPN with multifactor authentication.
- Meet federal security standards ([NIST FIPS 140-2 standards](#)).
- Log and store all access sessions as required.

Before giving outside parties access, get written documentation that shows what work they'll do, who authorized it, who's responsible, and exactly when access starts and ends.

Section 3.03 Information Technology Security

TECHNICAL POINT OF CONTACT

Each board of elections must designate a Technical Point of Contact (TPOC). This TPOC can be an employee of the board of elections or an employee of an external IT support organization if the board contracts for such services, either through the county or a third party. The board is required to notify the Secretary of State's office whenever there is a change in the TPOC, including any updates to the TPOC's contact information.

CONNECTED SYSTEMS

All connected systems, including voter registration servers, computers, and network equipment, must follow the *Security of Critical Infrastructure Security Directive* that is sent directly to the board from the Ohio Secretary of State's office. This document is for official use only and is covered by [R.C. 149.433](#).

VULNERABILITY MANAGEMENT

Boards must run weekly authenticated vulnerability scans and keep records on this for at least one year. Fix security problems quickly: Critical and/or high vulnerabilities must be

fixed within 15 days and others within 30 days. Using a patch management solution can help meet these deadlines.

EMAIL AND WEBSITE SECURITY

All board email addresses and websites must use domains ending in ".gov". Board members, directors, deputies, and staff may not use personal email providers (Gmail, Yahoo, etc.) for official business.

Never forward email messages to personal accounts (such as Gmail or Yahoo).

Boards must use email security tools (SPF (Sender Policy Framework), Domain-based Message Authentication, Reporting and Conformance, or DMARC, with DomainKeys Identified Mail known as DKIM) to prevent email scams and phishing. Learn more at: <https://www.cisa.gov/eviction-strategies-tool/info-countermeasures/CM0055>

All county board of elections email accounts must use multifactor authentication, and each permanent employee or member requiring an email must have their own email address.

NETWORK SECURITY

Boards of elections must set up their networks securely, as shown in the *Security of Critical Infrastructure Security Directive*. This document is for official use only and is exempt from public disclosure under [R.C. 149.433](#). It adds to the rules of this section.

VOTER REGISTRATION AND ELECTION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM DATA

Areas with voter registration systems, election management systems, vote tabulation systems, pollbooks, electronic pollbooks, ballots, or other election systems must be secured. This security must use a two-person access mechanism, ensuring that access requires a bipartisan team.

Boards must back up the voter registration server and data every day. Encrypt these backups using federal security standards ([NIST FIPS 140-3](#)) as explained in the *Security of Critical Infrastructure Directive*. Store all backups in a secure, off-site location not connected to the board network. Test the backup once a year to make sure the board can fully restore the voter registration server if needed.

Section 3.04 Security

Election officials are responsible for protecting Ohio's elections. Each county board of elections must follow the steps in this section to strengthen security and protect IT systems.

THE MULTI-STATE INFORMATION SHARING AND ANALYSIS CENTER (MS-ISAC) AND CYBERSECURITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE SECURITY AGENCY (CISA) RESOURCES

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) designated election infrastructure as critical, which gives election officials access to some free DHS services. For more information, contact DHS at CISAServiceDesk@CISA.DHS.gov.

Boards must continue using the Cyber Hygiene Vulnerability Scanning Service, which scans internet systems for security issues and tells users about these risks so they can fix them. Boards must continue to use the Web Application Scanning service, which scans the board's websites for vulnerabilities.⁶

Every two years, boards must request these DHS CISA services:

- Risk and Vulnerability Assessment: An on-site assessment that finds network security vulnerabilities and gives the board a report and recommendations.
- Remote Penetration Testing: Remote testing that identifies vulnerabilities in external systems, with a report and recommendations.

Boards must also update personnel information with the MS-ISAC and register new staff at Learn.CISecurity.org/MS-ISAC-Registration.

SECURING ONLINE CAPABILITIES

TLS/SSL certificates (digital certificates standing for Transport Layer Security and Secure Sockets Layer) secure data and prevent websites from being flagged as insecure. Each board must use these certificates for all web applications and make sure they don't expire.

⁶CISA defines a vulnerability as a flaw or weakness in system security procedures, design, implementation, or internal controls that could be exploited, either accidentally or intentionally, leading to a security breach or violation of the system's security policy. Essentially, it's a potential weakness that an attacker could use to compromise a system.

All board websites, including vendor systems for election and voter data, must have a web application firewall (WAF). The *Security Directive Implementation Guidebook* provides more information on WAFs.

The board's WAF must include:

- Protection from denial-of-service attacks.
- Blocking of harmful scanning and bots.
- Defense against common web attacks (like cross-site scripting or SQL injection).

Boards must also show a banner on their website telling visitors how to check that the site is secure and official.

INCIDENT RESPONSE PLANNING AND PRACTICE WITH TABLETOP EXERCISE (TTX)

Boards must have a plan for handling security problems such as ransomware, phishing, and insider threats. The board must practice this plan once a year through a tabletop exercise (TTX). Boards must send updated Incident Response and Continuity of Operations Plans to the Secretary of State's Elections Division at Election@OhioSoS.gov.

Boards should ask website providers to test how many visitors their sites can handle before elections, when traffic increases.

The board should have a clear way for people to report website problems or security issues, referred to as a vulnerability disclosure policy (VDP). Make sure these reports go to the right people at the board (usually the technical person in charge of the website) so they can fix the problems.

ANNUAL CYBERSECURITY AWARENESS TRAINING

Board members and staff must take an approved security awareness training course every year and send proof of completion to the Secretary of State's office within 30 days of completion.

If the board doesn't have training available, the Secretary of State's office will provide it for free. Complete the training within two months of enrolling. If the board uses training from the Secretary of State's office, it doesn't need to send proof of completion.

PHYSICAL SECURITY ASSESSMENT AND TRAINING

Each board must complete a free DHS physical security assessment. Security assessments should be completed:

- Every three to five years.
- When a board moves to a new location (see also [Chapter 2, Board of Elections Location Move, Secretary of State/Board Coordination Checklist and Timeline](#)).
- When there is a significant remodel of the current board office.
- On notification from the Secretary of State.

This includes on-site visits and web-based surveys to find security gaps and suggest fixes. Boards should review the report, consider the recommendations, and conduct remediation to reduce any identified security vulnerabilities.

Boards must also train staff on physical security practices and policies. The rules for securing offices, voting equipment, and ballots are outlined earlier in **Section 3.03** of this chapter. Make sure board practices meet or exceed these standards.

CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS

All permanent board employees, vendors, and contractors who perform sensitive services must have a criminal background check. Sensitive services include access to personal or agency data, computer systems, or secure areas without supervision.

Vendors and contractors can either pay for their background check or attest to having completed one with no disqualifying crimes. Each board must have a policy for reviewing background checks and deciding who can be hired based on criminal history.

VENDOR CONTRACTS

Vendor partnerships should be closely evaluated and monitored for security risks. The board must work with its legal counsel to add cybersecurity terms to all new or renewed contracts for:

- Voter registration systems.
- Electronic pollbooks.
- Ballot-on-demand services.

- Voting machines.
- IT services.

These contracts must include a [Security Supplement](#) to ensure vendors follow the Ohio Secretary of State's official security directives.

The Security Supplement includes standard cybersecurity terms for data protection, network security, vulnerability management, access control, MFA, incident response, supply chain risk, and more. The federal government bans products from foreign vendors, and that ban applies to all contracts.

More details can be found in the Security Supplement. The Security Supplement covers:

- Data and network protection.
- Vulnerability management and application security.
- Controlling who has access.
- Password and authentication requirements.
- How to handle security incidents.
- Supply chain risks.
- Ban on foreign products.
- Software Bill of Materials.

Section 3.05 Security Event Reporting

This section defines "security events" and tells the board and its employees how to report them to the Secretary of State's office. The board must notify the Secretary's office immediately, even outside business hours, using the email in the *Security of Critical Infrastructure Security Directive*. Follow the instructions if email isn't available. Follow these instructions year-round, even if law enforcement is not involved.

Examples of Reportable Security Events include:

- Instances of any direct, indirect, or perceived threats of violence, harassment, or intimidation of election officials, staff, precinct election officials, or property used

by the boards of elections. If you believe a threat of violence is imminent, call 9-1-1.

- Someone without proper clearance is trying to get into board facilities, polling places, or offices.
- Phishing or hacking attempts on county voter registration systems or websites.
- Attempts to alter or destroy election-related systems (such as candidate qualifications, ballots, and voting equipment).
- Unauthorized access or inaccessibility of IT systems used for election management.
- Phishing or hacking of election officials' email or social media accounts.
- Hacks on political party or candidate IT systems.
- Disruptions or hacking attempts on absentee ballot infrastructure.
- Compromises of networks/systems affecting election-related infrastructure.
- Attempts to persuade officials to engage in illegal activity.
- Disruptions at polling or training locations that hinder voter participation.
- Disinformation efforts targeting government websites or voter participation.
- Unauthorized entry into vote-counting locations or election systems.
- Impacts to critical infrastructure (for example, the board's power, internet, transportation) affecting elections.

MARCS BACK UP EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

The Secretary of State's office has provided each board of elections with a Multi-Agency Radio Communication System (MARCS radio) for backup communications and emergency preparedness. All boards must make sure they have enough staff trained to use the MARCS radio in case of an emergency. Be sure the radio is charged and turned on during all voting periods. Set it to the appropriate channel and store it securely when not in use.

Local law enforcement and boards will receive additional guidance before each statewide election to ensure proper usage if needed.

Chapter 3 Checklist: Security

PHYSICAL SECURITY

Office Security

- ☐ Create and adopt a comprehensive office security policy.
- ☐ Train all staff on the security policy.
- ☐ Implement visitor registration and supervision protocols.
- ☐ Restrict access to areas with voting equipment and systems.
- ☐ Establish a process for reporting security violations.

Voting Equipment Storage

- ☐ Secure voting equipment in a clean, climate-controlled area.
- ☐ Install a monitored security system for the storage area.
- ☐ Use a dual-control lock system that requires bipartisan access.
- ☐ Keep a visitor log for the storage area.
- ☐ Install smoke detection and fire suppression systems.
- ☐ Train staff on fire response.
- ☐ Keep the storage area clean.

Equipment Inventory

- ☐ Maintain complete inventory of all voting equipment with serial numbers.
- ☐ Keep purchase documentation for all equipment.
- ☐ Maintain Chain of Custody logs for at least two years.
- ☐ Track and log equipment usage, including date, location, and user.
- ☐ Document any damage or unauthorized handling.
- ☐ Keep complete repair history records.

- ❑ Regularly review the inventory list.

Ballot and Media Storage

- ❑ Store ballots and election media in a clean, secure, climate-controlled area.
- ❑ Give access to authorized people only.
- ❑ Use a dual-lock system for ballot storage.
- ❑ Store ballots according to printer directions.
- ❑ Mark and properly store all election media.
- ❑ Keep a detailed inventory of all ballots.
- ❑ Use Chain of Custody logs for ballot delivery.

SYSTEM SECURITY

Voting Systems

- ❑ Be sure that no voting machines connect to the internet.
- ❑ Only connect voting machines to air-gap networks when necessary.

Passwords and Access Control

- ❑ Set BIOS passwords on all vote tabulation servers.
- ❑ Implement split passwords with bipartisan control.
- ❑ Ensure passwords meet all complexity requirements.
- ❑ Change BIOS and central tabulating system passwords before every election.
- ❑ Set up automatic logout after 5 minutes of inactivity.

User Accounts

- ❑ Give each user a unique ID and password.
- ❑ Use complex password requirements.
- ❑ Use different passwords for different applications.
- ❑ Change passwords every 90 days.

- ❑ Set up multifactor authentication for all critical systems.
- ❑ Review user accounts quarterly.
- ❑ Keep administrative and regular accounts separate.
- ❑ Change service account passwords every year.

Logs and Monitoring

- ❑ Regularly check all access logs.
- ❑ Look for unusual access patterns or suspicious activity.
- ❑ Store logs on a separate system.
- ❑ Keep logs for 90 days.
- ❑ Do not turn off electronic logs.

IT SECURITY

Email and Website Security

- ❑ Use only .gov domains for websites and email.
- ❑ Never forward official emails to personal accounts.
- ❑ Use DMARC and DKIM email authentication.
- ❑ Set up Sender Policy Framework (SPF).
- ❑ Use MFA for all email accounts.
- ❑ Install TLS/SSL certificates on all web applications.
- ❑ Protect websites with a web application firewall.

Data Protection

- ❑ Back up voter registration server and data every day.
- ❑ Encrypt backups using FIPS 140-3 standards.
- ❑ Store backups in a secure, off-site location.
- ❑ Test backups annually to be sure they can restore data.

- ❑ Run weekly authenticated vulnerability scans.
- ❑ Fix critical issues within 15 days.
- ❑ Fix other vulnerabilities within 30 days.

SECURITY PROGRAMS AND TRAINING

CISA and MS-ISAC Resources

- ❑ Use Cyber Hygiene Vulnerability Scanning Service to find internet vulnerabilities.
- ❑ Use Web Application Scanning service for the board's website vulnerabilities.
- ❑ Request a Risk and Vulnerability Assessment every two years.
- ❑ Request Remote Penetration Testing every two years.
- ❑ Register new staff with the Elections Infrastructure Information Sharing and Analysis Center (EI-ISAC).
- ❑ Keep MS-ISAC contact information updated.

Response Planning

- ❑ Maintain an incident response plan.
- ❑ Conduct annual tabletop exercises (TTX).
- ❑ Submit updated plans to the Secretary of State's office.
- ❑ Have website providers perform load testing.
- ❑ Consider creating a vulnerability disclosure policy.

Training and Assessment

- ❑ Complete annual cybersecurity awareness training.
- ❑ Submit training completion certificates within 30 days.
- ❑ Complete DHS physical security assessment.
- ❑ Review and implement assessment recommendations.
- ❑ Train staff on physical security practices.

Vendor Management

- ❑ Conduct criminal background checks for permanent employees.
- ❑ Require background checks for vendors handling sensitive services.
- ❑ Include cybersecurity terms in all vendor contracts.
- ❑ Do not use products from foreign vendors banned by federal government.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Incident Reporting

- ❑ Know what security events must be reported.
- ❑ Establish clear reporting procedures.
- ❑ Train staff to report incidents immediately.
- ❑ Know who to contact at the Secretary of State's office.

Emergency Communications

- ❑ Train staff on MARCS radio use.
- ❑ Keep MARCS radio charged during voting periods.
- ❑ Set MARCS radio to the appropriate channel.
- ❑ Store MARCS radio securely when not in use.



CHAPTER 4: VOTER REGISTRATION¹

Section 4.01 Voter Registration Introduction

Voter registration is the foundation of Ohio's election system. The Help America Vote Act (HAVA), the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA), and the Ohio Revised Code include ways to increase opportunities to register to vote. The board of elections manages the voter registration process from start to finish. It registers new voters, updates records, maintains accurate lists, and ensures only eligible citizens can vote. This chapter guides the board and its employees through every part of voter registration. It contains practical instructions, legal requirements, and compliance deadlines. It will also guide the board and its employees in following laws and rules that govern voter registration, including the NVRA, HAVA, and the Ohio Revised Code (R.C.).

Section 4.02 Voter Status Codes and Acknowledgment

VOTER STATUS CODES

Election officials apply data codes to show voter status. These codes help the board maintain its voter registration records. The two primary codes are "ACTIVE" and "CONFIRMATION".

ACTIVE

The "ACTIVE" status code is assigned to any voter who is not assigned a "CONFIRMATION" or "REMOVED" voter status code. ACTIVE voters can vote normally. The electronic database shows this as the capital letter "A". These voters are fully registered and eligible to vote.

¹[Directive 2026-31](#)

CONFIRMATION

The CONFIRMATION status code is sometimes referred to as “Inactive” or “Active-Confirmation.” Use this when the board sends a confirmation notice to a voter who hasn’t responded to either confirm the information on file or provide updated information. These voters are fully qualified electors who can still vote and sign petitions, and they appear in the pollbook on Election Day. The electronic database shows “Inactive” or “Active-Confirmation” status by the capital letters “I” or “C”.

Other Codes

Boards should apply uniform codes established by the Secretary of State for all other voter statuses. These include “Incarcerated,” “Incompetent,” “Merged,” “Removed,” and “Dead.”

Section 4.03 Voter Registration Methods

IN-PERSON REGISTRATION

When someone registers to vote in person:

- They must provide their current, valid Ohio driver license number or state ID card number as ID.²
- If they do not have a current, valid driver license or state ID card number, they must provide the last four digits of SSN on the registration card.³
- If the voter doesn’t have a driver license number, state ID, or SSN, they must check the box indicating that they have not been issued an Ohio driver license, state ID, or SSN.

REGISTER BY MAIL

“Register by mail” is a term of art⁴ used in the Help America Vote Act (HAVA).

For registering by mail:

- The voter must provide their name and address.

²52 U.S.C. § 21083(a)(5)(A)(i)(I); R.C. 3503.14(A)(5)(a).

³52 U.S.C. § 21083(a)(5)(A)(i)(II); R.C. 3503.14(A)(5)(b).

⁴A term of art is a word or phrase that has a precise, specialized meaning in a particular field or specialization.

- They must provide their current, valid Ohio driver license number or state ID card number.⁵
- If they do not have a current, valid driver license or state ID card number, they must provide the last four digits of SSN on the registration card.⁶

Registration Date

Ohio law defines a voter's "registration date" in the DATA Act and requires that it be included in their county voter registration record and the state voter registration database.⁷ The registration date depends on how the voter registered and should generally be the date they initially became registered to vote in Ohio.⁸ Use the **Voter Registration Date Rules** to determine a voter's registration date.

⁵[R.C. 3503.14\(A\)\(5\)\(a\).](#)

⁶[R.C. 3503.14\(A\)\(5\)\(b\).](#)

⁷[R.C. 3503.15\(C\)\(9\).](#)

⁸A change of address or change of name form, including a provisional ballot affirmation that serves as a change of address or change of name form, is not considered an application to register to vote. [R.C. 3503.15\(C\)\(9\)\(b\)\(ii\).](#) Additionally, an application to register to vote that is submitted by an individual who is already registered to vote in Ohio is not considered an application to register to vote. [R.C. 3503.15\(C\)\(9\)\(b\)\(iii\).](#)

Voter Registration Date Rules

Registration Method	Definition	Registration Date
Designated Agency	Registrations delivered in person to a state or local office of a designated agency, the office of the registrar or any deputy registrar of motor vehicles, a public high school or vocational school, a public library, or the office of a county treasurer.	The date that is stamped on the registration when it is received by the designated agency or other qualifying public office. ⁹
By Mail	Delivered by mail to a board of elections or the Secretary of State's office.	The date that the application is postmarked. If the postmark is missing or illegible, use the date the application is received at the board. If the date the board receives the application by mail falls after close of voter registration but no later than the 25th day before the election, use the date of the close of voter registration. ¹⁰
Online Voter Registration (OLVR)	Delivered via online voter registration system.	The date of the online submission. ¹¹
In Person	Registrations that are delivered in person to a board of elections or the Secretary of State's office.	The date that is stamped on the application upon receipt by the board of elections or the Secretary of State's office. ¹²
Electronic	Delivered via fax or email.	The date the board receives the transmission or email. ¹³
Rejected Provisional	A provisional ballot affirmation that serves as an application to register to vote in future elections.	The date of the meeting where members of the board determine that the provisional ballot is invalid. ¹⁴

⁹[R.C. 3503.15\(C\)\(9\)\(a\)\(i\).](#)

¹⁰[R.C. 3503.15\(C\)\(9\)\(a\)\(iii\); R.C. 3503.19\(A\).](#)

¹¹[R.C. 3503.15\(C\)\(9\)\(a\)\(iv\).](#)

¹²[R.C. 3503.15\(C\)\(9\)\(a\)\(ii\).](#)

¹³[R.C. 3503.15\(C\)\(9\)\(a\)\(v\).](#)

¹⁴[R.C. 3503.15\(C\)\(9\)\(a\)\(vi\).](#)

Don't assign new registration dates for address or name changes.¹⁵ Keep the original registration date unless the registration was canceled (including removed, incarcerated, or incompetent) and then properly reactivated.

Registration Blackout Period

The DATA Act has temporal (i.e., time-based) requirements and prohibitions about when the voter registration date is entered during voter registration blackout periods. Don't assign registration dates that fall between the day after the close of voter registration and Election Day.¹⁶ Instead, assign dates based on when board employees process the application *after* the election.¹⁷

Boards are permitted to "pre-process" voter registrations during voter registration blackout periods. Pre-processing includes receiving and routing paper applications, opening mail, scanning documents, and conducting any data entry work necessary to create or update voter records. Any new registrations received and pre-processed during a voter registration blackout period should be assigned the date after the election on which the board of elections processes the application.

While the blackout period for assigning registration dates ends the day after the election, boards must not send voter registration packets until voter history is uploaded and authorization is received from the Secretary of State's office. Any registrations that arrive between the first day after the election and the resumption of normal packet transmission should receive the appropriate registration date as set forth above.

The voter registration blackout period only applies to the assignment of registration dates.

¹⁵[R.C. 3503.15\(C\)\(9\)\(b\)\(ii\).](#)

¹⁶[R.C. 3503.15\(C\)\(9\)\(b\).](#) ¹⁷[R.C. 3503.15\(C\)\(9\)\(b\)\(i\).](#)

¹⁷[R.C. 3503.15\(C\)\(9\)\(b\)\(i\).](#)

Section 4.04 Voter Eligibility and Voter-Initiated Activity

QUALIFICATIONS

To register, a person must:

- Be a U.S. citizen.¹⁸
- Be at least 18 years old on or before the day of the next general election.¹⁹
- Be an Ohio resident for at least 30 days immediately before the election at which the person wants to vote.²⁰ (See **Determining Voting Residency** below)
- Not be in jail, prison, or a community-based correctional facility because the person was convicted of a felony.²¹
- Not be determined incompetent for voting by a probate court.²²
- Not be permanently banned from voting for election law violations.²³

Once registered, a person doesn't need to register again unless their registration is canceled.²⁴ See also **Voter Initiated Activity** below.

If someone moves within Ohio and/or changes their name, they must update their voter registration record with the appropriate county board of elections.

Determining Voting Residency

Whether a person qualifies as a "resident" of Ohio for voting purposes is a decision made by the board of the county where the person would vote.²⁵ In making its determination, the board must apply the rules in [R.C. 3503.02](#):

- "Residence" is where someone's home is fixed and where they intend to return when absent.²⁶

¹⁸[R.C. 3503.01\(A\).](#)

¹⁹[R.C. 3503.01\(A\).](#)

²⁰[R.C. 3503.01\(A\).](#)

²¹[R.C. 2961.01\(A\), \(C\)\(2\).](#)

²²[R.C. 3503.21\(A\)\(5\).](#)

²³[R.C. 3503.18\(D\).](#)

²⁴[R.C. 3503.07.](#)

²⁵[R.C. 3501.11\(Q\).](#)

²⁶[R.C. 3503.02\(A\).](#)

- Temporary moves don't change residence if the person intends to return.²⁷
- Temporary visits don't create a new residence.²⁸
- For married people, family residence is usually the voting residence, except when spouses have separated and live apart. The place where the spouse resides long enough to entitle them to vote shall be considered the spouse's place of residence.²⁹
- Military and U.S. government service doesn't change Ohio residence. The place where they resided at the time of their leaving is considered their place of residence.³⁰
- Homeless persons can use a shelter or other location where they regularly stay and intend to return as the person's residence for the purpose of registering to vote.³¹

Loss of Residency for Voting Purposes

[R.C. 3503.02](#) also addresses situations where Ohio voters lost their residency for voting purposes. For example:

- Moving to another state and intending to make that state their home.³²
- Living outside Ohio continuously for four years or more (except people who reside outside of Ohio because of military/government service).³³
- Voting in another state.³⁴

This excludes voters who qualify under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) or the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act. (See also [Chapter 5](#) for more information on UOCAVA ballots.)

²⁷[R.C. 3503.02\(B\).](#)

²⁸[R.C. 3503.02\(C\).](#)

²⁹[R.C. 3503.02\(D\).](#)

³⁰[R.C. 3503.02\(G\)\(1\).](#)

³¹[R.C. 3503.02\(I\).](#)

³²[R.C. 3503.02\(E\).](#)

³³[R.C. 3503.02\(F\).](#)

³⁴[R.C. 3503.02\(H\).](#)

No USPS office, Contracted Post Office Facility, Post Office (P.O.) Box or Mail Store as Voting Residence Address

A person cannot list a United States Postal Service (USPS) office, a Post Office (P.O.) box, a contracted post office facility address, or a commercial mail store (e.g., UPS, FedEx) as their residence for voting purposes. However, they can provide a P.O. Box for mailing purposes.

The Registration Audit Dashboard contains flagged voter registrations with residential addresses that exactly match the address of a USPS office or mail store. On a monthly basis, boards must access the Dashboard to review the residence qualifications of voters whose registration addresses are flagged as located at a USPS office or mail store address. The board must review records to determine whether the voter's mailing address was mistakenly entered into the residential address field. If the board has a different valid residential address on file, it should correct the error.

Investigate each flagged voter to determine whether the building also contains residential property (for example, if the USPS office is in a mixed-use development). If the board finds that the flagged address contains residential property in addition to the USPS office, the board must use the "Report Issue" function on the Dashboard and describe how it reached that determination.

However, if the board verifies that the record is actually registered at a USPS office, it must send [Form 10-RES](#) to the voter's mailing address on file, if one is available. If no mailing address is available, the board must send the form to the voter's registration address. The board must notate the voter file with the date this notice was sent. Voters sent a [Form 10-RES](#) will have 30 days from the date the notice is sent to update their voter registration with a valid residential address. If they do not respond within 30 days, the board must cancel the voter's registration.

Shielding Residence Addresses of Designated Public Service Workers

Qualifying designated public service workers can request that their address be shielded from disclosure.³⁵ They cannot register to vote from their business address.

Under Ohio law, the following may request that a public office redact their address from any record publicly available on the internet: "a peace officer, parole officer, probation

³⁵[R.C. 149.45\(D\)\(1\)](#).

officer, bailiff, assistant prosecuting attorney, correctional employee, county or multicounty corrections officer, community-based correctional facility employee, designated Ohio national guard member, protective services worker, youth services employee, firefighter, EMT, medical director or member of a cooperating physician advisory board of an emergency medical service organization, state board of pharmacy employee, investigator of the bureau of criminal identification and investigation, emergency service telecommunicator, forensic mental health provider, mental health evaluation provider, regional psychiatric hospital employee, magistrate, or federal law enforcement officer.”³⁶ This request must be made on the Ohio Attorney General’s [Request to Redact Address](#) form.³⁷ Process the request within five business days, and either make the redaction or explain why the redaction is not possible.³⁸ Consult the county prosecutor with questions about processing a completed form or verifying employment or eligibility.

When the board receives a valid request, board employees must:

1. Flag the voter’s address as “private” in the board’s voter registration system.
2. Send an update via the bridge to the voter’s record in the Statewide Voter Registration Database (SWVRD) to show as private. This prevents the address from appearing on the board’s or the Secretary of State’s website.

The requester’s address still appears in the board’s internal voter query, but it will include a note that says, “THIS VOTER’S ADDRESS HAS BEEN FLAGGED AS PRIVATE.” This allows election officials to access the address but alerts them that it is private.

If you have questions about flagging a voter’s file as “private,” contact the Ohio Secretary of State’s Elections Division.

Disabled Soldiers’ Home Residence

Residents of a national home for disabled soldiers who are U.S. citizens, have lived in Ohio for at least 30 days before the election, and who are otherwise qualified, are considered lawful residents of the county and township where the home is located.³⁹

³⁶R.C. 149.43(A)(7); R.C. 149.45(A)(2), (D)(1).

³⁷The form is located at the following link: <https://www.ohiosos.gov/secretary-office/office-initiatives/shielding-our-protectors/>.

³⁸R.C. 149.45(D)(2).

³⁹R.C. 3503.03.

Public or Private Institutions

Residents of a public or private institution who are U.S. citizens, have lived in Ohio for at least 30 days before the election, and who are otherwise qualified, are considered lawful residents of the county, city, village, and township where the institution is located.⁴⁰

Temporary treatment patients vote from their home address.⁴¹

Youth Services Facilities

People 18+ years of age living in a facility operated by the Ohio Department of Youth Services (DYS) may use the facility address for voter registration if the board determines the applicant is qualified to vote in the county.

Safe At Home Participants

Safe at Home (SAH) is an Address Confidentiality Program established by Ohio law. It helps victims of domestic violence, rape, sexual battery, menacing by stalking, or human trafficking by shielding their personal information from public record.⁴² It provides individuals who are otherwise eligible with a safe and secure way to register and vote. Qualifying individuals, or their parent or guardian, may apply to participate in the program with the help of an application assistant.⁴³ A list of organizations that provide application assistants and other program information may be found on the [Secretary of State's website](#).⁴⁴

A board's director and deputy director are two of the very few government officials who may know a participant's true address. They are entrusted with the participant's *safety* and must act accordingly. Disclosure can result in potential prosecution⁴⁵ and may endanger lives.

Safe at Home participants receive a special voter registration form, Form SAH-VR.⁴⁶ They should mail the form in a purple envelope addressed to the board's director or deputy director only.

The director or deputy director must review the SAH-VR for completeness, just like any other voter registration form. If there are issues with the voter registration, the director

⁴⁰[R.C. 3503.04.](#)

⁴¹[R.C. 3503.04.](#)

⁴²[R.C. 111.42\(A\).](#)

⁴³[R.C. 111.42\(A\)\(1\).](#)

⁴⁴The list is available at the following link: <https://www.ohiosos.gov/secretary-office/office-initiatives/safe-at-home/>.

⁴⁵[R.C. 111.99\(B\)\(2\).](#)

⁴⁶[R.C. 111.42\(B\).](#)

or deputy director must send the Safe at Home Acknowledgment Notice (SAH-10-J) to the individual indicating why their voter registration was rejected.⁴⁷

When a board receives a complete voter registration form for a Safe at Home participant, it must:

1. **Call** the Safe at Home unit at the Secretary of State's office to confirm the participant's ID number and that the individual is enrolled in the program.⁴⁸

Never send an email to any person that contains a participant's name or contact information.

2. If the participant is:
 - a. NOT registered to vote and has completed the Safe at Home voter registration application, create a confidential voter registration file using the board's Safe at Home worksheet.
 - b. A CURRENT registered voter in your county and has completed the Safe at Home voter registration application:
 - i. Cancel the existing registration.
 - ii. Remove the residence address and precinct from the voter registration record.
 - iii. Create a confidential voter registration file using the board's Safe at Home worksheet.
 - c. A CURRENT registered voter in ANOTHER county and has completed the Safe at Home voter registration application:
 - i. Call the director or deputy director in the county where the participant is registered and alert them to cancel the existing registration, and send [Form 255-J Voter Registration Cancellation Notice - Safe at Home](#) to the updated voter registration address.

⁴⁷[R.C. 111.44\(C\)\(7\).](#)

⁴⁸[R.C. 111.44\(C\)\(1\).](#)

- ii. Create a confidential voter registration file using the board's Safe at Home worksheet. The participant's registration is then considered transferred to the county in which the participant resides.
- d. A CURRENT registered voter in ANOTHER state and has completed the Safe at Home voter registration application:
 - i. Notify the other state that the voter has registered to vote in Ohio, and send [Form 255-J Voter Registration Cancellation Notice – Safe at Home](#) to the updated voter registration address.
 - ii. Create a confidential voter registration file using the board's Safe at Home worksheet.

After the participant's voter registration is completed, the director or deputy director must mail a photocopy of Form SAH-10-J *Safe at Home Acknowledgment Notice* to the participant's residence. Do not put this notice in regular outgoing mail.

3. Last, mail a copy of the completed form, the initial Safe at Home voter registration, and each valid update to the Safe at Home unit.

Safe at Home participants should not submit a regular voter registration form because it compromises the confidentiality of the participant's address. However, boards are not on notice of who is in the program and should process standard voter registration forms accordingly.

Upon a participant exiting the SAH program, SAH staff will send an official letter to the board of elections in the county where the participant lives, notifying them that the individual is no longer a SAH participant.

VOTER-INITIATED ACTIVITY

Voter-initiated activity includes:

- Voting.
- Submitting a valid absentee ballot application.
- Registering to vote.
- Updating or confirming an address with a board or the Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV).

- Signing valid candidate or issue petitions.⁴⁹

Check and verify each signature on valid part-petitions, even if it exceeds the minimum number of signatures required for ballot access, to ensure voters receive properly updated voter-initiated activity dates.

Last Activity Date

The DATA Act requires the Secretary of State to adopt rules that define “last activity date.”⁵⁰ Ensuring this definition is consistent among all 88 county boards of elections ensures voter registration databases are more accurate and the general voter records maintenance program can be conducted more efficiently.

The Secretary of State’s rules define “last activity date” as “the last date on which voter-initiated activity occurred, which is documented by the boards of elections and the Secretary of State.”⁵¹ To determine a voter's last activity date, use the latest of the following voter-initiated activities:

- **Voting:** Date of the last election in which a voter cast a counted ballot.⁵²
- **Absentee Ballot Request:** Date the board received a valid absentee ballot request.⁵³
- **BMV Interaction:** Date of BMV interaction under the National Voter Registration Act of 1993.⁵⁴
- **Confirmation Notice:** Postmarked date of a voter’s response to a board’s confirmation notice.⁵⁵ If the postmark is missing or illegible, use the date the board received the response.
- **Petition:** Date the petition was filed.⁵⁶

⁴⁹The voter should not be provided voter-initiated activity for signing a petition until after verification of part-petitions by the board. Only voters with a valid signature should be provided voter-initiated activity.

⁵⁰[R.C. 3503.15\(C\)\(11\)](#).

⁵¹[O.A.C. 111:3-11-01\(B\)](#).

⁵²[O.A.C. 111:3-11-01\(B\)\(1\)](#).

⁵³[O.A.C. 111:3-11-01\(B\)\(2\)](#).

⁵⁴[O.A.C. 111:3-11-01\(B\)\(6\)](#).

⁵⁵[O.A.C. 111:3-11-01\(B\)\(8\)](#).

⁵⁶[O.A.C. 111:3-11-01\(B\)\(7\)](#). Boards must apply voter-initiated activity to the record if both the voter’s signature and the part-petition is valid.

- **Provisional Ballot:** Date the board rejected a voter's provisional ballot under Chapter 3505, if the provisional ballot serves as a voter registration.⁵⁷
- **Voter Registration:** Date the voter registered to vote (using the procedure outlined in [R.C. 3503.15\(C\)\(9\)\(a\)](#)).⁵⁸
- **Voter Registration Update:** Date the voter updated their registration (using the procedure outlined in [R.C. 3503.15\(C\)\(9\)\(a\)](#)), including updates with no changes.⁵⁹
- **Any additional date required by a Secretary of State directive**, such as the last activity type described below.⁶⁰

Last Activity Type

Last Activity Type (LAT) is the type of activity the voter engaged in, associated with their Last Activity Date. Record the voter's LAT with these codes:⁶¹

- Voting (VOT)
- Absentee Request (ABR)
- Registering to Vote (REG)
- Updating Voter Registration (UPD)
- BMV Interaction (BMV)
- Petition Signature (PET)
- Confirmation Notice Response (CON)

When a voter has multiple activities on the same day, the Last Activity Type used should be whichever appears higher on this list.⁶²

⁵⁷[O.A.C. 111:3-11-01\(B\)\(5\)](#); [R.C. 3503.15\(C\)\(9\)\(a\)\(vi\)](#).

⁵⁸[O.A.C. 111:3-11-01\(B\)\(3\)](#).

⁵⁹[O.A.C. 111:3-11-01\(B\)\(4\)](#).

⁶⁰[O.A.C. 111:3-11-01\(B\)\(9\)](#).

⁶¹[Directive 2024-18](#), at 5.

⁶²[Directive 2024-18](#), at 5.

Section 4.05 Forms for Voter Registration

FORMS

Three types of voter registration forms work in Ohio:

1. State form — prescribed by the Secretary of State
2. Federal form — prescribed by the United States Election Assistance Commission (EAC) at [EAC.gov](https://www.eac.gov)
3. Federal Postcard Application (FPCA) form — a federal form that may be used by military personnel and overseas civilians. Applicants may use either the cardstock version or the online form found on the website of the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) at [FVAP.gov](https://www.fvap.gov).

The Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) declaration may be used to register the person to vote for an election if it is received 30 days before the election.⁶³

FWAB and FPCA signatures must be original to be valid.⁶⁴ Reject electronically generated signatures.

State Form

The Secretary of State creates Ohio registration, change of residence, and change of name forms.⁶⁵ The form must meet the requirements of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 and include **all** of the following:

- voter's name⁶⁶
- voter's address⁶⁷
- current date⁶⁸
- voter's date of birth⁶⁹
- at least one of the following:

⁶³[R.C. 3511.14\(B\)](#).

⁶⁴[R.C. 3501.011](#).

⁶⁵[R.C. 3503.14\(A\)](#).

⁶⁶[R.C. 3503.14\(A\)\(1\)](#).

⁶⁷[R.C. 3503.14\(A\)\(2\)](#).

⁶⁸[R.C. 3503.14\(A\)\(3\)](#).

⁶⁹[R.C. 3503.14\(A\)\(4\)](#).

- voter's driver license number or state ID card number, if any⁷⁰
- last four digits of the voter's Social Security number, if any⁷¹
- voter's signature⁷²
- A statement that the applicant is a U.S. citizen and will be 18 years or older by the general election.⁷³

Federal Forms

The federal voter registration form, also called the National Mail Voter Registration Form, works in all states. The form and state-specific instructions for completing it are available on [EAC's website](#).

Ohio voters don't need to complete the "Choice of Party" and "Race or Ethnic Group" boxes. An individual registering to vote in Ohio using the federal form must complete only those fields that are required to register an individual to vote in Ohio.

Where to Obtain and Return Forms

Get forms from:

- Secretary of State or county board of elections (request in person, by phone, by mail, online, or through others).⁷⁴
- Designated agency (see below) in person.
- Public high schools or vocational schools.
- Public libraries.
- County treasurer's offices.
- BMV office.⁷⁵

⁷⁰[R.C. 3503.14\(A\)\(5\)\(a\)](#).

⁷¹[R.C. 3503.14\(A\)\(5\)\(b\)](#).

⁷²[R.C. 3503.14\(A\)\(6\)](#).

⁷³[R.C. 3503.14\(A\)](#).

⁷⁴[R.C. 3503.19\(B\)\(1\)](#).

⁷⁵[R.C. 3503.10\(B\)](#); [R.C. 3503.11\(C\)\(1\)](#).

Completed registration forms may be returned in person, by mail, or through another person to the Secretary of State or a county board of elections.⁷⁶ In-person returns may also be made to the same locations listed above.⁷⁷

If a person returns a completed registration form on behalf of another, they must return it to the Secretary of State's office or the appropriate county board of elections within 10 days or by 30 days before the election, whichever is earlier.⁷⁸ Late returns may be criminal violations.⁷⁹ The board may want to consult with the county prosecutor and the Public Integrity Division of the Ohio Secretary of State on the matter.

Designated Agencies and Other Entities Providing Voter Registration Services

Ohio law requires designated agencies, public high schools and vocational schools, public libraries, and county treasurer offices to provide voter registration applications and assistance in registering persons qualified to vote.⁸⁰ Additionally, each BMV registrar and deputy registrar must offer people applying for or renewing a driver license the opportunity to register to vote or update their voter registration address if they present, or have presented, proof of citizenship.⁸¹ These requirements stem from the National Voter Registration Act of 1993.

Designated agencies include the following state or local public offices:

- Department of Job and Family Services
- The Women, Children, and Infants (WIC) program administered by the Department of Health
- Department of Behavioral Health
- Department of Developmental Disabilities
- Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities
- Ohio's four-year state-supported colleges and universities⁸²

⁷⁶[R.C. 3503.19\(B\)\(2\)\(a\)-\(b\)](#).

⁷⁷See [R.C. 3503.19\(B\)\(2\)\(a\)](#); [R.C. 3503.11\(C\)\(2\)](#).

⁷⁸See [R.C. 3599.11\(B\)\(2\)\(a\)](#), [\(C\)\(1\)](#).

⁷⁹See, e.g., [R.C. 3599.11\(B\)\(2\)\(a\)](#), [R.C. 3599.11\(C\)\(1\)](#).

⁸⁰[R.C. 3503.10\(B\)](#).

⁸¹[R.C. 3503.11\(A\)\(1\)](#).

⁸²[R.C. 3501.01\(X\)](#).

The designated agency or other entity charged with providing voter registration services must return completed voter registration forms to the appropriate board within five days.⁸³

REQUESTS FOR VOTER REGISTRATION FORMS

Provide voter registration forms as needed.⁸⁴ Supply forms to anyone in the county who qualifies to vote.

If anyone requests three or more registrations at one time, give them a copy of the [Secretary of State's Voter Registration Instructions](#) brochure.⁸⁵

Section 4.06 Processing Voter Registration Forms

GENERALLY

Check all registration forms carefully. If someone registered more than once, cancel the additional registration forms.⁸⁶ If any person is found to have submitted more than one registration form, the form(s) submitted later in time should be treated as a registration update and processed by the board to receive activity credit.

Registration forms don't need to be completed in ink to be valid.

Additional markings on the form (for instance, markings outside required fields or information added by the person completing the form) do not invalidate the form.

No limit exists on the number of completed voter registration forms an individual or entity can submit at one time. It's not unusual for interest groups or political parties to conduct a voter registration drive and return a large number of forms.

REQUIRED INFORMATION

Applicants must provide this information for valid registration:

1. Citizenship (Question 1 in Box on State and Federal Registration Forms)

⁸³ [R.C. 3503.19\(A\)](#).

⁸⁴ [R.C. 3501.11\(C\)](#).

⁸⁵ [R.C. 3503.28\(B\)](#).

⁸⁶ [R.C. 3503.12](#).

The applicant must check “Yes” to affirm they are a U.S. citizen. This question is required by the Help America Vote Act.⁸⁷ If “No,” the form cannot be processed as valid.

2. Age Declaration (Question 2 in Box on State and Federal Registration Forms)

The applicant must check “Yes” to affirm that they will be at least 18 years old on or before the next general election. The Help America Vote Act also requires this question.⁸⁸ If “No,” the form cannot be processed as valid.

3. Identification

ID requirement depends on the voter registration application.

a. In-Person Registration

A current, valid Ohio driver license number or state ID card number. If the applicant doesn’t have a current Ohio driver license or state ID card, use the last four digits of their SSN.⁸⁹ If the applicant doesn’t have a SSN, they must check the box indicating that they have not been issued an Ohio driver license, state ID card, or SSN.

b. Mail Registration:

A current, valid Ohio driver license number or state ID card number. If the applicant doesn’t have a current Ohio driver license or state ID card, use the last four digits of their SSN.⁹⁰

If the applicant checks the box indicating that they have not been issued an Ohio driver license, state ID card, or SSN, register them and provide a number to identify the applicant for voter registration purposes.⁹¹

4. Residence Address

Applicants must provide their voting residence address to determine a precinct.⁹²

Section 4.04 provides guidance on what constitutes a voter’s residence address.

⁸⁷ 52 U.S.C. § 21083(b)(4)(A)(i).

⁸⁸ 52 U.S.C. § 21083(b)(4)(A)(ii).

⁸⁹ 52 U.S.C. § 21083(a)(5)(A)(i); R.C. 3503.14(A)(5).

⁹⁰ 52 U.S.C. § 21083(a)(5)(A)(i); R.C. 3503.14(A)(5).

⁹¹ 52 U.S.C. § 21083(a)(5)(A)(ii).

⁹² R.C. 3503.14(A)(2).

5. Date of Birth

Required on the application.⁹³

6. Signature

Applicants must provide their signature or legal mark. Ohio law defines a signature or legal mark as a “person’s written, cursive-style legal mark written in that person’s own hand” or a person’s “other legal mark that the person uses during the course of that person’s regular business and legal affairs that is written in the person’s own hand.”⁹⁴

If an applicant is physically unable to sign the application, they can make an “X” in the signature box of the form. The individual helping the applicant complete the form must sign their name in the signature box to the right of the applicant’s “X.”⁹⁵

If an applicant is unable to make an “X,” they must indicate their desire to register to vote or to change their name or residence, and the person registering the applicant must sign their name and complete the attestation on the form.⁹⁶

ADDITIONAL FIELDS

1. Mailing Address

Applicants may provide a different address to receive mail. This could be a post office box or a commercial mail facility.

If an applicant provides a mailing address on their registration form, that address must be included in the voter registration file.

2. Phone Number

Applicants may provide a phone number that the board can use to contact them.

3. Previous Address and Former Legal Name

⁹³[R.C. 3503.14\(A\)\(4\).](#)

⁹⁴[R.C. 3501.011\(A\), \(B\).](#)

⁹⁵[R.C. 3503.14\(C\).](#)

⁹⁶[R.C. 3503.14\(C\).](#)

If updating the voting residence address or legal name, they may provide their former address and/or legal name.

4. Date

The applicant may provide the date they completed the application, but a failure to include the date does not make the application invalid. A person is not considered to be registered until the valid voter registration form has been received, which may or may not be the same date.

INCOMPLETE, INVALID, OR INELIGIBLE REGISTRATIONS

Incomplete or Invalid Form

If a registration application lacks required information (listed above) or doesn't have enough information to determine whether the applicant is eligible to register to vote, the board must:

- Contact the applicant and ask them to submit a new voter registration application.
- Send a letter to the applicant or use [Form 10-J](#) to explain what's missing or why it is invalid.
- Provide a highlighted copy (not the original) of the application showing the missing information.
- Include a blank voter registration application for the applicant to complete and submit.
- Keep the original as a public record.

Applicant Is Ineligible

If an applicant appears to be ineligible (for example, they are not 18 on or before the general election, not an Ohio resident, or not a U.S. citizen):

- Contact the applicant to explain the rejection and the reason why the application was determined to be invalid.
- The board may hold a hearing on the matter to give the applicant due process of law.
- Keep the original voter registration form as a public record.

Voter Registration Form Provided to the Incorrect County

If the board receives a voter registration form intended for another county:

- Transfer the original to the correct county within five days of receipt.
- Include a transmittal form cover page with the board's name and contact information, the transmission date, and the number of registrations transferred. The board may also include a list of applicants whose forms are included in the transmittal packet.
- Keep a copy, in either paper or electronic format, of the original as well as the transmittal form.

Suspicious Applications

If the board receives a voter registration application that appears suspicious:

- Investigate irregularities and the qualifications of the applicant.⁹⁷
- Consult the county prosecutor and the Public Integrity Division at the Secretary of State's office.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT CARD FOR VALID REGISTRATION

The board must register the applicant to vote within 20 business days of receiving a complete registration application or change of name or address form (unless it is within 30 days of an election).⁹⁸

Upon completing the registration or change of name or address, promptly mail the applicant an Acknowledgment Notice. The Acknowledgment Notice must be sent by non-forwardable mail using the USPS.⁹⁹

The notice must:

- Advise the voter that they are registered to vote.
- Include their precinct and polling location.
- Include voter identification requirements for Election Day.

⁹⁷[R.C. 3501.11\(J\), \(Q\).](#)

⁹⁸[R.C. 3503.19\(C\)\(1\).](#)

⁹⁹[R.C. 3501.01\(V\); R.C. 3503.16\(E\); R.C. 3503.19\(C\)\(1\)\(c\).](#)

- Include the following text, in bold font: **“Voters must bring valid and unexpired photo identification to the polls in order to verify identity. Voters who do not provide photo identification will still be able to vote by casting a provisional ballot.”**¹⁰⁰
- Use [Form 10-J](#), prescribed by the Secretary of State.¹⁰¹

Whenever an Acknowledgment Notice is returned to the board as undeliverable:

- If the notice was sent to an incorrect address, board employees must investigate and resend it to the correct address.¹⁰²
- If the board can’t verify the voter’s correct address, board employees must proceed under R.C. 3503.201: change the voter’s status from ACTIVE to CONFIRMATION and issue a Confirmation Notice by forwardable mail.¹⁰³
- Follow this same process for other undeliverable election mail to registered voters.

When the board changes a voter’s precinct or polling location, send written notice of the change to the voter.¹⁰⁴

If a voter has been marked as “INACTIVE” (or “ACTIVE-CONFIRMATION”) because of an undeliverable Acknowledgment Notice and they appear to vote, they must provide ID to election officials and vote by provisional ballot under [R.C. 3503.201](#).¹⁰⁵

If the provisional ballot counts under [R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(3\)](#) and [R.C. 3503.201\(D\)\(2\)](#), correct that voter’s registration(if needed), remove the flag that the voter’s notification was returned, and change the voter’s status from INACTIVE (or ACTIVE-CONFIRMATION) to ACTIVE.¹⁰⁶ If the provisional ballot is not counted under [R.C. 3503.201\(D\)\(2\)](#) because the voter did not provide the information requested to fix the BMV/SSA mismatch within four days of Election Day, their registration must be canceled, and the board sends the individual [Form 255-I Failure to Count Provisional Ballot](#).¹⁰⁷ See **Section 4.14** of this

¹⁰⁰[R.C. 3503.19\(C\)\(1\)](#).

¹⁰¹[R.C. 3501.01\(V\)](#).

¹⁰²[R.C. 3503.19\(C\)\(1\)](#).

¹⁰³[R.C. 3503.19\(C\)\(2\)](#); [R.C. 3503.201\(A\)\(1\)\(a\)](#).

¹⁰⁴[R.C. 3503.17](#).

¹⁰⁵[R.C. 3503.19\(C\)\(2\)](#); [R.C. 3503.201\(D\)](#).

¹⁰⁶[R.C. 3503.201\(D\)\(3\)](#).

¹⁰⁷[R.C. 3503.19\(C\)\(2\)](#); [R.C. 3503.201\(D\)\(4\)](#); [R.C. 3503.21\(A\)\(10\)](#).

chapter for more information on canceling a provisional voter's voter registration after their failure to fix a BMV/SSA mismatch.

If a voter doesn't respond to the Confirmation Notice, vote, or engage in any voter-initiated activity for four years (including two federal elections), cancel the registration.¹⁰⁸ At least one month before canceling any record, mail [Form 255-A-3 Notice of Voter Registration Cancellation](#) to the address on file for the record.¹⁰⁹ If the voter responds and confirms their address, change their status to an ACTIVE status and mail the voter an Acknowledgment Notice.

CONFIRMATION NOTICE

Send a Confirmation Notice for any of these four circumstances:

1. As part of the National Change of Address (NCOA) process of the state's general voter records list maintenance program.¹¹⁰
2. As part of the Supplemental Process of the state's general voter records list maintenance program.¹¹¹
3. When the voter's Acknowledgment Notice was returned as undeliverable.¹¹²
4. When voter information does not match records from the BMV or Social Security Administration (SSA) (see **Section 4.09** of this Chapter for additional information on the BMV/SSA matching process).¹¹³

Send the Confirmation Notice by forwardable mail through the USPS, with prepaid postage, and a pre-addressed return envelope containing a form on which the elector may verify or correct the elector's registration.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁸[R.C. 3503.21\(A\)\(7\)](#).

¹⁰⁹The exact timeline for sending [Form 255-A-3](#) before canceling voter registration records is set by the Secretary of State through cancellation directives.

¹¹⁰[R.C. 3503.21\(B\)](#).

¹¹¹[R.C. 3503.21\(A\)\(7\)](#).

¹¹²[R.C. 3503.19\(C\)\(2\)](#); [R.C. 3503.201\(A\)\(1\)\(a\)](#).

¹¹³[R.C. 3503.151\(E\)](#); [R.C. 3503.201\(A\)\(1\)\(b\)](#).

¹¹⁴[R.C. 3501.01\(W\)](#); [R.C. 3503.201](#).

Section 4.07 Deadline for Receipt of Voter Registration

BOARDS MUST PUBLISH NOTICE OF DEADLINE

Six weeks before the day of an election, the board must publish a notice in one or more general circulation newspapers about voter registration places, dates, times, methods, and voter qualifications.¹¹⁵

REGISTRATION DEADLINE

Registration to vote may be made at any time. However, to be eligible to vote in an election, an individual must be registered to vote at least 30 days before the election.¹¹⁶ Note that the 30th day before an election is usually a Sunday, so the registration deadline moves to Monday, the 29th day before the election.¹¹⁷ If that Monday is a legal holiday (for instance, Columbus Day), the deadline moves to Tuesday, the 28th day before the election.¹¹⁸

Valid Registration by Deadline

Properly completed and signed registration forms mailed to the board or Secretary of State's office are valid for the upcoming election if:

- Postmarked by the 30th day before the election.
- The postmark is illegible or missing, valid if received by a board or the Secretary of State by the 25th day before the election.
- Other proper submissions received by the Secretary of State, any county board of elections, public library, public high school or vocational school, county treasurer's office, or designated agency by the voter registration deadline.¹¹⁹

Late registrations don't count for that election, but are valid for future elections if the registrant qualifies.¹²⁰

¹¹⁵[R.C. 3503.12.](#)

¹¹⁶[R.C. 3503.19\(A\); Ohio Const., art. V, §1.](#)

¹¹⁷[R.C. 1.14.](#)

¹¹⁸[R.C. 1.14.](#)

¹¹⁹[R.C. 3503.19\(A\).](#)

¹²⁰[R.C. 3503.19\(A\).](#)

Don't transmit voter registration packets to the Secretary of State's office after the duplicate resolution period for any statewide elections (14 days before Election Day). Contact the Secretary of State's office for special situations.

OFFICE HOURS ON VOTER REGISTRATION DEADLINE

The board must keep its office open until 9 p.m. on the last day of voter registration before a general or primary election.¹²¹

Section 4.08 Entering Registrations into the Statewide Voter Registration Database

ENTERING INCOMPLETE APPLICATIONS AS PENDING

For incomplete or invalid voter registration applications:

- Enter the applicant's preliminary information into the board's voter registration system.
- Assign a locally defined "PENDING" voter status code to that applicant's record.
- Do not send "PENDING" records to the Statewide Voter Registration Database (SWVRD).
- Once the board receives a completed and valid registration record from the applicant, complete the applicant's profile in the voter registration system and begin the packet exchange with the SWVRD.

Keep incomplete voter registration forms for four years. Board employees may delete "PENDING" electronic voter records from the board's voter registration system after the 30th day past the election, following proper notice and retention schedule.

TRACKING THE SOURCE OF REGISTRATION FORMS

The board must code each registration, change of name, or change of address to track its source for Election Assistance Commission (EAC) Survey reporting. It requires the board to provide the exact number of voter registrations or changes of address/name requests received by:

- BMV.

¹²¹[R.C. 3501.10\(B\)](#).

- Public assistance offices mandated by the NVRA.
- State-funded agencies primarily serving persons with disabilities.
- Armed forces recruitment offices.
- Other agencies not mandated by the NVRA but by Ohio law, including public high schools, vocational schools, and public libraries.
- Voter registration drives from advocacy groups or political parties.

Consult the board's voter registration system vendor and/or the Elections Division of the Secretary of State's office with questions regarding coding.

DATA ENTRY STANDARDS

Adhere to the data entry standards in this section when entering information into the Statewide Voter Registration Database (SWVRD). Review existing records in the SWVRD and make needed changes to comply with data entry standards outlined in this section. By having data in a standardized format, boards can identify duplicate records and get more accurate results when searching for a voter's information in the SWVRD.

ENTERING A VOTER'S NAME

General guidelines for entering a voter's name:

- Accuracy is more important than speed – compare the spelling of the voter's name on the registration form to the database entry.
- All data in the name fields must be in UPPERCASE letters.
- Never enter titles or prefixes (like Mr., Mrs., Dr., Ph.D, Rev.) in the name field.
- Do not use characters (like - * ' % () ?, etc.) in the name fields. See First Name Field below for the only exception to this rule.

1. First Name Field

If a voter does not have a first name, enter a period (.) to satisfy the required field entry. This is the only time a period may be entered into a name field.

For double first names (like MARY ANN, BOBBIE JO), enter both names in the first name field with a space between them.

If a voter has a single character as their first name followed by a middle name, enter the single character in the first name field and enter the middle name in the middle name field.

If a voter has a single character as their first name followed by a longer first name (for instance, J ROBERT), enter the single character and the longer name in the first name field with a space between them.

If a voter has a multisyllable first name with an apostrophe, a space, or spaces between the syllables, enter the name and omit the apostrophe or space(s) between syllables. For example, the names: LA DONNA, D'LINDA, and LA KEYSHA should be entered into the first name field as: LADONNA, DLINDA, and LAKEYSHA.

2. Middle Name Field

Enter the voter's middle name or initial, if provided. A voter is not required to provide a middle name. If no middle name is provided, leave the field blank.

If a voter has two middle names, enter both in the middle name field with a space between them. For example, the names: EVA-MARIE, JOHN-PAUL, and C.M., should be entered into the middle name field as: EVA MARIE, JOHN PAUL, and C M.

3. Last Name Field

If a voter has a multisyllable last name with a space or spaces between the syllables, enter the name and omit the space(s) between syllables. For example, the names: MC DONALD, DE LA ROSA, and VAN HUSEN should be entered into the last name field as: MCDONALD, DELAROSA, and VANHUSEN.

If a voter has a hyphen in their last name, replace the hyphen with a space to separate two last names (e.g., SMITH-JONES should be entered as SMITH JONES).

Never use a suffix (such as Jr, Sr, II, VI) in the last name field. Instead, enter it into the suffix field, explained below.

4. Suffix Field

Below is a list of valid suffixes. Enter only the abbreviation for the suffix. When entering: 'The Second', 'The Third', etc., use a capital "I" and not the number "1".

<i>Suffixes</i>	<i>Abbreviation</i>	<i>Suffixes</i>	<i>Abbreviation</i>
Junior	JR	The Fourth	IV
Senior	SR	The Fifth	V
The Second	II	The Sixth	VI
The Third	III		

Do not enter professional designations, such as “Esq.” or “Ph.D.” in the suffix field.

ENTERING A VOTER’S ADDRESS USING A STANDARDIZED ADDRESS

Use fully spelled-out addresses or USPS standard abbreviations, or as shown in the current Postal Service ZIP+4 file. USPS standards require the recipient’s name, delivery address, and a last line (CITY, STATE, ZIP). The delivery address should always contain a street number and name. Addresses simply listing a building name, or building name and room number, are usually improper.

JOHN SMITH (recipient line)

180 S CIVIC CENTER DR. (delivery address line)

COLUMBUS OH 43215-1234 (last line)

Guidelines for Format

- Use a uniform left margin.
- USE ALL UPPERCASE letters.
- Spell out city names completely or use USPS-approved abbreviations.
- Do not use characters in an address field.

The only exception to this rule is the use of a hyphen between the ZIP code and the +4 code or a house number that has a hyphenated number (see “House Number Field” below).

1. House Number Field

Enter the voter’s house number in the HOUSE_NUMBER field. Some house numbers have a whole number and a fraction. If the voter’s house number

contains a fraction, put a space or hyphen between the whole number and the fraction (such as 105 ½ MAIN ST or 105-1/2 MAIN ST). If the voter's house number has a hyphenated number, enter the hyphen (for example, 289-01 HIGH ST).

2. Pre-Street Direction Field

Use a pre-street direction, if provided, in the PRE_STREET_DIRECTION field. If not, leave the field blank. Acceptable pre-street directions are: N, S, E, W, NE, NW, SE, and SW.

3. Street Name Field

Enter the voter's street name in the STREET_NAME field. Typically, the street name is not abbreviated. Replace hyphen, if provided, with a space.

4. Numeric Street Field

Numeric street names, for example, 7TH ST or SEVENTH ST, must be entered exactly as they appear in the USPS ZIP+4 file. Spell out numeric street names only when there are duplicate street names within a postal delivery area and the only distinguishing factor is that the one board employees matched is spelled out.

5. Street Description Field

Enter the voter's street description in the STREET_DESCRIPTION field. See the following table for acceptable street description abbreviations:

Source USPS - https://pe.usps.com/text/pub28/28apc_002.htm

6. Street Direction Field

Use post-street direction, if provided, in the POST_STREET_DIRECTION field. If not, leave the field blank.

Acceptable post-street directions are: N, S, E, W, NE, NW, SE, and SW.

7. Secondary Indicators Field

Enter the voter's secondary indicator, if provided, in the SECONDARY_INDICATOR field. USPS-approved secondary indicators are:

DESCRIPTION	APPROVED	DESCRIPTION	APPROVED	DESCRIPTION	APPROVED
APARTMENT	APT	LOBBY	LBBY *	SIDE	SIDE *
BASEMENT	BSMT *	LOT	LOT	SLIP	SLIP
BUILDING	BLDG	LOWER	LOWR *	SPACE	SPC
DEPARTMENT	DEPT	OFFICE	OFC *	STOP	STOP
FLOOR	FL	PENTHOUSE	PH *	SUITE	STE
FRONT	FRNT *	PIER	PIER	TRAILER	TRLR
HANGER	HNGR	REAR	REAR *	UNIT	UNIT
KEY	KEY	ROOM	RM	UPPER	UPPR*

* Does not require a Secondary Address RANGE to follow

8. Secondary Address Range Field

If the voter's address is part of a multiple-unit apartment or building, enter the room, suite, or apartment number in the SECONDARY_ADDRESS_RANGE field.

9. City Field

Enter the voter's city in the CITY field. Spell out city names in their entirety. When abbreviations must be used due to labeling constraints, use only the approved 13-character abbreviations provided in the Postal Service's "City State" file.

10.State Field

Enter the two-character state abbreviation in the STATE field (such as OH).

11.ZIP Code Field

Enter the voter's five-digit zip code in the ZIP_CODE field. If the board has the +4 digits of the voter's zip code, enter the four digits in the ZIP_CODE4 field. For example, 43123, with the +4, is 43123-4567.

12.Entering Street Addresses and Post Office Boxes

If the voter has a mailing address that is a post office box, always abbreviate post office box as "PO BOX." Change any reference to "Caller," "Lockbox," and "Drawer" in a voter's file in the SWVRD to "PO BOX."

13.Entering County, State, and Local Highways

The following are examples of county, state, and local highway primary names, and the recommended standardized format. The board must use the standardized format when entering information into the SWVRD.

EXAMPLES IN USE	STANDARD	EXAMPLES IN USE	STANDARD
COUNTY HIGHWAY 32	COUNTY HIGHWAY 32	HIGHWAY 101	HIGHWAY 101
COUNTY HWY 32	COUNTY HIGHWAY 32	HWY 101	HIGHWAY 101
CO HWY 32	COUNTY HIGHWAY 32	HIWAY 101	HIGHWAY 101
COUNTY ROAD 62	COUNTY ROAD 62	INTERSTATE 271	INTERSTATE 271
CO RD 62	COUNTY ROAD 62	I 271	INTERSTATE 271
CR 62	COUNTY ROAD 62	INTERSTATE HWY 271	INTERSTATE 271
ROAD 22	ROAD 22	ROUTE 31	ROUTE 31
RD 22	ROAD 22	RT 31 / RTE 31	ROUTE 31
STATE HIGHWAY 303	STATE HIGHWAY 303	STATE ROUTE 45	STATE ROUTE 45
ST HIGHWAY 303	STATE HIGHWAY 303	ST RT 45 / SR45	STATE ROUTE 45
TOWNSHIP ROAD 56	TOWNSHIP ROAD 56	US HIGHWAY 44	US HIGHWAY 44
TSR 56	TOWNSHIP ROAD 56	US HWY 44 / US 44	US HIGHWAY 44
OHIO STATE ROUTE 752	OH STATE ROUTE 752	US ROUTE 224	US ROUTE 224
OH ST RT 752	OH STATE ROUTE 752		
OHIO 752	OH STATE ROUTE 752		

14. Using Rural Route Addresses

Board employees must enter and print rural route addresses as: "RR N BOX NN" (for example, "RR 2 BOX 15A"). Do not enter the words "RURAL," "NUMBER," "NO.," or the pound (#) sign.

Do not use a leading zero before the rural route number. For example, "RR03 BOX 98D" should be entered as "RR3 BOX 98D."

Use a hyphen as part of the box number only when the hyphen is part of the address in the ZIP+4 file (e.g., RR 4 BOX 19-1A).

There should be no additional designations, such as town or street names, on the Delivery Address Line of rural route addresses. However, if secondary name information is used, place it above the Delivery Address Line.

Special Considerations for Military Addresses

- **Overseas Locations**

Overseas military addresses must contain an APO or FPO designation along with a two-character “state” abbreviation of AE, AP, or AA and the ZIP Code or ZIP+4 Code (such as APO AE 09001-5275). AE is used for armed forces in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Canada; AP is for the Pacific; and AA is the Americas, excluding Canada.

- **Domestic Locations**

Use only the approved city name as listed in the “City State file,” along with the two-character state abbreviation and the ZIP Code or ZIP+4 Code (e.g., MINTO AFB ND 58705-1253).

PREPRINTED DELIVERY POINT BARCODES

The preprinted Delivery Point barcode must match the delivery address, city, state, and ZIP+4 Code on the mailpiece. To qualify for automation rates, see the USPS Domestic Mail Manual (DMM) for barcode requirements.

REGISTRATION AUDIT DASHBOARD

The Ohio Secretary of State’s office, in partnership with Ohio’s 88 county boards of elections, has a duty under the law to maintain accurate voter rolls, which requires constant vigilance. The Elections and Data Analytics teams can assist in this effort. Boards must access the Registration Audit Dashboard at least once per workweek and take action to correct any flagged voter records that appear.¹²²

The board must maintain its voter registration databases to ensure the percentage of flagged voter records does not exceed 0.1 percent of the total number of voter records in ACTIVE and Active-Confirmation status for a period of 30 days. If the percentage of flagged voter records exceeds 0.1 percent, the board must submit a plan to the Secretary of State’s office to reduce the percentage to the stated threshold.

¹²²[R.C. 3503.151\(D\)\(1\).](#)

Section 4.09 Bureau of Motor Vehicles Voter Registration Transactions

BMV VOTER REGISTRATION VERIFICATION

The Help America Vote Act (HAVA), the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA), and the Ohio Revised Code require the Secretary of State to partner with the Ohio BMV and Social Security Administration to verify voter registration.

The Secretary of State regularly sends BMV/SSA Voter Record Information Verification Packets to boards when a new registration needs clarification or updates for the following reasons:

- Driver License Number (DLN) could not be verified.
- Last Name (LN) could not be verified.
- First Name (FN) could not be verified.
- Date of Birth (DOB) could not be verified.
- Last Four Digits of SSN (SSN4) could not be verified.
- The elector has been identified as deceased.

If a discrepancy is identified, boards of elections must mail [Form 10-C](#) or [10-D Voter Information Confirmation Notice](#) to those applicants. If the discrepancy is in the date of birth, driver license or state ID, or the last 4 of the SSN, the board must place the voter in provisional voting status as required by law.¹²³ Name discrepancies alone are placed in confirmation status and not required to vote provisionally.¹²⁴

Note: If board employees find after reviewing board records that the error is a result of a data entry mistake by the board of elections, like a nonmatch resulting from a different data entry formatting convention (for example, "O'Brien" compared to "OBRIEN"), the board is not required to send notice.

Don't remove voters from the board's official list solely because information in the voter registration system doesn't match ID information from the BMV or SSA. Only remove

¹²³[R.C. 3503.151\(E\); R.C. 3503.201\(A\)\(1\)\(b\).](#)

¹²⁴[52 U.S.C. § 21083\(a\)\(5\)\(B\); R.C. 3503.15\(B\)\(4\); R.C. 3503.201\(A\)\(1\)\(b\).](#)

ineligible voters as authorized in this section.

Program Processing Details

New and updated voter registrant information is compared with the BMV or SSA to verify information.¹²⁵ "New" means that the applicant was not previously registered to vote in Ohio or lost their registration due to cancellation or moving out of state.

When a board of elections receives a packet from the Secretary of State containing certain codes that indicate a mismatched voter record, the board must take action. If the voter is not already in confirmation status, the board must place them in that status and flag the voter as required to cast a provisional ballot.

¹²⁵[52 U.S.C. § 21083\(a\)\(5\)\(B\)](#).

BMV_MATCH_CODE	BMV_MESSAGE	Associated PROVISIONAL REASON
DN	Driver license number could not be verified by BMV.	DLN
DYNNNN	Last name, First name and Date of birth could not be verified by BMV.	DOB
DYNYNN	Last name and Date of birth could not be verified by BMV.	DOB
DYYNNN	First name and Date of birth could not be verified by BMV.	DOB
DYYYNN	Date of birth could not be verified by BMV.	DOB
NN_	Last name, first name, date of birth, and the last four digits of the Social Security number could not be verified by the BMV.	MMM

The board must:

- ☐ Mark or flag the record in the county voter registration system in CONFIRMATION status; AND
- ☐ Mark or flag the record in the county voter registration system in PROVISIONAL.

The county voter registration vendor for the board of elections must have the capability to store the provisional mark or “flag” in a designated PROVISIONAL_REASON field. The following codes and legal values must be supported by the board's voter registration vendor:

PROVISIONAL REASON	Code Description	Associated BMV_MATCH_CODE
NULL/Blank	The voter is not required to vote a provisional ballot.	
ADD	The voter must verify their address (returned undeliverable acknowledgment).	Applied at BOE
SSN	The voter must verify the last 4 digits of their SSN (BMV/SSA mismatch on the SSN4).	Hold for future value
DOB	The voter must verify their date of birth (BMV/SSA mismatch on DOB).	DYNNNN DYNYYN DYNNNN DYYNNN
DLN	The voter must verify their driver license number/state ID number (BMV/SSA mismatch on the DLN).	DN
MMM	The voter must verify their driver license number/state ID number, last four of their SSN AND their date of birth (BMV/SSA Mismatch on DLN, SSN4, and DOB).	NN_
MDB	The voter must verify their driver license number/state ID number AND date of birth (BMV/SSA mismatch on DLN and DOB).	Hold for future value
MDS	The voter must verify driver license number/state ID number AND last four of their SSN (BMV/SSA Mismatch on DLN and SSN4).	Hold for future value
MBS	The voter must verify their date of birth AND the last four of their SSN (BMV/SSA Mismatch on DOB and SSN4).	Hold for future value

If a voter was required to vote provisionally because of an “MMM” mismatch code and provided their date of birth on the Form 12-B Provisional Ballot Affirmation, but provided either their (1) driver license or state ID number or (2) last four of their SSN, the ballot must still be counted.

Additionally, the board's electronic pollbook vendor must have the capability to flag the reasons stated above for the provisional mark or "flag" in the electronic pollbook system. Precinct election officials must be able to readily determine why the voter is casting a provisional ballot.

Pre-Election Verification

- A voter does not have to vote provisionally if they fix their mismatched registration more than 14 days¹²⁶ before an election by doing one of the following:
 - Returning a completed [Form 10-S-1 Confirmation Notice](#), if the board must verify the voter's residence;¹²⁷
 - Returning a completed [Form 10-C](#) or [10-D Voter Information Confirmation Notice](#), and the board verifies the voter's signature with the signature on file; or
 - Providing documentation to rectify any identified mismatch between the voter's registration record and the SWVRD, BMV, or SSA database records and updating their voter registration form.¹²⁸
- The voter must provide the necessary information to correct their record. This is usually done by completing and returning [Form 10-C](#) or [10-D](#), after which the board verifies that the voter's signature matches the signature on file.

¹²⁶[R.C. 3503.23.](#)

¹²⁷[R.C. 3503.201\(B\)\(1\).](#)

¹²⁸[R.C. 3503.201\(B\)\(2\).](#)

- If a voter appears at the board and provides documentation for the board to verify their registration information, acceptable forms of documentation include:
 - A valid, unexpired Ohio driver license or state identification card;
 - A valid, unexpired passport;
 - Social Security card; or
 - A birth certificate.

The board must request that the voter update and complete a Voter Registration Form ([Form SEC 4010](#)) and verify that the information on the updated form matches the documentation they provided. The board must update the voter's record and note in the voter's file that the documentation provided matched the updated voter registration form.

What to Do When the Board Receives a Completed "Return Notice"

- If a voter completes [Form 10-C](#) or [10-D](#) or provides acceptable forms of documentation and submits an updated voter registration form more than 14 days before an election, the voter will be moved from CONFIRMATION status back to ACTIVE status, and the mark or "flag" indicating that the voter must vote provisionally will be removed from the system. The board must then send the voter a [Form 10-J Acknowledgment Notice](#) to let them know that their information has been accepted and their registration is in good standing. If the Return Notice confirms information in the board's records, verify that the voter's signature matches the signature on file with the board.
- Confirm the voter's information in the county's voter registration system.

If a voter in BMV/SSA mismatch provides the relevant information on [Form 12-B Provisional Affirmation](#) and shows a valid photo ID at the polls or during early voting hours, the ballot must be counted, and the record must not be canceled under [R.C. 3503.201\(D\)\(4\)](#). The voter record must be updated to ACTIVE status and the Provisional flag removed. Should the information provided on the provisional affirmation match the current information in the voter record, the board should note that the voter confirmed the current information, and that record should not be placed in Confirmation status or flagged to vote provisionally due to BMV/SSA mismatch. The board must inform the voter that their information could be incorrect at the source agency.

- Remove the Confirmation mark or “flag” from the voter’s record and place the record in ACTIVE status.
- Remove the Provisional mark or “flag” from the voter’s record.
- Send [Form 10-J Acknowledgment Notice](#).
- Keep the completed Return Notice for at least four years, in accordance with the retention chart.

If the Return Notice INDICATES CHANGES ARE NEEDED in Federal Records:

- If a voter completes [Form 10-C](#) or [10-D](#), but a clerical error in the databases of the BMV and/or SSA continues to cause mismatches between those source agency records and the SWVRD, the board must submit Form 10-SAM to the Secretary of State to verify the source agency error and prevent a recurring mismatch flag.
- In [Form 10-SAM](#), state the reason for the mismatch, the form or documentation used to verify the voter’s current information, and any supporting evidence provided by the voter. Have the director or deputy director sign the form before submission to the Secretary of State.
- Remove the Confirmation mark or “flag” from the voter’s record and place the record in ACTIVE status.
- Advise the voter to contact the source agency to try to correct the error in the source agency’s records.

If the Return Notice INDICATES CHANGES ARE NEEDED in the Information in the Board’s Records:

- Verify the voter’s signature matches the signature on file with the board.
- Update the record with the information provided by the voter. Remove the provisional flag on the voter’s record and place the record in ACTIVE status. The board must follow the instructions and keep the completed Return Notice for at least four years, in accordance with the retention chart.
- New address within the county:
 - Update voter record with the new address and date received.

- Remove the provisional flag on the voter's record and place in ACTIVE status.
- Keep completed Return Notice for at least four years, in accordance with the retention chart.
- Send the voter an [Form 10-J Acknowledgment Notice](#), with registration update and new polling location.
- New address outside the county but still in Ohio:
 - Keep a copy of the completed Return Notice from the elector.
 - Mail the original to the board for the voter's new county.
 - The new board enters the voter into its registration database as an active voter.
 - A duplicate record will be created in the statewide voter registration database that must be resolved according to the Secretary of State's normal business procedures.
 - Keep the completed Return Notice for at least four years, in accordance with the retention chart.
- New address outside Ohio:
 - Cancel the voter's registration.
 - Note on the voter's registration record the date the Return Notice was received and the date of cancellation.
 - Keep completed Return Notice for at least four years, in accordance with the retention chart.

What to Do When the Board DOES NOT Receive a Completed "Return Notice"

If the voter doesn't return the Voter Information Confirmation Return Notice or otherwise fails to confirm the relevant information, the board must:

1. Leave the CONFIRMATION mark on the voter's record.
2. Leave the PROVISIONAL mark or flag on the voter's record
3. Note the date the Voter Information Confirmation Notice was mailed to the voter registrant.

4. If the voter doesn't update registration or vote for four years (including two federal elections), cancel the voter's registration and note the date of cancellation.

The original four-year period from the mailing of the notice applies even if the board sends additional notices under NVRA.

What to Do When the Board Receives Information Voter May Be Deceased

If the BMV, SSA, or Systemic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) databases indicate that the voter is deceased, or the county receives a report from the Secretary of State from SAVE indicating that the voter is deceased:¹²⁹

1. Check with the county health officer and the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) to confirm the report of a deceased elector.
2. Compare voter record information (name, date of birth, etc.) with the same information from county and state health records. Verify that the voter indicated in the BMV or SSA database as deceased is actually deceased.

Cancel the voter registration after comparing records and finding that the voter is deceased. Send [Form 255-C Voter Registration Cancellation Notice](#) – Deceased Voter.

Do not cancel a voter registration based solely on BMV or SSA databases indicating that the voter may be deceased.

¹²⁹[R.C. 3503.18\(B\)](#).

If board employees can't confirm the voter is deceased after comparing records:

1. Send a letter addressed to the voter to confirm their registration.
2. Include a postage-paid return envelope.
3. If no response, leave the Confirmation mark or flag on the voter's record.
4. Keep the board records with the voter's information flagged with a notation of the date the Confirmation notice was mailed to the elector.
5. Cancel the registration if no activity occurs for four years (including two federal elections). Note the cancellation date.

Federal and state laws prohibit canceling any voter registration solely because the voter hasn't updated information, or solely because they provided information on their registration form that didn't match the information on file with the BMV or SSA. This means that, unless a voter is deceased or there is a court order requiring removal, their name cannot be removed from the voter registration database without first being sent a notice as required by these procedures under the HAVA and/or the NVRA.

The original four-year period applies even if the board sends additional notices under NVRA.

What to do with "No Forwarding Address" Returns for the BMV/SSA Voter Information Records Verification Program

All Voter Information Confirmation Notices must be:

- Postage prepaid.
- Sent according to forwardable mail standards of the USPS.
- Include a Return Notice that protects voter privacy through the U.S. mail.

When USPS returns mail to the board as non-deliverable without a forwarding address, record this in the comments section of that voter's file. Keep the undeliverable confirmation notice for four years. This documents the board's compliance with these procedures and the general voter records maintenance program.

Prospective BMV/SSA Voter Record Information Verification Program

The BMV/SSA Voter Record Information Verification Program is prospective in nature. This means that each confirmation notice must provide information advising the voter that their registration will be canceled four years after the postmark on the notice (including two federal general elections) unless they do one of three things:

- Return the Voter Information Confirmation Return Notice card (originally sent with the Voter Information Confirmation Notice) confirming information accuracy, and it is verified by the board.
- Provide documentation to the board for verification purposes and it is verified by the board.
- Vote by provisional ballot, and their ballot is counted.

If a voter fails to respond to a Voter Information Confirmation Notice AND fails to update their voter registration, engage in voter-initiated activity, or vote by the appropriate four-year anniversary date, cancel the registration by one of the following dates, whichever is later:

- By 120 days after the second federal general election where they failed to vote.
- By 120 days after the end of the four-year period where they didn't vote or respond to a Voter Information Confirmation Notice/Voter Information Confirmation Return Notice.¹³⁰

The general election day entered should be at least four years (including two federal elections) after the date the notice is sent.

At least one month before canceling any record, mail [Form 255-A-3](#) to the address on file for the record. If the voter responds and confirms their address, change the voter's status to an ACTIVE status and mail the voter an acknowledgment notice.

Any cancellation of voting eligibility in the board's records must be marked on the voter registration information and include the cancellation date.

¹³⁰[R.C. 3503.21\(E\)](#).

Section 4.10 Secretary of State's Online Voter Registration System

USING THE SYSTEM

The Secretary of State's Online Voter Registration System lets applicants submit a registration securely online. It also allows registered voters to confirm or update their address online.

To use the system, applicants must enter:

- Their first and last name.
- The last four digits of their Social Security number.
- Their Ohio driver license number or Ohio ID card number.
- Their date of birth.

If all the information matches the state database or BMV data, the applicant can proceed using the online system. If the information doesn't match, they will be prompted to complete, print, and sign a paper voter registration form to mail or deliver to their board of elections.

After submitting online, the system provides applicants with a tracking number. The Online Voter Registration System sends a packet to the board's voter registration system (VRS) with all required information and the applicant's signature. Board employees can review the information in each packet and accept it into the board's VRS.

USABILITY EXPECTATIONS AND SUPPORT

Most Ohioans can use the online system. However, there will be some situations when an individual will not be able to use the system.

If applicants can't use the system, they may call the board or the Secretary of State's office for help. Assist voters as needed. Report unexpected errors to the Elections Division of the Secretary of State's office.

PROCESSING ONLINE RECORDS

Tools for Online Registrations

The board receives packets from the Online Voter Registration System regularly. The voter registration system vendors have developed reporting capabilities allowing board employees to review and accept records. Contact the board's voter registration system vendor for training.

Timeline for Online Registrations

Access the board's online voter registration report and process (accept or reject) all records at least once every workday.

Starting 60 days before any election through the close of registration for that election, process records at least twice every workday.

Rejecting Records

In the unusual circumstance that processing results in a rejection of the record from the board's system, board employees must:

- ☐ Document the reason for the rejection in the voter registration system following vendor instructions.
- ☐ Contact the voter by first-class U.S. mail, phone, or email, explaining the need for complete information.
- ☐ Contact the Elections Division of the Secretary of State's office.

Records Belonging to Another County

Similar to a paper registration form, if an otherwise complete online voter registration goes to the wrong county (because the voter entered the incorrect county), it is still a valid application and must be treated as such. If board employees must reject a record because the voter's address is not in the county, contact the Secretary of State's office via email at (SWVRD@OhioSoS.gov) within 24 hours. A board must include the 17-digit application number with the correct county in the email. The Secretary of State's office can redirect the record to the correct county.

Don't reject a valid, in-county street address just because the street name isn't in the street/road table. Instead, the board must amend it to conform to the street/road table.

Example: Don't reject "1234 State Route 161" when the street table calls it "East Dublin-Granville Road."

Electronic Images of Signatures

File Size and Content Requirements

A voter's signature image file can't exceed 32 kilobytes (32KB). If it exceeds 32KB, rescan the original image or reformat the existing file.

A voter's signature image file may not contain any other image. No substitutions may be used in place of the voter's signature image. If a signature image file contains any other image, rescan image files to conform.

"Bad Signature" Acknowledgment

If the board receives a bad signature acknowledgment ("3000 Bad signature for voter OH00XXX") from the SWVRD, rescan or resize the signature and then resend it to the SWVRD. Contact the board's voter system vendor for training on this process.

Resolve bad signature acknowledgments within two business days if possible.

Missing Signatures

Every Monday, the Secretary of State's office will post a list of all voter records with missing signature files by county. Look for it in the Boards of Elections Portal under Data Quality.

Download the list each week and upload a signature file to the SWVRD by the close of that week.

If the voter record has no signature image on file because the voter registered before signatures were digitized from original registration forms, contact the voter for a signature using Form 260 or its local equivalent.

Scanning Signatures from Paper Registration Forms

Upload signature images from paper registration forms to the SWVRD within 24 hours after the voter record is sent to the SWVRD.

Issuing Acknowledgment Notices

Issue Acknowledgment Notices at least weekly. Include all online applications and traditional paper voter registration forms (for new registrations, address and/or name changes) received during the week before the batch run and/or mail date.

WIDGET PLACEMENT

Place a Secretary of State widget on the board website so voters can easily access the online registration and change of address portal.

REPORTING

New registrations and address changes/confirmations submitted through the Online Voter Registration System are considered "Internet" registrations. For purposes of the Elections Assistance Commission (EAC) Survey, the board must track online voter registrations and address changes as separate categories.

Section 4.11 Bureau of Motor Vehicles Change of Address

BMV CHANGE OF ADDRESS OVERVIEW

A key component of the National Voter Registration Act is that a change of address made by a licensed driver with the BMV must also initiate a change of address for that person on the voter rolls.¹³¹

The board will receive BMV changes of address daily via the existing online change of address process and the files from the Boards of Elections Portal. The portal will include records labeled "BMV COA Review" that need more research before the board can update the voter's record. The files from the Boards of Elections Portal will contain "pre-matched" records that require a mandatory completion of the voter's record and "possible-match" records that require research prior to completing the voter's record.

Process pre-matched records from the Boards of Elections Portal and BMV changes of address from the Online Voter Registration System immediately. Then, research the possible-match records and BMV COA Review.

All BMV change of address records will contain the date of the transaction at the BMV. They should be treated like any other registration (physical card or online change of address).¹³²

¹³¹52 U.S.C. § 20504(a).

¹³²Regardless of whether the registration is initiated using a physical voter registration card, the Online Voter Registration System, or comes from the BMV as a result of the NVRA change of address process, if the acknowledgment card issued to the voter by non-forwardable mail is returned as undeliverable, the board must investigate and cause the notification to be delivered to the correct address. [R.C. 3503.19\(C\)](#). If, after investigating, the board is unable to verify the correct address, the board must proceed under [R.C. 3503.201](#) by placing the voter in confirmation status and sending the voter a confirmation notice. [R.C. 3503.201\(A\)\(1\)\(a\)](#).

PRE-MATCHED PAIRS REQUIRING A MANDATORY COMPLETION

Complete the voter's record in the county and statewide systems using information from the BMV record that is missing in the SWVRD record (BMV ID, last four digits of Social Security number (SSN4), or Date of Birth).

Download and completely process all pre-matched pairs at least once every work week.

- **BMV ID Is Blank in the SWVRD Record**

Records match exactly on SSN4, DOB, and Last Name — complete the voter's record in the county voter registration system and the SWVRD with the BMV ID from the field labeled BMV_LICENSE_NUMBER.

- **SSN4 Is Blank in the SWVRD Record**

Records match exactly on BMV ID, DOB, and Last Name — complete the voter's record in the county voter registration system and the SWVRD with the SSN4 from the field labeled BMV_SSN4.

- **DOB Is Invalid in the SWVRD Record**

Records match exactly on BMV ID, SSN4, and Last Name but the SWVRD DOB field is "1/1/1800," — complete the voter's record in the county voter registration system and the SWVRD with the correct DOB from the field labeled BMV_DOB.

First Name	Last Name	BMV ID	SSN4	DOB	
	Y	Blank	Y	Y	Pre-Match
	Y	Y	Blank	Y	Pre-Match
	Y	Y	Y	Invalid	Pre-Match
Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Possible Match
Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Possible Match
Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Possible Match
Y	Y	Y	N	N	Possible Match
N	Y	Y	Y	N	Possible Match
N	Y	Y	N	Y	Possible Match

BMV CHANGE OF ADDRESS REQUIRING A MANDATORY UPDATE

Most BMV change of address records come through the Online Voter Registration System. Download and process all BMV change of address records at least once every workweek. These records will be flagged as “BMV” records for voter registration tracking purposes. Track these as “BMV Change of Address” for EAC reporting purposes.

Follow the instructions and timeline for all records provided through the Online Voter Registration System.

POSSIBLE-MATCH PAIRS AND BMV CHANGES OF ADDRESS REQUIRING REVIEW

Possible-match pairs and changes of address from the BMV that require review by the board will be available in a single file.

Changes of address from the BMV will be in this file for one of three reasons:

- The record is an unresolved duplicate in the SWVRD.
- The voter’s record in the SWVRD doesn’t have a voter signature on file.
- The address provided by the user to the BMV is not compatible with the requirements of the Secretary of State’s Online Voter Registration System.

Boards must download and completely process all possible match pairs and BMV changes of address labeled “BMV COA Review” at least once every workweek.

BMV Changes of Address Labeled “BMV COA Review”

Changes of address from the BMV that are either duplicates or the address must be parsed will be in a file labeled “BMV COA Review.” Review the file and determine the validity of the address provided. If valid, enter the address into the board’s system and update the voter’s address.

Board employees may research records to determine the validity of the address change. Track these changes as “BMV Change of Address” for EAC reporting purposes.

Board employees can correct typos or data entry errors in the address to make it valid and then update it. If the employee can’t determine the validity, treat the record as an incomplete registration and contact the voter for a complete address.

Possible Match-Pairs

Examine the six circumstances below carefully. Compare all of the available information in the record pairs and the voter’s original registration form. Determine if the two records are, in fact, the same person and, if so, which record (BMV or SWVRD) has the correct information.

Research and resolve the discrepancy. Correct the voter’s record in the county voter registration system and the SWVRD. If the discrepancy is due to a board of elections data entry error (shown by comparing to the voter’s original form), correct it without contacting the voter.

The board may contact the voter by mail to verify information accuracy in the SWVRD if it can’t resolve the discrepancy.

- The Record Pairs Match Exactly on BMV ID, DOB, Last Name, and First Name, but not SSN4.
- The Record Pairs Match Exactly on BMV ID, SSN4, Last Name, and First Name, but not DOB.
- The Record Pairs Match Exactly on SSN4, DOB, Last Name, and First Name, but not BMV ID.
- The Record Pairs Match Exactly on BMV ID, Last Name, and First Name, but not SSN4 and DOB.

- The Record Pairs Match Exactly on BMV ID, SSN4, and Last Name, but not DOB and First Name.
- The Record Pairs Match Exactly on BMV ID, DOB, and Last Name, but not SSN4 and First Name.

The board should access additional possible-match pairs through the “BMV Missing” Registration Audit Dashboard on the Boards of Election Portal. These voter records are missing both the BMV_ID and the last four of the SSN. Potential matches in this file were generated using first name, last name, date of birth, and either middle initial or house number and Zip code. Boards must review the dashboard to confirm and verify that the records represent the same person. If so, board staff must complete the voter record in the county voter registration system and the SWVRD with the missing information provided.

In each circumstance, review the voter’s registration form to determine if data entry errors explain the discrepancies. Immediately fix all data entry errors in county and state systems. Contact the voter by mail to verify accuracy if the board can’t fix the discrepancy between records. Resolve all discrepancies.

Note: Voter registration records must not be assigned voter-initiated activity, and any records in CONFIRMATION status must not be updated to ACTIVE status as a result of this information update.

After the board completes its review, the board must review its records for duplicates and merge them to ensure that duplicate levels do not exceed 0.03 percent on a rolling basis and do not exceed zero percent fourteen days prior to an election.

Section 4.12 Automatic Confirmation of Address Safeguard

Under the NVRA, a change of address submitted to the BMV also serves as a change of address for voter registration.¹³³ This changes voter status from ACTIVE-CONFIRMATION to ACTIVE-ACTIVE and stops the four-year cancellation clock.

¹³³[52 U.S.C. 20504\(a\)](#); [R.C. 3503.11\(A\)\(2\)](#).

Though not addressed by the NVRA, if a BMV interaction can automatically update a voter's registration address, it can also confirm the address automatically.

The Automatic Confirmation of Address Safeguard excludes voters from list maintenance when the BMV interaction confirms their current voter registration address.

Each board receives a monthly list of voters who went to the BMV to apply for, update, or renew a driver license or state ID card and didn't change their address. The list is posted on the Boards of Elections Portal on the right-hand side of the screen under "Confirmation Safeguard."

Log onto the Boards of Elections Portal and review the county's list each month. Compare and verify the information provided on the list for each voter with the board's records before updating. After the passing of H.B. 74, there may not be a file to review.

If any voter appears on the Confirmation Safeguard list and is in ACTIVE-CONFIRMATION status from any year's general voter records maintenance program:

1. Compare and verify that the information matches.
2. If the information matches, reset the voter to ACTIVE-ACTIVE status.
3. Use the date from "BMV_PERSON_RECORD_CHANGE_DATE" or "BMV_DRIVER_RECORD_CHANGE_DATE" (whichever is later) as the activity date for the voter's record.

The fact that the voter appeared at the BMV on this date and did not change their address serves as automatic confirmation that this voter still resides at the same address.

Section 4.13 Timing and Impact of Changes of Address and/or Name

NAME CHANGES

When voters legally change their name, they must update their voter registration.¹³⁴

They can use a voter registration form for this purpose. Voters must submit the form by the deadline for voter registration before the next election when they intend to vote.

¹³⁴[R.C. 3503.16\(A\)](#).

Voters who change their name and fail to update by the deadline may be eligible to cast a regular ballot if they provide one of the following to election officials before Election Day or to precinct election officials on Election Day and complete [Form 10-L Notice of Name Change](#):

- court order
- marriage license
- proof of legal name change with both former and current names¹³⁵

Voters who change names, fail to update by the deadline, and don't provide proof of the name change must cast a provisional ballot.¹³⁶

Voters who change names, move outside of their precinct, and fail to update by the deadline must cast a provisional ballot at their assigned polling location on Election Day or at the board office or other location designated for early in-person absentee voting before the election.¹³⁷

ADDRESS CHANGES

Change Within the Precinct

Voters who move within their current precinct may update their voter registration at any time using a voter registration form or the Online Voter Registration System. If updated after the voter registration deadline before an election, the voter completes a registration form and votes a regular ballot.¹³⁸

Change Within the County, Outside of Precinct

Voters who move from one precinct to another in the same county may update their voter registration at any time using a voter registration form or the Online Voter Registration System. If updated after the voter registration deadline before an election, voters can do one of two things:

- Go to the board office between the 28th day (or 25th day in presidential elections years) and the Sunday prior to the election, update their registration, and vote a provisional ballot.

¹³⁵[R.C. 3503.16\(B\)\(1\)\(b\).](#)

¹³⁶[R.C. 3503.16\(B\)\(1\)\(b\).](#)

¹³⁷[R.C. 3503.16\(B\)\(2\).](#)

¹³⁸[R.C. 3503.16\(B\)\(1\)\(a\).](#)

- Go to their new polling location, the board office, or another site designated by the board on Election Day, update their registration, and vote a provisional ballot.¹³⁹

County-to-County Change

Voters who move from one Ohio county to another may update their voter registration at any time using a voter registration form. If updated after the voter registration deadline, voters can do one of two things:

- During the 28 days before Election Day, voters should go to the board office, update their voter registration, and vote a provisional ballot.
- Go to the board office or other designated site in their new county on Election Day, update their registration, and vote a provisional ballot.¹⁴⁰

Section 4.14 Cancellation of Registration

CANCELLATION OCCURRENCES

Ohio law, as prescribed in [R.C. 3503.21](#), outlines the circumstances under which a voter's registration must be canceled and requires that the voter be notified in writing the reason for the cancellation. To meet this requirement, boards of elections must use the following forms when canceling a voter's registration:

- [Form 10-BB Voter Registration Cancellation Notice - Noncitizen](#)
- [Form 255-B Voter Registration Cancellation Notice – Cancellation Authorization](#)
- [Form 255-C Voter Registration Cancellation Notice – Deceased Voter Form](#)
- [Form 255-E Voter Registration Cancellation Notice – Felony Conviction](#)
- [Form 255-F Voter Registration Cancellation Notice – Adjudication of Incompetency](#)
- [Form 255-G Voter Registration Cancellation Notice – Fictitious Voter Registration](#)
- [Form 255-H Voter Registration Cancellation Notice – Successful Voter Registration Challenge](#)
- [Form 255-I Voter Registration Cancellation Notice – Failure to Count Provisional Ballot](#)
- [Form 255-J Voter Registration Cancellation Notice – Safe at Home](#)

¹³⁹[R.C. 3503.16\(B\)\(2\).](#)

¹⁴⁰[R.C. 3503.16\(C\).](#)

- [Form 255-K Voter Registration Cancellation Notice – Confirmation Notice Failure](#)
- [Form 255-L Voter Registration Cancellation Notice – Out-of-County Form](#)

EFFECT OF PRIOR REGISTRATION

If an elector applying for registration is already registered in another state or another Ohio county, they must declare this fact to the registration officer and sign an authorization to cancel the previous registration on [Form 10-A](#) from the Secretary of State.¹⁴¹ A properly completed voter registration form qualifies as adequate authorization.

The board director must mail authorizations to the proper board of elections or comparable agency of the proper state and county.¹⁴² When a board in Ohio receives this authorization from the forwarding county, the director should compare the elector's signature with their signature on the registration files, remove their registration from the files, and place it with the cancellation authorization in a separate file, which must be kept for two calendar years.¹⁴³ Notify the voter at the address shown on the cancellation authorization that their registration has been canceled.¹⁴⁴

UPON REQUEST

Currently registered voters may cancel their registration at any time by filing a written request on [Form 10-A](#).¹⁴⁵ Before canceling the registration, verify that the signature on the request matches the signature on the voter registration card.

CANCELLATION NOTICE FOR PROVISIONAL VOTERS

If a provisional ballot cannot be counted because the voter did not provide the information or documents needed to fix a BMV/SSA mismatch after casting a provisional ballot, the board of elections must cancel the voter's registration and notify the voter of the cancellation by sending [Form 255-I Voter Registration Cancellation Notice - Failure to Count Provisional Ballot](#).¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹[R.C. 3503.33](#); [R.C. 3503.21\(A\)\(1\)](#).

¹⁴²[R.C. 3503.33](#).

¹⁴³[R.C. 3503.33](#).

¹⁴⁴[R.C. 3503.33](#).

¹⁴⁵[R.C. 3503.21\(A\)\(1\)](#).

¹⁴⁶[R.C. 3503.21\(A\)\(10\), \(F\)\(1\)](#); [R.C. 3503.201\(A\)\(1\)\(b\), \(B\)\(2\), \(D\)](#).

Important note: If a voter's registration is canceled after a failure to count their provisional ballot, the board must not use the voter's provisional ballot form ([Form 12-B](#)) to update the voter's registration.

DEATH

Notice of Death of Registered Voter

A deceased person's spouse, parent, child, estate administrator, or executor of a will may file a certified copy of the elector's death certificate with the board.¹⁴⁷ Upon receipt, the board must cancel the deceased voter's registration.¹⁴⁸

Send written notice on [Form 255-C](#) Voter Registration Cancellation Notice – Deceased Voter to the deceased voter's address where they were registered. The form informs the recipient that the elector's registration has been canceled due to death, and advises the recipient that, if the cancellation was made in error, they may contact the board to correct it. If the registration was canceled in error, restore it as though it were never canceled.¹⁴⁹

Records Provided by the Ohio Department of Health (ODH)

ODH sends a monthly report to the Secretary of State with names, Social Security numbers, birth/death dates, and addresses of all deceased persons over 18.¹⁵⁰ If ODH is notified of a death after sending its report, it will send a supplement within a month.¹⁵¹ Once the board receives confirmed information of a voter's death, cancel their registration.¹⁵²

Send a written notice on [Form 255-C](#) Voter Registration Cancellation Notice - Deceased Voter to the voter's address. The form informs the recipient that the registration has been canceled due to death and advises them that if the cancellation was made in error, the voter should contact the board to correct it. If the registration was canceled in error, restore it as though it were never canceled.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁷[R.C. 3503.21\(A\)\(3\).](#)

¹⁴⁸[R.C. 3503.21\(A\)\(3\).](#)

¹⁴⁹[R.C. 3503.21\(F\)\(2\).](#)

¹⁵⁰[R.C. 3503.18\(A\)\(1\).](#)

¹⁵¹[R.C. 3503.18\(A\)\(1\).](#)

¹⁵²[R.C. 3503.18\(E\).](#)

¹⁵³[R.C. 3503.21\(F\)\(2\).](#)

State and Territorial Exchange of Vital Events (STEVE) Database

STEVE Overview

The NVRA requires states to make a reasonable effort to remove the names of ineligible voters from official lists due to death.¹⁵⁴

One tool for accomplishing this is the State and Territorial Exchange of Vital Events (STEVE) Database. STEVE provides timely, accurate information on Ohio voters who died in Ohio or participating jurisdictions around the country. The Ohio Department of Health is a partner jurisdiction in the STEVE database.

Boards are required to download the STEVE file from the Boards of Elections Portal monthly. This file contains potential matches between deceased individuals and state voter records.

Matching criteria are as follows (any of the below will result in a matched pair of records in the download file):

<i>SSN4</i>	<i>DOB</i>	<i>LAST_NAME</i>	<i>FIRST_NAME</i>
Y	Y	Y	Y
Blank in SWVRD	Y	Y	Y
N	Y	Y	Y
Y	Y	Y	N
Y	N or Blank in SWVRD (i.e., 1/1/1800)	Y	Y

Then, only if the STEVE record indicates the deceased individual is female:

<i>SSN4</i>	<i>DOB</i>	<i>LAST_NAME</i>	<i>FIRST_NAME</i>
Y	Y	N	Y

¹⁵⁴[52 U.S.C. § 20507\(A\)\(4\)\(a\).](#)

Deceased Individual's Identifying Information Matched with Voter Identifying Information in County Download File

The following fields (in order of appearance) will be in the county download file for STEVE-SWVRD matched records:

<i>STEVE (deceased individual identifying information):</i>	<i>SWVRD (voter identifying information supplied by the county BOE to the SWVRD):</i>
Last Name	Unique State Voter ID Number assigned by the SWVRD
First Name	Unique County Voter ID Number assigned by the county VRS
Middle Name	SWVRD Status
Suffix	Last Name
Last four digits of SSN	First Name
Birth date	Middle Name or Initial
Date of Death	Suffix
Male or Female (if supplied)	Last four digits of SSN
Residence City	Birth Date
Residence House Number and Street (including pre- and post-street direction, description, and unit number)	Date of Match
Residence Zip Code	Criteria Used to Identify Possible Match
Residence County	
Residence State	

When and How to Download SWVRD Records Matched with STEVE Records.

Download the board's file of deceased individuals' identifying information matched to county records in the SWVRD at least monthly and promptly process every record. Use the board's assigned username and password to log into the Boards of Elections Portal.

Download the file by clicking on the displayed link. Name and save the file in an appropriate directory and folder on the board computer. Board employees should also see a "Processed" List. After downloading the board's file of deceased individuals'

identifying information, the file will automatically move into the “Processed” list. Board employees can re-access files already downloaded from the Processed list.

How to Process Matched Files

Within **10 days** of downloading STEVE-SWVRD matched records, use the STEVE info to confirm whether a voter in the county is deceased. Exception: if the board is conducting an election, do not process STEVE files received **after** registration closes until the election is certified. If the board receives this data after the close of registration, process the STEVE files as soon as the board is authorized by the Secretary of State’s office to resume processing voter registrations, after the Official Canvass. Check voter history for registrations listed in STEVE files received after registration closes to ensure no ballot was cast after the deceased voter’s date of death.

Examine each pair of matched records carefully and compare identifying information like middle name or initial, suffix, and address. If board staff can confirm a voter is deceased using the supplied information, cancel the voter’s registration.

Important: A match between a STEVE record and a SWVRD record does not guarantee the records are for the same person.

Voter Registration Cancellation

Notice - Deceased Voter

When canceling a registration based on STEVE data, send written notice on [Form 255-C](#), with option one on the form checked, to the deceased voter’s address. The form informs the recipient that the registration has been canceled due to death, and advises them that if the cancellation was made in error, they may contact the board to correct it. If the registration was canceled in error, restore it as though it were never canceled.¹⁵⁵

Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) and State and Territorial Exchange of Vital Events (STEVE) Databases

The Secretary of State conducts a monthly review to identify registered voters who are deceased.¹⁵⁶ This information is shared with boards of elections through the SAVE system and the State and Territorial Exchange of Vital Events (STEVE) files that the boards already receive.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵[R.C. 3503.21\(F\)\(2\).](#)

¹⁵⁶[R.C. 3503.18\(B\).](#)

¹⁵⁷[R.C. 3503.18\(C\).](#)

The board must cancel the registration and send [Form 255-C](#), with option three on the form checked, within 10 days of receiving a report from the Secretary of State.¹⁵⁸

INCARCERATION ON FELONY CONVICTION

Voters convicted of a felony and incarcerated are not qualified Ohio voters during their incarceration.¹⁵⁹ Monthly, the clerk of the court of common pleas must file with the board the names and addresses of those convicted of crimes that would disfranchise them under Ohio law.¹⁶⁰

U.S. attorneys provide federal conviction reports to the Secretary of State's office, who forwards the information to the appropriate board for cancellation.¹⁶¹

Upon receiving notice of a voter's felony conviction and incarceration:

1. Cancel the voter's registration.
2. Send a notice, by forwardable mail, on [Form 255-E](#) informing the elector of the date and reason for the cancellation.¹⁶²

If canceled in error, restore the registration as if it were never canceled.¹⁶³

A voter may be eligible to reregister after incarceration ends.

If a felony report from the clerk of courts contains a voter's address from a different county, promptly send a copy to the appropriate board.¹⁶⁴

Any questions regarding the list should be directed to the clerk of the court of common pleas. Questions regarding specific offenses or what constitutes "incarceration" should be directed to the county prosecutor. In the event of inadequate sentencing information, contact the clerk of courts and the prosecuting attorney. For questions regarding federal felony reports, contact the U.S. Attorney's Office that generated the report.

¹⁵⁸[R.C. 3503.18\(E\).](#)

¹⁵⁹[R.C. 2961.01\(A\)\(1\).](#)

¹⁶⁰[R.C. 3503.18\(D\).](#)

¹⁶¹[R.C. 3503.18\(D\).](#)

¹⁶²[R.C. 3503.18\(E\); R.C. 3503.21\(A\)\(4\).](#)

¹⁶³[R.C. 3503.21\(F\)\(2\).](#)

¹⁶⁴[R.C. 3503.18\(E\).](#)

DETERMINATION OF INCOMPETENCY BY PROBATE COURT

Monthly, each probate judge must file with the board the names and addresses of persons over 18 who were adjudicated incompetent for voting purposes.¹⁶⁵ If the probate judge's report contains an address in a different county, promptly send a copy to the appropriate board.¹⁶⁶

Medical professional, caretaker, family member, or power of attorney determinations alone are insufficient for a board to cancel a voter's registration for incompetency. The probate court must adjudicate or judge a person incompetent for voting purposes for a board to cancel a voter's registration for this reason.¹⁶⁷

Begin a process to cancel the registration of voters that the probate judge filed as adjudicated incompetent.¹⁶⁸ Before canceling the voter's registration, send written notice on [Form 255-F Voter Registration Cancellation Notice – Adjudication of Incompetency](#) by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the voter at the address on file with the board.¹⁶⁹ The form advises the voter that their name appears on the probate judge's list, and that if it is an error, the voter may contact the board to correct the error.

A voter's registration may be canceled because of the voter's appearance on the list from the probate judge within 30 days before an election.

REMOVAL OF NONCITIZEN REGISTRATIONS

The board must remove voter registrations of individuals who:

- Submitted documentation to the BMV self-identifying as a noncitizen.
- Fail to respond to Secretary of State notices seeking citizenship confirmation or voter registration cancellation.
- Have been confirmed as noncitizens in the federal Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) database.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁵[R.C. 3503.18\(C\).](#)

¹⁶⁶[R.C. 3503.18\(E\).](#)

¹⁶⁷[R.C. 3503.18\(C\).](#)

¹⁶⁸[R.C. 3503.18\(E\).](#)

¹⁶⁹[R.C. 3503.21\(A\)\(5\).](#)

¹⁷⁰[R.C. 3503.152\(A\), \(B\)\(1\); R.C. 3503.21\(A\)\(9\).](#)

The Secretary of State provides notice to noncitizens that their registrations will be removed unless they provide proof of citizenship to their county board of elections.

No later than five business days of receiving the list of noncitizens from the Secretary of State, do both of the following:

1. Remove registrations found on the list.
 - Send those individuals [Form 10-BB](#) informing them that their registration was canceled because they were verified as noncitizens by the SAVE database.¹⁷¹

Noncitizens whose registrations are removed may request a hearing and administrative appeal before the board. If they provide proof of citizenship at the hearing, reinstate their voter registration.

Anyone removed from the voter registration database may cast a provisional ballot.¹⁷² That ballot will count if the individual provides proof of U.S. citizenship within the four-day cure period.¹⁷³ If registration was removed in error, restore the registration to ACTIVE status and treat it as though it was never canceled.¹⁷⁴

REMOVAL OF REGISTRATIONS OF INDIVIDUALS WHO REGISTERED AND VOTED OUT-OF-STATE

The Secretary of State's office may enter into data-sharing agreements with partner states for list maintenance purposes.¹⁷⁵ The shared voter registration data helps identify duplicate registrations and double voting between the states in the most recent general election. If an individual is registered in Ohio and later registers and votes in another state, they lose Ohio residency for voting purposes.¹⁷⁶

Accordingly, when the board receives from the Secretary of State a list of individuals who have registered to vote in another state, the board must do both of the following:

1. Send each individual on the list a [Form 10-VOS](#) to the address on file with the board within 10 days of receiving the list .

¹⁷¹[R.C. 3503.152\(A\), \(B\)\(1\); R.C. 3503.21\(A\)\(9\), \(F\)\(1\).](#)

¹⁷²[R.C. 3505.181\(A\)\(1\).](#)

¹⁷³[R.C. 3505.182\(D\)\(5\)\(b\); R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(1\)-\(2\).](#)

¹⁷⁴[R.C. 3503.21\(F\)\(2\).](#)

¹⁷⁵[R.C. 3503.151\(C\)\(1\).](#)

¹⁷⁶[R.C. 3503.02\(H\); R.C. 3503.06\(C\)\(2\)\(g\).](#)

2. Remove the registration of any individual who fails to respond within 30 days of the notice being mailed.

Post-Election Voter-Initiated Activity

If an individual on the list has recently engaged in voter-initiated activity in Ohio, the board should not send [Form 10-VOS](#). Instead, the board must conduct outreach to confirm whether the individual is an Ohio resident for voting purposes, and, if so, inform them to cancel their out-of-state voter registration.

Administrative Hearing

An individual whose voter registration is canceled under this process may request a hearing before the board of elections. If the individual provides clear and convincing evidence that they have not registered and voted out of state, their voter registration must be restored.

UNIFORM AND NONDISCRIMINATORY VOTER RECORDS MAINTENANCE

Voter Records Maintenance Overview

The voter records maintenance program is a requirement of the NVRA.¹⁷⁷ The purposes of the NVRA are to increase voter registrations, enhance participation of eligible citizens in the voter process, protect the integrity of the electoral process, and maintain accurate voter registration rolls. State law requires local election officials to conduct the state's general voter records maintenance program every year.¹⁷⁸ County boards are also required to conduct the supplemental process every year.

The Two Parts of Ohio's Voter Records Maintenance Program

Ohio's general voter records maintenance program under the NVRA has two parts:

- **National Change of Address Process (NCOA)**

Triggered when a voter record appears in the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) NCOA database indicating a likely move.¹⁷⁹ Under state law, the Secretary of State

¹⁷⁷[52 U.S.C. § 20507\(a\)\(4\)](#).

¹⁷⁸[R.C. 3503.21\(D\)](#).

¹⁷⁹[R.C. 3503.21\(B\)\(1\), \(D\)](#).

matches voter records in the SWVRD against the NCOA database to compile the data for NCOA process.¹⁸⁰

- **The Supplemental Process**

Triggered by voter inactivity during a fixed period of time (generally two years). Inactivity is determined by the absence of a voter-initiated activity. This seeks to identify voters whose lack of voter-initiated activity indicates they may have moved, even though their names didn't appear as part of the NCOA process. Boards use data points (voter activity) in their local system to compile the data for this supplemental process. Ensure that voter-initiated activity is entered and updated prior to completing the supplemental process.

This uniform, nondiscriminatory program helps maintain accurate voter registration rolls, proactively contacts voters who likely moved, and accurately identifies and cancels registrations of unqualified electors under the law after proper notice.

Instructions for Conducting NCOA Supplemental Process Issued Annually

Each year after the primary election, the Secretary of State's office issues detailed instructions to boards for conducting the NCOA and supplemental process. The instructions outline confirmation notice content and how to process returned notices.

Complete the process within a specified timeframe and certify completion.

Completion of Maintenance Timeline

Before canceling a voter's registration under the voter records maintenance program (for example, through the NCOA and supplemental processes), send them a [Form 255-A-3 Notice of Voter Registration Cancellation](#) by forwardable mail.

If the voter replies updating or confirming their address, do not cancel the registration.

It is important to complete the voter records maintenance program. Because the board may not cancel a voter's registration as part of a systematic removal process within 90 days of a federal election, there is a narrow window of time that such records may be canceled.¹⁸¹ Therefore, it is vital that board employees track and keep a calendar for

¹⁸⁰[R.C. 3503.21\(B\)\(1\), \(D\).](#)

¹⁸¹[52 U.S.C. § 20507\(c\)\(2\)\(A\).](#)

when records must be canceled. A registration can't be canceled until after two federal general elections or four years **from the mailing of the confirmation notice**.¹⁸²

Never complete the maintenance program and cancel a voter's registration as part of a systematic removal process within 30 days of a non-federal election.

See **Section 4.18** for list maintenance.

Section 4.15 Publication of Voter Lists

GENERALLY

Update official voter registration lists on a regular, routine basis. Daily data entry may be required depending on the volume of new registration forms, updates, and cancellations.

PRIOR TO AN ELECTION

Fourteen days before an election, prepare a complete, official registration list for each precinct from the statewide voter registration database.¹⁸³ The list must contain the names (in alphabetical order), addresses, and political party ballot each elector voted in the most recent primary election within the current year and the preceding two calendar years.¹⁸⁴ Prepare the lists either in sheet form (one side of paper) or electronically at the board's discretion.¹⁸⁵ Head each precinct list with "Register of Voters" and indicate the district or ward and precinct under the heading.¹⁸⁶

Attach board members and director names to the precinct lists. Provide enough copies for candidates, political parties, or organized groups that apply for them, and have each precinct list available for public viewing at the board during normal business hours.¹⁸⁷

Ensure that each precinct has a paper copy of its voters' registration lists by poll opening on the day of a general or primary election.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸²[R.C. 3503.21\(A\)\(7\), \(B\)\(2\).](#)

¹⁸³[R.C. 3503.23\(A\).](#)

¹⁸⁴[R.C. 3503.23\(A\).](#)

¹⁸⁵[R.C. 3503.23\(A\).](#)

¹⁸⁶[R.C. 3503.23\(A\).](#)

¹⁸⁷[R.C. 3503.23\(A\).](#)

¹⁸⁸[R.C. 3503.23\(A\).](#)

DAY OF ELECTION

On general or primary Election Day, precinct election officials must do both of the following:

1. By the time the polls open, post and display one copy of the registration list of voters in that precinct in an easily accessible area of the polling location.
2. At 11 a.m. and 4 p.m., place a mark, on the registration list posted at the polling location, before the names of the voters who have voted.¹⁸⁹

CORRECTION OF REGISTRATION LIST

Errors Identified by Board of Elections

When the board discovers a registration record error (misspelled name, incorrect date of birth, or transposed numbers in the voter's residential address, etc.), promptly correct it.

Errors Identified by Voter

The board may correct registration errors as long as they are not of fraudulent intent.¹⁹⁰ Specifically, if a voter registered in the wrong precinct by mistake, the board may correct the voter's registration form with proof of true residence and full, satisfactory proof that the error was a mistake.¹⁹¹

Errors Identified by Another Elector

A qualified voter may file an application for correction or challenge of another voter's registration at the office of the board of elections.¹⁹² Additional information on the challenge process and deadlines is in **Section 4.17**.

Section 4.16 Statewide Voter Registration System

DUPLICATE RESOLUTION

Never let the board's duplicate levels get above 0.03 percent on a rolling monthly basis.

When printing Election Day precinct lists, have local and statewide voter registration lists as accurate as possible. The Secretary of State expects all counties to have their duplicate numbers at zero percent by the 14th day before an election.

¹⁸⁹[R.C. 3503.23\(B\)](#).

¹⁹⁰[R.C. 3503.30](#).

¹⁹¹[R.C. 3503.30](#).

¹⁹²[R.C. 3503.24\(A\)](#).

This level of duplicate management will allow for a more accurate voter file for Election Day.

VOTER HISTORY

Upload voter history for all state elections to the SWVRD no later than 14 days after the completion of the county's Official Canvass and recounts. Counties with more than 100,000 registered voters must contact the Elections Division to schedule their upload during that time frame.

The DATA Act defines "voting history" such that only voters casting counted ballots receive voting history for participating in that election.¹⁹³ A blank ballot cast by a voter and counted requires a board to apply "voting history." The DATA Act requires boards to record the type of ballot the voter cast, the date of the election, and, if the election was a primary, the political party whose ballot the voter cast or an indication the voter cast a questions and issues only ballot at a special election held on the day of the primary.¹⁹⁴

Assign voter history only if any of the following are true:

- The voter signed the pollbook on Election Day.
- The voter timely returned the ID envelope purporting to contain the voter's marked absentee ballot (including UOCAVA and FWAB), and the ballot was counted.
- The voter returned an absentee ballot in person during the period for early in-person absentee voting, and the ballot was counted.
- The voter is an eligible elector of the state of Ohio and cast a provisional ballot, and the ballot was counted.

Type of Ballot Cast

Ohio Administrative Code rules define ballot types. The rules define:

- "Early in-person ballots" as an absent voter's ballots cast in person.
- "Election Day ballots" as "ballots cast on the date of an election at a polling location."

¹⁹³[O.A.C. 111:3-11-01\(B\)\(1\).](#)

¹⁹⁴[R.C. 3503.15\(C\)\(10\)\(a\)-\(c\).](#)

- “Regular absent voter’s ballots” as “absent voter’s ballots that are not early in-person ballots or Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee ballots.”¹⁹⁵

The following categories must be used to indicate which type of ballot the voter cast:

- Uniformed and Overseas Absent Voter’s Ballot (ABU)
- Regular Absent Voter’s Ballot (ABR)
- Ballots Cast by Early In-person Voting (EIP)
- Ballots Cast on the Date of an Election at a Polling Location (EDR)
- Backup Optical Scan Election Day Ballot (EDB) – This category only applies if the board of elections canvasses paper ballots cast on Election Day separately from other ballots cast on Election Day.
- Provisional Ballots (PRV) – Provisional ballots should use this category regardless of when they were cast.
- Any additional information required by a directive from the Secretary of State.¹⁹⁶

PARTY AFFILIATION

Under Ohio law, an elector affiliates with a political party by voting in that party’s primary. Voters are party members if they voted in that party’s primary within the preceding two calendar years, or didn’t vote in any other party’s primary within the preceding two calendar years.¹⁹⁷

Program the board’s county voter registration system to reflect party affiliation using these examples:¹⁹⁸

- ☐ Voted D in 2026 primary
Voted issues only (or non-partisan primary) in 2025 primary
Voted D or R in 2024 primary
Elector’s affiliation is D

¹⁹⁵[O.A.C. 111:3-11-01\(C\)-\(E\).](#)

¹⁹⁶[O.A.C. 111:3-11-03\(C\).](#)

¹⁹⁷[R.C. 3513.05, 17; R.C. 3513.19\(A\)\(1\).](#)

¹⁹⁸**Please note that the use of specific political parties and years in these examples is for demonstration purposes only.** Any major political party (Democratic and Republican) or recognized minor political party appearing in any of these examples can be interchanged with any other political party based on the ballot selected by the voter. Likewise, the years appearing in these examples are for explanatory purposes only. Questions regarding the determination of an elector’s party affiliation may be directed to the Elections Division of the Secretary of State’s office.

- ☐ Voted R in 2026 primary
Voted D or R in 2025 partisan primary
Elector's affiliation is R
- ☐ Voted D in 2026 primary
No primary held in 2025
Voted D or R in 2024 primary
Elector's affiliation is D
- ☐ Voted issues-only or did not vote in 2026 primary
Voted issues-only (or non-partisan primary) in 2025 primary
Voted D in 2024 primary
Elector's affiliation is D
- ☐ Voted issues-only or did not vote in 2026 primary
Voted R in 2025 partisan primary
Elector's affiliation is R
- ☐ Voted issues-only or did not vote in 2026 primary
No primary held in 2025
Voted D in 2024 primary
Elector's affiliation is D
- ☐ Voted issues-only or did not vote in 2026 primary
No primary held in 2025
Voted issues-only or did not vote in 2024 primary
Elector is unaffiliated
- ☐ Voted issues-only or did not vote in 2026 primary
Voted issues-only (or non-partisan primary) in 2025 primary
Voted issues-only or did not vote in 2024 primary
Elector is unaffiliated

Section 4.17 Challenge of Right to Vote

CHALLENGES

Under [Ohio law](#), qualified electors may file an application for correction or challenge, either in person or by mail with the board of elections.¹⁹⁹ A challenger must:

¹⁹⁹[R.C. 3503.24\(A\)](#).

1. Use [Form 257](#).
2. File the application or challenge at least 30 days before an election.
3. State reasons for the application or challenge.
4. Sign under penalty of election falsification.²⁰⁰

Determine Whether a Hearing is Warranted

The director and deputy director²⁰¹ must complete an initial review to determine whether the application or challenge meets legal requirements by addressing the following questions:

- **Was the application or challenge filed under penalty of election falsification using [Form 257](#)?** If not, the challenge is invalid and cannot proceed.
- **Is the person who filed the application for challenge a qualified Ohio elector?** Review the board's records to determine whether the person who filed is a qualified elector in Ohio. If not, the challenge is invalid and cannot proceed. Any disagreement between the director and deputy director must be resolved by board vote.
- **Does the challenge state sufficient reasons for the application for challenge?** Complete an initial review of the reasons for the application or challenge as filed on [Form 257](#). Consider whether the party filing the challenge has enough information to sustain a successful challenge. As part of this administrative process, the director and deputy director will review the face of the document as filed. If the reasons wouldn't be sufficient to grant the challenge even if they prove to be true, the challenge is insufficient and cannot proceed. Any disagreement between the director and deputy director must be resolved by board vote. However, if the filing is sufficient and the board can determine that an application or challenge should be granted or denied solely on the basis of the board's records, immediately vote to grant or deny that application or challenge.²⁰²

²⁰⁰[R.C. 3503.24\(A\)](#).

²⁰¹Where the board only has a Director, the Director and the Chairperson will follow these steps.

²⁰²[R.C. 3503.24\(B\)](#).

Note: The determination that a challenge is facially valid and sufficient doesn't affect the ultimate merits of the challenge hearing.

Scheduling a Hearing

However, if the board cannot make such a determination on the basis of the board's records, the director must promptly set a time and date for a hearing before the board.²⁰³ The hearing must be held within 10 days of receiving the application or challenge.²⁰⁴

Providing Notice for a Hearing

Provide notice to the person challenged that a hearing has been scheduled.²⁰⁵ Inform them of the date and time of the hearing, and of their right to appear and testify, call witnesses, and be represented by counsel.²⁰⁶

Provide notice to the challenge filer of the hearing date and time, unless the challenged elector has a confidential voter registration record under [R.C. 111.44](#).²⁰⁷

Send all notices by first-class mail no later than six days before the scheduled hearing.²⁰⁸

Challenge Process, Hearing, and Decision

Issue subpoenas to witnesses to appear and testify before the board at the hearing, at either party's or a board member's request.²⁰⁹ All witnesses must testify under oath.²¹⁰

The board must reach a decision on all applications and challenges immediately following the hearing.²¹¹ If the board decides that a person's name should not be on the registration list, remove it from the list.²¹² If the board's notice wasn't returned as undeliverable, but the person challenged did not appear for the hearing, mail them a notice of the cancellation.

²⁰³[R.C. 3503.24\(B\)](#).

²⁰⁴[R.C. 3503.24\(B\)](#).

²⁰⁵[R.C. 3503.24\(B\)](#).

²⁰⁶[R.C. 3503.24\(B\)](#).

²⁰⁷[R.C. 3503.24\(D\)](#).

²⁰⁸[R.C. 3503.24\(B\)](#).

²⁰⁹[R.C. 3503.24\(B\)](#).

²¹⁰[R.C. 3503.24\(B\)](#).

²¹¹[R.C. 3503.24\(B\)](#).

²¹²[R.C. 3503.24\(C\)](#).

If the board decides the person's name *should* appear on the registration list, it must be added or remain on the list.²¹³

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Return Mail or Change of Address

The return of mail as undeliverable or unable to forward, or a change of address on file (NCOA), alone are insufficient to grant a challenge under [R.C. 3503.24](#).

Foreclosure

Evidence of a foreclosure action alone is insufficient to grant a challenge under [R.C. 3503.24](#).

Confirmation Status

The fact that a voter's status is recorded in the Statewide Voter Registration Database as "ACTIVE-CONFIRMATION" or "INACTIVE" alone is insufficient to grant a challenge under [R.C. 3503.24](#). An Active-Confirmation or Inactive voter is treated the same as an Active voter for voting purposes.

Section 4.18 Public Records

REGISTRATION FORMS AND LISTS

Except as otherwise provided by state or federal law, voter registration forms and the Statewide Voter Registration Database are public records under [R.C. 149.43](#).²¹⁴

All registration forms and lists, when not in official use by registrars or judges of elections, must be in the board's possession.²¹⁵ Names and addresses of electors may be copied from the lists only in the office when it is open for business.²¹⁶ No copying is permitted during the period 21 days before an election through the 11th day after an election if, in the board's opinion, it would interfere with the board's necessary work.²¹⁷ Keep a convenient, correct set of the registration lists of all precincts in the county available for public inspection.²¹⁸

²¹³[R.C. 3503.24\(C\)](#).

²¹⁴[R.C. 3503.13\(A\)\(1\)](#).

²¹⁵[R.C. 3503.26\(A\)](#).

²¹⁶[R.C. 3503.26\(A\)](#).

²¹⁷[R.C. 3503.26\(A\)](#).

²¹⁸[R.C. 3503.26\(A\)](#).

Proof of Citizenship Documentation Non-Public Record

Documents used to prove a person's U.S. citizenship status are not public and must not be released.²¹⁹ If a board of elections is unsure whether a specific record must be disclosed, the board should consult with the county prosecutor for a final legal determination.

VOTER REGISTRATION LIST MAINTENANCE (NCOA AND SUPPLEMENTAL PROCESS) RECORDS

The board must maintain and make available for public inspection and copying, at reasonable cost, all list maintenance records.²²⁰ Include names and addresses of all registered electors sent Confirmation Notices and whether or not the elector responded.²²¹ Maintain all NCOA and supplemental process confirmation notices (both sent and received) and lists of individuals sent such notices for five years.²²² Maintain all returned undeliverable NCOA and supplemental process confirmation notices for four years.²²³

RECORDS RETENTION CHART

The Secretary of State's [retention chart](#) specifies the length of time the board must retain records related to voter registration (including forms, lists of electors, etc.). Questions about the chart should be directed to the Elections Division of the Secretary of State's office.

Direct questions about public records requests or retention to the county prosecutor.

²¹⁹[R.C. 3503.13\(A\)\(2\)\(d\).](#)

²²⁰[R.C. 3503.26\(B\).](#)

²²¹[R.C. 3503.26\(B\).](#)

²²²CBE-44, 46, [Secretary of State Retention Schedule.](#)

²²³CBE-47, [Secretary of State Retention Schedule.](#)

Chapter 4 Checklist: Voter Registration

Daily Operations

- ☐ Process online voter registration reports at least once per workday.
- ☐ During the 60 days before the election, process online reports twice per workday.
- ☐ Enter new registrations and updates promptly into the county system.
- ☐ Scan and upload signature images within 24 hours of processing paper forms.
- ☐ Check for incomplete, invalid, or suspicious applications.
- ☐ Transfer wrong-county registrations within five days with proper transmittal forms.
- ☐ Update voter records based on valid address/name changes.
- ☐ Process returned mail and update voter status as needed.

Weekly Tasks

- ☐ Access Registration Audit Dashboard and correct flagged records.
- ☐ Issue Acknowledgment Notices for all registrations received the previous week.
- ☐ Download and process BMV change of address files completely.
- ☐ Download and process BMV pre-matched pairs requiring mandatory completion.
- ☐ Research and resolve BMV possible-match pairs and BMV COA Review files.
- ☐ Download missing signature lists from Boards of Elections Portal and upload files by week's end.
- ☐ Review Online Voter Registration System rejections and contact voters.
- ☐ Process any challenge applications received.

Monthly Tasks

- ☐ Download and process STEVE death records from Boards of Elections Portal.
- ☐ Review and process Confirmation Safeguard list from Boards of Elections Portal.

- ❑ Process SAVE death records upon receipt of a report from the Secretary of State.
- ❑ Keep duplicate levels under 0.03 percent.
- ❑ Process reports from court clerks on felony convictions/incarcerations.
- ❑ Process reports from probate judges on incompetency determinations.
- ❑ Review voters registered at postal box addresses for eligibility.
- ❑ Check for and correct data entry errors in voter records.

Tasks Before Elections

- ❑ Publish voter registration deadline notice in newspapers.
- ❑ Process challenge applications (must be filed 30+ days before election).
- ❑ Prepare complete, official precinct voter lists from statewide database.
- ❑ Provide sufficient copies for candidates, parties, and organized groups.
- ❑ Make lists available for public viewing during business hours.
- ❑ Process all applications received by the deadline.

Election Day

- ❑ Ensure each precinct has a paper copy of voter registration list.
- ❑ Verify precinct officials post voter list in accessible location by poll opening.
- ❑ Confirm officials mark list at 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. showing who voted.

After Election

- ❑ Resume normal registration date assignments (first day after election).
- ❑ Upload voter history within 30 days of Official Canvass completion.
- ❑ Counties with 100,000+ voters: Schedule upload with Elections Division.
- ❑ Once released, process STEVE/SAVE files received after registration deadline.
- ❑ Check voter history against death dates in post-deadline STEVE/SAVE files.
- ❑ Resume normal packet transmission after Secretary of State authorization.

Special Situations and Ongoing Compliance

- ❑ Process SAH-VR forms confidentially (director/deputy director only).
- ❑ Mail photocopies of valid registrations to Safe at Home unit.
- ❑ Process "Request to Redact Address" forms within five business days.
- ❑ Process noncitizen removal lists within five business days of receipt.
- ❑ Send [Form 10-BB](#) notices within five business days of removing noncitizen registrations.
- ❑ Handle incompetency determinations using [Form 255-F](#).
- ❑ Process felony conviction reports and send forwardable mail notices promptly.
- ❑ Coordinate with other counties when reports contain out-of-county addresses.

Confirmation Processes

- ❑ Send confirmation notices when Acknowledgment Notices return undeliverable.
- ❑ Change voter status from ACTIVE to CONFIRMATION when appropriate.
- ❑ Change voting status to provisional when appropriate.
- ❑ Track four-year periods for voter records maintenance.
- ❑ Send [Form 255-A-3](#) at least one month before canceling any record.
- ❑ Process Confirmation Notice responses within required timeframes.

BMV/SSA Verification

- ❑ Process BMV/SSA verification packets within 10 days.
- ❑ Send confirmation notices only when not due to data entry errors.
- ❑ Research discrepancies before contacting voters.
- ❑ Track four-year anniversary dates for cancellation purposes.
- ❑ Maintain proper documentation for compliance auditing.

Death Record Processing

- ❑ Verify death information with county health officer and Ohio Department of Health.
- ❑ Compare STEVE records carefully; don't assume matches are same person.
- ❑ Process SAVE deceased report from the Secretary of State.
- ❑ Send [Form 255-C](#) notices to addresses of canceled deceased voters.
- ❑ Process family-submitted death certificates promptly.

Voter Challenges

- ❑ Determine if challenges are facially sufficient using [Form 257](#).
- ❑ Schedule hearings within 10 days of receiving valid challenges.
- ❑ Send notices to all parties at least six days before hearings.
- ❑ Issue subpoenas as requested by parties or board members.
- ❑ Make immediate decisions following hearings.
- ❑ Send cancellation notices if challenged voters don't appear.

Public Records and Transparency

- ❑ Make registration records available for public inspection during business hours except for proof of citizenship documentation
- ❑ Restrict copying during 21 days before through 11 days after elections if interfering with work.
- ❑ Maintain NCOA and supplemental process records for public inspection.
- ❑ Keep all list maintenance records for two years minimum.
- ❑ Follow Secretary of State retention schedule for all voter registration documents.
- ❑ Coordinate with county prosecutor on public records requests.

System Maintenance and Reporting

- ❑ Place Secretary of State widget on board website for online registration access.
- ❑ Track online registrations as "Internet" category for EAC Survey reporting.

- ❑ Track BMV changes of address as "BMV Change of Address" for EAC reporting.
- ❑ Code all registrations by source for accurate EAC Survey data.
- ❑ Maintain signature image files and to contain only voter signatures.
- ❑ Determine party affiliation correctly using prescribed examples.

Error Correction and Problem Resolution

- ❑ Promptly correct data entry errors discovered in voter records.
- ❑ Contact voters when forms are incomplete, invalid, or rejected.
- ❑ Investigate and resolve suspicious applications with proper authorities.
- ❑ Report unexpected system errors to Secretary of State Elections Division.
- ❑ Consult county prosecutor on legal questions.
- ❑ Document all irregularities and corrective actions taken.



CHAPTER 5: BALLOTS¹

Section 5.01 Ballots, Introduction

This chapter guides boards of elections through creating accurate, legally compliant ballots for all elections. Boards will learn format requirements, candidate guidelines, testing procedures, and quality control steps that ensure every voter receives the correct ballot.

Section 5.02 General Guidelines for Ballots

FORMAT

The board must follow these ballot format rules:

Font and Headings

- Use a sans-serif font, like Arial or a similar font, in 12-point bold for headings.² Sans-serif fonts are easier to read and [ADA-compliant](#).
- Use the same font throughout the ballot.

Layout

- Separate columns with a 2 point line.³
- Put the date of the election and facsimile signatures of board members at the end of the ballot.⁴
- Print all ballots with black ink.⁵

¹[Directive 2026-32](#).

²[R.C. 3505.08\(B\)](#).

³[R.C. 3505.08\(A\)](#).

⁴[R.C. 3505.08\(A\)](#).

⁵[R.C. 3505.08\(A\)](#).

Candidate Placement

- On a paper ballot, put all candidates for a single office in the same column.
- On a Direct Recording Electronic (DRE) machine or Ballot Marking Device (BMD), put all candidates for a single office on the same screen.
- Voters should not need to go to the next column or screen to see every candidate for a single contest.

Ballot Questions

Ballot questions or issues may be longer than one column. In such instances, the board can:

- Wrap the text to the next column.
- Combine columns to create a wider column to avoid wrapping text. Note, not every voting system has this capability.

Generally, a board should avoid wrapping text for a ballot question or issue.

Never put “Yes/No” ovals/buttons alone in a column without some of the text appearing before them.

Other Languages

[Section 203](#) of the Voting Rights Act outlines when local boards of elections must provide ballots and materials in a language other than English, based on [Census data](#) published by the U.S. Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division. If a non-English language is required:

- Put the English version first.
- Place the additional language version(s) immediately after the English version.
- Wrap text as needed.
- Put the space for the voter to mark their selection after both versions.
- Do not put the other language translation in a separate column by itself.

VOTER INSTRUCTIONS⁶

Each ballot must include clear instructions on how the voter should mark it. Use 12-point font with mixed-case (uppercase and lowercase) letters. Each board must provide instructions that match the county's voting system as described below.

For Optical Scan Ballots (manually or "hand-marked")

- To vote, darken the oval () to the left of your choice.
- Note the permitted number of choices directly below each office title.
- Do not mark the ballot for more choices than allowed. If you do, that contest or question will not be counted.
- To vote for a write-in candidate: darken the oval () to the left of the blank line and write in the candidate's name.
- Only votes cast for candidates who filed as write-in candidates can be counted.
- Do not write in a candidate's name if their name is already printed on the ballot for that same contest.
- If you make a mistake or want to change your vote, return your ballot to an election official and get a new ballot.
- You may ask for a new ballot up to two times.

For DRE Machines and BMD Machines

- To vote for the candidate of your choice, touch that person's name.
- A checkmark will appear indicating your selection.
- To vote for a write-in candidate: touch the area labeled "Write-in." Letters will appear on the screen. Spell the name of the candidate of your choice by touching the letters.
- Do not type in a candidate's name if their name is already listed on the ballot for that same contest.

⁶[R.C. 3505.12](#); [R.C. 3506.08](#); [R.C. 3506.09](#).

- If you make a mistake or want to change your vote, first touch the choice you no longer want. Then, touch the choice you do want.

Instructions that are not consecutive steps should not be numbered. Use bullets or separate paragraphs instead.

If the board's system cannot print instructions for paper ballots different from those that appear on the DRE/BMD machine's screen, there are two options:

- Program optical scan instructions and post DRE/BMD machine-specific instructions inside each DRE/BMD machine booth.
- Program DRE/BMD machine instructions and work with the board's optical scan ballot printing vendor to remove the pre-populated DRE/BMD machine instructions and replace them with the optical scan ballot instructions above.

BALLOT STUBS⁷

Each optical scan ballot must have two stubs unless the Secretary of State gives the board permission to use one stub. The two stubs should be attached at the top or bottom of the ballot, and each should be the width of the ballot and measure at least one-half inch. Perforated lines must separate the stubs from the ballot and from each other. The top stub is "Stub B" and must have "Stub B" printed on its face. The other is "Stub A" and must have "Stub A" printed on its face.

Number each ballot for each precinct consecutively, beginning with number 1. Print that same consecutive number on both stubs attached to the ballot. Each stub must also have printed on its face "Consecutive Number ____".

PAGE NUMBERS

Label every page as "Page X of Y." This tells voters the order of the ballot and how many pages remain.

Example: Page 1 of 2 indicates the "front" of a single-sheet ballot.

Example: Page 2 of 2 indicates the "back" of a single-sheet ballot.

For DRE/BMD machines, label each screen "Screen X of Y" for the same reason.

⁷[R.C. 3505.08\(A\)](#); [R.C. 3506.08](#); [R.C. 3506.09](#).

PARTISAN PRIMARY ELECTION ONLY

The board must provide separate ballots for each political party listing candidates in a primary election.⁸

Primary Ballot Requirements

- Print “Official (party name) Primary Ballot” at the top and below the stubs.
- Although not required, the board may choose to use different colored ballots for each party. This could be tinted headings or colored lines or bars across the top or along the side of the ballot.

Major Parties (Democratic and Republican)

- Primary election ballots for major parties must list all offices and positions where candidates could file.⁹
- If no valid petition was filed, print “No Valid Petition Filed” in the space where a candidate’s name would have appeared.
- If fewer candidates filed than positions available in that race, print “No Other Valid Petition Filed” under the names of the candidates who filed.¹⁰

Minor Parties

- Primary election ballots for minor political parties must list only the offices and positions for which valid petitions were filed.
- List only the names of candidates with valid petitions for those offices and positions.

The names of all candidates who have not withdrawn¹¹ must be arranged, rotated, and printed on the ballot according to [R.C. 3505](#), [R.C. 3506](#), and [R.C. 3513](#). Detailed information on how to do this is in **Section 5.03**.

⁸[R.C. 3513.13](#).

⁹[R.C. 3513.041](#).

¹⁰As required by [R.C. 3513.14](#), when candidates for the office of delegate and alternate to the national and state conventions and member of the state central committee are elected at the primary election, no write-in votes are accepted and no blank space shall be left on the ballot after the names of the candidates for such office.

¹¹[R.C. 3513.30](#).

17-YEAR-OLD VOTERS (PRIMARY ELECTION ONLY)¹²

Ohio law allows 17-year-olds to vote if they will be 18 years old by or on the day of the general election. They can only vote for:

- Partisan candidates seeking nomination to run in the general election.
- Presidential convention delegates in presidential primaries.

Voters who are 17 years old by or on the primary election cannot vote on any question or issue, or any state or county central committee contests.

Manually Marked Optical Scan Ballot Options (17-Year-Old Voter)

The board may either:

- Give a special optical scan ballot with only eligible offices (no state or county central committee contests [in the appropriate years] and no questions and issues) and let the 17-year-old voter use the scanner.
- Give a regular optical scan ballot with instructions for marking and returning it, and an envelope to separate it from other regular ballots. After polls close, review the ballot in the envelope to ensure that no ineligible votes are counted. If the ballot has marks for ineligible contests and/or questions, remake the ballot following the instructions in [Chapter 10, Canvassing the Vote](#).

DRE/BMD Machine Ballot Options (17-Year-Old Voter)

Boards of elections may do one of two things:

- Program a DRE/BMD machine ballot with only eligible offices.
- Give a central count, optical scan ballot, and follow option two above.

ELIMINATION OF PARTISAN PRIMARY ELECTIONS IN ODD-NUMBERED YEARS¹³

Determining Whether a Partisan Primary Election is Eliminated by Law

Although partisan primary elections are held in even-numbered years for every office for which candidates may be nominated, that is not the case in odd-numbered years.

¹²[Schwerdtfeger v. Husted](#), 2016 Ohio Misc. LEXIS 18, Franklin C.P. No. 16 CV 002346 (March 11, 2016).[R.C. 3503.01](#); [R.C. 3503.011](#); [R.C. 3503.07](#)

¹³[R.C. 3513.02](#).

Partisan primary elections held in statutory municipalities in odd-numbered years must follow the restrictions of [R.C. 3513.02](#). The law states if and when nominations for certain offices will be submitted to voters.

No partisan primary will be held in odd-numbered years if either:

- No valid petitions are filed for any office, or
- The number of candidates for each office does not exceed the number to be elected.

Duties of Election Officials When Primary Is Eliminated¹⁴

If no partisan primary is held in a municipality, the board must:

- By the 90th day before the primary election, declare that each eligible candidate who filed for the primary is nominated for the general election.
- Issue appropriate certificates of nomination to each candidate.
- Certify their names for the general election ballot.

No Write-In Candidates if Partisan Primary Election Eliminated

Do not accept a declaration of intent to be a write-in candidate for any office where the primary was eliminated under [R.C. 3513.02](#).¹⁵

Section 5.03 Candidate Guidelines

OFFICE HEADINGS¹⁶

Office Title

For office titles, use 12-point boldface mixed-case (uppercase and lowercase) type. Use a screened (lightly shaded) heading and align the title flush left.

¹⁴[R.C. 3513.02](#)

¹⁵[1973 Op. Att'y. Gen. No. 73-094.](#)

¹⁶[R.C. 3505.08\(A\); R.C. 3505.08\(B\).](#)

Number to be Elected

For single-person offices:

- Print "(Vote for not more than 1)" below the title.
- Use 6-point boldface uppercase and lowercase font.
- Align the "vote for" wording flush left within the shaded title area below the title or, if applicable, the term commencing date or unexpired term ending date.

For offices where more than one person may be nominated or elected:

- Print "(Vote for not more than ___)" with the correct number.
- Use 6-point boldface uppercase and lowercase font.
- The "vote for" wording should be flush left within the shaded title area directly below the title or, if applicable, the full term commencing date or unexpired term ending date.

Full or Unexpired Term

For judicial offices, include "Full term commencing _____," with the appropriate date, on the ballot. If for an unexpired term, the designation "Unexpired term ending _____," with the office term ending date must appear on the ballot.¹⁷

List judicial offices for that court by term start, then unexpired terms in descending order by ending date.

For all other offices, show terms only when there is an unexpired term to elect (for example, if a candidate is running for an unexpired term for mayor) and where two or more full terms for the office appear on the ballot (for example, municipal court judge). Put those offices in chronological order by the date the terms commence.

Put full terms first, followed by unexpired terms.

Use a 2-point rule to separate the office title from candidate names.¹⁸

¹⁷[R.C. 3505.04](#); [R.C. 3513.08](#); [R.C. 3505.03\(D\)](#).

¹⁸[R.C. 3505.08\(A\)](#).

CANDIDATE NAMES

Basic Rules

- Use at least 12-point boldface mixed-case font.¹⁹
- Align each candidate's name flush left, but do not extend into the voting area.
- If no valid petition was filed (including a declaration of intent to be a write-in candidate), print "No Valid Petition Filed" in the space where a name would have appeared.²⁰
- If fewer candidates filed than there are positions available in that race, print "No Other Valid Petition Filed" under the names of the candidates who filed.
- Use a 4-point rule to separate candidates from the next office on the ballot.²¹
- Use a 1-point rule to separate the names of candidates.²²

Provide write-in spaces for every office where someone filed a valid write-in declaration of intent.²³ If multiple people can be elected and multiple people filed valid write-ins, the board must provide enough spaces on the ballot for that office, but not more than the number to be elected.

Restrictions on Candidate Names

Nicknames

The board may print nicknames if they are a natural derivative of the candidate's legal name. Do not use quotation marks or parentheses. For example, a candidate named William Smith may request his name appear as William Smith, Will Smith, Bill Smith, Billy Smith, but not William "Bill" Smith.

¹⁹[R.C. 3505.08\(A\)](#).

²⁰In the event that more than one candidate may be elected in a particular race where fewer valid declarations were filed than candidates that may be elected in that race, the board shall print "No Other Valid Petition Filed" under the names of the candidates who filed valid declarations of candidacy.

²¹[R.C. 3505.08\(A\)](#).

²²[R.C. 3505.08\(A\)](#).

²³[R.C. 3505.23](#); [R.C. 3513.041](#).

Former Names

Print any declared former names in parentheses directly below the candidate's current name.²⁴ This does not apply to name changes from marriage or divorce.

Titles

Do not print words, designations, or descriptors of political affiliation on the ballot, including titles such as "Dr.," "Judge," "Rev.," etc.²⁵

Same Names²⁶

If two or more candidates running for the same office have the same first and last name, differentiate their names using combinations of their first and middle names or initials. Once this situation is identified:

- The election official (board director, director of the most populous county's board for district elections, or the Secretary of State for statewide elections) must notify candidates about differentiating their names on the ballot.
- If one candidate is an incumbent, they get first choice of how their name will appear. They must decide within two days of being notified.
- If the incumbent doesn't respond in time or there's no incumbent, the board has three days after the notification to assign names. This responsibility falls to the board in the most populous county for district elections.
- For statewide candidates, or if a board fails to act within three days, the Secretary of State will issue a final decision.

CANDIDATE'S POLITICAL PARTY

- **For all partisan contests**, print the political party's name in 10-point mixed-case font.
- Separate the party name from the candidate's name by a 2-point blank space.²⁷
- Align the political party's name flush with the candidate's name.

²⁴[R.C. 3505.02.](#)

²⁵[R.C. 3505.03\(G\).](#)

²⁶[R.C. 3505.021.](#)

²⁷[R.C.3505.08\(A\).](#)

- No party designation appears under the name of an independent candidate unless they requested the designation “nonparty candidate” or “other-party candidate” when they filed their nominating petition.²⁸

Do not print “independent” on the ballot.

For nonpartisan offices, do not print any party designation under the candidate’s name (such as Township Trustee, Board of Education, etc.).²⁹

JUDICIAL CANDIDATE AFFILIATION

Judicial candidates nominated at a primary election for Chief Justice or Justice of the Supreme Court of Ohio or Judge of a Court of Appeals must appear on the general election ballot with a political party designation.³⁰ Judicial candidates not affiliated with a political party may file a nominating petition and appear on the general election ballot without a designation or as a nonparty candidate.³¹

Depending on the jurisdiction, candidates for judge of a municipal court, county court, or court of common pleas may run in a partisan primary.³² However, those offices must appear on the nonpartisan office ballot in a general election.³³

²⁸ [R.C. 3505.03](#); [R.C. 3513.257](#).

²⁹ [R.C. 3505.04](#).

³⁰ [R.C. 3505.03](#).

³¹ [R.C. 3513.257](#).

³² [R.C. 1901.07](#); [R.C. 3513.08](#).

³³ [R.C. 3501.01](#); [R.C. 3505.03](#); [R.C. 3505.04](#); [R.C. 3513.257](#).

ROTATION OF CANDIDATES' NAMES³⁴

Rules for Candidate Name Rotation

- Arrange candidate names in alphabetical order by last name under the title of that office.
- The order must be rotated from one precinct to another. This does not apply when the number of candidates for a particular office is the same as the number of candidates to be elected to that office (i.e., uncontested races).
- The number of series rotations is determined by the least common multiple of the number of names in each group.

Candidate Name Rotation in Practice

Candidate names are placed in alphabetical order by last name.

If there are more candidates than positions to be filled, the next precinct where the race is held will rotate the candidate at the top of the list to the bottom, with all other candidates moving up one position.

This process is repeated in each subsequent precinct.

For example, four of the seven offices on the ballot have uncontested races. The remaining three races where only one candidate will be elected to each particular office, have the following number of candidates on the ballot:

- **Office One** – two candidates
- **Office Two** – three candidates
- **Office Three** – four candidates

The least common multiple of this series of candidates is 12. This is the smallest number that can be evenly divided by two, three, and four. Therefore, this series of candidates must rotate 12 times.

- The board must number all precincts in regular, serial sequence.
 - In the first precinct, the names of the candidates in each group must be listed in alphabetical order based on their last names.

³⁴[R.C. 3505.03](#); [R.C. 3505.03\(E\)\(1\), \(2\)](#); [R.C. 3505.04](#).

- In each succeeding precinct, the name listed first in each group drops to last, and each following candidate's name moves up one place.

ROTATION ON ABSENTEE BALLOTS³⁵

Absentee ballot rotation must match Election Day rotation for the same precinct/style.

When possible, the candidate names for an office on absentee ballots should alternate so that each name appears equally in the beginning, middle, and end positions.

Do not rotate if the number of candidates for a particular office is the same as the number of candidates to be elected for that office.

Note: The board cannot use "absentee" as a single precinct method for tabulating and reporting absentee vote totals.

³⁵[R.C. 3505.03 \(E\)\(1\)](#); [R.C. 3509.01](#); [R.C. 3511.03](#).

Section 5.04 Questions and Issues

Put candidate contests on the ballot first, followed by questions and issues.

Use the certified form of the ballot for all voting systems. The sample ballot provides the correct ballot format for questions or issues that may appear on the board's local ballot.

HEADINGS

Print a brief title immediately below the heading of each question or issue, such as "Proposed Constitutional Amendment," "Proposed Bond Issue," "Proposed Annexation of Territory," or "Proposed Increase in Tax Rate."³⁶

Numbering³⁷

State questions and issues appear first.

For elections after November 5, 2024, state questions or issues will continue consecutive numbering based on the number of the last state question or issue from the last election. When state numbering reaches "500," restart with "1."³⁸

Local questions and issues:

- Numbered consecutively, grouping together based on county, municipal, township, and school or other district.
- For elections after 1997, local questions or issues will rotate the sequence of these groups each calendar year.

The cycle for the order of questions/issues is as follows:

- 2026 and 2030: state, school and other districts, county, municipal, and township.
- 2027 and 2031: state, township, school and other districts, county, and municipal.
- 2028 and 2032: state, municipal, township, school and other districts, and county.
- 2029 and 2033: state, county, municipal, township, and school and other districts.

³⁶[R.C. 3505.06\(D\)](#); [R.C. 3505.08](#).

³⁷[R.C. 3505.06\(F\)\(1\)](#).

³⁸[R.C. 3505.06\(F\)\(2\)](#).

- The sequence for specific questions within each group will be determined by the board.

BALLOT LANGUAGE

Requirements

- Use at least 10-point font for all questions and issues.³⁹
- The board may receive a directive to use condensed text prepared by the Secretary of State for statewide questions or issues appearing on the ballot.
- For local questions or issues, boards are responsible for preparing the condensed text.⁴⁰
- It is preferred that boards use mixed-case font (not all capital letters) to improve readability and comprehension.

If Using Condensed Text

Boards must post the full text of the proposed question or issue in each polling location where voters can easily see it. Include the percentage of the affirmative votes necessary for passage.⁴¹

Review the appropriate sections of the Ohio Revised Code, local charter (if applicable), and the [Ohio Ballot Questions and Issues Handbook](#) from the Secretary of State's office for ballot language and formats that may not appear on the certified ballot format.

APPROVAL OF BALLOT LANGUAGE FOR TAX LEVIES

A taxing authority submitting resolutions must follow the requirements of the Ohio Revised Code, outlined in the [Ohio Questions and Issues Handbook](#).

The board is responsible for approving ballot language for local questions and issues and sending it to the Secretary of State's office for review.⁴² The board submitting the ballot language is responsible for grammar, punctuation, spelling, financial amounts (i.e., millage, percentages, etc.), and formatting. When preparing ballot language for tax levy questions, board employees should review previous submissions to ensure that the

³⁹[R.C. 3505.08\(B\).](#)

⁴⁰[R.C. 3505.06\(E\).](#)

⁴¹[R.C. 3505.06\(E\).](#)

⁴²[R.C. 3501.11\(V\).](#)

proposed text coincides with previous submissions. See checklists at the end of this chapter.

The Secretary of State approves final ballot language for questions and issues.⁴³ For tax levies, approval is based on comparing the information from the taxing authority's resolution authorizing the ballot issue to the proposed ballot language. If the two are consistent, then the Secretary of State approves the language.

The Secretary of State's office does not determine if the taxing authority's resolution is legally sufficient. Accordingly, the Secretary of State will take no position on whether the statutory authority cited in the taxing authority's resolution is accurate or whether the taxing authority has followed the steps necessary to place an issue on the ballot.

Each board must ensure all questions and issues, including local option questions, are placed on the ballot in the appropriate precinct and precinct splits.

PERCENTAGE OF VOTES⁴⁴

Include a brief statement of the percentage of affirmative votes necessary for passage for each question and issue. Put this below the title and name of the entity requesting the submission of the question or issue.

For example:

- "A majority affirmative vote is necessary for passage."
- "A 55 percent affirmative vote is necessary for passage."

Do not use the "%" symbol.

Section 5.05 Proofs

PROOFING BALLOTS

Check every detail of the ballots when they are created and before the board sends the ballot files to the printer. Board employees must also carefully review and approve the final ballot layouts or printer proofs provided by the vendor. This includes the accessible ballot that the board must provide after it gets a properly completed application.

⁴³[R.C. 3501.05\(J\)](#).

⁴⁴[R.C. 3505.06\(D\)](#).

Sample checklists for ballot proofing are included at the end of this chapter for the most common types of ballots proofed by boards.

Who Must Proof?

At a minimum, the director and deputy director, or a bipartisan team of board employees they designate, must proofread every contest, question, or issue for every ballot style. They must also verify that candidate names are properly rotated, starting with the first precinct in the county. For more information on candidate rotation, refer to **Section 5.03** of this chapter. The board also must ensure proper rotation of questions and issues. Refer to Chapter 1 of the [Ohio Ballot Questions and Issues Handbook](#) for more details.

It is recommended that boards request a physical ballot and ballot envelope proof from their print vendor instead of relying only on digital proofs. If the board chooses a digital proof, they should print the ballot and ballot envelope face and double-check the sizing and position of the artwork.

How to Proof – Proofing Practices that Work

- **Proof from original source materials** (the candidate's petition or a document signed by the candidate to confirm the spelling of the candidate's name, or the certification of an issue by the jurisdiction's governing body, etc.). Consider using a proofing master document verified for accuracy against the original source material.
- Ensure that each question or issue submitted to the office was properly placed on the ballot, including local options.
- Have one person read aloud what should be printed based on the original source material, while another person follows along on the proof from the vendor or central tabulating system.
- When proofing candidate names, spell the name aloud, letter by letter and include capitalization of words. For example, John Doe would be read "capital J-o-h-n capital D-o-e."
- When proofing candidate headings and ballot language, speak numbers or dates one numeral at a time. For example, "\$1,000" would be read as "dollar-sign one comma zero zero zero."

- Speak all punctuation or other symbols. For example, “period of time, commencing” would be read as “period of time comma commencing.”

The board must proof candidate contests and ballot questions and issues for each precinct split against its voter registration system.

Ensure that each voter is receiving all of the correct combination of offices and districts based on their address.

The director and deputy director must oversee the proofing process and approve the final ballot layouts/proofs. Board members must review and verify the final ballot layouts/proofs.

Board Responsibility

The board members are ultimately responsible for ballot accuracy. Board members’ signatures on every voter’s ballot confirm this. The board must develop, maintain, and practice a policy and procedure to ensure this responsibility is met at all levels. This is a basic and essential function of the board. Failure to adequately proof ballots will have consequences and be taken into consideration upon reappointment.

POSTING PROOFS⁴⁵

After preparing ballot proofs, the board must notify these people that the ballot proofs are available for inspection and correction:

- The chairperson of the executive committee for each party represented on the ballot by candidates.

Ballot Proofing Fundamentals Checklist

- contests, questions, and issues appear on the correct precinct ballot
- ballot title and election date
- instructions
- office titles
- office order
- commencing and ending term dates and text
- “Vote for” text (number of candidates to nominate or elect)
- party affiliation
- candidate names
- candidate name rotation
- heading descriptions
- ballot language text for spelling
- board signatures
- precinct names
- other directions (like page numbering “page 1 of 2”)

⁴⁵[R.C. 3505.14.](#)

- A designated representative for each group supporting and/or opposing a question or issue appearing on the ballot. If no one was designated, contact the treasurer, if any, who filed on behalf of the group or committee.
- All taxing and bond issuing authorities within the county, as defined by [R.C. 5705.01](#). They must ensure that all tax levies or bond issues certified to the board appear on the ballot with the correct language.

Post the ballot proofs for at least 24 hours in a public area in the board office and on the board website. Include instructions for notifying the board of needed corrections.

If corrections are needed, board employees must review and correct any errors.

If a local correction made by the board is required at any stage of the proofing process before finalization and printing, repeat the above notification and posting requirements. Ensure that corrections don't create new errors.

COPY OF ABSENTEE BALLOTS TO SECRETARY OF STATE

The board must have absentee ballots printed and ready:

- 46 days before the election for Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)⁴⁶ voters (issue those ballots to UOCAVA voters who submitted a valid application for absent voter's ballot under state law).⁴⁷
- The day after the close of registration for non-UOCAVA voters.⁴⁸

A copy of each absentee ballot style (including candidate contests and ballot questions and issues) must be sent to the Secretary of State's office at least 46 days before the election.⁴⁹ The Secretary of State's office will provide submission instructions for the ballot file before each election.

⁴⁶[R.C. 3511.04\(B\)](#).

⁴⁷[52 U.S.C.A. § 20302\(a\)\(8\)](#); [R.C. 3509.01\(B\)\(1\)](#); [R.C. 3511.04\(B\)](#).

⁴⁸[R.C. 3509.01\(B\)\(1\)-\(2\)](#).

⁴⁹[R.C. 3509.01\(E\)](#).

Section 5.06 Multicounty District Overlaps

MULTICOUNTY DISTRICT PROOFS⁵⁰

The board must have 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.⁵¹

However, each board of a less populous county has the responsibility to find out and know what overlaps onto its ballots.

Notification Process

- By the 70th day before the election, the board of the most populous county must:
 - Email candidate names, parties or designations (if applicable), and ballot language for district questions or issues to the board of each less populous county within the district.
 - Follow up with a phone call if a less populous county doesn't confirm receipt of the email.
 - Provide boards of less populous counties in the district with a receipt itemizing each candidate's name and political party or designation and/or each ballot question or issue.

⁵⁰[R.C. 3505.01](#).

⁵¹[R.C. 3505.01\(A\)\(2\)](#). Per [R.C. 3505.071](#), the board of elections in the most populous county of a multi-county school district or transit authority must send a written notice to the board of elections in each less populous county of the district no later than 10 days after the date of the filing of the resolution or petition.

- Each board of a less populous county in a district must return the receipt to the board of the most populous county confirming they received every candidate/question/issue itemized on the receipt or identifying the itemized items they did not receive.
- By the 60th day before the election, the board of a less populous county must send a proof of its ballot with the overlapping candidate contest, ballot question, or issue to the board of the most populous county in the district.

The board of the most populous county must review the proofs submitted by the board of the less populous county and verify the candidate contests and ballot questions and issues match.

- By the 58th day before the election, the board of the most populous county in the district must confirm via email to the board of each less populous county in the district whether the submitted proofs are acceptable or need to be revised.

Do not print ballots or program voting machines until the board of the most populous county has approved proofs from the less populous county. If the less populous county hasn't received written confirmation from the most populous county that the proofs are acceptable, it must get confirmation before printing the ballots.

- The most populous county boards of a multicounty district must immediately provide written notice (with receipt) to each board of a less populous county within the district of any candidate who dies or withdraws prior to Election Day. Include instructions for posting a notice on the Election Day voting machines and for all absentee ballots or instructions to remove the candidate's name from the ballot and, if appropriate, substitute a replacement candidate's name.

Note: A board must remove candidates who withdraw on or before the 70th day before an election. Do not remove the name of any candidate who withdraws after the 70th day before an election. Enclose a notice with each absentee ballot given or mailed after the candidate withdraws, stating that votes for the withdrawn candidate will be void and not counted.⁵²

⁵²[R.C. 3513.30\(E\)](#).

Section 5.07 Bid Requirements⁵³

If ballot printing costs exceed \$25,000, the board must competitively bid the contract. To give prospective bidders time to submit their proposals, the proposal period must last at least 15 days.

BIDDING PROCESS

1. Publish a notice in a county newspaper announcing the competitive bid. Ohio law requires that these notices be published "once in a newspaper of general circulation".

The notice may be posted electronically and mailed to eligible printing offices.⁵⁴

2. Verify that each bid includes a 10 percent bid bond. No proposal may be considered by the board if the bidder fails to include this bond.⁵⁵
3. Review all properly submitted proposals and award the contract to the most qualified and responsible bidder meeting Secretary of State standards. See also the Secretary of State's office [Approved Absentee Ballot Print Vendors](#) list.
4. Require the selected bidder to post a 100 percent performance bond equal to the election's contract amount. If the contract is for multiple elections, the board may require the selected bidder to post a performance bond equal to 100 percent of the board's estimated ballot printing costs for the largest election to be held during the contract period.⁵⁶

Section 5.08 Ballot Quantities

Providing ballots is one of the most essential duties of a board of elections. The board must not run out of ballots. Do not delegate the responsibility for determining ballot quantities or machine allocations to others.

⁵³ [R.C. 3505.13](#); [O.A.C. 111:3-10-11](#).

⁵⁴ [R.C. 3505.13\(A\)](#).

⁵⁵ [R.C. 3505.13\(B\)](#).

⁵⁶ [R.C. 3505.13\(C\)](#); [O.A.C. 111:3-10-1 to -11](#).

Consider the contests on the ballot in each political subdivision to determine if the board needs more than the minimum number of ballots and/or voting machines required for the election.

MINIMUM BALLOT QUANTITIES FOR PRECINCT-COUNT OPTICAL SCAN (PCOS) VOTING SYSTEMS

Preprinted Ballots

Provide at least one percent more than the total number of registered voters in the precinct.⁵⁷ Do not count voters who failed to respond to any confirmation notice within 30 days.⁵⁸ Be mindful of the proper allocation of this quantity across precinct splits.

Ballots on Demand

Provide at least five percent more ballots for each precinct than the total number of voters—regular and provisional—in that precinct who voted in the comparable election four years earlier. However, for special elections, use the most recent primary or general election.⁵⁹

If precinct election officials (PEOs) request additional ballots, provide them quickly so all qualified voters can vote.⁶⁰ Keep enough blank paper stock on hand to cover the difference between preprinting and on-demand minimums.

Note: When considering whether to preprint fewer ballots and supplement with ballots on demand, think about whether or not the board’s in-house printing capacity (including inventory of on-hand replacements for consumables) is sufficient to make ballots on demand if mass quantities are required at the same time on Election Day. Be mindful of the proper allocation of this quantity across precinct splits.

Provisional Ballots

The board must give each precinct regular paper ballots and provisional ballot envelopes for provisional voters. Provide at least five percent more than the number of provisional ballots cast in that precinct at the previous like election (an election of a similar type).⁶¹ The boards should review the number of voters in provisional status per

⁵⁷[R.C. 3505.11\(A\).](#)

⁵⁸[R.C. 3505.11\(A\).](#)

⁵⁹[R.C. 3505.11\(B\)\(1\).](#)

⁶⁰[R.C. 3505.11\(B\)\(2\).](#)

⁶¹This is a minimum requirement for preparedness, not a prediction for the number of provisional ballots expected to be cast.

precinct location and ensure sufficient provisional ballot quantities. The number of ballots discussed above must be increased by the number of provisional ballots estimated in this section when determining the total number of ballots to be provided to a precinct. Be mindful of the proper allocation of these quantities across precinct splits and political parties.

Board Votes

Vote in public session by 90 days before the election on the number of voting machines, marking devices, and automatic tabulating equipment to allocate to each precinct and/or polling location to use on Election Day.⁶² Hold a second vote in public session, no earlier than 30 days before the general election, to reconsider the initial allocation and determine if any reallocation is needed.⁶³

MINIMUM BALLOT QUANTITIES FOR DIRECT RECORDING ELECTRONIC OR BALLOT MARKING DEVICE VOTING MACHINES

Machine Requirements

If the board is using a direct recording electronic (DRE) voting machine or ballot marking device (BMD) voting machine as its primary voting system on Election Day:

- Deploy at least one DRE/BMD voting machine for every 175 registered voters in a precinct or voting location with DREs/BMDs programmed to allow any voter in the location to vote on any machine in the location.⁶⁴
- Have at least two DRE/BMD voting machines in any precinct or voting location (three for presidential primary or general election in an even-numbered year).
- Don't count voters who didn't respond within 30 days to any confirmation notice. The board also doesn't have to count any registered voter who requested an absent voter ballot (by mail or in person) before the allocation decision is made.

⁶²[R.C. 3501.11\(I\)](#).

⁶³See [Chapter 2, Section 2.03](#).

⁶⁴[R.C. 3506.22\(B\)\(1\)](#).

- Vote in public session at least 90 days before the general election on the number of DRE/BMD machines to allocate to each precinct and/or polling location for use on Election Day.⁶⁵
- Hold a second vote in public session, no earlier than 30 days prior to the general election, to reconsider the initial allocation and determine if any reallocation is needed.⁶⁶
- Program all ballot types on the encoder card(s).
- Provide backup paper ballots for all primary, special, and general elections. Providing back-up paper ballots is considered a best practice.
- Provide sufficient supplies and equipment (like paper for voter-verified paper audit trail printers).

Provisional Ballots

Print and distribute to each precinct regular paper ballots and provisional ballot envelopes for provisional voters. Provide at least five percent more ballots and envelopes than the number of provisional ballots cast in that precinct at the previous like election.⁶⁷ The boards should review the number of voters in provisional status per precinct location and ensure sufficient provisional ballot quantities. Be mindful of the proper allocation of this quantity across precinct splits.

MINIMUM ABSENTEE BALLOT QUANTITIES

There is no minimum quantity of absentee ballots required by law. Plan to have on hand at least five percent more ballots for the current election than were requested in the previous like election.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

When calculating how many paper ballots to print or DRE/BMD machines to deploy for a primary election, consider the number of people who may switch political parties and plan to have enough ballots for all parties with candidates for that election.

⁶⁵[R.C. 3501.11\(I\)](#).

⁶⁶See [Chapter 2, Section 2.03](#).

⁶⁷This is a minimum requirement for preparedness, not a prediction for the number of provisional ballots expected to be cast in an election.

SEALED PRINTED PAPER BALLOTS⁶⁸

The board must allow for the inspection of printing and rotation of names on ballots. The printing vendor must seal the ballots securely in packages, one package for each precinct in the county and deliver them as directed. Give the printer a receipt showing the number of ballots in each package and the number of precincts in each case.

BACKUP OPTICAL SCAN BALLOTS

DRE/BMD Machines Counties Must Provide

All boards using DRE/BMD machines must distribute backup optical scan ballots for long lines and machine problems or breakdowns for all primary, special, or general elections. The board may adopt a policy letting voters choose between DRE/BMD machines and optical scan ballots. If the board adopts this policy, do so for all elections so voters aren't confused from one election to the next.

Establishing a Wait Time Policy

County boards of elections are best suited to determine what constitutes "long lines" based on turnout in previous, like elections, equipment allocation, availability and training of PEOs, ballot length, and other factors. Boards must establish a wait time policy for presidential primaries and general elections in even-numbered years. When wait times reach the board's threshold, PEOs must announce the availability of centrally counted optical scan ballots to voters every half hour until the wait time goes below the established maximum wait time. Be sure this required policy is communicated to voting location managers and other PEOs before Election Day.

Minimum Number of Paper Ballots

The board must determine the minimum number of backup optical scan ballots to provide for each precinct. To do this, multiply the number of ballots cast in the precinct (public count) from the previous like election by 15 percent. This is the minimum for that precinct. The board may print ballots totaling more than the calculated minimum number so long as the increase is uniform across the county. Although the ballots are labeled and look the same, this 15 percent is in addition to the quantity the board determines is necessary to accommodate all provisional ballot voters at each precinct.

⁶⁸[R.C. 3505.15.](#)

Voter Privacy

Provide private areas for voters to mark their optical scan ballots. Provisional ballot booths may be used for this purpose.⁶⁹

Voter Instructions

As required in the Help America Vote Act,⁷⁰ give each voter instructions on how to properly mark and cast an optical scan ballot.

Backup Paper Ballots are not Provisional Ballots

A centrally counted, backup optical scan ballot is NOT a provisional ballot and must NOT be placed in a provisional ballot envelope. A provisional ballot is ONLY to be cast as the law allows.⁷¹ If a backup optical scan ballot is placed into a provisional ballot envelope, it must be counted as a regular ballot at the Official Canvass.

Secure Ballot Containers

Provide secure ballot containers for voters to deposit their centrally counted, optical scan ballots after they are marked. A backup optical scan ballot doesn't have to be sealed inside an envelope when placed in the ballot box. However, if they are put in the same container as provisional ballot envelopes, do not label the container "Provisional Ballots."

Provisional ballots must be placed in the appropriate provisional ballot bag, large envelope, or other container that the board provides in the precinct supply kit.

Tabulation

Because a centrally counted, backup optical scan ballot is a "regular ballot" under state law, the board must count it as a part of its Unofficial Canvass.

OUTSOURCING ABSENTEE BALLOT PROCESSING⁷²

The board may not outsource printing and mailing absentee ballots to vendors or any other third party unless it gets prior written authorization from the Director of Elections.

⁶⁹[R.C. 3599.20.](#)

⁷⁰[52 U.S.C.A. 21082\(b\).](#)

⁷¹[R.C. 3503.16](#); [R.C. 3505.181.](#)

⁷²[R.C. 3505.13](#); [O.A.C. Chapter 111:3-10.](#)

Submit the request no later than 60 days before each election where absentee ballot printing and mailing will be outsourced.⁷³ To request authorization, the board must:

- Vote to outsource printing and mailing absentee ballots in a public meeting no later than 70 days before an election.
- Consider any action that might show impropriety or political bias before selecting a vendor. See also the Secretary of State's office [Approved Absentee Ballot Print Vendors](#) list.

Prepare a draft contract reviewed by the county prosecutor. The contract must include the following or similar conditions:

- ☐ The board must provide ballot image files (typically in .pdf format), absentee voting instructions, envelopes, and any additional inserts by the 46th day before Election Day.
- ☐ The vendor must provide a complete physical proof of all absentee ballot styles and a sample of the complete mailing to the board for review and proofing before production. It must include the ballot, instructions, absentee identification envelope, absentee return envelope, mailing envelope, and any additional inserts the board may include with the ballot. The vendor should provide the physical proofs no later than the 42nd day before Election Day.

Print Vendor Approval

No board shall enter into an agreement with a print vendor for the manufacture or distribution of ballots prior to the vendor completing a Secretary of State's office approved attestation form.

A board may enter into an agreement with any print vendor that completed a Secretary of State's office approved attestation form. The Secretary of State maintains a list of approved print vendors on its website.

In selecting a print vendor, the board must consider any print vendor's action that indicates an appearance of impropriety or overt political bias.

See also [O.A.C. 111:3-10-02](#)

⁷³If a board of elections is conducting elections that overlap one another, the board is permitted to make a request for more than one election at the same time.

- ❑ The board must approve the proofs from the vendor and inform them of any necessary changes.⁷⁴ New proofs must then be provided and approved before production.

Note: As a best practice, the board should approve final proofs by 40 days before Election Day to allow time for production.

- ❑ The board must send all absentee voter data files to the vendor by 39 days before Election Day. The vendor must acknowledge receipt of data files.
- ❑ The board must send subsequent absentee voter data files to the vendor by 35 days before Election Day. The vendor must acknowledge receipt of data files.
- ❑ The board must send subsequent absentee voter data files to the vendor again by 29 days before Election Day. The vendor must acknowledge receipt of the data files.
- ❑ On the first day of absentee voting ([see current year elections calendar](#)), the vendor must complete the printing, insertion, and addressing, and deliver for distribution the absentee ballots for all records from any absentee voter data file received from the board by the 39th day before the election.
- ❑ No later than the 24th day prior to Election Day, the vendor must complete the printing, insertion, and addressing, and deliver for distribution, the

The board shall confirm that the samples conform with the following:

(1) The ballots properly tabulate on all voting equipment that the board operates.

(2) The ballots are generated in the same manner as ballots to be used in an election.

(3) The ballot style is accurate.

(4) The ballots and other mailing material are compatible with the board's mail sorting or processing system.

(5) All mailing materials utilized comply with requirements prescribed by the Revised Code, this chapter, and directives of the secretary of state.

⁷⁴[O.A.C. 111:3-10-06](#).

absentee ballots for all records contained in any data files received from the board by the 29th day before the election.

- ☐ If the board sends absentee voter data files to the vendor between the 28th and 16th day before Election Day, the vendor must acknowledge receipt and process the data. The vendor must complete the printing, insertion, and addressing of the absentee ballots. Additionally, vendors must deliver all absentee ballots for distribution within 48 hours of receiving the data file(s), including weekends or holidays.
- ☐ If the board sends absentee voter data files to the vendor between the 15th day and the Tuesday immediately before Election Day, the vendor must acknowledge receipt and process the files. The vendor must complete the printing, insertion, and addressing of the absentee ballots. Vendors must deliver all absentee ballots for distribution within 24 hours of receiving the data file(s), including on weekends or holidays.
- ☐ .
- ☐ If the county has multiple elections with overlapping deadlines in the election cycles that prevent the board from meeting the above deadlines, work with the vendor to produce a mutually agreeable adjusted schedule for the latter election(s) and submit it to the Secretary of State for approval 90 days before the election in which modifications are necessary.
- ☐ The vendor must give the board a detailed audit report of each ballot produced and delivered to the USPS within 12 hours of delivery to USPS.
- ☐ The print vendor must ensure no voter receives duplicate ballots.
- ☐ The print vendor must maintain operation seven days a week and during all federal holidays between the first day of absentee voting and the Saturday prior to Election Day to fulfill the contract and order on time.
- ☐ The vendor must commit the human resources, technology, and supplies to fulfill the contract and order on time.
- ☐ The vendor must not subcontract unless the contract lists the name and contact information for each subcontractor who will perform the terms of the contract.

The board must include the following information in its request for authorization to outsource the printing and mailing of absentee ballots:

- ☐ A copy of the draft contract with the vendor and confirmation the county prosecutor reviewed it. The contract must contain the requirements set forth above.
- ☐ The name and contact information of the Ohio print vendor who will print and mail the absentee ballots.
- ☐ The name and contact information for any subcontractor. Any subcontractor that prints ballots must be located in Ohio.
- ☐ A description of the method used for providing the .pdf artwork for the ballots and absentee data files to the vendor. The vendor should include the method they use to securely transfer files.
- ☐ The type of data that will be provided to the vendor each day, which must include:
 - Absentee and/or county voter registration ID number.
 - Voter's name.
 - Voter's registration address.
 - Mailing address (if applicable).
 - Precinct/split information and/or ballot style information.
- ☐ The actual service-level agreement for production and mailing of absentee ballots that lists the amount of time, after receiving the absentee data files, in which the ballots will be mailed.
- ☐ The type of first-class postage (pre-sorted, bulk mail, stamps, etc.) used for the delivery of the ballots and whether Intelligent Mail Barcode (IMb) tracing will be used. USPS recommends that all trays and sacks with mailings of ballot materials affix *Tag 191, Domestic and International Ballots*. Envelopes should be marked with the Official Election Mail logo.
- ☐ The process by which absentee ballots will ultimately be transmitted to the USPS and the USPS facility that will accept the mailing of the absentee ballots.

- ❑ The process for proofing any cross-reference/relationship tables that are provided to the vendor to ensure the correct ballot is associated with each precinct/split. The plan process must describe how a sample data file will be provided to the printer and require that each type of ballot be produced and proofed to ensure the cross-reference tables correctly match the ballot to the appropriate address. The vendor must:
 - Provide proof that each precinct/split has been tested.
 - Test all other printed documents, such as voter instructions, withdrawal notices, etc.
 - Test the proper printing of the delivery address, including, when a mailing address is provided in the data (address on ID envelope must be different than the mailing address for the test).
 - Proof and test the preprinting of the name and voter registration address and voter ID.
- ❑ A plan to address the testing of all ballot styles across all precincts and splits. The vendor must provide a full set of ballots to the board, including every ballot type for every precinct and split. The board must test each ballot using the ballot scanning equipment before approving the proof for production. The board must ensure that all precincts or precinct splits with more than one ballot sheet are correctly produced to ensure that the voter receives the proper ballot.
- ❑ A copy of the daily audit process. This process must allow for a cross-reference of the data with the absentee data provided to the vendor. The vendor must provide the board with digital proofs that are reviewed for accuracy to ensure the correct ballot is being provided to the voter.
- ❑ The process used to update the board's voter registration system using the report provided by the print vendor. Vendor reports must include the dates the ballots were mailed.
- ❑ A plan to address the mailing of the ballots in the seven days before Election Day, including how the vendor will fulfill same-day requests, if the vendor is printing and mailing absentee ballots during this period.

- ❑ A copy of the ballot print vendor attestation for applicable contracts.
- ❑ Written assurances from the vendor that they have the human resources, technology, and supplies to fulfill the contract and order on the timeline established in the contract, based on the volume of absentee ballot requests anticipated in the election.

In addition to the requirements above, vendors will be required to provide boards with notice if they subcontract any work under the contract and provide ballot samples for the board to approve prior to printing. Boards must still thoroughly review and vet contracts with vendors and ensure that the contracts meet their needs.

Attestation Forms

Ballot print vendors with contracts over \$25,000 must comply with Ohio Administrative Code regulations adopted by the Secretary of State in 2023.⁷⁵

Boards cannot contract with vendors that don't complete and file an attestation form with the Secretary of State. The form must include contact information, emergency contact information, documentation on vendor equipment, and details on how the vendor intends to comply with requirements found in the [Ohio Administrative Code](#). Boards must submit a copy of the attestation form as described above.

Section 5.09 Logic and Accuracy Testing⁷⁶

To ensure electronic voting systems accurately tabulate votes, boards of elections must conduct Logic and Accuracy (L&A) testing before conducting the required Pre-Election Public Testing described later in this chapter.

L&A testing proves that ballots are accurate and votes will be counted properly. It checks every component of a voting system with every ballot style, including ballot-on-demand printers.

To conduct L&A testing, boards use a pre-audited group of ballots that are marked to record a predetermined number of valid votes for each contest. The pre-audited group must include overvoted ballots to ensure the automatic tabulating equipment can reject overvotes.

⁷⁵[O.A.C. 111:3-10](#).

⁷⁶[R.C. 3506.14\(A\)](#).

L&A testing is required before every election on each voting machine and component of automatic tabulating equipment, including backup equipment. Never deploy voting equipment that has not undergone L&A testing. Complete L&A testing before the distribution of ballots to voters.

Additionally, after the initial L&A test, if the ballot, voting machine, or any part of the automatic tabulating equipment is updated, the board will need to retest all components of the voting system.

TESTING

Develop and adopt bipartisan testing policies and procedures for all voting equipment and ballots. Incorporate manufacturer instructions into the minimum testing requirements. The procedures must be in checklist form to ensure no critical steps are missed.

Below are the minimum requirements that must be incorporated into the procedures.

Optical Scan Voting Machines

- ☐ Inspect the physical condition of the equipment, including plugs and ports.
Damage to plugs and ports may not be readily apparent.
- ☐ Check to make sure the ballot box is empty.
- ☐ Verify that the removable media has the correct data for the election that is being tested.
- ☐ Turn on each unit to Election Day mode to calibrate and test date and time, firmware, and battery status.
- ☐ Print a "zero report" and check to be certain that all vote totals are at zero.
- ☐ Verify that all races are printed on the report.
- ☐ Scan and process ballots.
- ☐ Run the results totals.
- ☐ Review results.
- ☐ Replace printer paper as necessary.
- ☐ Close and power down the unit.
- ☐ Remove the removable media.

- ☐ Remove test ballots from the ballot storage container.
- ☐ Import results into the election management system.
- ☐ Secure removable media and perform necessary steps to clear any results totals.
- ☐ Maintain ballots in machine order/precinct order.
- ☐ After all units are tested, upload results to the election management system and run the report.
- ☐ Compare results to the test script.
- ☐ For central scanning, scan and process the complete test deck, upload results, and run a report. Then do integrated testing to compare with precinct results.
- ☐ For accessible voting equipment, listen to all audio and test at least two ballot styles for all functionalities.

Direct Recording Electronic (DRE) and Ballot Marking Device (BMD)

Voting Machines

- ☐ Inspect the physical condition of the equipment, including plugs and ports. Damage to plugs and ports may not be readily apparent.
- ☐ Document the serial number of each unit.
- ☐ Turn on each unit to Election Day mode to calibrate and test date and time, firmware, and backup battery status. To calibrate a DRE/BMD machine, make sure the screen is positioned at the same height and angle that it will be on Election Day. Use a stylus or the bottom of a pen or pencil (not a finger) to get the most accurate calibration.
- ☐ Confirm the software and firmware numbers match the expected, certified configuration.
- ☐ Inspect the physical condition of removable media and clear all information from each card.
- ☐ Print a zero tape and check to be certain all vote totals are at zero.
- ☐ Ensure that all races are present.
- ☐ Unplug the unit and check that the battery backup is functioning.
- ☐ Use a test script that includes:

- A review of the summary screen.
 - A review accessibility features test (including enabling devices like sip and puff and jelly switch).
 - An audio test for all headers, contests, and candidates for each ballot style, including write-ins.
 - A test of a magnified ballot, ensuring that it is not distorted or unreadable, and that it remains in calibration for each ballot style.
 - A confirmation that the Voter-Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) prints correctly, including rejected ballots.
- ❑ At the end of the L&A test, print several ballot VVPAT tapes to help determine how many paper rolls or ballot canisters the board will need for Election Day.
 - ❑ Turn off the unit to ensure it powers down properly.
 - ❑ Check the paper supply to ensure both VVPAT and the internal audit record have enough paper for Election Day.
 - ❑ Maintain detailed documentation and post-test security measures.
 - ❑ Seal each device properly so it is ready for Election Day.
 - ❑ Conclude L&A testing by performing an integrated test combining results from all sources (optical scan precinct count, central count, and voting machines).

When L&A testing, create a file for each machine that stays with the machine, so it is easy to keep track of machine performance.

Remember to check ALL ballot styles, including the full candidate name rotation, write-in votes, and ballots provided to polling locations for use on Election Day. Boards must also check the integration of all election systems to be used in an election. This includes accessible devices, absentee ballot devices, ballot-on-demand systems, the election management system (EMS) tallying and exporting of votes, and electronic pollbooks activating the ballot.

[R.C. 3505.15](#) outlines the procedure for the print vendor to seal ballots. The board must ensure that additional ballots are kept separate for testing purposes. These ballots must be printed and produced in the same manner as the sealed Election Day ballots.

After testing, the board should know with confidence that all systems work together, that all the correct candidates appear on the ballot, that ballots are printed properly, and that votes can be tallied. Boards will have ensured that election staff can operate the equipment end-to-end, that the system can load and shut down properly, and that the board has adequate supplies for Election Day.

Section 5.10 Public Test before Tallying Ballots

Test and audit variable codes before each election to verify the accuracy of any computer program that will be used in tallying ballots for each precinct.⁷⁷

Boards must give public notice of the test time and place by proclamation or posting, in the same way that boards provide notice of elections.⁷⁸ Conduct testing consistent with [R.C. 3506.14\(B\)](#). If board employees find errors, determine the cause, correct it, and run an error-free test before starting the count.⁷⁹

Public testing does not replace L&A testing. L&A testing does not serve as public testing.

Section 5.11 Public Records Retention

The Secretary of State's office has developed a [records retention schedule](#) that sets the minimum amount of time the board must keep election records, including ballots. The schedule can be found on the [Secretary of State's website](#).

Section 5.12 Prohibitions Concerning Ballots

Ohio law prohibits many actions related to the handling of ballots, including:

- Showing a voted ballot to another person.
- Destroying or mutilating a ballot.
- Forging or falsifying a ballot.
- Possessing another person's ballot without permission.

⁷⁷[R.C. 3506.14\(A\)\(1\)](#).

⁷⁸[R.C. 3506.14\(C\)](#).

⁷⁹[R.C. 3506.14\(A\)\(2\)](#).

- Delaying the delivery of a ballot.⁸⁰

These actions are generally misdemeanors or felonies. As such, discuss any ballot handling questions with the county prosecutor.

Section 5.13 Reporting Ballot Errors

If the board discovers ballot errors during absentee voting or on Election Day, the director or deputy director must report the error to the Secretary of State's office as soon as possible and not later than one hour after the error is first discovered. Explain how the error occurred, how many voters are impacted, and how the error will be corrected. After the initial report, keep the Secretary of State's office informed of any further developments.

⁸⁰[R.C. 3599.07](#); [R.C. 3599.20](#); [R.C. 3599.21](#); [R.C. 3599.22](#); [R.C. 3599.26](#); [R.C. 3599.33](#).

Chapter 5 Checklist: Ballots

Pre-Election Planning

- ☐ Develop ballot format following font and layout requirements.
- ☐ Create proofing procedures with bipartisan teams.
- ☐ Establish vendor relationships and contracts (if needed).
- ☐ Prepare multicounty district coordination lists.
- ☐ Set ballot quantity calculations based on voter registration.

Ballot Creation

- ☐ Follow candidate name and rotation requirements.
- ☐ Apply proper party designations.
- ☐ Format questions and issues correctly.
- ☐ Include all required voter instructions.
- ☐ Verify page numbering and stub requirements.

Quality Assurance

- ☐ Conduct thorough ballot proofing from original source materials.
- ☐ Post proofs for the required parties within established timeframes.
- ☐ Complete Logic and Accuracy testing on all equipment.
- ☐ Conduct public testing with proper notice.
- ☐ Test all ballot styles and rotations.

Production and Distribution

- ☐ Bid contracts over \$25,000 appropriately.
- ☐ Calculate and order correct ballot quantities.
- ☐ Coordinate with multicounty districts on approvals.
- ☐ Prepare backup ballots for DRE/BMD machine counties.
- ☐ Send absentee ballot copies to the Secretary of State.

Error Management

- ☐ Implement correction procedures for any errors that are discovered.
- ☐ Immediately report ballot errors to the Secretary of State.
- ☐ Document all changes and approvals.
- ☐ Maintain proper records retention.

Legal Compliance

- ☐ Retain all required legal citations and percentages.
- ☐ Follow withdrawal and substitution procedures.
- ☐ Comply with UOCAVA timing requirements.
- ☐ Meet all statutory deadlines.
- ☐ Maintain ballot security and prohibition compliance.

Candidates, Questions and Issues Checklist Samples

Candidate Checklist (Local Filing)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

Candidate For: _____

Subdivision: _____

Party: _____ Full Term: ____ or Unexpired Term Ending: _____

Receipt Number: _____

1. __ Time stamp all petition parts	13. __ Board Certification of Petition is Accepted:____ Rejected:____
2. __ Give receipt to filer	14. __ Program into Election Management System (EMS)
3. __ Give ethics info to filer, filer must sign a receipt	15. __ Send Overlap Notice Form 124-A (if needed)
4. __ Give campaign finance info to filer -----	16. __ Provide Overlap Receipt (if needed)
5. __ Add to candidate list	17. __ Ballot Language Approved:____ or ____:Corrected
6. __ Supreme Court of Ohio Form (Judges Only)	18. __ Prepare appropriate notice of election
7. __ Scan petition.	19. __ Does candidate appear in database in correct districts and precincts
8. __ Put petition Into Petition Verification System, Petition ID:_____	20. __ Notify political party of ballot proofs
9. __ Put information into Filing Information System (FIS)	21. __ Does candidate appear on 46-day notice
10. __ Identify overlapping county:_____	22. __ Receive unofficial results from overlap counties
11. __ Check signatures	23. __ File Official Certification of Results with appropriate entities
12. __ Does the petition have enough verified signatures YES:____ NO:____	24. __ Produce Candidate Certificate (if winner of their race)

Candidate Checklist (Overlapping County)

Most Populous (MP) County: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

Candidate For: _____

Subdivision: _____

Party: _____

Full Term: ____ or Unexpired Term Ending: _____

Receipt Number: _____

1. __ Receive 124-A Notice of Election in Overlapping Districts Number to be elected:____ Number of candidates:____ 2. __ Scan petition 3. __ Put the petition into the petition verification system 4. __ Check signatures: Valid:____ Invalid:____ 5. __ Return checked petition to MP county 6. __ Was it certified or rejected by MP County: Valid:____ Invalid:____ 7. __ Add to Filing Information System (FIS) 8. __ Add to candidate List	9. __ Precinct and splits: _____ 10. __ Program into Election Management System (EMS) 11. __ Send ballot proof to MP county 12. __ Ballot proof Accepted:____ Corrected:____ 13. __ Prepare appropriate Notice of Election 14. __ Confirm candidate appears on 46-Day Notice 15. __ Send unofficial canvass to MP county 16. __ Send official canvass to MP county 17. __ Candidate elected YES:____ or ____:NO
---	--

Tax Levy Checklist

Subdivision:_____Type:_____

For Townships - Including Corporations:_____ Excluding Corporations:_____

Name of Filer:_____ Title of Filer:_____

Phone Number:(____)_____(____)_____

Email address (For Ballot proofs):_____ Receipt Number:_____

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. __Verify inclusion of the following<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. __Resolution of Necessity (Meeting #1)b. __Certificate of Estimated Property Tax Revenue (From County Auditor)c. __Resolution to Proceed Dated:_____ (Meeting #2)2. __Give receipt to filer |
|---|

(Continued on next page).

3. __Authority: O.R.C. Section:_____ 4. __Purpose:_____ 5. __Bond Principal:_____ 6. Term Years:_____ 7. __Income Tax %:____ Originally Expires, for Renewal:_____ 8. __Mills:__\$Amount:_____ 9. Commencing:____ First Due:_____ 10. __Term Years:_____ Type:_____ 11. __Overlapping county:_____ 12. __Add to QIS System 13. __Prepare ballot language 14. __Prepare 126C 15. __Send the following to SoS a. __Resolution of Necessity, to Proceed, Cert of Est Property Tax Revenue b. __Ballot language c. __126C d. __For renewals, include approved ballot language from last election 16. __Is ballot language Approved:____ or ____: Corrected from SoS 17. __Send ballot language to issue entity 18. __Is ballot language Approved :__ or __: Corrected from issue entity 19. __Precinct and splits:_____ 20. __Added to 100-Day Notice 21. __Prepare appropriate Notice of Election (Overlap and Advertising)	22. __Enter issue into Election Management System 23. __Add question or issue to BallotSync 24. __Send 124-A to Overlap County via BallotSync 25. __Send proof to Overlap County via BallotSync 26. __Is ballot proof approved :____ or ____: corrected from overlap district 27. __Does it appear on the 45-day Notice 28. __Receive unofficial canvass from overlap county 29. __Unofficial Canvass Majority County Excel Sheet 30. __Receive official canvass From overlap county 31. __Official Canvass Majority County Excel Sheet 32. __Enter official results into QIS (entire district results) 33. __File Official Certificate of Result of Election with appropriate entities a. __County Auditor b. __Ohio Secretary of State c. __Overlap County Auditor d. __Ohio Department of Taxation (Income Tax) e. __Less Populous County f. __Issue Entity
---	--

Local Option Checklist

Entity/Business Filing: _____

Name of Filer: _____ Agent: _____

Phone Number: (____) _____ (____) _____ Email Address (For Ballot Proofs): _____

Receipt Number: _____ PCT: _____ Petition #: _____

1. _____ Verify inclusion of the following
 - a. _____ Petition parts: _____ Number of sigs: _____ Minimum required: _____
 - b. _____ Time stamp all petition parts
 - c. _____ List of names and addresses of permit holders who would be affected by the election, as supplied by the Division of Liquor Control (for petition forms 5-A, 5-C, 5-D, 5-E, 5-P, 5-Q, 5-T)
 - d. _____ Form 5-N top section (for petition forms 5-A, 5-C, 5-D, 5-E, 5-P, 5-Q, 5-T)
 - e. _____ Form 5-N bottom section (for petition form 5-R only)
 - f. _____ Designation of Agent (if permit holder has one, for petition form 5-R only)
 - g. _____ Form 5-F Certificate of Required Number of Signatures (not required)
 - h. _____ Filing fee \$10.00 – Cash: _____ Check: _____
2. _____ Receipt given to filer

(Continued on next page).

3. __Scan petition 4. __Add to Petition Verification System, Petition ID:_____ 5. __Add to QIS 6. __Confirm Holder or Applicant Status from Division of Liquor Control https://com.ohio.gov/divisions-and-programs/liquor-control 7. __Verify applicant as an Applicant:____ Holder:__ Does Not:__ 8. __Check signatures The petition had enough verified signatures YES:____ NO:____ 9. __Prepare ballot language 10. __Prepare 126-A 11. __Send the following to SoS a. ____ 1 petition page copy b. ____ Ballot language c. ____ 126-A 12. __Is ballot language approved:____ or ____:corrected	13. __Is board certification of petition accepted:____ rejected:____ 14. __Prepare appropriate Notice of Election 15. __Program into ballot software 16. __Send applicant or designated agent ballot proof 17. __Is ballot proof approved :____ or ____: corrected 18. __Does it appear on the 46-day Notice 19. __Send form 126-B to Div. Liquor Control and SoS after official canvass 20. __Enter official results into QIS (entire district results) 21. __File Official Certificate of Result of Election with appropriate entities a. __Ohio Division of Liquor Control b. __Ohio Secretary of State c. __Issue entity
---	---

Issue Checklist (Most Populous County)

Most Populous (MP) County: _____

Subdivision: _____

Type: _____

Duration: _____ Mills: _____

Purpose: _____

1. __Authority: O.R.C. Section: _____	9. __Precinct and splits: _____
2. __Purpose: _____ _____	10. __Add to 100-day Notice
3. __Bond Principal: _____ Term Years: _____	11. __Prepare appropriate Notice of Election
4. __Income Tax %: _____ Originally Expires, for Renewal: _____	12. __Enter issue into Election Management System (EMS)
5. __Mills: _____ \$Amount: _____ Commencing: _____ First Due: _____	13. __Send MP county ballot proof (BallotSync)
6. __Term Years: _____ Type: _____	14. __Did MP county approve ___ or ___ correct ballot proof
7. __Add to QIS system	15. __Does it appear on the 46-day Notice
8. __Prepare ballot language	16. __Send unofficial results to MP county
	17. __Send official results to MP county

Candidate Checklist (Secretary of State Statewide)

Candidate_____

District _____ Office_____

Term (Full or Unexpired Term)_____

1. __Add to filing information system 2. __Add to petition verification system 3. __Check part petitions: Valid:____ Invalid:____ 4. __ Check signatures: Valid:____ Invalid:____	5. __Complete SoS certification form 6. __Submit SoS certification form electronically 7. __Print, sign, and email SoS certification form to the Elections Division 8. __Ship back to SoS
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Statewide Issue Checklist (Secretary of State or Attorney General)

Title: _____

1. __Add to petition verification system, Petition ID:_____ 2. __Are part petitions: Valid:____ Invalid:____ 3. __Check Signatures: Valid:____ Invalid:____ 4. __Email reporting form back to Attorney General	5. __Mail part petitions back to Attorney General 6. __Did Attorney General 7. Accepted:__ Rejected:__ the petition 8. __Receive official Form of Ballot from SoS 9. __Prepare ballot language 10. __Enter issue into Election Management System (EMS)
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CHAPTER 6: PRECINCTS, POLLING LOCATIONS, AND PRECINCT ELECTION OFFICIALS¹

Section 6.01 Precincts and Polling Locations, Introduction

This chapter covers the essential information about precincts, polling locations, and precinct election officials (PEOs) that boards need to manage elections effectively. It establishes the framework for creating accessible voting locations and outlines proper staffing levels. The chapter also outlines procedures for managing equipment, material, and personnel throughout the election process.

Section 6.02 Precincts and Polling Locations Requirements

DEFINITIONS

- **Precinct**

A defined geographic area within a county in which all qualified residing voters can vote at the same assigned polling location.²

- **Polling Location**

The place where voters in a precinct go to cast their ballots.³

PRECINCTS

- **General Requirements**

The board must provide a polling location for each precinct with proper facilities for conducting elections.⁴

¹[Directive 2026-33](#)

²[R.C. 3501.01\(Q\)](#).

³[R.C. 3501.01\(R\)](#).

⁴[R.C. 3501.29\(A\)](#).

- **Precinct Size**

Each precinct must have no more than 1,400 voters. The board decides what number is reasonable based on:

- Available equipment.
- Past voter turnout.
- Size and location of the polling place.
- Available parking.
- Number of available PEOs.
- Accessibility for voters with disabilities.⁵

- **Drawing Precinct Lines**

The board may divide parts of political subdivisions in the county into precincts.⁶ Precincts must follow census block lines.⁷

- **Waiver of Census Block Restrictions**

Using [Form 50](#) Census Block Reprecincting Waiver, the board may request a waiver from the Secretary of State if drawing precincts by census blocks isn't possible.⁸ Reasons include:

- A precinct would have more than 1,400 voters or is expected to surpass 1,400 voters.
- Census block boundaries would compromise the "continuity" of the neighborhood (i.e., would segregate certain residents of a neighborhood by placing them with residents of another neighborhood).
- School District boundaries intersect the census block.
- The census block is large and creates a travel hardship for voters.⁹

Any waiver request must explain in detail why it's needed and it must include

⁵[R.C. 3501.18\(A\).](#)

⁶[R.C. 3501.18\(A\).](#)

⁷[R.C. 3501.18\(B\)\(1\).](#)

⁸[R.C. 3501.18\(B\)\(2\).](#)

⁹[R.C. 3501.18\(B\)\(2\), \(C\).](#)

maps showing current and proposed precinct and census block boundaries.¹⁰

Email waiver requests and supporting materials to the Secretary of State's Elections Division inbox at SWVRD@OhioSoS.gov.

- **Separate Precinct Required for Disabled Soldiers**

State or national homes for disabled soldiers must have a separate election precinct.¹¹ The board may need to divide these facilities into multiple precincts.¹²

- **Changing Precincts**

The board may divide, rearrange, and combine precincts.¹³ The board may also change polling locations when needed to:

- Maintain proper precinct size.
- Provide voter convenience.
- Ensure proper election conduct.¹⁴

The board cannot put all precincts in a county into one polling location on Election Day when a countywide or statewide issue or candidate is on the ballot.

Boards cannot change the number of precincts or boundaries:

- During the 25 days before a primary or general election.
- Between January 1 and the election of county central committee members.¹⁵

- **Written Notice to Electors and the Secretary of State**

When the board needs to change, divide, or combine any precinct or move a polling location, it must:

- Notify all affected voters by mail before the next election.
- Notify the Secretary of State of any change in precinct boundaries within 45 days of making the change.¹⁶

¹⁰[R.C. 3501.18\(B\)\(2\).](#)

¹¹[R.C. 3501.20.](#)

¹²[R.C. 3501.20.](#)

¹³[R.C. 3501.18\(A\).](#)

¹⁴[R.C. 3501.18\(A\).](#)

¹⁵[R.C. 3501.18\(A\).](#)

¹⁶[R.C. 3501.21.](#)

- **Restrictions on Changes**

If the board changes precinct boundaries after someone files a local option election petition (according to [R.C. 4301.32](#) to [R.C. 4301.41](#), [R.C. 4303.29](#), or [R.C. 4305.14](#)), the local option election must use the original precinct boundaries that existed when the petition was filed.¹⁷

POLLING LOCATIONS

- **Public Buildings**

The board must use public buildings, such as schools, for polling locations when possible.¹⁸ By Ohio law, public authorities must provide space for elections and voting machine storage at no charge.¹⁹ A *reasonable* fee may be paid for needed janitorial services.²⁰

- **Private Buildings, Rental and Insurance**

When using private buildings as polling locations, the board may:

- Pay a reasonable rental fee.
- Pay for liability insurance for the premises when used for election purposes.
- Purchase a single liability policy covering both the board and the building owners.²¹

- **Temporary Buildings**

When the board provides a temporary building for voting:

- They must be built under the contract awarded to the lowest and best bidder.
- They must follow all accessibility and safety rules.
- They must be removed within 30 days after an election, unless another election will occur within 90 days.²²

ACCESSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

State and federal laws require all polling locations to be accessible to people with

¹⁷[R.C. 3501.18\(A\).](#)

¹⁸[R.C. 3501.29\(A\).](#)

¹⁹[R.C. 3501.29\(A\).](#)

²⁰[R.C. 3501.29\(A\).](#)

²¹[R.C. 3501.29\(A\).](#)

²²[R.C. 3501.29\(A\).](#)

disabilities. People with disabilities must be able to vote privately, just like other voters. Make sure that polling locations are accessible and have appropriate parking before each election.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) created accessibility standards for voting locations. The Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002 requires polling locations, including the path of travel, entrances, exits, and voting areas, to be accessible to individuals with disabilities.²³ Access must provide voters with disabilities, including the blind and visually impaired, the same opportunities for participation, including privacy and independence, as for other voters.²⁴

Ohio law requires boards to ensure that polling locations:

- ☐ Are free from barriers that would block entry or exit for people with a disability.
- ☐ Have enough accessible parking spaces.
- ☐ Have level entrances or non-skid ramps that meet federal legal requirements.
- ☐ Have doorways at least 32 inches wide.²⁵

Evaluating Accessibility

Boards must evaluate every selected polling location using the most recent version of the [Secretary of State's Polling Location Accessibility Checklist](#) and [Accessible Parking Guide](#). When the Secretary of State's office publishes a revised checklist, all polling locations should be rechecked before the next general election.

Keep completed checklists on file and review all voting locations at least once every two years.

The board should also consider the Presidential Commission on Elections Administration's recommendation to keep diagrams of polling locations, including signs required by the Americans with Disabilities Act.²⁶

The Secretary of State's ADA coordinator can help the board develop polling location assessment strategies. The U.S. Election Assistance Commission has published a [Quick Start Guide for Making Voting Accessible](#) that board employees may find helpful, too.

²³52 U.S.C. § 21021(b)(1).

²⁴52 U.S.C. § 21021(b)(1).

²⁵R.C. 3501.29(B).

²⁶[The American Voting Experience: Report and Recommendations of the Presidential Commission on Election Administration \(January, 2014\)](#), at 33.

Boards can use the *Automated Accessibility Checklist Program*²⁷ to conduct assessments. Using a Windows-based tablet, this program allows users to complete the survey at the site, take measurements, and document access with photos. Contact the Secretary of State's ADA coordinator for more information at ADA@OhioSoS.gov.

If a polling location has issues, board employees must take action to ensure proper access on Election Day. Actions may include:

- Notifying the facility's owners about problems to coordinate permanent fixes.
- Buying equipment to temporarily fix the issues.
- Finding another accessible facility to use as required by law.²⁸

These requirements also apply to board offices because they function as polling locations during early voting.

Verification of Accessible Polling Locations

Before each election, the board director must sign a statement verifying that each polling place meets the requirements for accessible parking.²⁹ This statement ([Form 16](#)) must be signed by both the director and deputy director (or by the chairperson if there is no deputy director). They must also file a signed statement ([Form 17](#)) before each election verifying that each polling location meets federal and state laws for accessibility.

Outside the Polling Location

PEOs should check the route from accessible parking to the polling room to make sure there are no barriers. They should:

- Make sure directional signs guide voters to the nearest accessible entrance.
- Set up any temporary equipment, such as parking signs, cones, or ramps provided by the board to fix barriers.
- Be sure any alternate accessible entrance is unlocked.

PEOs should notify the board of accessibility issues and be alert that voters with disabilities may need help in accessing the polling location.

²⁷This is a desktop-based program available to all counties. Contact ADA@OhioSos.gov to arrange a file transfer of the automated checklist.

²⁸When a board of elections considers it necessary to relocate a polling location, it must notify each of the registered voters in the precinct by mail prior to the next election. [R.C. 3501.21](#).

²⁹[R.C. 3501.29\(E\)](#).

Inside the Polling Location

PEOs should make sure the entire route to the voting area is accessible. This includes:

- Checking that any elevators or lifts are working.
- Ensuring easy access from the entrance to the voting area and stations.
- Making sure there is a 36-inch-wide path through the voting area.
- Providing accessible tables and voting machines.
- Ensuring adequate privacy for voters.

Be ready to provide reasonable accommodations, such as chairs for voters who need to rest.

Common Accessibility Issues

Common barriers at polling locations include:

- Lack of designated accessible parking spaces.
- Lack of vertical signs or access aisles at accessible parking spaces.
- Sidewalks without curb-cuts.
- Steps at entrances.
- High thresholds or steps.
- Uneven surfaces like gravel, grates, or cracked sidewalks.
- Heavy doors.
- Door handles that can't be used with a closed fist.
- Tripping hazards like loose mats or cords.
- Protruding objects that can't be detected by a cane or are sitting in a walkway.

Simple Solutions to Accessibility Issues

Many access problems can be fixed easily on Election Day:

- Use temporary signs to mark accessible parking spaces.
- Post directional signs to accessible entrances.
- Post signs inside the building to the voting room.
- Use temporary ramps where needed.
- Prop open heavy doors and those that can't be opened with a closed fist.

- Keep a 36-inch passageway throughout the voting room.
- Place chairs, trash cans, or cones under protruding objects so they can be found with a cane.
- Set up accessible voting machine(s) in private locations in the voting room.
- Tape down or remove loose mats, cords, or wires.
- Remove obstacles from walkways.
- Place chairs along routes or in the voting location where a person can rest.

POLLING LOCATION SUPPLIES

Before polls open at 6:30 a.m. on Election Day, PEOs should work in teams to set up. Working in pairs makes the process faster and prevents errors. For example, one person can read off items from a list while another person checks to see if the item is in the supplies.

Polling Location Supplies Checklist

Checking Supplies and Forms

PEOs should verify they have these supplies for the polling location:

- ☐ Quick Reference Guide (flip chart) for PEOs from the Secretary of State
- ☐ Official manuals and guides from the board
- ☐ Voter identification requirements
- ☐ Chain of Custody forms for voting materials
- ☐ Reference Guides for voting equipment
- ☐ Reference guides for accessibility³⁰
- ☐ Emergency Contact List for the board
- ☐ "I Voted" stickers
- ☐ Officials' name tags
- ☐ Locks and seals
- ☐ Oath and payroll forms
- ☐ Miscellaneous supplies (such as extension cords, tape, paper clips, pens, rubber bands, three-prong adapters, etc.)
- ☐ Other materials that may be required by the Secretary of State

Forms and Materials Checklist

Officials should also check for the following items and make sure they are designated for the right precinct:

- ☐ Encoders/Access Cards (if applicable)
- ☐ Pollbook
- ☐ Signature Pollbook
- ☐ Official Precinct Voter Registration Lists
- ☐ Absentee Voter List
- ☐ Ballot Stub Containers

³⁰[Secretary of State's Polling Location Accessibility Checklist](#) and [Accessible Parking Guide](#).

- ☐ Precinct Voting Location Guide
- ☐ Identification Envelope - Provisional Ballot Affirmation: (Secretary of State [Form 12-B](#), have with optical scan paper ballots on the correct table)
- ☐ Provisional Voter Precinct Verification Form ([Form 12-D](#))
- ☐ Provisional Ballot Notices (include list of acceptable forms of proof of citizenship and hotline number) ([Form 12-H](#))
- ☐ Official ballot bag or box for voted provisional ballots (have in an accessible, secure location)
- ☐ Voter Registration and Change of Address Forms
- ☐ Forms and envelopes (for example, curbside voting or 17-year-old voter forms)
- ☐ List of write-in candidates (if applicable)
- ☐ Spoiled/Defaced Ballot Envelope
- ☐ Ballot accounting chart (to record the number of paper ballots if needed)
- ☐ Precinct identifier sign (above the table and in plain sight)
- ☐ Signature Pollbook and Official Precinct Voter Registration List (place next to each other so both can be checked by two PEOs)
- ☐ Precinct referral cards (have on table, if available)
- ☐ Quick Reference Guide (flip chart) for PEOs from the Secretary of State (place on table) Any other official precinct election official manuals, instructions, or guides from the board to accompany the Quick Reference Guide

Make sure PEOs responsible for provisional voting have:

- ☐ Unvoted paper ballots for the precinct.
- ☐ Identification Envelopes - Provisional Ballot Affirmation ([Form 12-B](#)).
- ☐ Provisional Voter Precinct Verification Form ([Form 12-D](#)).
- ☐ Provisional Ballot Notices (includes list of acceptable forms of proof of citizenship and hotline number) ([Form 12-H](#)).
- ☐ Affidavit of Religious Objection ([Form 12-O](#)).
- ☐ Provisional Ballot Tally Sheet.
- ☐ Precinct Voting Location Guide.

Preparing for Special Situations

Officials should also have:

- ☐ Voter Registration Forms.
- ☐ Notice of Name Change Forms ([Form 10-L](#)).
- ☐ Challenge Forms ([Form 10-U](#)) (for PEOs only, not observers).
- ☐ Alternative language materials, if applicable.
- ☐ Candidate withdrawal notices, if applicable.
- ☐ Be sure that outdated notices from prior elections aren't posted in voting booths or polling location.

Polling Location Supplies Checklist

Setting Up and Closing the Polling Location

- ☐ Chain of custody forms for voting equipment and materials ([Form 400](#))
- ☐ Reference guides for ADA accessibility²³
- ☐ Necessary ADA solution supplies for the polling location
- ☐ New locks and seals for closing the polls
- ☐ Miscellaneous supplies (such as extension cords, tape, paper clips, pens, rubber bands, three-prong adapters, etc.)
- ☐ Other materials and signs that may be required by the Secretary of State
- ☐ Be sure that outdated notices from prior elections aren't posted
- ☐ Officials' name tags

Forms for Record Keeping in the Polling Location

- ☐ Oath and payroll forms
- ☐ Ballot accounting chart (to record ballots issued, used, and remaining)
- ☐ Election Day Precinct Incident Log ([Form 450](#))
- ☐ Voting Machine Event Log ([Form 475](#))

Reference Material for Poll Workers

- ☐ Quick Reference Guide (flip chart) for PEOs from the Secretary of State
- ☐ Official manuals and guides from the county board, including reference guides for voting equipment
- ☐ Precinct Election Official Manual from the Secretary of State
- ☐ Emergency contact list for the board
- ☐ Voter identification requirements from the Secretary of State

PEOs Responsible for Voter Sign-In Need

- ☐ Precinct identifier sign (above the sign-in table and in plain sight)
- ☐ Electronic pollbooks, including backup signature pollbooks (if applicable)
- ☐ Paper pollbooks (if applicable)
- ☐ Official precinct voter registration lists to update and post throughout Election Day
- ☐ Supplemental absentee voter list
- ☐ List of write-in candidates (if applicable)
- ☐ Unvoted paper ballots for the precinct (some counties may store at the provisional table)

PEOs Responsible for Provisional Voting Need

- ☐ Precinct voting location guide for the county
- ☐ Identification Envelope - Provisional Ballot Affirmation ([Form 12-B](#))
- ☐ Provisional Voter Precinct Verification Form ([Form 12-D](#))
- ☐ Provisional Ballot Notices ([Form 12-H](#))
- ☐ Official ballot container for voted provisional ballots
- ☐ Provisional ballot tally sheet

PEOs Responsible for Ballot Casting or Counting Need

- ☐ Encoders or access cards (if applicable)
- ☐ Ballot stub containers (if applicable)
- ☐ Authority to vote envelopes (if applicable)
- ☐ Soiled or defaced ballot envelope

- ☐ "I Voted" stickers

Forms and Envelopes for Special Circumstances

- ☐ Curbside voting envelopes
- ☐ 17-year-old voter ballots and or envelopes (if applicable)
- ☐ Voter registration or change of address forms
- ☐ Notice of Name Change Forms ([Form 10-L](#))
- ☐ Challenge Forms ([Form 10-U](#))
- ☐ Affidavit of Religious Objection ([Form 12-O](#))
- ☐ Alternative language materials (if applicable)
- ☐ Candidate withdrawal notices (if applicable)
- ☐ Precinct or polling location referral cards

EMERGENCY POLLING LOCATIONS CHANGES

Except in emergencies, polling locations can't be changed during the 25 days before an election.³¹ If an emergency change is needed, the board must:

1. Approve the change by a majority vote of the board.
2. Immediately notify the Secretary of State's office by emailing SWVRD@OhioSoS.gov with updated information.
3. Notify all affected voters by mail, phone, and email, if possible.
4. Update the board's voter registration system, website, and social media.
5. Update any lists given to other agencies.
6. Inform community partners and local news outlets.
7. Post signs at the previous polling locations directing voters to the new one.

Boards should consider getting signs that can be quickly customized for emergency polling location changes (such as blank yard signs).

ADJUSTED TRAVEL TO POLLING LOCATIONS

The board should contact all political subdivisions, utility companies, municipal service departments, county engineers, and the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) district office at least 90 days before an election and before early voting begins to inquire about planned or ongoing work that would affect access to polling locations.

If a utility restriction is expected, the board must request priority restoration.³²

If a road closure is expected, the board must:

1. Ask if the road can be reopened for Election Day.
2. Contact local law enforcement and street departments to help direct voters to the detoured route, if necessary.
3. Inform local media about detour routes.
4. Use social media and the board website to inform the public.

³¹[R.C. 3501.18\(A\)](#).

³²Under Ohio law, boards of elections can request priority restoration of services from local utility providers during outages. See [O.A.C 4901:1-10-08](#) (outlining restoration of electric utility services); [O.A.C 4901:1-6-31](#) (outlining restoration of services by telecommunications or local exchange carriers). Each board should proactively contact their local utility companies to arrange for prioritization of restoration for both the board office and polling locations before election day.

5. Place signs at affected intersections to direct voters to the detour. Put the signs up before Election Day to make voters aware of the change.
6. Send letters to affected voters explaining alternate routes.
7. Provide information to the voters about absentee voting options.
8. Engage community partners to help get the word out. For example, flyers at local places such as pizza shops, retail stores, and gas stations may help.

MOVING VOTERS TO ANOTHER PRECINCT OR COUNTY

Another Precinct

When only a portion of a precinct is in an election district, the board may assign those voters to the nearest precinct within that district for the purpose of voting in special elections.³³ An election district may be a school district, municipal corporation, township, or other political subdivision that includes territory in more than one precinct and is allowed to place an issue on the ballot at a special election.³⁴

Board employees must notify these voters about their polling location at least 10 days before the election.³⁵

Another County

For elections where only some precinct voters are eligible to vote, the board may assign voters to an adjoining precinct in another county if fewer than 200 voters are involved.³⁶ Before reassigning voters, the board must get the consent of the other county's board.³⁷

The board of the home county must notify affected voters of their polling location at least 10 days before the election.³⁸

When a county hosts voters from another county for a special election:

- The host county prepares, issues, and counts all ballots for that election.
- The host county provides paper ballots to the home county for provisional voting.
- The home county provides voter registration information to the host county.

³³[R.C. 3503.01\(B\)](#).

³⁴[R.C. 3503.01\(B\)](#).

³⁵[R.C. 3503.01\(B\)](#).

³⁶[R.C. 3503.01\(B\)](#).

³⁷[R.C. 3503.01\(B\)](#).

³⁸[R.C. 3503.01\(B\)](#).

- The Secretary of State's elections counsel should be notified as soon as possible when transferring voters to another county.

The Secretary of State's office will provide instructions to both counties that outline the responsibilities of the home and host counties.

VOTING EQUIPMENT

Counties using direct recording electronic (DRE) voting machines must provide enough machines for all voters. They must:

- Have at least one DRE machine for every 175 registered voters in a precinct or voting location.³⁹
- Not count those who didn't respond to any confirmation notice within 30 days or voters who requested an absentee ballot when determining the number of registered voters.
- Never have fewer than two DRE machines in any precinct or voting location.
- Never have fewer than three DRE machines in a presidential primary or a regular state election.

Counties using other types of ballot marking machines should follow the above guidance as a best practice.

When allocating machines, the board should consider:

- Precinct size.
- Polling location layout.
- Available parking.
- Accessibility.
- Number of contests on the ballot.⁴⁰

SETUP FOR MULTI-PRECINCT POLLING LOCATION

A multi-precinct voting location serves voters from more than one precinct. If the board chooses to create one (by a vote of at least three members of the board), it may:

³⁹[R.C. 3506.22\(B\)\(2\).](#)

⁴⁰[R.C. 3506.12\(A\).](#)

- ☐ Designate a single voting location manager from the political party whose candidate for governor received the most total votes in those combined precincts.
- ☐ Combine the pollbooks for those precincts into a single pollbook for the location.⁴¹

If a multi-precinct location uses electronic pollbooks, the board can vote to reduce the number of PEOs from four to two per precinct.⁴² This will ensure that no less than four PEOs will be assigned to each polling location.

Never consolidate all precincts in a county into one polling location for any election when a countywide or statewide issue or candidate is on the ballot.

⁴¹[R.C. 3501.22\(A\)\(2\)\(a\)-\(b\).](#)

⁴²[R.C. 3501.22\(A\)\(2\)\(c\).](#)

Setup for Polling Locations Checklist

Best Practices for Polling Locations

Regardless of the voting system, the board must have a sign-in station and a provisional ballot station.

Sign In Station when using paper signature pollbooks

- ☐ Have tables organized by the first letter of the voter's last name.
- ☐ Post signs with the alphabetical division served at each table.
- ☐ Voters show identification (ID) and sign the signature pollbook at a table based on the first letter of their last name.
- ☐ The board must decide on the alphabetical breakdown for the sign-in stations.
- ☐ PEOs must check off the voter's name on the Precinct Voter Registration Lists at the same time the voter signs the signature pollbook.

The same alphabetical division applies to the 6:30 a.m., 11 a.m., and 4 p.m. lists.

Suggested Alphabetical Breakdown

- ☐ **Without Clerk Books**
 - 2 precincts > 3 stations > A-G, H-P, Q-Z
 - 3 precincts > 4 stations > A-E, F-K, L-R, S-Z
 - 4 precincts > 5 stations > A-C, D-H, I-N, O-S, T-Z
- ☐ **With Clerk Books**
 - 2 precincts > 2 stations > A-K, L-Z
 - 3 precincts > 3 stations > A-G, H-P, Q-Z
 - 4 precincts > 4 stations > A-E, F-K, L-R, S-Z

Provisional Ballot Station

- ☐ The voting location must have one specific station dedicated to provisional voters.
- ☐ The station must be staffed by PEOs specifically trained on:
 - ☐ Rules and procedures for provisional voting, including citizenship verification at polling locations.
 - ☐ Using Precinct Voting Location Guide and precinct maps (used to determine if the voter is in the right voting location).

- ☐ Correctly completing [Form 12-B](#) (Identification Envelope - Provisional Ballot Affirmation Form).
- ☐ Finding and issuing the proper provisional ballot and ballot style based on the voter's address and precinct. [Form 12-H](#) (Provisional Ballot Notice) must be provided to every person who votes a provisional ballot.

Voting Machines

In general:

- ☐ The board should allow any voter to use any voting device in the location.
- ☐ Voters must still vote the proper ballot style (both precinct and precinct split) for their address.

1. Precinct Count Optical Scanner

- ☐ For optical scanners, clearly mark which scanner accepts which ballot style.
- ☐ Train PEOs to direct voters to the correct scanner.

2. Issuing Ballots: DRE Machine and Hybrid Counties

For DRE machine counties or touch screen ballot marker counties:

- ☐ In some DRE machine counties, programming a smartcard for each voter is the necessary "authority to vote" step to ensure the voter gets the correct ballot style after they sign the pollbook.
- ☐ When a smartcard isn't used, boards should use an "authority to vote" form where PEOs at the sign-in table write down the voter's correct precinct, precinct split, or ballot style (or party for a partisan primary election) for voters to take to the next step in the process.
- ☐ Officials may print the "authority to vote" slip with this information from the electronic pollbook.

3. Issuing Ballots: Optical Scan Counties

- ☐ Set up a ballot station between the sign-in station and voting booths to ensure voters get the correct ballot.
- ☐ Use an "authority to vote" form completed by the PEO and given to the voter after signing the pollbook.

POLLING LOCATION RULES

A polling location is a “neutral zone” with specific rules about who may enter and what conduct is allowed.

Who May Enter

Only these people may enter a polling location:

- voters (and their non-voting age children)
- election officials⁴³
- observers⁴⁴
- police officers⁴⁵
- people checking the 11 a.m. or 4 p.m. voter lists⁴⁶
- someone assisting another person to vote⁴⁷

Neutral Zone Rules

Two small U.S. flags must be placed 100 feet from the polling location entrance, or as close to 100 feet as possible.⁴⁸ Within this area or within 10 feet of voters in line:

- No one may loiter except election officials, observers, police officers, or voters waiting to vote.⁴⁹
- No one may campaign or try to influence voters.⁵⁰
- No one may block voters from entering or leaving.⁵¹

Media Access

Election officials must grant reasonable access to media members as long as they don’t

⁴³ [R.C. 3501.35\(B\)\(1\)](#). An “election official” includes the following individuals: (1) Secretary of State; (2) employees of the Secretary of State serving the division of elections in the capacity of attorney, administrative officer, administrative assistant, elections administrator, office manager, or clerical supervisor; (3) director of a board of elections; (4) deputy director of a board of elections; (5) member of a board of elections; (6) employees of a board of elections; (7) precinct election officials; (8) employees appointed by the boards of elections on a temporary or part-time basis. [R.C. 3501.01\(U\)](#).

⁴⁴ [R.C. 3501.35\(B\)\(1\)](#). See [Chapter 9, Section 9.10](#) of this manual for an explanation of the election observer process.

⁴⁵ [R.C. 3501.35\(B\)\(1\)](#).

⁴⁶ [R.C. 3503.23\(C\)](#).

⁴⁷ [R.C. 3501.35\(B\)\(1\)](#).

⁴⁸ [R.C. 3501.30\(A\)\(4\)](#).

⁴⁹ [R.C. 3501.30\(A\)\(4\)](#); [R.C. 3501.35\(A\)\(1\)](#).

⁵⁰ [R.C. 3501.30\(A\)\(4\)](#); [R.C. 3501.35\(A\)\(1\)](#).

⁵¹ [R.C. 3501.35\(A\)\(2\)](#).

interfere with voting.⁵² When defining “reasonable access,” consider:

- Whether the person is from an accredited media source.⁵³
- How long they’ll be there.
- Length of voter lines.
- Size and layout of the polling location.
- Protecting voter privacy.
- Conduct of the media representative.
- Effect of their presence on voters and election officials.

No person, including media members, may disrupt the voting process, interfere with the election, intimidate voters, or jeopardize ballot secrecy.⁵⁴ If they do, they may be removed. Members of the media are encouraged to ask permission of voters before recording them.

No person can bypass the statutory observer process by trying to gain access to a polling location as a member of the media.

PEOs should tell the director and deputy director if a member of the media visits a polling location.

Exit Polling at a Polling Location

Exit polling is allowed within the 100-foot neutral zone.⁵⁵ However, exit pollsters:

- May not enter a polling location.⁵⁶
- May not interfere with or disrupt the election.⁵⁷
- May not wear anything within the 100-foot neutral zone that suggests campaigning for or against any candidate or issue on the ballot.⁵⁸

⁵² [R.C. 3501.35\(B\)\(2\)](#); *Beacon Journal Publ’g Co., Inc. v. Blackwell*, 389 F.3d 683, 685 (6th Cir. 2004).

⁵³ A board of elections does not issue credentials to a member of the media. A member of the media should already possess press credentials. These credentials are sufficient to grant the member access to a polling location.

⁵⁴ [R.C. 3599.01\(A\)\(2\)](#); [R.C. 3599.24\(A\)\(1\), \(5\)](#).

⁵⁵ *American Broadcasting Co., Inc. v. Blackwell*, 479 F.Supp.2d 719, 744 (S.D. Ohio 2004).

⁵⁶ [R.C. 3501.35\(B\)\(1\)](#); [R.C. 3503.23\(C\)](#).

⁵⁷ [R.C. 3599.24\(A\)\(5\)](#).

⁵⁸ [R.C. 3501.30\(A\)\(4\)](#); [R.C. 3501.35\(A\)\(1\)](#).

Collecting Signatures at a Polling Location

People may not collect signatures inside a polling location or within the neutral zone.⁵⁹ However, they may collect signatures outside the neutral zone.

Food and Campaigning at a Polling Location

Within the neutral zone, no one may:

- Campaign.
- Display campaign materials.
- Distribute food.⁶⁰

However, campaigning and the display of campaign materials are allowed outside of the neutral zone.

Ohio law prohibits offering “money or other valuable thing” to influence voting.⁶¹ Food, discounts, and other items are considered “thing[s] of value” under the Revised Code.⁶² Food, for example, can be used to influence voters in different ways. This could include asking voters which party or candidate they support to determine who receives the food, or requiring individuals to vote before receiving it.

Notwithstanding this, Ohio’s election laws do not prohibit a person or entity from freely distributing food outside of the neutral zone of a polling location, so long as the distribution is in no way an inducement to vote or to refrain from voting.

Problems with Conduct at a Polling Location

Officials should contact the board office or law enforcement immediately if they have problems with anyone’s conduct at a polling location. Review the Ohio Secretary of State’s [De-Escalation Training Resources](#) to help minimize and prevent misconduct at polling locations.

Section 6.03 Precinct Election Officials

Precinct election officials (PEOs) help to ensure that elections are conducted lawfully.

⁵⁹[R.C. 3501.35\(A\)\(1\)](#); *United Food & Commercial Workers Local 1099 v. City of Sidney*, 364 F.3d 738, 751 (6th Cir. 2004) (holding that circulators were not deprived of their free speech rights when they were prohibited from collecting signatures within the “campaign-free zone”).

⁶⁰[R.C. 3501.35\(A\)](#); [R.C. 3599.01\(A\)\(3\)](#).

⁶¹[R.C. 3599.01\(A\)\(3\)](#). See also [R.C. 3599.02](#).

⁶²[R.C. 1.03\(I\)](#). Even a professor’s award of extra credit to a student who votes in an election has been considered to be a “thing of value.” [1996 Ohio Atty.Gen.Ops. No. 96-033, at 2-129](#).

Ohio law requires four residents from the county to serve as PEOs in each precinct.⁶³ The board can assign more than four PEOs to a precinct, especially if the board expects a high voter turnout.⁶⁴

One PEO serves as the voting location manager.⁶⁵ This person oversees the entire election process, including opening and closing the polls and transporting materials to the board after polls close.⁶⁶ The manager must be from the party whose candidate for governor received the most votes in that precinct at the last gubernatorial election.⁶⁷

PEOs work as a team to conduct an election at their precinct.⁶⁸ All must:

- Maintain peace and order in the polling location.
- Keep the entrance open and unobstructed.
- Prevent attempts to interfere with voters.
- Protect official observers from harassment.
- Prevent riots, violence, and disorder.⁶⁹

See the Secretary of State [Precinct Election Official Training Manual](#) for info on other duties of the voting location manager and PEOs.

QUALIFICATIONS

PEOs must be registered voters in the county where they serve.⁷⁰ However, they don't have to live in the precinct where they work.

Restrictions

A person cannot serve as a PEO if they:

- Have been convicted of a felony or any violation of election law.⁷¹A
- Cannot read and write English well.⁷²

⁶³[R.C. 3501.22\(A\)\(1\).](#)

⁶⁴[R.C. 3501.22\(A\)\(1\).](#)

⁶⁵[R.C. 3501.22\(A\)\(1\).](#)

⁶⁶[R.C. 3501.22\(A\)\(1\).](#)

⁶⁷[R.C. 3501.22\(A\)\(1\); R.C. 3501.01\(G\).](#)

⁶⁸See [R.C. 3501.22\(A\)\(1\).](#)

⁶⁹[R.C. 3501.33.](#)

⁷⁰[R.C. 3501.22\(A\)\(1\).](#)

⁷¹[R.C. 3501.27\(A\).](#)

⁷²[R.C. 3501.27\(A\).](#)

- Are a candidate on the ballot in that precinct (except unopposed county central committee candidates).⁷³
- Have a family member or business associate on the ballot in that precinct (unless the candidate is completely unopposed).⁷⁴

APPOINTMENT & TERM

By September 15 each year, the board must vote and appoint four qualified voters from the county for each precinct as PEOs, who serve for one year.⁷⁵

Not more than half of the PEOs in a precinct may be from the same political party.⁷⁶ The board may appoint unaffiliated voters to serve as PEOs.

Exception: By majority vote, a board may reduce from four to two PEOs per precinct at a voting location that serves more than one precinct and uses electronic pollbooks.⁷⁷

For special elections, the board may select just two PEOs from different parties if four aren't needed.⁷⁸

RECRUITMENT GOALS

Boards should recruit at least 15 percent more PEOs than the minimum needed to staff the polling locations. These extra poll workers should be fully trained and ready if needed. Boards should consider assigning more than four PEOs to high-turnout precincts.

CERTIFICATE OF APPOINTMENT

The board must give each PEO a certificate of appointment, which the PEO must present to the voting location manager when polls open.⁷⁹ The certificate should specify the precinct, ward, or district where the PEO is appointed to serve, the date of appointment, and the date their term ends.⁸⁰

REMOVAL FROM OFFICE

The board may remove poll workers for neglect of duty, misconduct, or other good

⁷³[R.C. 3501.15.](#)

⁷⁴[Ohio Secretary of State Ethics Policy](#), at 4.

⁷⁵[R.C. 3501.22\(A\)\(1\).](#)

⁷⁶[R.C. 3501.22\(A\)\(1\).](#)

⁷⁷[R.C. 3501.22\(A\)\(2\)\(c\).](#)

⁷⁸[R.C. 3501.22\(A\)\(1\).](#)

⁷⁹[R.C. 3501.22\(A\)\(1\).](#)

⁸⁰[R.C. 3501.22\(A\)\(1\); R.C. 3501.27\(A\).](#)

reasons.⁸¹

VACANCIES

The board must fill vacancies for unexpired terms.⁸² For new precincts, the board must appoint PEOs to serve the unexpired term.⁸³

COMPENSATION

Every PEO in a county must be paid the same hourly rate—at least the federal minimum wage (\$7.25 per hour)—and no more than \$133.72 per day.⁸⁴

When the federal minimum wage increases, the Secretary of State adjusts the maximum daily rate by the same percentage.⁸⁵

Boards cannot increase pay during a calendar year unless they notify the county commissioners about the increase by October 1 of the preceding calendar year.⁸⁶

Boards may increase the pay of PEOs during a calendar year by up to nine percent over what was paid the previous calendar year, if the previous pay was less than \$85 per day.⁸⁷ The board can also increase pay up to four and a half percent if the previous pay was \$85 to \$95 per day.⁸⁸

The county commissioners may review and comment on proposed increases.⁸⁹ They can also write an agreement with the board of elections to allow a higher increase in pay for PEOs than the percentages outlined above.⁹⁰

Officials who work less than a full Election Day (i.e., from opening until closing procedures are complete) receive less than the maximum amount owed to them.⁹¹

VOTING LOCATION MANAGERS

Voting location managers receive additional compensation, as set by the board.⁹²

Managers who deliver and return election supplies may receive:

⁸¹ [R.C. 3501.22\(A\)\(1\)](#).

⁸² [R.C. 3501.22\(A\)\(1\)](#).

⁸³ [R.C. 3501.22\(A\)\(1\)](#).

⁸⁴ [R.C. 3501.28\(B\)](#), [\(C\)](#); [O.A.C. 111:3-7-01\(B\)](#), [\(C\)](#); [Directive 2009-08, Pollworker Compensation](#).

⁸⁵ [R.C. 3501.28\(C\)](#).

⁸⁶ [R.C. 3501.28\(D\)\(1\)\(a\)](#).

⁸⁷ [R.C. 3501.28\(D\)\(1\)\(b\)](#).

⁸⁸ [R.C. 3501.28\(D\)\(1\)\(c\)](#).

⁸⁹ [R.C. 3501.28\(D\)\(2\)](#).

⁹⁰ [R.C. 3501.28\(D\)\(2\)](#).

⁹¹ [R.C. 3501.28\(E\)](#).

⁹² [R.C. 3501.22\(A\)\(1\)](#); [R.C. 3501.28\(D\)](#).

- Up to \$5 for each trip to the polling location.
- Up to \$5 for each trip from the polling location to the board office.
- Mileage for each trip at the state rate.⁹³

WITHHOLDING PAY

The board may withhold a PEO's pay for failing to follow instructions or comply with election laws regarding their duties.⁹⁴

SOCIAL SECURITY AND MEDICARE

PEOs who earn less than \$2,500 per calendar year are exempt from Social Security and Medicare deductions related to their PEO compensation.⁹⁵

PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

State law allows public employees to take paid leave to serve as PEOs. The public employee gets both their regular pay plus the compensation for being a PEO.⁹⁶ Employees must get employer approval first. Local work rules and collective bargaining agreements may limit this opportunity.

SEVENTEEN-YEAR-OLD PEOS

Ohio has two provisions for 17-year-olds to serve as PEOs.

General Provision

If not enough qualified voters are available, the board can appoint 17-year-olds who are registered to vote.⁹⁷

High School Program

Boards may partner with schools to allow certain high school students to apply as PEOs.⁹⁸ Unlike the general provision, these students do not need to be registered to vote.⁹⁹ However, student applicants must declare their party affiliation.¹⁰⁰

Boards are limited in how many 17-year-olds they can use:

- Precincts with fewer than six PEOs: one 17-year-old (i.e., three or four adults and

⁹³[R.C. 3501.36.](#)

⁹⁴[R.C. 3501.28\(G\).](#)

⁹⁵[26 U.S.C. § 3121\(b\)\(7\)\(F\)\(iv\); 42 U.S.C. § 418\(c\)\(8\)\(B\).](#) See also [Int. Rev. Serv., 2026 Publication 15-A: Employer's Supplemental Tax Guide](#), at 1 (Dec. 15, 2025).

⁹⁶[R.C. 3501.28\(F\)\(1\), \(3\).](#)

⁹⁷[R.C. 3501.22\(B\); R.C. 3503.07.](#)

⁹⁸[R.C. 3501.22\(C\)\(1\).](#)

⁹⁹[R.C. 3501.22\(A\)\(1\).](#)

¹⁰⁰[R.C. 3501.22\(C\)\(2\)\(b\).](#)

one 17-year-old participant).

- Precincts with six or more PEOs: up to two 17-year-olds (i.e., five or six adults and one or two 17-year-old participants *or* four adults and two 17-year-old participants).¹⁰¹

Schools may set additional eligibility requirements.¹⁰² Schools must excuse students from classes on Election Day if they serve as a PEO.¹⁰³

Students cannot serve as voting location managers under this program.¹⁰⁴

TRAINING

Only registered voters who have completed the required training may serve as PEOs.¹⁰⁵ Boards must use Secretary of State training materials, plus any additional materials they create.¹⁰⁶ The board can use unpaid volunteers to help with training and may reimburse their expenses.¹⁰⁷

Boards may pay PEOs for attending training sessions.

New Precinct Election Officials

- Must receive in-person training on voting equipment before their first election.
- Must be trained within 60 days before the election.¹⁰⁸

Experienced Precinct Election Officials

- Must be trained once every three years, when voting equipment changes, or when the board or Secretary of State deems necessary.
- Must receive in-person training on voting equipment.
- Must be retrained before primary elections in even-numbered years when serving as a voting location manager.
- Must be trained within 60 days before the election.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰¹[R.C. 3501.22\(D\).](#)

¹⁰²[R.C. 3501.22\(C\)\(1\).](#)

¹⁰³[R.C. 3501.22\(C\)\(4\).](#)

¹⁰⁴[R.C. 3501.22\(C\)\(3\).](#)

¹⁰⁵[R.C. 3501.27\(B\), \(C\).](#)

¹⁰⁶[R.C. 3501.27\(B\).](#)

¹⁰⁷[R.C. 3501.27\(B\).](#)

¹⁰⁸*See* [R.C. 3501.27\(B\).](#)

¹⁰⁹[R.C. 3501.27\(B\).](#)

Boards may offer online or virtual training for experienced PEOs who are already trained on current equipment. Self-paced training must track participants to ensure they complete the training. The board must give each potential PEO (whether they do live or self-paced virtual training) an assessment to be sure they understand the training information.

Training for Poll Workers on Election Day Mismatch Verification

Poll workers and voting location managers should be prepared to clearly explain to a registered voter the new requirement for correcting a mismatched registration record. Boards must train poll workers on this requirement and should consider providing a step-by-step instruction guide to poll workers who may encounter situations requiring the correction of a voter registration record mismatch. A suggested set of step-by-step instructions is shown in [Chapter 9, Section 9.06](#).

Training for Poll Workers on Citizenship Verification at Polling Locations

Poll workers and voting location managers should be prepared to clearly explain to a registered voter the requirements for citizenship verification. Boards of elections must train poll workers on this requirement and should consider providing a step-by-step instruction guide to poll workers who may encounter situations requiring citizenship verification. A suggested set of step-by-step instructions is shown in [Chapter 9, Section 9.09](#).

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

PEOs set the tone at polling locations. They should treat voters and other election officials with courtesy and respect.

Acceptable Conduct

PEOs must:

- Treat voters professionally.
- Work efficiently with each other.
- Resolve problems so voters can vote with ease and privacy.
- Avoid distracting voters.

Unacceptable Conduct

PEOs **may not**:

- Campaign or try to influence voters.
- Wear or distribute campaign materials, sample ballots, slate cards, campaign badges or clothing, or campaign buttons.
- Use personal electronic devices (such as laptops, cell phones, radios, televisions, etc.).
- Sell raffle tickets or other items (such as baked goods, candy, crafts, etc.).
- Place food or drinks on the check-in table or near voting equipment or supplies.
- Engage in any other illegal or unacceptable activities.
- Refuse to enforce election laws.¹¹⁰

See also [Chapter 16, Section 16.06](#).

¹¹⁰[R.C. 3501.33](#); [R.C. 3501.35\(A\)](#); [R.C. 3599.02](#).

ETHICS REQUIREMENTS

All PEOs must follow Ohio ethics laws and the Secretary of State's Ethics Policy as it applies to them. All PEOs must complete the Ethics Policy Acknowledgment Form ([Form 351](#)). Keep the completed form on file at the board office.

Ethics violations may be reported to the board director or deputy director. Anonymous reports may be mailed to the board's director or deputy director. Reports may also be filed with the Secretary of State's Election Integrity Unit in the office's Public Integrity Division.

Violations of the ethics policy may result in dismissal.

VOTING LOCATION MANAGER DUTIES

The voting location manager oversees the precinct polling location and is responsible for the overall conduct of the election there.

Key Ethics Rules

1. Officials cannot serve in any precinct where they are on the ballot (except unopposed party committee candidates).
2. Officials (including rovers, scouts, or similar, temporary election workers) cannot serve where family members or business associates are candidates.
3. Officials (including rovers, scouts, or similar, temporary election workers) cannot wear or distribute campaign materials (shirts, buttons, stickers, or other campaign items) at the board office or polling locations.
4. Officials (including rovers, scouts, or similar, temporary election workers) cannot engage in political activity while on board time.
5. Officials (including rovers, scouts, or other similar, temporary election workers) should avoid actions that could undermine public confidence in Ohio elections.

Voting Location Manager Checklist

Before Election Day, the voting location manager should:

- ☐ Pick up any election supplies.
- ☐ Check supply containers' labels without breaking seals to make sure they are for the correct precinct or polling location.
- ☐ Visit the polling location to find parking and voting equipment.
- ☐ Contact the facility about getting in to set up for the election.
- ☐ Contact other PEOs to confirm their commitment for Election Day and arrange a time to set up the polling location.

On Election Day, the voting location manager must:

- ☐ Arrive by 6 a.m. or earlier if required.
- ☐ Administer the oath to other PEOs.¹¹¹
- ☐ Create work and break schedules (if the board hasn't already done this).
- ☐ Oversee the set up the polling location and voting machines.
- ☐ Review special instructions with PEOs.
- ☐ Break the seal on the election supply container and confirm the supplies, including ballots, are for the correct precinct or polling location.
- ☐ Before the polls open, check off absentee and early provisional ballot voters listed on the Supplemental Absentee List on the Official Precinct Voter Registration List.
- ☐ Post the Official Precinct Voter Registration List at 6:30 a.m. and updates at 11 a.m. and 4 p.m., showing who has voted in the precinct.
- ☐ Officially open and close the polls.
- ☐ Administer the oath to observers.
- ☐ Ensure PEOs keep campaigners and campaign materials outside the 100-foot zone.¹¹²
- ☐ Complete chain of custody procedures.

¹¹¹[R.C. 3501.31](#).

¹¹²[R.C. 3501.30\(A\)\(4\)](#); [R.C. 3501.35\(A\)\(1\)](#).

- ☐ Return ballots, voting materials, and supplies to the board with an official from the opposite party.
- ☐ Perform any other duties assigned by the board.

BIPARTISAN CUSTODY OF ELECTION MATERIALS

Ballots and required voting materials and supplies must be transported to the board by a voting location manager and an official from the opposite party.¹¹³ See specific transport instructions from the board for more details.

Each board must arrange for voting equipment delivery to polling locations before or on Election Day. If it will be delivered before Election Day, board employees must arrange for its security.

Equipment Storage Rules

- Never store voting equipment at an official's home, vehicle, or workplace.
- At a polling location, store voting equipment as recommended by the manufacturer. Keep it in a clean, climate-controlled environment.
- Never store equipment on the ground in an area that might flood.

Removable Media Devices

If removable media devices are inserted into the voting machines before delivery, the board must:

- Use tamper-evident seals with unique identifiers.
- Document each seal's identifier for each voting machine.

This documentation of the unique identifiers should be kept on three lists (one list must be kept in a secure location at the board office, one of them in a secure location with the director, and the other with the deputy director, also in a secure location).

PEOs must inspect voting equipment for damage during setup and closing. They must document the inspections on a maintenance log from the board and note any signs of damage or tampering.

Boards must use a Chain of Custody Log ([Form 400](#) or local equivalent) to document all transfers of voting equipment, election supplies, and/or ballots. Train PEOs on tamper-evident seals so they know what to look for when inspecting the equipment.

POLLING LOCATION SECURITY AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE

PEOs must control all voting equipment, keys, removable media devices, ballots, and other election supplies at all times. They must report suspicious activity or damage immediately. The board must give each voting location manager emergency contact

¹¹³[R.C. 3505.31](#).

information.

In emergencies, a PEO's first priority is safety. They should only remove voting equipment, election supplies, and ballots if it is safe to do so. At least one official (preferably two from opposite parties) must stay with any removed equipment and supplies.

Secure Return of Ballots and Election Day Supplies

At poll closing, a bipartisan team must return all ballots and election supplies to the board office or other designated location. The bipartisan team must:

Include the voting location manager and an official from the opposite party than the manager who "has taken an oath to uphold the laws and constitution of this state, including an oath that the person will promptly and securely perform the duties [of promptly and securely transporting and delivering ballots and election supplies to the board of elections]." ¹¹⁴

Travel in the same vehicle.

Additional people, such as law enforcement, may accompany the team. One bipartisan team may transport the ballots and election supplies for an entire multi-precinct polling location.

Other Precinct Election Official General Duties

A precinct election official must:

- ☐ Visit the polling location before Election Day to know how to get there, find parking, and be familiar with where the voting equipment can be found.
- ☐ Arrive at the polling place by 6 a.m. or earlier if needed on Election Day.
- ☐ Take and sign the precinct election officials' oath of office. ¹¹⁵
- ☐ Sign the payroll sheet.
- ☐ Conduct the election properly.

They may also need to:

- ☐ Help set up the polling location.
- ☐ Help open and close the polls.

¹¹⁴[R.C. 3505.31.](#)

¹¹⁵[R.C. 3501.31.](#)

- ☐ Assist voters courteously and respectfully.
- ☐ Know how to use the voting machines.
- ☐ Keep voting machine(s), materials, and supplies secure.
- ☐ Verify and sign forms.
- ☐ Keep campaigners outside the 100-foot zone.¹¹⁶
- ☐ Record important information.
- ☐ Post the Official Precinct Voter Registration List for the precinct at 6:30 a.m., 11 a.m., and 4 p.m.
- ☐ Check voter ID.
- ☐ Manage pollbook(s) and check-in voters.
- ☐ Issue correct ballots.
- ☐ Complete other assigned duties.

Official's Oath¹¹⁷

On or before Election Day, each precinct election official must take this oath of office:¹¹⁸

State of Ohio, County of _____: I do solemnly swear under the penalty of perjury that I will support the constitution of the United States of America and the constitution of the state of Ohio and its laws; that I have not been convicted of a felony or any violation of the election laws; that I will discharge to the best of my ability the duties of precinct election official in and for precinct _____ in the _____ (township) or (ward and city or village) _____ in the county of _____, in the election to be held on the _____ day of _____, _____, as required by law and the rules and instructions of the board of elections of said county; and that I will endeavor to prevent fraud in such election, and will report immediately to said board any violations of the election laws which come to my attention, and will not disclose any information as to how any elector voted which is gained by me in the discharge of my official duties.

(Signatures of precinct election officials)

¹¹⁶[R.C. 3501.30\(A\)\(4\)](#); [R.C. 3501.35\(A\)\(1\)](#).

¹¹⁷[R.C. 3501.31](#).

¹¹⁸[R.C. 3501.31](#).

Chapter 6 Checklist: Precincts, Polling Locations, and Precinct Election Officials (PEOs)

Precinct Management

- ☐ Ensure precincts have no more than 1,400 voters.
- ☐ Draw precinct boundaries along census block lines.
- ☐ Request waivers from Secretary of State if needed.
- ☐ Notify voters of any precinct changes by mail.
- ☐ Notify Secretary of State of boundary changes within 45 days.

Polling Location Selection

- ☐ Use public buildings when possible.
- ☐ Evaluate all locations using the [Secretary of State's Accessibility Checklist](#).
- ☐ Reevaluate locations when new checklists are issued.
- ☐ Maintain files of completed accessibility checklists.
- ☐ Have directors sign verification forms before each election ([Form 16](#) and [Form 17](#)).
- ☐ Coordinate with political subdivisions about potential road closures.
- ☐ Have plans for emergency polling location changes.

Equipment Allocation

- ☐ Provide at least one DRE machine per 175 registered voters (if applicable).
- ☐ Ensure a minimum of two machines per precinct (three for presidential/state elections).
- ☐ Consider contests, location size, parking, and accessibility when allocating equipment.
- ☐ Use tamper-evident seals with unique identifiers on removable media devices.
- ☐ Document all equipment with Chain of Custody logs.

Precinct Officials

- ☐ Appoint four qualified voters per precinct by September 15 each year.

- ☐ Ensure no more than half in each precinct are from the same political party.
- ☐ Recruit at least 15 percent more officials than the minimum required.
- ☐ Issue certificates of appointment to all officials.
- ☐ Train new officials in person within 60 days of their first election.
- ☐ Retrain experienced officials at least every three years.
- ☐ Have all officials complete Ethics Policy Acknowledgment Form ([Form 351](#)).
- ☐ Determine compensation rates and notify county commissioners if increasing rates.

Multi-Precinct Locations

- ☐ Designate a single voting location manager from the appropriate party.
- ☐ Combine pollbooks for all precincts.

All Polling Locations

- ☐ Determine alphabetical breakdown for sign-in stations for paper poll books and backup paper poll books.
- ☐ Create a dedicated provisional ballot station.
- ☐ Train officials on proper ballot distribution procedures.

Election Day Preparation

- ☐ Prepare supply packages for each location.
- ☐ Include all required forms, pollbooks, and materials.
- ☐ Create emergency contact lists for voting location managers.
- ☐ Arrange secure delivery of voting equipment.
- ☐ Plan for bipartisan return of materials after polls close.

Accessibility Compliance

- ☐ Verify all locations have accessible parking spaces.
- ☐ Provide signs for alternate accessible entrances.
- ☐ Confirm doorways are at least 32 inches wide.
- ☐ Check for and remove potential barriers along voter paths.

- ☐ Provide temporary equipment to fix accessibility issues (signs, ramps, etc.).
- ☐ Train officials to properly set up accessibility equipment.
- ☐ Ensure 36-inch pathways throughout voting areas.
- ☐ Provide chairs for voters who need to rest while waiting.



CHAPTER 7: ABSENTEE VOTING¹

Section 7.01 Absentee Voting Introduction

This chapter explains how to handle all aspects of absentee voting in Ohio.

It covers who can vote absentee, how to process applications, and procedures for issuing and counting absentee ballots. The chapter covers special requirements for military and overseas voters, voters with disabilities, and those in special circumstances like hospitalization. It also includes mandatory timelines, security procedures, and step-by-step processes to ensure all absentee ballots are handled correctly and legally.

Absentee Voter: Any qualified voter who votes by mail or in person before Election Day. See also [R.C. 3509.02](#).

Section 7.02 Eligibility

Ohio is a no fault absentee state, meaning voters do not need to state a reason for requesting an absentee ballot. Any qualified, registered voter can vote absentee at any election without stating a reason.^{2 3}

Section 7.03 Application

REQUESTING AN ABSENTEE BALLOT

Qualified voters have two ways to request an absentee ballot:

- Submit a written application to the board of elections of their county.

¹[Directive 2026-34](#)

²[R.C. 3509.02](#).

³ Except as otherwise specified in **Section 7.04**, provisional voters can only vote absentee through early in person voting.

- Come in person to the board office or other site designated for early in-person absentee voting⁴ and request to vote absentee.

Voters who want to cast an absentee ballot in person at the board office or other designated location must:⁵

- Give their full name and current address,
- Provide valid identification (ID) to election officials. Acceptable IDs for early in-person voting are the same as for Election Day voting.

Early In-person Voting is when voters come to the board office or designated location to vote absentee before Election Day.

When the Board Mails Absentee Ballot Applications

Under Ohio law, the board cannot mail unsolicited absentee ballot applications to any voter.⁶ The application must be in the form required by the Secretary of State ([Form 11-A Absentee Ballot Application](#)).

The board may post absentee ballot application forms on its website or in public places such as libraries. Respond promptly to proper requests for absentee ballot applications.

Required Fields

Absentee ballot applications must be the current forms from the Secretary of State's office and must have **ALL** of the following:⁷

- voter's name
- voter's signature⁸
- address where voter is registered
- voter's date of birth
- ONE of the following forms of ID:

⁴A Board of Elections can only have one location for early in-person absentee voting. [R.C. 3501.10\(C\)](#).

⁵[R.C. 3509.051\(B\)](#).

⁶[R.C. 3509.03\(E\)\(2\)](#).

⁷[R.C. 3509.03\(B\)](#) and [R.C. 3511.02\(A\)\(1\)](#).

⁸Generally, signing or affixing a signature to an election-related document requires a person's written, cursive-style legal mark written in that person's own hand. However, voters with a disability may personally affix their signature through the use of a reasonable accommodation, including the use of assistive technology or an augmentative device such as a signature stamp. See [R.C. 3501.011](#), [3501.382\(F\)](#) and related [OAG 2015-012](#).

- voter's Ohio driver license number
- last four digits of the voter's Social Security number
- copy of Ohio driver license, Ohio state ID card, or interim ID form issued by Ohio BMV; a U.S. passport or passport card; or a U.S. military ID card, Ohio National Guard ID, military dependent ID card, or U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs ID card. Include front and back images of the photo ID, except for a passport, which must include the passport's identification page.
- Statement identifying the election for which the absentee ballot is requested.
- Statement that the person is a qualified elector.⁹
- voter's party, if for a primary election ballot
- Mailing address if they want the absentee ballot to be mailed to a different address.

Important Notes

- Some absentee voters must provide additional information, as described below.
- Absentee ballot applications are valid for a single election only, and voters must reapply before each election.¹⁰
 - Exception: The Federal Post Card Application (FPCA), which is used by absentee voters who are uniformed services or overseas citizens (UOCAVA), is valid for all elections in a calendar year unless otherwise noted. See additional details on *UOCAVA* in the subsections below.

⁹Under [R.C. 3503.01](#), a voter's qualifications to vote are determined as of the date of the election. [R.C. 3511.02](#).

¹⁰[R.C. 3509.02](#); [R.C. 3509.03\(D\)](#).

Early In-Person Voting

Early in-person voting is a form of absentee voting under Ohio law.¹¹ If a voter applied for a mail ballot but comes to vote early in person at the board or early vote center, they don't need to vote provisionally, so long as no other reason for provisional voting applies.¹²

UOCAVA Voters are a special class of voters created by the federal Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act in 1986. They include military members, their families, and U.S. citizens living overseas.

Provisional Ballots

As a reminder, if a voter requested an absentee ballot (either by mail or in person), they must be flagged in the voter registration system and pollbook.¹³ If they show up at their polling location to vote on Election Day, they must vote provisionally, even if they did not return their ballot.¹⁴

Affidavit of Religious Objection to Photo ID

If a voter objects to being photographed for religious reasons and doesn't have a photo ID, the precinct election official (PEO) or board staff must provide an Affidavit of Religious Objection ([Form 12-O](#)). These voters also vote provisionally. If the voter does not complete the affidavit when casting the provisional ballot, they may appear at the board office within four days after the day of the election and complete the affidavit. See [Chapter 8, Provisional Voting](#) and [Chapter 10, Canvassing the Vote](#) for more on Affidavit of Religious Objection.

Noncitizen Identification

All voters must be U.S. citizens eligible to vote and have a valid photo ID. The PEO or board must:

- Verify the voter appears in the pollbook.
- Ask for a valid photo ID.

Important: Only require additional citizenship proof if ID shows a "noncitizen" designation or if they provide some other unauthorized form of photo identification. (See also [Boustani v. Larose, N.D. Ohio No. 1:06CV2065, 2024 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 196824, at *18 \(Oct. 30, 2024\).](#))

¹¹[R.C. 3509.051](#).

¹²[R.C. 3505.181](#) for reasons that a voter may be required to vote provisionally.

¹³This does not apply to Safe at Home address confidentiality program participants per [R.C. 111.44](#).

¹⁴[R.C. 3509.09\(B\)](#).

- Verify the voter's name and photograph and that the license or ID has not expired.
- Reject the ID as invalid if the license or ID contains a "NON-RENEWABLE/NON-TRANSFERABLE" identifier (on the front).
- Require additional proof of citizenship if the license or ID contains a "NONCITIZEN" identifier (on the back).
 - Use [Form 10-U](#) to verify citizenship qualifications.
 - If the voter completes Form 10-U, provides a valid photo ID, *and* acceptable proof of citizenship, they may vote a regular ballot.
 - If they complete Form 10-U but don't provide a valid photo ID *and* acceptable proof of citizenship, they must vote a provisional ballot.

Section 7.04 Absentee Voting by Mail

VOTING BY MAIL

Deadlines to Apply for an Absentee Vote by Mail Ballot

Voters must apply to cast an absentee vote by mail using [Form 11-A](#). They may submit applications beginning January 1 of the election year, or 90 days before the election, whichever is earlier, and ending at close of business seven days before Election Day.¹⁵

When the Board Mails Ballots

The board may begin mailing absentee ballots the first day after the close of voter registration, before Election Day. Continue mailing absentee ballots until close of business seven days before Election Day.¹⁶

How Voters Return Ballots

Voters may return absentee ballots by mail or personal delivery to the board office in the county where they're registered. If the county has designated an alternate location for early in-person voting, absentee ballots may also be returned there by in-person delivery.

¹⁵[R.C. 3509.03](#).

¹⁶[R.C. 3509.01](#); [R.C. 3509.03](#).

Return by Mail

- Non-UOCAVA absentee ballots must be received by the board by the close of polls on Election Day.
- UOCAVA ballots must be received by the board by the fourth day after Election Day.¹⁷

Return by Personal Delivery

- Voters or their family members may deliver the absentee ballot personally¹⁸ by the close of polls on Election Day to the board office only. No one may return a voted absentee ballot to a precinct polling location.¹⁹
- Disabled voters may choose anyone except their employer or union representative (or agents of those people) to return their ballot.²⁰
- Provide [Form 12-P](#) to anyone returning a ballot for someone else. They must declare under penalty of election falsification that they are:
 - Returning a ballot for a family member under [R.C. 3509.05\(C\)\(1\)](#), and that they are lawfully designated to do so; or
 - Assisting a disabled voter under the Voting Rights Act, and that they are not the voter's employer, agent of that employer, or an officer or agent of the voter's union.

Family member includes spouse, mother, father, mother-in-law, father-in-law, grandfather, grandmother, brother, or sister of the whole or half blood, or the son, daughter, adopting parent, adopted child, stepparent, stepchild, uncle, aunt, nephew, or niece.

Boards are encouraged to develop a drive-through ballot drop-off system for periods of high-volume turnout. These plans must be approved by a vote of the board and meet requirements and best practices established by the Secretary of State.²¹

¹⁷[R.C. 3511.11\(B\)](#).

¹⁸[R.C. 3509.05\(C\)\(1\)](#). "Family member" includes the spouse of the elector, the father, mother, father-in-law, mother-in-law, grandfather, grandmother, brother, or sister of the whole or half blood, or the son, daughter, adopting parent, adopted child, stepparent, stepchild, uncle, aunt, nephew, or niece.

¹⁹[R.C. 3509.05](#).

²⁰*League of Women Voters of Ohio v. LaRose*, 741 F. Supp.3d 694, 726 (N.D. Ohio 2024) (citing [52 U.S.C. § 10508](#)).

²¹See [Advisory 2024-03](#).

Secure Receptacles (Drop Boxes) Rules and Security

- Only one drop box for absentee ballots is allowed per board and must be located on board office property.²² If the board has multiple offices in the county, it may designate any office for absentee ballot returns, but only ONE office for the drop box.
- Post a weather-resistant notice ([Drop Box Protocol Sign](#)) at or on a drop box specifying security protocols and clear instructions on who is eligible to return ballots and instructions if someone other than the voter is attempting to return a ballot.
- To ensure compliance with state and federal law, and to protect the security of absentee ballot delivery, the only individual who may use a drop box to return the ballot is the voter.
- All individuals delivering ballots for a family member or disabled voter may either:
 - Mail the ballot to the board of elections, or
 - Return it to an election official at the board office and complete an attestation ([Form 12-P](#), see above info).
- Only a bipartisan team of election officials may open a drop box or handle its contents.
- The team must collect drop box contents daily and deliver them to the board.
- Collect contents promptly at the close of polls on Election Day. If people are in line to deposit ballots at the close of polls, they must be permitted to do so.
- The drop box must be open to receive ballots from the first day after voter registration closes through the close of polls on Election Day. It must remain open to receive ballots at all times during that period.
- Before early voting begins and after Election Day, signs should say ballots cannot be deposited in the drop box. Drop boxes can be used for other purposes year-round.

²²[R.C. 3509.05\(C\)\(3\)](#).

- Video surveillance is required at all times for drop boxes. Recordings are public record.
- Choose one option for complying with public records requests related to video surveillance:
 - Make recordings available for inspection upon request per [R.C. 149.43](#).
 - Make each day's recording available free, online for streaming or download within 72 hours after the recording ends.
- Keep video recordings for at least two weeks. Note that some counties co-own the video recordings with another office, such as the county sheriff, which may require a longer retention period.
- Consult the county prosecutor and county records commission for further guidance.
- If a voter tries to return an absentee ballot to the wrong county:
 - If the voter can be contacted quickly, they can come to collect their ballot.
 - If the voter can't be contacted or chooses not to collect their ballot, forward the unopened absentee ballot ID envelope to the correct board of elections via U.S. mail.
 - Ballots received by the correct county board by the close of polls on Election Day must be counted.

USE OF REMOTE BALLOT MARKING SYSTEM.

Voters with a qualifying disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) may apply for an absentee ballot by mail and request to mark their ballot using the county's remote ballot marking system. The voter must provide all standard absentee application information PLUS:

- A statement that the person has a qualifying disability under the ADA.²³

²³A board of elections must accept as true the voter's statement that they have a qualifying disability under the ADA. Under no circumstances may a board of elections require a voter to provide documentation of their disability or any information beyond what is requested on [Secretary of State Form 11-G](#).

- A statement that the person needs to use the remote ballot marking system to independently mark their ballot.
- The email address where the board can deliver the ballot.
- The address where the voter wants the ID Envelope ([Form 12-A](#)) mailed (if different from the registration address).

The voter may use [Form 11-G](#) for this purpose. It is on the Secretary of State's website and the board must make it available upon request.

If a voter submits a written absentee ballot application on a different form but indicates they have a disability and want to use the remote ballot marking system, make reasonable efforts to get any additional information needed to process the application and make the remote ballot marking system available to the voter.

What the Board Sends to the Voter

By Email

Once the board has received a completed application from a voter, send the following promptly to the voter via email:

- A link to access and mark their ballot using the remote ballot marking system.
- Secretary of State [Form 12-A](#) (Identification Envelope – Statement of Voter).²⁴
- Secretary of State [Form 12-N](#) (Instructions to Voters Using a Remote Ballot Marking System).
- Any additional instructions from the board or vendor for the remote ballot marking system.

If the board gets a notice of delivery failure for the email, verify the attempt to send to the email address provided, and, if the provided address is correct, contact the voter immediately for a valid email address. The voter must provide an alternate email address

in writing using a separate written application for an absentee ballot. If the board can't

Identification Envelope: Envelope ([Form 12-A](#)) with voter's name, address, signature, and ID that contains their voted ballot.

²⁴Each board must use the version of Secretary of State [Form 12-A](#) that appears on the Secretary of State's website, because that version of the form is compliant with [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#) (WCAG) 2.1AA and is a fillable PDF.

get a valid email address by the close of business seven days before Election Day, send the ballot to the voter by regular U.S. mail.

By Regular Mail (Same Day as Email):

Send the voter an absentee ballot ID envelope ([Form 12-A](#)) and an absentee ballot return envelope ([Form 12-F](#)) via regular U.S. mail on the same day the board emails the link and instructions. The ID envelope and absentee ballot return envelope must be sent to the voter's registration address or the address requested on their written application.

Pre-print the voter's name and the address (where they're registered to vote) on the ID envelope before mailing it. To show where the voter needs to sign, punch two small holes with a hole puncher — one on the "X" following "Signature" and one at the end of the signature line. This lets the voter detect by touch where they need to sign.

How the Remote Ballot Marking System Works

Voters can mark their ballot by accessing the remote ballot marking system through the board's link. Work closely with the remote ballot marking system vendor to help troubleshoot, resolve issues, and provide step-by-step instructions using the system.

After marking the ballot, the voter must print it and enclose it in an envelope using one of two methods:

- They complete the Statement of Voter ([Form 12-A](#)) electronically, then print and sign it. They then enclose this form with their ballot in any other envelope.
- They complete and sign the Statement of Voter ([Form 12-A](#)) that the board mailed to the voter and enclose their ballot in the ID Envelope.

Voters may return their voted ballot to the board of elections by mail or personal delivery in the same way as described in the ***How Voters Return Ballots*** section above.

EARLY IN-PERSON ABSENTEE VOTING

Early In-Person Absentee Voting Location

The board can use its office or designate another location for early in-person absentee voting.²⁵

If the board chooses to designate an alternate location:

²⁵[R.C. 3501.10\(C\)](#).

- Early in-person absentee voting may occur at ONLY that location.
- The designated location must comply with all applicable polling location requirements and prohibitions.²⁶
- It may NOT issue absentee ballots to voters from the board office, except by mail.
- It may accept absentee ballot returns at an alternate site in addition to the board office.
- It may only allow early in-person absentee voting at ONE location.

Uniform Statewide Hours

Early in-person absentee voting begins the day after voter registration closes and ends at 5 p.m. on the Sunday before Election Day.²⁷

All boards must adopt these exact business hours for early in-person absentee voting:²⁸

²⁶[R.C. 3501.11\(Z\)](#).

²⁷[R.C. 3509.01](#); [R.C. 3509.051](#); [R.C. 3509.06](#); [R.C. 3511.10](#).

²⁸[Substitute House Bill 458 \(134th General Assembly\)](#): "SECTION 4. (A) It is the intent of the General Assembly to enact legislation that specifies the days and hours during which the boards of elections shall permit in-person absent voting before an election. (B) The Secretary of State shall prescribe by directive a uniform schedule of days and hours for in-person absent voting, consistent with section 3509.051 of the Revised Code, as amended by this act. The schedule shall reallocate the six hours of in-person absent voting on the day before election day that, before the effective date of this section, were prescribed by Directive 2022-11. The Secretary of State shall do so by requiring the boards of elections to permit in-person absent voting during additional hours Monday through Friday of the week before the week of the election."

Uniform Statewide Early Voting Hours	Elections Conducted in Even Years (excluding special elections)		Elections Conducted in Odd Years, Special Elections, Primary Elections (excluding Presidential Primary)
	<i>Presidential General Election</i>	<i>Presidential Primary and Gubernatorial General Elections</i>	
	Voting begins the day after registration closes.		
State and Federal Holidays	Must be open for early in-person absentee voting.	Must be open for early in-person absentee voting.	Must not be open for early in-person absentee voting.
Week One of Voting	Day after the end of voter registration to Friday: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.	Day after the end of voter registration to Friday: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.	Day after the end of voter registration to Friday: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Week Two of Voting	Monday to Friday: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.	Monday to Friday: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.	Monday to Friday: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Week Three of Voting	Monday to Friday: 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday: 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday: 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.	Monday to Friday: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday: 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.	
Week Four of Voting	Monday: 7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Tuesday: 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. Wednesday to Friday: 7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Saturday before Election Day: 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday before Election Day: 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.	Monday: 7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Tuesday: 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. Wednesday to Friday: 7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Saturday before Election Day: 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday before Election Day: 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.	Monday: 7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Tuesday: 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. Wednesday to Friday: 7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Saturday before Election Day: 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday before Election Day: 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Rule: If in-person absentee voters are waiting in line when voting ends on any day during the early in-person absentee voting period, keep the voting location open until those voters who were in line when the location closed have cast a ballot.²⁹

²⁹R.C. 3509.051(A)(2).

Required: Place signage at the board office (and early in-person absentee voting location, if different) alerting voters to this schedule.

Early In-Person Absentee Voting Ballot Issuing and Return Procedures

Identification Requirements

A voter who chooses to receive and cast an absentee ballot early in person must provide one valid form of ID acceptable for Election Day voting purposes.³⁰

Receiving and Casting a Ballot

1. Verify voter eligibility.
2. Provide a signature book to be signed by the early in-person absentee voter.³¹
3. Verify the voter's signature.

Check for a provisional flag in the pollbook. If the voter is flagged to vote provisionally, follow the directions provided in [Chapter 8, Provisional Voting](#).

Identify the correct ballot style for the voter.

Issue an absentee ballot to the voter.

A voter who applies for and receives an absentee ballot in person may:

- Vote the ballot immediately.
- Take a paper ballot home to complete later. However, boards are prohibited from issuing these "hand carry" absentee ballots after the absentee ballot request deadline of the close of business on the seventh day before the election.³²

An early in-person absentee voter who is issued an optical scan ballot must mark the ballot at the board office or other designated site and insert the voted ballot into the scanner to cast it.

An early in-person absentee voter casting their ballot on a direct recording electronic (DRE) machine or touchscreen must mark and cast the ballot using the voting machine.

³⁰ [R.C. 3509.051\(B\)](#). See **Section 7.03** of this Chapter for valid forms of identification.

³¹ [R.C. 3509.051\(B\)](#).

³² [R.C. 3509.03\(D\)](#).

No Identification Envelope – Statement of Voter is required for early in-person absentee voting.³³

If an absentee voter chooses to take a paper ballot home, the board **must** provide the return mailing envelope ([Form 12-F](#)) and ID Envelope ([Form 12-A](#)). A voter who receives a paper absentee ballot in person and takes it home to vote may return it through the mail or by personal delivery. Follow the procedures outlined above in the Return by Mail and Return by Personal Delivery sections.

CURBSIDE VOTING

Curbside voting must be available for voters with a disability who can travel to the polling location but are physically unable to enter the location.³⁴ The voter may send another person into the polling location to inform election officials that they want to vote.³⁵ Boards should clearly display parking information and explain eligibility requirements for curbside voters.

If the disabled voter has assistance in completing the ballot, [Form 12-C](#) should be completed.

See [Chapter 9, Section 9.06](#), for details on the procedure for curbside voting. Also note that this process is the same for both Early Voting and Election Day.

STEPS FOR VOTING EARLY IN-PERSON ABSENTEE AFTER A VOTER HAS APPLIED FOR AN ABSENTEE BALLOT BY MAIL

If a voter previously submitted an absentee ballot application for a mailed ballot and appears for early in-person voting, the voter does not need to vote provisionally, as long as no other provisional reasons apply.³⁶

Process

- **If the voter hasn't returned the mailed absentee ballot**, record the original ballot as spoiled in the voter registration system.
- Ask the voter to return the spoiled ballot for tracking purposes.
- **If a voter returns the original ballot**, place it in the spoiled ballot container.

³³[R.C. 3509.051\(B\)](#).

³⁴[R.C. 3501.29\(C\)](#).

³⁵[R.C. 3501.29\(C\)](#).

³⁶See [R.C. 3505.181](#) for reasons that a voter may be required to vote provisionally.

- **Note:** A voter does NOT need to return the original absentee ballot to cast a regular early in-person ballot.

Replacement Ballots³⁷

- If a voter tears, soils, defaces, or erroneously marks a paper ballot before casting, or if the voter mistakenly requested the wrong form of a ballot in a primary, they may return the ballot and receive a replacement.
- A voter who received one ballot in the mail and one early in-person ballot may receive ONLY ONE MORE replacement paper ballot.³⁸
- No replacement ballots may be provided after the ballot is cast.
- Electronic ballots on a voting machine don't need replacements because voters can change their selections before casting the ballot.³⁹

ABSENTEE VOTING UNDER SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Ohio law provides some guidelines for other types of absentee voting under special circumstances.

Disability or Confinement

Eligibility

A voter who has a disability or is confined and cannot vote at a polling location on Election Day or in person at the board office due to personal illness, physical disability, infirmity, or confinement may vote by absentee ballot.⁴⁰ This includes voters who are confined to a nursing home, jail, or workhouse.

Application

- Use [Form 11-F](#) for applications.
- Submit applications to receive an absentee ballot in the same manner as other absentee voters.

³⁷ [R.C. 3505.23](#).

³⁸ [Chapter 9, Section 9.05](#), Marking the Ballot for instructions on processing Replacement Ballots

³⁹ [R.C. 3505.23](#) and [R.C. 3509.051\(E\)](#).

⁴⁰ [R.C. 3509.08\(A\)](#).

Return Methods for Disability or Confinement

A voter who has a disability or is confined may receive and return an absentee ballot by mail or in person through two board employees:

Return by Mail

The same requirements apply to returning a special circumstances ballot as regular mail ballots:

- Ballots must be received by the board by the close of polls on Election Day.⁴¹

Receipt and Return by Two Board Employees⁴²

- Two board employees from different major political parties may deliver an absentee ballot to a voter who has a disability or is confined and return the completed ballot to the board office.
- Both employees must be present during delivery, voting, and return of ballot.
- Both employees must subscribe to this fact on the absentee ballot ID envelope ([Form 12-C](#)).

Provisional Absentee Ballots

An absentee voter who has a disability or is confined and who also is required to vote a provisional ballot due to a change of address, change of name, or BMV/SSA mismatch may vote a provisional absentee ballot.⁴³

- Use [Form 11-I](#), the absentee ballot application prescribed for this purpose.
- No other type of absentee voter may vote provisionally by absentee ballot through the mail.

Unforeseeable Hospitalization

If a voter or their minor child is confined to a hospital due to an accident or unforeseeable medical emergency that occurred after the absentee voting by mail application deadline, they may vote by absentee ballot.⁴⁴

⁴¹[R.C. 3509.05\(D\)](#).

⁴²[R.C. 3509.08\(A\)](#).

⁴³[R.C. 3503.16\(G\)](#).

⁴⁴[R.C. 3509.08\(B\)\(1\)](#).

Unforeseeable Hospitalization Application Process

The voter must apply by completing [Form 11-B](#) with all required information, including:

- Listing the hospital where the applicant or their minor child has been admitted.
- Date of admission to hospital.
- Elections and ballot types for which the applicant is qualified to vote.⁴⁵

Voters may submit applications beginning after the close of business on the seventh day before Election Day (after the close of the normal absentee ballot request deadline).

The deadline is 3 p.m. on Election Day.⁴⁶

Absentee voters with an unforeseeable hospitalization *within the county* may receive and return the absentee ballot through a family member or through two board employees.⁴⁷ They must provide the same voter ID as someone who casts a ballot by mail.

If the voter's hospitalization is *outside of the county*, they may receive and return an absentee ballot through a family member or by mail.⁴⁸

Receipt and Return by a Family Member

- Certain family members⁴⁹ of a voter are permitted to deliver the absentee ballot to the voter and return the voted absentee ballot to the board office by the close of polls on Election Day.⁵⁰ Be sure that the family member completes [Form 12-P](#).⁵¹
- Voted absentee ballots cannot be returned to the precinct polling location.

⁴⁵[R.C. 3509.08\(B\)\(2\)](#).

⁴⁶[R.C. 3509.08\(B\)\(2\)](#).

⁴⁷[R.C. 3509.08\(B\)\(2\)](#).

⁴⁸[R.C. 3509.08\(B\)\(2\)](#).

⁴⁹[R.C. 3509.05\(A\)](#). "Family member" includes the spouse of the elector, the father, mother, father-in-law, mother-in-law, grandfather, grandmother, brother, or sister of the whole or half blood, or the son, daughter, adopting parent, adopted child, stepparent, stepchild, uncle, aunt, nephew, or niece.

⁵⁰[R.C. 3509.08\(B\)\(2\)](#).

⁵¹ Specifically, as voters with disabilities are concerned, federal law allows such voters to select a person of their choice to assist them with voting, including the return of the voter's absentee ballot. Federal law thus preempts state laws limiting that choice to only certain family members. See *League of Women Voters of Ohio v. LaRose*, 741 F. Supp.3d 694, 726 (N.D. Ohio 2024) (citing [52 U.S.C. § 10508](#)).

Receipt and Return by Two Boards of Elections Employees (hospital within the county)

- Two board employees from different major political parties may deliver a ballot to the absentee voter who is hospitalized or whose minor child is hospitalized within the county.⁵²
- Both employees must be present during delivery, voting, and return of the ballot.
- Both employees must subscribe to that fact on the Absentee Ballot ID Envelope ([Form 12-C](#)).

Receipt and Return by Mail (Hospital Outside the County)

- If the hospital is outside the county where the voter is registered, the board may mail the absentee ballot to the hospital per [Form 11-B](#).⁵³
- The ballot has the same mail return requirements as regular absentee ballots.⁵⁴

Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) Voters

Federal and state laws govern absentee voting by uniformed services and overseas U.S. citizens. The Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)⁵⁵ and the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act⁵⁶ protect the rights of U.S. citizens to vote in federal elections while serving or residing overseas. Ohio incorporated those federal protections into the Ohio Revised Code and extended them to state and local elections.⁵⁷

Types of UOCAVA Voters⁵⁸

Uniformed Services Voters

- member of active or reserve components of the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard
- National Guard and organized militia members on activated status⁵⁹

⁵²[R.C. 3509.08\(B\)\(2\)](#).

⁵³[R.C. 3509.08\(B\)\(2\)](#).

⁵⁴[R.C. 3509.05\(B\)\(2\)](#).

⁵⁵52 U.S.C.A. § 20301.

⁵⁶52 U.S.C.A. § 20101.

⁵⁷[R.C. 3503.191](#); [R.C. 3511.01](#); [R.C. 3511.011](#); [R.C. 3511.021](#).

⁵⁸[R.C. 3511.01](#).

⁵⁹The Ohio organized militia consists of Ohio citizens who are members of the Ohio National Guard, the Ohio Naval Militia, the Ohio Military Reserve, and the Ohio Cyber Reserve. [R.C. 5923.01](#).

- Merchant Marine members
- Commissioned Corps: Public Health Service or the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- spouses or dependents of any of above

Overseas Voters

- A person considered by law an Ohio resident but currently outside the U.S. These individuals were last eligible to vote in Ohio before leaving or would have been eligible if they had been 18 or older.⁶⁰
- A person born outside the U.S. with a parent/guardian who last resided and was last eligible to vote in Ohio before leaving the U.S.⁶¹

UOCAVA Application Process

UOCAVA voters apply for absentee ballots using the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) or by filing a written request with the board containing all the following required information:⁶²

- ☐ voter's name
- ☐ signature
- ☐ address where registered to vote in Ohio
- ☐ date of birth
- ☐ acceptable form of identification
- ☐ election(s) for which the voter is requesting ballots for
- ☐ statements the voter is a qualified elector, absent UOCAVA voter, and that voter or their parent/guardian, if applicable, resided in Ohio for at least 30 days before commencing service or leaving the U.S.
- ☐ voter's party affiliation (primary elections only)
- ☐ method to receive ballot (mail, email, or fax)
- ☐ mailing address, email address, or fax number for ballot delivery

⁶⁰[R.C. 3511.01\(B\)\(1\)-\(2\).](#)

⁶¹[R.C. 3511.01\(B\)\(3\).](#)

⁶²[R.C. 3511.02\(A\).](#)

UOCAVA voters may choose among mail, email, fax, or in person to submit absentee ballot applications.⁶³

Deadline: Applications by mail, email, or fax must be received by the board by the close of business on the seventh day before the election.⁶⁴

Relatives of UOCAVA voters may apply for absentee ballots on the UOCAVA voter's behalf if the UOCAVA voter is already registered to vote. Use [Form 11-E](#) or the FPCA.⁶⁵ A relative must submit the form on behalf of the registered UOCAVA voter in person or by mail to the board office.

Special FPCA Rules

Dual Purpose: The FPCA serves as both a voter registration form (if the voter is not registered or needs to update their registration) AND as a request for absentee ballots.

Registration Deadline: An FPCA used to register or update the registration of qualified UOCAVA voters must reach election officials no later than 30 days before the election.⁶⁶

Annual Validity: FPCA absentee ballot request is valid for every election in that year unless the voter specifies a single election only.⁶⁷

Accommodation Requirement: If the board receives an absentee ballot application that is not an FPCA and it's clear the applicant is a UOCAVA voter, provide the same accommodations as if they applied using the FPCA.⁶⁸

Electronic Submission: An emailed or faxed copy of a signed FPCA is acceptable for voter registration.⁶⁹

Board UOCAVA Tasks

1. Prepare Two Notices of Elections for Voters Using the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot

The board must prepare initial and updated election notices for each precinct for

⁶³ [R.C. 3503.19\(B\)](#); [R.C. 3511.021\(A\)\(2\)](#).

⁶⁴ [R.C. 3511.04\(B\)](#).

⁶⁵ [R.C. 3511.02\(C\)](#). Relatives include "spouse, father, mother, father-in-law, mother-in-law, grandfather, grandmother, brother or sister of the whole blood or half blood, son, daughter, adopting parent, adopted child, stepparent, stepchild, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, uncle, aunt, nephew, or niece."

⁶⁶ [52 U.S.C.A. § 20302](#).

⁶⁷ [R.C. 3511.02](#).

⁶⁸ [R.C. 3509.10](#).

⁶⁹ [R.C. 3503.19\(B\)\(2\)\(a\)](#).

Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot use.⁷⁰ A uniformed services or overseas voter may request a copy of this notice to be sent via mail, fax, or email.⁷¹ If the board maintains a website, post both notices online.⁷²

Use [Form 120](#) for the election notice template.

a. Initial Notice⁷³

Deadline: The initial notice should be available at least 100 days before each regularly scheduled election and as soon as practicable before an election that is not regularly scheduled.

The initial notice must include:

- i. A list of all federal, state, and local offices the board expects on the ballot.
- ii. A list of all questions and issues the board expects on the ballot.
- iii. Specific instructions for UOCAVA voter to indicate choices on the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot.

b. Updated Notice⁷⁴

Deadline: The updated notice must be prepared as soon as the form of the ballot is certified and no later than 46 days before each election.

Updated notice must include:

- i. A list of certified candidates for each office on the ballot.
- ii. A list of all certified questions and issues on the ballot.
- iii. Specific instructions for UOCAVA voters to indicate choices on the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot.

2. Transmit UOCAVA Ballots on the 46th Day Before Each Election

Deadline: On the 46th day before each election — even if it's a day the board is not regularly open for business — the board must transmit an absentee ballot to every UOCAVA voter who filed a valid application with the board during the application period beginning January 1 or 90 days before the election (whichever

⁷⁰[R.C. 3511.16.](#)

⁷¹[R.C. 3511.16\(B\).](#)

⁷²[R.C. 3511.16\(D\).](#)

⁷³[R.C. 3511.16\(A\).](#)

⁷⁴[R.C. 3511.16\(C\).](#)

is earlier). UOCAVA ballots must be transmitted on the 46th day.⁷⁵ **This is a mandatory deadline.**

Boards must have the necessary personnel on-site to accept UOCAVA applications, review them for validity, and issue ballots on the 46th day prior to the election.

UOCAVA voters may receive absentee ballots by mail, email, or fax, as indicated on their application. If they didn't express a preference on the application, deliver the absentee ballot via standard mail.⁷⁶

All uniformed services and overseas voters may vote a complete ballot — all federal, state, and local candidate and issue contests — of the Ohio precinct where they resided immediately before leaving Ohio.

A person who moves from Ohio to a location outside the United States without becoming a resident of another state does not lose Ohio residency and is therefore eligible to vote on all candidate and issue contests.⁷⁷

What to transmit to UOCAVA Voters:

- ballot
- [Form 12-A](#) (Identification Envelope with Statement of Voter)
- [Form 12-K](#) (Instructions to Uniformed Services or Overseas Voters)
- [Form 12-J](#) (Ballot Tracking for Military and Overseas Voters-Notification of PIN)

When sending these materials via email, it is sufficient to attach the ballot to the email in .pdf form generated from the election management system (EMS). The actual ballot issued to the UOCAVA voter will be the one used when remaking the ballot upon return. It will have a stub.

⁷⁵[R.C. 3511.04\(B\).](#)

⁷⁶[R.C. 3511.021\(A\)\(2\).](#)

If the board receives more than one absentee ballot request from a UOCAVA voter and has already issued them a ballot, do NOT transmit another ballot to the same voter UNLESS all the following apply:

- Voter's subsequent request states they submitted the initial request more than 30 days before the election.
- They haven't received a ballot as of the 15th day before the election.
- The board hasn't received a voted ballot from that voter.⁷⁸

3. Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB)

The FWAB serves as a backup ballot for UOCAVA voters who made timely application for, and did not receive, an absentee ballot.

Voter Process:

- The voter downloads the FWAB from the Federal Voting Assistance Program website at [FVAP.gov](https://www.fvap.gov).
- They complete the ballot with information the board provides in the election notices explained above.
- These voters can vote for all federal, state, and local offices, questions, and issues in every election.⁷⁹

Counting Requirements:

- A FWAB is counted only if the voter requested an absentee ballot by the deadline, which is the close of business on the seventh day before Election Day.⁸⁰
- If, after mailing the FWAB to the board, the voter receives the requested absentee ballot, they may vote the ballot and return it to the board of elections.
- If the board receives a voter's valid absentee ballot by the fourth day after the election, it will count the absentee ballot (not the FWAB).

⁷⁸[R.C. 3511.08.](#)

⁷⁹[R.C. 3511.14.](#)

⁸⁰[52 U.S.C.A. § 20303; R.C. 3511.02.](#)

Registration Function:

- The declaration accompanying a FWAB may register the person to vote in the next election if received no later than 30 days before the election.
- If submitted after that point and if the voter is not already registered, the ballot cannot count, but the declaration serves to register the voter for future elections.⁸¹

4. Maintain Centralized Ballot Tracking System (CBTS)

The Centralized Ballot Tracking System (CBTS) allows UOCAVA voters to track the status of their absentee ballots.⁸²

Initial Setup:

- When the board receives a valid FPCA or [Form 11-E](#), enter the voter into the CBTS to create a voter record.
- The CBTS will automatically generate a unique, personal identification number (PIN) for the voter.
- Using [Form 12-J](#), provide the voter their assigned PIN and instructions to access the CBTS website and track their ballot.

The voter uses their PIN to log in and view the status of their ballot. The board is required to update and maintain the accuracy of each voter record. Update each absentee ballot record with:

- ☐ Date the board received the FPCA or [Form 11-E](#).
- ☐ Date the board transmitted the blank absentee ballot to the voter.
- ☐ Date the board received the voted absentee ballot.
- ☐ Any errors that were detected on the absentee ballot ID envelope.
- ☐ Whether the absentee ballot was counted.

All CBTS records must be updated completely before the Official Canvass is completed.

⁸¹[R.C. 3511.14\(B\)](#).

⁸²[R.C. 3511.021\(B\)](#).

If the board does not have a copy of the CBTS manual, please contact the Secretary of State's Elections Division.

Safe at Home Voters

Safe at Home is an address confidentiality program under Ohio law.⁸³ It assists survivors of:

- Domestic violence.
- Menacing by stalking.
- Human trafficking.
- Trafficking in persons.
- Rape.
- Sexual battery.

The program shields personal information from public record and provides individuals who are otherwise eligible a safe and secure way to register and vote.

Program participants eligible to become electors may have a confidential voter record.⁸⁴ They will not appear in a pollbook. To protect their confidentiality, Ohio law limits program participants to voting *only* absentee by mail.⁸⁵ The participant may use their program participant identification number instead of their address on the absentee ballot application and identification envelope.⁸⁶

Safe at Home discourages participants from voting provisionally because:

- It reveals their address to those in the polling location.
- Provisional ballot counting decisions must be resolved in a public meeting.

Exception: A provisional ballot affirmation completed by a program participant with a confidential voter registration is NOT a public record.⁸⁷ A director or deputy director must promptly consult their county prosecutor if they receive a public records request

⁸³[R.C. 111.41 et seq.](#)

⁸⁴[R.C. 111.44.](#)

⁸⁵[R.C. 111.44\(D\)\(2\).](#)

⁸⁶[R.C. 3509.04\(B\).](#)

⁸⁷[R.C. 149.43\(A\)\(1\)\(ee\).](#)

regarding provisional ballots when a program participant with a confidential registration voted a provisional ballot in that election.

Participants with questions about requesting and receiving an absentee ballot without compromising address confidentiality should contact the **Safe at Home Program** at the Secretary of State's office at 614-995-2255.

DAILY REPORTING REQUIREMENTS FOR RETURNED ABSENTEE BALLOTS

Beginning on the 45th day before the election and ending on the fifth day after the election, the board is required to report information about early voting from the previous day to the Secretary of State's office.⁸⁸ The Secretary of State must make this information available to the public. Provide daily files to the Secretary of State's office containing all voters who requested or returned absentee ballots or voted early in person. Files must conform to the format and data requirements set forth in the *Absentee File and Data Requirements* document in the Boards of Elections Portal.

Section 7.05 Processing Absentee Ballot Applications

PRE-PRINTING ONLY NAME AND ADDRESS ON ABSENTEE BALLOT APPLICATION

The board may pre-print ONLY a voter's name and address on absentee ballot applications before mailing to a voter who requests it.⁸⁹

Do not complete any other required fields for the voter unless:

- The voter asks for help.
- The voter has a disability or literacy challenges.⁹⁰

PROHIBITION ON PRE-PAYING POSTAGE ON ABSENTEE BALLOT RETURN

The board cannot pre-pay return postage for any type of absentee ballot application.⁹¹

⁸⁸[R.C. 3509.05\(C\)\(4\)\(a\)](#).

⁸⁹[R.C. 3509.03\(F\)](#); [R.C. 3511.02\(F\)](#).

⁹⁰[R.C. 3505.24](#).

⁹¹[R.C. 3509.03\(E\)](#); [R.C. 3511.02\(E\)](#). This prohibition does not affect UOCAVA voters' use of the USPS Official Absentee Balloting Materials postage-paid envelope if they choose to return their FPCAs through the USPS.

SUBMISSION METHODS

Only UOCAVA voters may choose among mail, email, or fax to submit absentee ballot applications.⁹²

Non-UOCAVA absentee ballot applications must be mailed or delivered to the board in person. The board cannot accept or process non-UOCAVA absentee ballot applications received by fax or email.

INCOMPLETE APPLICATIONS

If the board receives an absentee ballot application that is missing required information, it must promptly notify the voter of the missing information and ask them to submit a new, complete application with all required information.⁹³

If the board is unable to verify the voter's date of birth, driver's license or state ID number, last four digits of their Social Security number, or residence address, it must send [Form 11-R](#) to inform the voter of the issue and alert them that they must vote provisionally if the problem is not resolved.⁹⁴

How to Contact Voters

- Notify the voter by phone and email that additional information is required to provide an absentee ballot.
- Send [Form 11-R](#), when applicable.
- Use regular mail if electronic contact is not possible.⁹⁵

For UOCAVA Voters

- If an absentee ballot application from a UOCAVA voter is missing required information or the board can't open the file in which the voter transmitted the FPCA, contact the voter immediately. Use the quickest and most effective available means of communication.
- Try to contact the voter using all the contact information provided.
- Ask the voter to resubmit a complete application.

⁹²[R.C. 3503.191\(A\), \(B\)](#); [R.C. 3511.021\(A\)\(2\)](#).

⁹³[R.C. 3509.04\(A\)](#).

⁹⁴[R.C. 3503.19\(C\)\(1\)-\(2\)](#); [3503.151\(E\)](#); [3503.201\(A\)\(1\), \(B\), \(D\)\(1\)-\(2\)](#); [3505.181\(A\)\(4\)](#).

⁹⁵[R.C. 3509.03](#); [R.C. 3509.04\(A\)](#); [R.C. 3509.04\(B\)](#).

Important Rules for Absentee Ballot Applications

- Never return an original incomplete application of any type to the voter. Once an application is received at the board office, it is a public record.
- Do not complete missing information for the voter.
- The voter must personally complete any missing information unless they have a designated attorney-in-fact.⁹⁶

ABSENTEE BALLOT APPLICATIONS SENT TO THE WRONG COUNTY

If the board receives an absentee ballot application intended for another county:

- Transfer the original application to the correct county within two days of receipt.
- Transfer it on the same day if the application is received within the week prior to the absentee application deadline.
- First, electronically transmit a copy of the original application to the correct county board.
- Then, mail the original application to the correct county board.
- Include a transmittal form cover page with:
 - Name and contact information for the board.
 - Transmission date.
 - Number of applications transferred.
 - Optional: List of applicants whose forms are included.
- Keep a copy (paper or electronic) of the original application and transmittal form.

ISSUING BALLOTS

When Absentee Voting Begins

- UOCAVA voters: 46 days before each election⁹⁷

⁹⁶[R.C. 3501.382](#); [R.C. 3509.03](#); [R.C. 3511.02](#).

⁹⁷[R.C. 3511.04](#).

- All other voters: the day after the close of registration⁹⁸

The board must have ballots proofed and ready to mail before the 46th day for UOCAVA voters.

Once the board receives a complete application, provide the voter with the correct ballot for their precinct based on the voter's residence address.

Prohibition on Canceling Requests

The board cannot cancel a valid absentee ballot application once a voter submits it.

After processing a complete absentee ballot application, the board must issue the ballot unless:

- It receives notice that the voter moved to another precinct.
- The voter died.
- The voter is otherwise ineligible to cast the ballot.

Voters may:

- Decide not to cast their absentee ballot.
- Vote early in person instead.
- Request a replacement absentee ballot to be sent by mail.

If the voter goes to their polling location to vote on Election Day, they must cast a provisional ballot.⁹⁹

Identification Envelope and Pre-Printing ONLY Name and Address

Ohio law requires boards to provide an identification envelope with the absentee ballot ([Form 12-A](#) and [Form 12-C](#)).¹⁰⁰ State law permits boards to pre-print the voter's name and address (at which the voter is registered to vote) on the identification envelope unless the voter has a confidential voter registration record (Safe at Home participant).¹⁰¹ Do not complete any other required information on absentee ballot

⁹⁸[R.C. 3509.01\(B\)](#).

⁹⁹[R.C. 3509.09\(B\)](#).

¹⁰⁰[R.C. 3509.04](#); [R.C. 3511.05](#).

¹⁰¹[R.C. 111.42](#); [R.C. 3511.02\(F\)](#).

applications or identification envelopes unless the voter requests help due to disability or literacy challenges.¹⁰²

How to Pre-Print Information

- Pre-print the voter's name and the address (at which the voter is registered to vote) directly onto the voter's identification envelope, or
- Pre-print voter's name and address onto a sticker or label and affix it to the identification envelope, or
- Use another method that achieves this purpose.

Additional Information Allowed

The board may print other helpful administrative information, such as:

- Voter ID number.
- Ballot style.
- Precinct.
- Party-affiliation.
- Municipality or other jurisdictions.
- Bar codes, etc.

Do not pre-print the address of a participant in the Safe at Home program.¹⁰³

If a voter's name is written anywhere on the identification envelope by the election board (for example, in a location other than the designated blanks on [Forms 12-A](#) or [12-C](#)), it fulfills the legal requirement for the envelope to include the voter's name.

Prohibition on Paying Return Postage on an Absentee Ballot

The board cannot pre-pay return postage for any absentee ballot.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰²[R.C. 3505.24](#); [R.C. 3509.04](#); [R.C. 3511.05\(E\)](#).

¹⁰³[R.C. 3509.04](#).

¹⁰⁴[R.C. 3509.04](#); [R.C. 3511.04](#). This prohibition does not affect UOCAVA voters' use of the USPS Official Absentee Balloting Materials postage-paid envelope to return their ballots through the USPS.

Mailing Considerations and Instructions

These instructions help ensure ballots are received on time and, if otherwise valid, can be included in the Official Canvass. They are based on close collaboration between state and local election officials in Ohio and USPS.

Board officials should:

- Include [Form 12](#) with every mailed absentee ballot.
- Use letter-size courtesy reply envelopes.¹⁰⁵
- Contact and use available postal resources that support election mail coordination, mailpiece design, mailing preparation and entry activities, and coordinating mailpiece delivery and pickup.

For help with mailpiece design, contact a Mailpiece Design Analyst (MDA) by calling the MDA Support Center at 855-593-6093 (Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. ET) or send the request by email to MDA@USPS.gov.

USPS recommends that all trays and sacks with mailings of ballot materials affix Tag 191 (a bright green tag). This tag provides a high degree of visibility on ballot mail as it enters postal processing centers.

- Domestic and International Ballots: These tags are available by contacting an USPS Election Mail Coordinator (see above).
- The board must use First-Class Mail postage for delivery of outbound absentee ballots. Use USPS-approved practices such as presort First-Class Mail to maximize postage discounts.
- USPS requires balloting materials for all types of absentee ballots to clearly show the proper amount of First-Class Mail postage that must be paid. Include this information in balloting materials (for instance, on ballot instructions, mailing instructions, or the envelope) with the marking "First-Class Mail postage must be applied."

¹⁰⁵This recommendation does not contemplate the use of #10 business envelopes. In fact, USPS regulations allow a letter size envelope to be up to 6½ inches in height, 11½ inches wide, and ¼ inch thick. This maximum size is substantially larger than a #10 business envelope.

- Alternatively, print “Apply First-Class Mail postage here” in the upper-right corner of the address side of the return envelope.
- USPS will also accept approved variations of the above markings. Additionally, balloting materials must show, in a prominent location, the specific amount of First-Class Mail postage required for the return of the ballot to election officials. The marking requirements will not apply to ballot materials that are qualified under the [special exemptions](#) specified by USPS.¹⁰⁶

STEPS FOR SENDING A REPLACEMENT BALLOT BY MAIL

The board may receive requests for replacement ballots when absentee voters:

- Did not receive their ballot in the mail.
- Made a mistake completing their ballot.
- Defaced their ballot.
- Have another reason for wanting a replacement.

Replacement Rules

- The board may provide up to two replacement absentee ballots per voter.¹⁰⁷
- Send replacement absentee ballots only to the address included on the original application.
- If the voter wants the ballot mailed to a different address, they must complete an application with the new address.¹⁰⁸
- No voter may receive a replacement ballot after their absentee ballot is scanned or entered into the automatic tabulating equipment.¹⁰⁹

If a voter wants the board to mail a replacement absentee ballot, board employees must take the following steps:

1. If a voter made a mistake or their ballot was defaced, ask them to return the original ballot for tracking purposes. The voter should fold the ballot for privacy,

¹⁰⁶USPS Domestic Mail Manual, [Balloting Mail](#). See also <http://about.usps.com/election-mail/election-mail-resources.htm>.

¹⁰⁷This is consistent with the law governing replacement ballots on Election Day. See [R.C. 3505.23](#): “In no case shall more than three ballots be issued to a voter.”

¹⁰⁸[R.C. 3509.03](#).

¹⁰⁹[R.C. 35 09.051\(E\)](#).

but not seal it within the identification envelope. Assure the voter that only one ballot will be counted.

2. If a voter did not receive or lost the ballot, tell them when it was issued and that USPS delivery takes two to five days.¹¹⁰
3. Depending on when the voter makes the replacement ballot request, caution them that there may not be enough time for mail delivery and suggest other options, such as voting early in person or at their polling location on Election Day.
4. If the voter still requests the board to mail a replacement absentee ballot, board employees must promptly issue the replacement ballot and clearly document electronically when it was issued.

Important: The board may count only one ballot per voter. If the voter marks and returns more than one ballot:

- Count only the first ballot received.
- If multiple ballots arrive simultaneously, use a bipartisan process to determine which ballot was received first.
- Knowingly voting more than once in the same election is a felony.¹¹¹

POLL LIST TO IDENTIFY ELECTORS REQUESTING ABSENT VOTER'S BALLOT

The board must mark the name of each registered voter in the precinct who requested an absentee ballot for that election.¹¹² If a voter marked as having requested an absentee ballot appears at their polling location to vote on Election Day, they must cast a provisional ballot.¹¹³

ABSENTEE BALLOT STATUS LOOKUP

The board website must allow absentee voters to check the status of their ballot from the date of application to the date it was accepted for counting. Specifically, the website must include:

¹¹⁰[State and Local Election Mail — User's Guide.](#)

¹¹¹[R.C. 3599.12\(A\)\(2\).](#)

¹¹²This does not apply to Safe at Home address confidentiality program participants per [R.C. 111.44.](#)

¹¹³[R.C. 3509.09.](#)

- ☐ The date the voter's absentee application was approved.
- ☐ The date the voter's approved absentee application was processed (that is, the date the board mailed or issued the ballot).
- ☐ The date the voter's voted absentee ballot was received by the board.
- ☐ The date the voter's voted absentee ballot was accepted for counting (or, if not accepted, the reason why and deadline to correct it).

This search functionality must be available from at least the 46th¹¹⁴ day before the elections through the 35th day after the election.

Section 7.06 Eligibility of Former Ohio Residents to Vote by Absentee Ballot in Ohio in a Presidential Election

Former Ohio residents may vote for President and Vice President only if they:

- Are qualified to vote in Ohio, with the exception of residence and registration:
 - Must be a U.S. citizen.
 - At least 18 years old by presidential Election Day
 - Resided in Ohio for at least 30 consecutive days before moving
 - Otherwise eligible to vote before moving.
 - Moved to another state from Ohio residence no more than 90 days before presidential Election Day.
- Have not registered to vote in the new state.
- Are not eligible to vote for President and Vice President, or for presidential and vice-presidential electors, in a new state.
- Complete a Certificate of Intent to vote in a presidential election.

A former Ohio resident who meets these requirements may vote in Ohio for President and Vice President, but not for any other offices or issues.¹¹⁵

The voter may:

¹¹⁴ [R.C. 3511.04.](#)

¹¹⁵ [R.C. 3504.01.](#)

- Vote absentee ballot by mail,
- Vote absentee ballot in person at the board office or other designated location during the early in-person voting period, or
- Vote in person on Election Day at their former Ohio precinct polling location.

CERTIFICATE OF INTENT TO VOTE IN A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Filing Requirement

An eligible former resident must:

- Complete two copies of the Certificate of Intent to Vote in a Presidential Election ([Form 107-A](#)).¹¹⁶
- File them in person or by mail with the board where voter was last a resident.¹¹⁷
- Deadline: File the certificates by 4:00 p.m. of the 30th day before the presidential election.¹¹⁸

Notice to Secretary of State

The board must send one copy of the Certificate of Intent to Vote in a Presidential Election to the Ohio Secretary of State's Elections Division no later than the 25th day before the day of the presidential election.¹¹⁹

ABSENTEE BALLOT FOR FORMER OHIO RESIDENT

Former Ohio residents may request and receive absentee ballots by mail or in person if they:

- Timely file the Certificates of Intent.
- Submit an absentee ballot application by the close of business the seventh day before the election.
- Request the ballot be mailed to the voter's new residence.

¹¹⁶[R.C. 3504.02.](#)

¹¹⁷If the voter has a confidential voter registration record (in other words, if the voter is a participant in the Safe at Home program), the applicant may include the applicant's program participation identification number instead of the applicant's address or precinct in the Certificate of Intent. [R.C. 3504.02.](#)

¹¹⁸[R.C. 3504.02.](#)

¹¹⁹[R.C. 3504.05.](#)

- Use former Ohio voting address on the application.
- Meet all other ID requirements for both the application and identification envelope.

Section 7.07 Processing and Counting Absentee Ballots

The board may begin processing absentee ballots the day after voter registration closes.¹²⁰ Processing includes scanning, but not tabulating. See [Chapter 10, Section 10.02](#), for details on processing absentee ballots.

COUNTING ABSENTEE BALLOTS¹²¹

Follow the step-by-step process in [Chapter 10, Section 10.02](#), for counting absentee ballots.

Key Reminders

When reviewing voter information on absentee ballot ID envelopes, follow these rules (along with [Chapter 10, Canvassing the Vote](#) instructions):

- Date of Birth

Small mistakes in dates of birth are not valid reasons to reject ballots.

 - Examples of small mistakes include switching month and year, writing today's date, or flipping numbers.
 - Check board records first to see if a board error caused the problem before rejecting the ballot.
- Address
 - Small mistakes in the address are not valid reasons to reject ballots.
 - The postal address (such as Columbus) may differ from political subdivision (city, village, or township) where the voter lives (such as Bexley). The political subdivision, ZIP Code, and/or city (from USPS) are generally not relevant here.

¹²⁰[R.C. 3509.06; 3509.01\(B\)\(2\)](#).

¹²¹[Instructions for administering absentee voting are found in Chapter 7.](#)

- The address is valid without a municipality or zip code when the street number and name are in your county (except when the same address exists in two or more different precincts within the same county).

Examples for ballots cast by voters in Franklin County:

Street No. & Name	City/ZIP	Political Subdiv.	In County?	Valid?
2598 Ruhl Ave.	Columbus, 43209	Bexley	Yes	Yes
2598 Ruhl Ave.	Bexley, 43209	Bexley	Yes	Yes
63 Pinebrooke	Westerville, 43082	Westerville	No	No

Important: Only use the board's voter registration system (CVRS) or the statewide voter registration database (SWVRD) to check addresses on absentee ballot ID envelopes. Do not use property records of a County Auditor or Treasurer or County Engineer maps.

- Identification
 - Voters don't need to use the same ID type on an absentee ballot ID envelope they used when registering.
 - **Important:** Only use CVRS or SWVRD to verify ID. Do not use the BMV website.
 - Follow the [Voter Identification Requirement Chart](#) at the end of **Chapter 10** for all ID verification.
- Empty Data Fields
 - If a data field in the CVRS or SWVRD is "null" (no data is present, or the field has placeholder values, such as "1/1/1800" for birth date), the voter meets requirements when they give this information on the identification envelope.
 - Board employees may enter this info into the CVRS.

Include all absentee ballots returned by the close of polls on Election Day in the unofficial results.¹²²

Count valid non-UOCAVA ballots received by the close of polls on Election Day and valid UOCAVA ballots received through the fourth day after the election in the Official Canvass. This includes ballots with insufficient ID envelopes that were cured by the fourth day.¹²³

See [Chapter 10, Canvassing the Vote](#), for more details on processing and counting absentee ballots.

¹²²[R.C. 3509.06; 3505.30.](#)

¹²³[R.C. 3509.05.](#)

Chapter 7 Checklist: Absentee Voting

Pre-Election Setup

- ☐ Order sufficient quantities of all required forms.
- ☐ Post [Form 11-A](#) on the board website.
- ☐ Make forms available at public locations (libraries, etc.).
- ☐ Set up absentee ballot status lookup on website (available 46 days before through 35 days after election).
- ☐ Post early voting hours and location information.
- ☐ Display drop box signage.
- ☐ Program voting equipment with security features and passwords.
- ☐ Install tamper-evident seals on voting equipment and ballot boxes.
- ☐ Set up video surveillance for drop boxes.
- ☐ Arrange for daily bipartisan collection of drop box contents.

Application Processing

- ☐ Check application completeness (name, signature, address, date of birth, ID, election, eligibility statement, party if primary, mailing address).
- ☐ Verify all required information is present.
- ☐ Verify ID and signature match.
- ☐ Pre-print voter name and address on ID envelopes.
- ☐ Process applications within required timeframes.
- ☐ Incomplete Applications:
 - Contact voter promptly (phone/email preferred, mail if necessary).
 - Provide [Form 11-R](#), if applicable.
 - For UOCAVA voters: Use the quickest communication method available.
 - Never return original, incomplete applications to voters.

- Never complete missing information for voters (except with disability assistance requests).

❑ Wrong County Applications:

- Transfer to correct county within two days (same day if received during second-to-last week of early voting).
- Send electronic copy first, then mail original.
- Include transmittal form with contact info, date, and number of applications.
- Keep copy of transferred applications.

Ballot Issuance

- ❑ Begin mailing UOCAVA ballots 46 days before election (mandatory deadline).
- ❑ Begin mailing other absentee ballots day after voter registration closes.
- ❑ Continue issuing until seven days before election (close of business).
- ❑ Use First-Class Mail postage only.
- ❑ Include [Form 12](#) with all mailed ballots. Use letter-size envelopes when possible (USPS recommendation).
- ❑ Mark postage requirement clearly on materials.
- ❑ Apply Tag 191 to trays and sacks of ballot materials, per USPS.
- ❑ Ballot Contents:
 - Correct ballot for voter's precinct
 - Pre-printed ID envelope with voter name/address
 - Return envelope ([Form 12-F](#))
 - Instructions ([Form 12](#))
 - Additional forms as needed (UOCAVA: Forms [12-K](#), [12-J](#))

Early In-Person Voting

Daily Setup

- ❑ Inspect voting equipment and ballot boxes before opening.

- ❑ Verify tamper-evident seals are intact.
- ❑ Ensure bipartisan team present for opening/closing procedures.
- ❑ Secure all materials at end of each day.
- ❑ Power down machines without tabulating votes.

Voter Processing

- ❑ Verify voter eligibility in pollbook.
- ❑ Check valid photo ID (same as Election Day requirements).
- ❑ Provide signature book for voter to sign.
- ❑ Issue correct ballot style for voter's precinct.
- ❑ Allow voter to vote immediately or take ballot home.

Replacement Ballots

- ❑ Limit to two replacement ballots per voter maximum.
- ❑ Mail only to address on original application.
- ❑ Document when replacement ballots issued.
- ❑ Ask for return of spoiled ballot when possible.
- ❑ Count only first ballot received if multiple returned.

Special Circumstances

UOCAVA Voters

- ❑ Accept applications by mail, email, or fax.
- ❑ Issue ballots 46 days before election (mandatory).
- ❑ Send complete ballot (all federal, state, local contests).
- ❑ Provide email/fax transmission as requested.
- ❑ Update Centralized Ballot Tracking System (CBTS).
- ❑ Prepare election notices (initial and updated).
- ❑ No postmark required for counting.

Disability/Confinement Voters

- ❑ Use [Form 11-F](#) for applications.
- ❑ Offer ballot delivery by two bipartisan employees.
- ❑ Use [Form 12-C](#) (ID envelope).
- ❑ Both employees must sign ID envelope.
- ❑ Allow family member delivery as alternative. Be sure that the family member completes [Form 12-P](#).

Hospitalized Voter or Child

- ❑ Use [Form 11-B](#) for applications.
- ❑ Accept applications after normal deadline (until 3 p.m. Election Day).
- ❑ Deliver within county via bipartisan team or family member.
- ❑ Mail if hospital outside county.
- ❑ Verify hospital name, admission date, and eligible offices.

Safe at Home Participants

- ❑ Never pre-print address on materials.
- ❑ Accept program participant ID number.
- ❑ Maintain confidentiality of voter registration.
- ❑ Limit to absentee voting only.

Ballot Return Processing

Receipt Verification

- ❑ Check timely submission
 - ❑ Regular absentee ballots must be received by the close of polls on Election Day.
 - ❑ UOCAVA ballots must be received by the fourth day after the election, unless the return envelope was signed after the close of polls on Election Day.

ID Envelope Review

- ❑ Verify minimum required information (name, signature, proper ID).

- ❑ Check signature against registration record.
- ❑ Confirm name matches pre-printed information.
- ❑ Review identification number/copy.
- ❑ Use voluntary information only if needed for eligibility determination.

Incomplete Envelopes

- ❑ Issue [Form 11-S](#) to supplement information within required timeframes:
 - Two business days (start of voting through third Saturday before)
 - One calendar day (third Monday through last Friday before)
 - Same day (Saturday before through three days after election)
- ❑ Include courtesy reply envelope with [Form 11-S](#).
- ❑ Contact voter by phone/email when possible.
- ❑ Send to both registration and ballot mailing addresses if different.
- ❑ For ID mismatches: Review voter registration records for errors before fourth day.

Ballot Opening and Counting

- ❑ Open only eligible ballot envelopes.
- ❑ Verify correct ballot and stub attachment.
- ❑ Reject if multiple ballots or wrong ballot enclosed.
- ❑ Reject if Stub A is detached.
- ❑ Mark rejected envelopes "Not Counted" with reason.
- ❑ Include eligible ballots in appropriate canvass (unofficial or official).

Drop Box Management

- ❑ Install ONE drop box maximum per board on office property.
- ❑ Post weather-resistant protocol sign.
- ❑ Monitor with video surveillance 24/7.
- ❑ Collect contents daily with bipartisan team.

- ❑ Final collection at the close of polls on Election Day.
- ❑ Open only for voter deposit (others use mail/in-person delivery).
- ❑ Maintain video recordings per public records requirements.

Daily Reporting Requirements

- ❑ Submit daily files to Secretary of State (45 days before through 5 days after election).
- ❑ Include all voters who requested/returned absentee ballots.
- ❑ Include early in-person voting information.
- ❑ Update ballot tracking systems.

Record Keeping

- ❑ Mark pollbooks for all absentee ballot requesters.
- ❑ Maintain copies of transferred applications.
- ❑ Document all replacement ballot issuances.
- ❑ Retain rejected ballots per retention schedule.
- ❑ Update voter registration system for spoiled ballots.
- ❑ Complete CBTS records before Official Canvass.

Presidential Election Special Procedures for Former Ohio Voters

- ❑ Process Certificates of Intent ([Form 107-A](#)) for former Ohio residents.
- ❑ File deadline: 30 days before presidential election.
- ❑ Send copy to Secretary of State by 25th day before election.
- ❑ Issue presidential-only ballots to eligible former residents.
- ❑ Mark pollbooks "Former Resident's Presidential Ballot."
- ❑ Remake ballots to count only President/Vice President contest.

Reminders

- ❑ All absentee voters (except in-person with ID) must seal ballot in ID envelope.

- ❑ Count only first ballot received if voter returns multiple ballots.
- ❑ Provisional ballot required if absentee voter appears at polling location on Election Day.
- ❑ Never accept ballot returns by fax or email.
- ❑ Pre-paid postage prohibited for ballot applications and returns.
- ❑ Applications valid for single election only (except UOCAVA FPCA).



CHAPTER 8: PROVISIONAL VOTING¹

Section 8.01 Provisional Voting, Introduction

Provisional voting gives voters a chance to vote when there are questions about their identity or whether they are eligible to vote. The board must give provisional ballots to voters for specific reasons, such as missing IDs, wrong precincts, or outdated registrations. After the election, board employees check each provisional ballot using a seven-step process to make sure it meets all legal requirements.

Section 8.02 The Basics of Provisional Voting: What, Who, When, Where, and How

WHAT IS A PROVISIONAL BALLOT?

Provisional voting is a safety net. It lets a voter cast a ballot when their identity or eligibility is in question. The ballot is counted after board employees verify the voter's eligibility. Provisional voting ensures every eligible voter has the opportunity to vote.

The Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002 requires every state to offer provisional voting in federal elections,² but Ohio had provisional voting even before that.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO CAST A PROVISIONAL BALLOT?

Voters must cast a provisional ballot when:

1. Their name isn't in the pollbook or on the supplemental voter list.³

Note: Before precinct election officials (PEOs) issue a provisional ballot for this reason, they must check that the voter is in the correct precinct. If they're not, PEOs must direct the voter to the correct one.

¹[Directive 2026-35](#).

²See generally [52 U.S.C. § 21082](#).

³[R.C. 3505.181\(A\)\(1\)](#).

2. The voter does not provide proper ID, including when they have a religious objection to being photographed.⁴
3. The voter changed their name and moved to a different precinct without updating their address by the voter registration deadline (30 days before the election).⁵
4. The voter moved to a different precinct without updating their address by the voter registration deadline (30 days before the election).⁶
5. The voter changed their name and doesn't have proof of the legal name change.⁷

Note: A voter who changed their name **but remains in the same precinct** may cast a regular ballot if, before or on Election Day, they show election officials proof of their legal name change, including both their former and current names on any of the following documents, and completes [Form 10-L](#):

- court order
 - marriage license or
 - other official document that shows both former and current names.⁸
6. The voter's signature doesn't match the signature on file with the board.⁹
 7. The voter was challenged by a precinct election official for not residing in Ohio for 30 days immediately before the election, not residing in the precinct where the voter appeared to vote, or being less than 18 years old.¹⁰
 8. The voter was challenged by a precinct election official for presenting a noncitizen photo ID on Election Day, and the voter was unable to provide proof of citizenship.¹¹

⁴[R.C. 3505.181\(A\)\(2\)](#), [\(B\)\(7\)\(a\)-\(b\)](#). See also [R.C. 3505.18\(A\)\(2\)](#).

⁵[R.C. 3503.16\(B\)\(2\)](#); [R.C. 3503.19\(A\)](#); [R.C. 3505.181\(A\)\(6\)](#).

⁶[R.C. 3503.16\(B\)\(2\)](#); [R.C. 3503.19\(A\)](#); [R.C. 3505.181\(A\)\(6\)](#).

⁷[R.C. 3505.181\(A\)\(6\)](#).

⁸[R.C. 3503.16\(B\)\(1\)\(b\)](#).

⁹[R.C. 3505.181\(A\)\(7\)](#).

¹⁰[R.C. 3505.181\(A\)\(5\)](#); [R.C. 3505.20\(B\)-\(D\)](#); [R.C. 3513.20](#).

¹¹[R.C. 3505.18\(A\)\(3\)](#); [R.C. 3505.181\(A\)\(5\)](#); [R.C. 3505.20\(A\)](#); [R.C. 3513.20](#).

9. The notice of registration or acknowledgment notice was returned to the board as undeliverable.¹²
10. The voter received a confirmation notice due to a database mismatch in the voter's registration information, and the voter failed to provide the requested information more than 14 days before the election.¹³
11. The voter is marked in the pollbook as having requested an absentee ballot and shows up at a polling location on Election Day.¹⁴
12. The voter already cast a ballot in that election.

For reasons 9 and 10, the voter should be flagged in the pollbook as needing to cast a provisional ballot.

WHEN AND WHERE CAN A PROVISIONAL BALLOT BE CAST?

When and where electors may cast a provisional ballot depends on why they need one.

Certain voters can cast a provisional ballot at the board office or early voting site during the established early voting period, or at their polling place on Election Day, including:

- Voters who moved from one precinct to another within a county and didn't update their address by the voter registration deadline.¹⁵
- Voters who moved from one precinct to another and changed their name but didn't update their voter registration by the deadline.¹⁶

Note: A voter who changed their name **but remains in the same precinct** may cast a regular ballot if, before or on Election Day, they show election officials proof of their legal name change, including both their former and current names on any of the following documents, and completes [Form 10-L](#):

- court order
- marriage license or
- other official document that shows both former and current names¹⁷

¹²[R.C. 3503.19\(C\)](#); [R.C. 3503.201\(A\)\(1\)\(a\)](#); [R.C. 3505.181\(A\)\(4\)](#).

¹³[R.C. 3503.151\(E\)](#); [R.C. 3503.201\(A\)\(1\)\(b\)](#), (D)(1).

¹⁴[R.C. 3505.181\(A\)\(3\)](#).

¹⁵[R.C. 3503.16\(B\)\(2\)](#).

¹⁶[R.C. 3503.16\(B\)\(2\)](#).

¹⁷[R.C. 3503.16\(B\)\(1\)\(b\)](#).

- Voters who have moved outside of their county (but still in Ohio) and didn't update their address by the deadline.¹⁸

Provisional voting ends at 5:00 p.m. on the Sunday before an election. It may resume on Election Day at the board of election or their correct polling location. On Election Day, registered voters can vote at their assigned polling place for their precinct, the board office, or, if the board has established another voting location in the county in lieu of its office, voters can use that location.

PROVISIONAL VOTING FOR VOTERS WITH ILLNESS, DISABILITY, OR INFIRMITY

Voters who moved to another precinct and did not update their address, or who changed their name without updating their registration, and who can't come to the board office due to illness, disability, or infirmity, can request and cast a provisional ballot like an absentee voter. They can do this from the 27th day before an election through the close of business on the seventh day before that election.¹⁹ [Form 11-I](#) is the ballot application used for this purpose.

For details on this type of voter, see [Chapter 7, Absentee Voting](#) in this manual and the information below.

On Election Day, if a voter must cast a provisional ballot for any reason other than those listed in this subsection, they must do it at their precinct.²⁰

DELIVERING A PROVISIONAL BALLOT TO VOTERS WITH ILLNESS, DISABILITY, OR INFIRMITY

The board may either mail a provisional ballot or have two board staff members — one democrat, one republican — deliver a provisional ballot to a person who meets all of these conditions:

- Voter needs to vote provisionally because they changed their name or address, or their voter registration information was the subject of a BMV/SSA mismatch, and they didn't update their info before the deadline.²¹

¹⁸[R.C. 3503.16\(C\)](#); [R.C. 3505.181\(A\)\(6\)](#).

¹⁹[R.C. 3503.16\(G\)](#); [R.C. 3509.02\(B\)](#).

²⁰See [R.C. 3503.16\(B\)\(1\)\(a\)-\(b\)](#).

²¹[R.C. 3503.16\(B\)\(2\), \(C\), \(G\)](#); [R.C. 3503.201\(A\)](#).

- Voter tells board employees they have a personal illness, physical disability, or infirmity.²²
- Voter tells board employees they cannot vote in person during early in-person voting or on Election Day.²³
- Completes [Form 11-I](#) and asks for ballot delivery by mail or by two board staff members.²⁴

The individual must submit the request to the board by the close of business seven days before the election.²⁵ The board must provide [Form 11-I](#) to each person who submits a request.

If the person completes [Form 11-I](#), submits it to the board, and meets all these conditions, either mail a provisional ballot or send the two staff members to deliver a provisional ballot to the voter, based on their choice.

Once the provisional ballot is issued, the voter may complete and return the Provisional Ballot Affirmation, [Form 12-B](#), either:

- By mail, as long as it is received by the board of elections no later than the time polls close on Election Day, or
- In person, delivered by two bipartisan board staff members.

PROCESS TO CAST A PROVISIONAL BALLOT

What Each Precinct Needs

The board must give each precinct enough of these items for provisional voters:

- [Form 12-B](#) Provisional Ballot Affirmation (most recent version)
- [Form 12-H](#) Provisional Ballot Notice (most recent version)
- [Form 12-D](#) Provisional Voter Precinct Verification Form (to be used only when a voter insists on voting in the wrong precinct after being told the correct precinct in the polling location)²⁶

²²[R.C. 3503.16\(G\)\(2\).](#)

²³[R.C. 3503.16\(G\)\(2\).](#)

²⁴[R.C. 3503.16\(G\)\(1\); R.C. 3509.08\(A\).](#)

²⁵[R.C. 3503.16\(G\)\(1\).](#)

²⁶[R.C. 3505.181\(C\)\(2\).](#)

- [Form 10-L](#) Notice of Change of Name
- [Form 12-O](#) For Religious Objections
- [Form 10-U](#) For Affidavit – Oath – Examination of Person Challenged
- An optical scan ballot for each ballot style within the polling place

What Each Provisional Voter Needs

After finding that a voter must cast a provisional ballot, give them these three items:

- ☐ [Form 12-B](#) Provisional Ballot Affirmation (most recent version)
- ☐ [Form 12-H](#) Provisional Ballot Notice (required by state and federal law)²⁷

Note: This form provides information on provisional voting and deadlines and gives a toll-free number the voter may call to learn the status of their ballot.

- ☐ The correct optical scan ballot.

What Each Provisional Voter Must Do

The voter must complete and sign the Provisional Ballot Affirmation ([Form 12-B](#)).²⁸

The voter must provide five items for the ballot to be eligible to be counted:

- printed name
- valid signature
- date of birth
- current address²⁹
- an acceptable form of ID (or a completed affidavit of religious objection)³⁰

A provisional voter must print and sign their name on the Provisional Ballot Affirmation; without these, the ballots can't be counted.³¹ Ohio law does not allow a voter to come to the board office after the election to print and/or sign their name.

²⁷[R.C. 3505.181\(B\)\(5\)\(a\); 52 U.S.C. § 21082\(a\)\(5\)\(A\).](#)

²⁸[R.C. 3505.182.](#)

²⁹[R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(1\)\(a\).](#)

³⁰[R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(3\)\(d\).](#)

³¹[R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(1\)\(a\).](#)

A provisional voter must provide their date of birth and current address on the Provisional Ballot Affirmation ([Form 12-B](#)).³² Ohio law does not allow a voter to come to the board office after the election to provide their date of birth or current address on the form.

The month and day of the voter's birth date on the Provisional Ballot Affirmation must match what's in the board's voter registration database, unless:

- The birth date in the database is 1/1/1800.
- The board, by a vote of at least three members, decides that the voter has met all other requirements listed in [R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(3\)](#).³³

Note: The requirements of [division \(B\)\(3\) of R.C. 3505.183](#) are:

- The provisional voter is registered to vote.³⁴
- The provisional voter is eligible to cast a ballot in this precinct and election.³⁵
- The provisional voter provided all required information on their written affirmation ([Form 12-B](#)) (printed name, signature, birth date, current address, and provided ID on Election Day or within four days after).³⁶

If the provisional voter gave an Ohio driver license or state ID card, that number must match what's in the Statewide Voter Registration Database.³⁷

- The provisional voter provided their current address.³⁸
- If the provisional voter was challenged by a precinct election official for not residing in Ohio for 30 days immediately before the election, not residing in the precinct where the voter appeared to vote, or being less than 18 years old, they provided information to fix the challenge within four days after the election.³⁹

³²[R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(1\)\(a\)](#).

³³[R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(3\)\(e\)](#).

³⁴[R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(3\)\(a\)](#).

³⁵[R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(3\)\(b\)](#).

³⁶[R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(1\), \(3\)\(c\), \(d\)\(1\)](#).

³⁷[R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(3\)\(d\)\(i\)](#).

³⁸[R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(3\)\(f\)](#).

³⁹[R.C. 3505.181\(B\)\(8\)](#); [R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(3\)\(g\)](#); [R.C. 3505.20\(B\)-\(D\)](#).

- If the provisional voter presented a noncitizen photo ID and did not provide proof of citizenship when appearing to vote, they provided proof of citizenship on a provisional ballot affirmation or within four days after the election.⁴⁰
- If the provisional voter's registration information was the subject of a database mismatch and the voter did not provide the requested information more than 14 days before the election, they provided the requested information on a provisional ballot affirmation or within four days after the election.⁴¹ A provisional voter must provide an acceptable form of photo ID either on Election Day or within four days after.⁴² Acceptable photo ID to cast a provisional ballot includes:
 - Ohio driver license, state ID card, or interim ID form issued by the registrar of motor vehicles or a deputy registrar.⁴³

Note: If these identification types are used, the voter must also write their full driver license or state ID card number on [Form 12-B](#), Section 5, in addition to showing photo ID.⁴⁴

- An unexpired Ohio driver license or state ID card or interim documentation with an old address **IS an ACCEPTABLE** form of ID when the provisional voter's current address is in the pollbook.
- A U.S. passport or passport card;⁴⁵ or
- A U.S. military ID card, Ohio National Guard ID card, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs ID card, or military dependent ID card.⁴⁶ As a general rule, voters must present their photo ID in physical form. However, since September 2022, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has issued only digital Veteran ID cards (VIC), which election officials must accept.

⁴⁰[R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(3\)\(i\)](#); [R.C. 3503.20\(A\)](#); [R.C. 3505.18\(A\)\(3\)](#).

⁴¹[R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(3\)\(h\)](#); [R.C. 3503.201\(D\)\(2\)](#).

⁴²[R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(3\)\(d\)\(i\)](#).

⁴³[R.C. 3501.01\(AA\)\(1\)\(a\)](#).

⁴⁴[R.C. 3505.181\(B\)\(6\)](#).

⁴⁵[R.C. 3501.01\(AA\)\(1\)\(b\)](#).

⁴⁶[R.C. 3501.01\(AA\)\(1\)\(c\)](#).

For more on acceptable identification for voting purposes, see the chart at the end of [Chapter 10, Canvassing the Vote](#). For additional info on Election Day challenges, including challenges of noncitizens, see [Chapter 9, Section 9.10](#).

Section 8.03 Provisional Ballots Cast in the Wrong Precinct

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CORRECT PRECINCT

When people register to vote in Ohio, they are assigned to a precinct based on their address and are eligible to vote in all elections held in that precinct.⁴⁷ Voters must be residents of the precinct where they vote.⁴⁸ Because Ohio law requires voters to reside in the precinct where they vote, a provisional ballot cast in the wrong precinct cannot be counted unless it falls under the exception below.

PROVISIONAL BALLOT CAST IN WRONG PRECINCT OF MULTI-PRECINCT POLLING LOCATION

Under Ohio law, a provisional ballot cast in the wrong precinct of a multi-precinct polling location may be eligible to be counted if the PEO didn't tell the voter they were in the wrong precinct.⁴⁹ A PEO must notify and direct a voter to the correct precinct.⁵⁰

If a voter refuses to cast a ballot in the correct precinct, they must be permitted to cast a provisional ballot and told that a ballot cast in the wrong precinct cannot be counted.⁵¹ To document that the voter was directed to the correct precinct but chose to cast a provisional ballot in the wrong one, a PEO must complete [Form 12-D](#) and attach it to the provisional voter's provisional ballot envelope [Form 12-B](#).⁵²

If a PEO doesn't complete and attach [Form 12-D](#) to the provisional ballot envelope [Form 12-B](#), the board must remake and count the provisional ballot for any contest the voter would be eligible to vote on if they were in the correct precinct.

⁴⁷[R.C. 3503.01\(A\)](#).

⁴⁸[R.C. 3503.01\(A\)](#).

⁴⁹[R.C. 3505.181\(C\)\(1\)](#).

⁵⁰[R.C. 3505.181\(C\)\(1\)](#).

⁵¹[R.C. 3505.181\(C\)\(1\), \(2\)](#).

⁵²[R.C. 3505.181\(C\)\(2\)](#).

Section 8.04 Processing Provisional Ballots

EXAMINING PROVISIONAL AFFIRMATIONS BEFORE THE OFFICIAL CANVASS

Board staff, working in bipartisan teams, may start checking the Provisional Ballot Affirmation ([Form 12-B](#)) and additional information before the Official Canvass if the board has adopted a provisional ballot policy that allows staff to do so. For ballots where the voter must provide photo ID, fill out a religious objection form ([Form 12-O](#)), or provide other additional information, staff may not begin examining the provisional ballot affirmations until the voter provides the information or until the fifth⁵³ day after the election, whichever is earlier.⁵⁴ The bipartisan teams may sort provisional ballots into groups of like ballots (such as 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.

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION DURING THE FOUR-DAY PERIOD

A provisional voter who didn't provide ID on Election Day, or a provisional voter who was successfully challenged under [R.C. 3505.20](#), may come to the board office to cure their ballot during the four days after the election.⁵⁵

Each board holding an election must be open to the public for four calendar days immediately following Election Day to allow voters to correct deficiencies on their provisional ballots. The specific days and times that boards must be open are:

- Wednesday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
- Thursday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
- Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
- Saturday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

⁵³ See 134th General Assembly, HB 458 as enrolled for the correct version of [R.C. 3505.183\(G\)\(2\)](#).

⁵⁴ [R.C. 3505.183\(G\)\(2\)](#).

⁵⁵ [R.C. 3505.181\(A\)\(2\), \(5\), \(B\)\(7\)\(b\), \(8\)](#).

If the board has no voters with outstanding problems on their absentee or provisional ballots after Election Day (there is nothing possible to cure) or if all deficiencies have been cured, it may return to normal operating hours for the rest of the cure period.

BOARD MEMBERS VOTE ON ELIGIBILITY

Remember that only board members can decide if each provisional ballot is valid. The board must, by a majority vote, determine whether to accept or reject each provisional ballot at a public meeting that is announced properly ahead of time.⁵⁶

OPENED AND COUNTED IN OFFICIAL CANVASS

No provisional ballot envelope may be opened, and no provisional ballot may be counted, in a particular county until the board has voted on the eligibility of all provisional ballots cast in the election in that county.⁵⁷

The opening of provisional ballot envelopes and the counting of provisional ballots cannot start until the Official Canvass begins, which may begin no earlier than the fifth day after the election.⁵⁸

The board must finish counting provisional ballots and complete the Official Canvass by the 21st day after the election.⁵⁹

Section 8.05 Mandatory Step-by-Step Process for Determining Eligibility

The board must follow the steps in the chart below to determine if a provisional ballot can be counted.

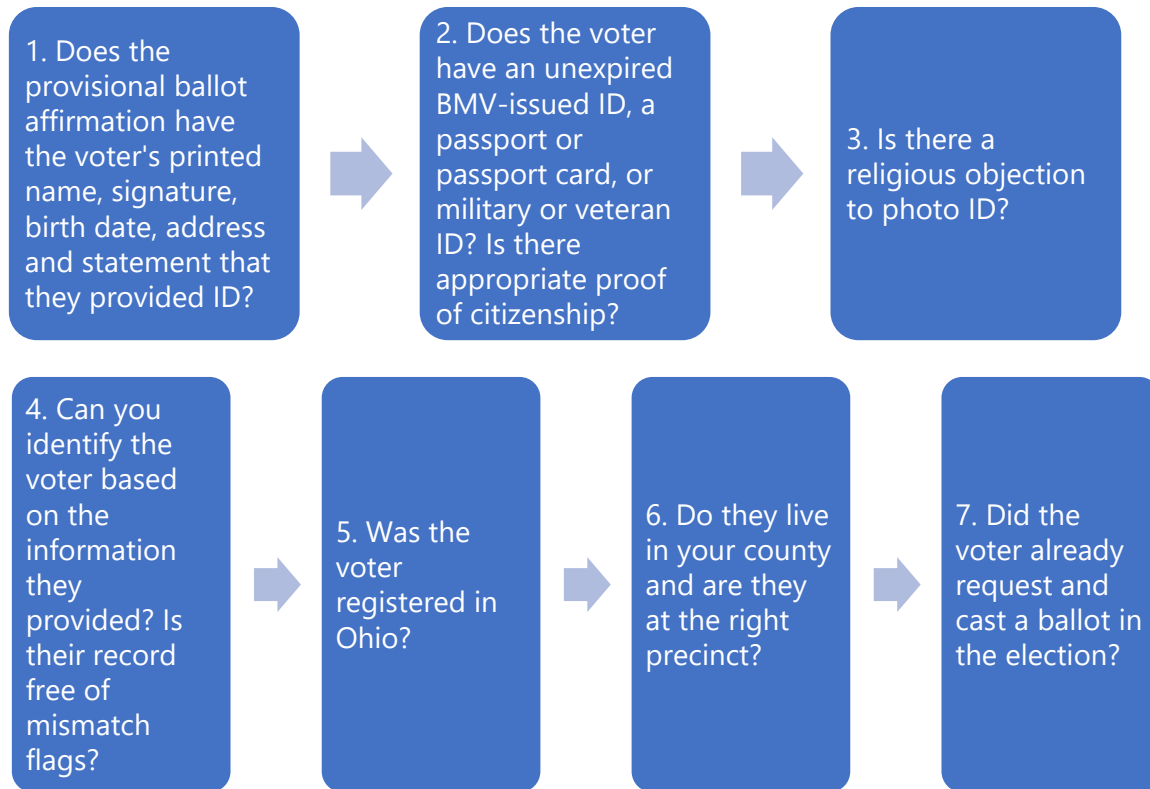
⁵⁶[R.C. 121.22\(B\)\(1\)\(a\), \(C\), \(F\)](#); [R.C. 3501.11](#); [R.C. 3505.32\(A\), \(C\)](#); [R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(3\)](#).

⁵⁷[R.C. 3505.183\(F\)](#).

⁵⁸[R.C. 3505.32\(A\), \(C\)](#).

⁵⁹[R.C. 3505.32\(A\)](#).

DETERMINING PROVISIONAL BALLOT ELIGIBILITY



Step 1: Check whether the Provisional Ballot Affirmation on the provisional ballot envelope has all five of these items

Go to Step 2 if the following five items appear on the Provisional Ballot Affirmation:

- voter's printed name
- voter's valid signature
- voter's birth date⁶⁰
- voter's current address⁶⁰
- voter's statement that they provided proper photo ID to the election official⁶¹

***Reject the Provisional Ballot Affirmation** if it doesn't include all five items, unless one of the two following exceptions applies.⁶²

⁶⁰[R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(1\)\(a\).](#)

⁶¹[R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(3\)\(d\).](#)

⁶²[R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(4\)\(a\)\(iii\).](#)

Exception 1: If the affirmation has the voter's date of birth but the month and day are different from what's in the Statewide Voter Registration Database, the board must reject the provisional ballot unless:

- The voter's date of birth in the database is 1/1/1800.⁶³
- The board votes (at least three members) that the voter has met all other requirements of [R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(3\)](#).⁶⁴

If the ballot fits this exception, proceed to Step 2.

Exception 2: If the voter didn't provide photo ID as marked in Section 5 of the Provisional Ballot Affirmation ([Form 12-B](#)) but completed an affidavit of religious objection ([Form 12-O](#)),⁶⁵ proceed to Step 3.

Step 2: Determine whether the provisional voter has provided an acceptable unexpired photo ID

Proceed to Step 4 if the voter stated on the form that they showed the PEO one of the following acceptable forms of photo ID and filled out Section 5 of [Form 12-B](#):

- Ohio driver license, Ohio state ID card, or interim ID form issued by the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV)

Note: For the above, the voter must write their full driver license or state ID card number on [Form 12-B](#), Section 5, and show photo ID to an election official. This number must also be identical to the number listed in the Statewide Voter Registration Database.

- Passport or passport card
- U.S. military ID card; Ohio National Guard ID card; U.S. military dependent ID card; or U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs ID card⁶⁶

Proceed to Step 4 if the voter provided a driver license or state ID card number that is an identical match to the number in the Statewide Voter Registration Database. **Reject the provisional ballot** if the voter provided an Ohio driver license or state ID card

⁶³[R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(3\)\(e\)\(i\)](#).

⁶⁴[R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(3\)\(e\)\(ii\)](#).

⁶⁵[R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(3\)\(d\)\(ii\)](#); [R.C. 3505.19\(A\)](#).

⁶⁶[R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(3\)\(d\)\(i\)](#); [R.C. 3501.01\(AA\)\(1\)](#).

number with letters and numbers different from what's in the Statewide Voter Registration Database.⁶⁷

Reject the provisional ballot if the voter didn't provide photo ID per [Form 12-B](#), Section 5,⁶⁸ but completed the Registration Update. Use the information to update their registration, even though the provisional ballot is rejected.

Provisional Voting Due to Noncitizen Photo ID: A precinct election official must challenge the voter's registration if they provide a noncitizen photo ID when voting on Election Day.⁶⁹ The voter must cast a provisional ballot if they don't produce acceptable proof of citizenship (other than their driver license or state ID card number) and declare under oath that they are a citizen.⁷⁰

Reject the provisional ballot if the voter did not provide acceptable proof of citizenship on the [Form 12-B](#) provisional ballot affirmation or within four days after Election Day.⁷¹

Exception for Disabled/Confined Provisional Voters: Proceed to Step 4 if a disabled or confined voter with an unreported change of address or name casts a provisional ballot under [R.C. 3503.16\(G\)](#). Under Ohio law, these voters must follow the same ID rules as a voter who casts an absentee ballot by mail.⁷² Therefore, if they provide an ID under Section 5 of [Form 11-I](#), the ballot may be eligible for counting.

Proceed to Step 4 if the voter didn't provide valid photo ID per Section 5 of [Form 11-I](#), but came to the board office within four days after the election and provided valid photo ID.⁷³

Reject the provisional ballot if the voter didn't provide photo ID per Section 5 of [Form 11-I](#), and didn't return to the board within the four days after the election to fix the missing item.⁷⁴

⁶⁷[R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(4\)\(a\)\(viii\)](#).

⁶⁸[R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(4\)\(a\)\(vi\)](#).

⁶⁹[R.C. 3505.18\(A\)\(3\)](#); [R.C. 3505.20\(A\)](#).

⁷⁰[R.C. 3505.181\(B\)\(8\)](#); [R.C. 3505.20\(A\)](#).

⁷¹[R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(4\)\(xiii\)](#).

⁷²[R.C. 3503.16\(G\)\(1\)](#); [R.C. 3509.03\(B\)\(5\)](#).

⁷³[R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(3\)\(d\)\(i\)](#).

⁷⁴[R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(4\)\(a\)\(vi\)](#).

Step 3: Religious Objection to Photo Identification Requirement

If a voter doesn't have a photo ID because of a religious objection to being photographed, the PEO or board staff must give the voter an affidavit of religious objection ([Form 12-O](#)). This can occur either when the voter casts the provisional ballot or at the board office, but no later than the fourth day after Election Day. Election officials must attach this affidavit to the provisional ballot affirmation.⁷⁵

Reject the provisional ballot if the last four digits of the voter's Social Security number on the affidavit don't match the numbers in the Statewide Voter Registration Database.⁷⁶

If the voter has not been issued a Social Security number, they must write "none" on the line for the last four digits of the Social Security number. If the voter doesn't have a Social Security number, none will appear in the database, and the affidavit is still valid.

Send information from the completed Affidavit of Religious Objection to the Secretary's office by the close of business on the fourth day after Election Day.⁷⁷

The Secretary's office will compare voters who provided a religious objection ([Form 12-O](#)) to BMV records and determine whether the BMV issued an unexpired photo ID to that voter.⁷⁸

The Secretary's office will notify the board of the results no later than the seventh day after Election Day.

Proceed to Step 4 if, based on information provided by the Secretary of State, board employees determine the BMV has not issued an unexpired photo ID and, therefore, the affidavit of religious objection is valid.

Reject the provisional ballot if, based on information provided by the Secretary of State, the board finds that the BMV issued an unexpired photo ID to the voter and, therefore, the affidavit of religious objection is invalid.⁷⁹

⁷⁵[R.C. 3505.181\(B\)\(7\)\(a\)](#); [R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(3\)\(d\)\(ii\)](#); [R.C. 3505.19\(A\)](#).

⁷⁶[R.C. 3505.19\(D\)\(1\)](#).

⁷⁷[R.C. 3505.19\(C\)](#).

⁷⁸[R.C. 3505.19\(C\)](#).

⁷⁹[R.C. 3505.19\(D\)\(2\)](#).

Step 4: Determine whether the board can verify the identity of the voter based on the information provided on the Provisional Ballot Affirmation or provided by the voter within the four-day cure period

Proceed to Step 5 if board employees can verify the voter's identity based on the information provided on the Provisional Ballot Affirmation ([Form 12-B](#)) and/or provided by the voter within four days of the election.

Otherwise, **reject the provisional ballot.**⁸⁰

Important: To verify identity, the board must:

1. Conduct at least one "wildcard" search of voter query, by placing the "%" sign after a partial name (i.e., "Jeff%" to return "Jeffrey").
2. Conduct a voter query of the Statewide Voter Registration Database using Search by Driver License Number.
3. Conduct at least one voter query of the Statewide Voter Registration Database by entering as much or as little information as is available using Search by Name.
4. Once board employees have successfully identified a voter with one of the searches above, they can move on to Step 5.

Important: A voter must vote provisionally if a mismatch in their voter registration information occurs between the Statewide Voter Registration Database (SWVRD) and the databases of the Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) and/or Social Security Administration (SSA), and the voter doesn't provide the information requested from them in a [Form 10-C](#) Voter Information Confirmation Notice by the next time they appear to vote.⁸¹ Refer to [Chapter 4, Section 4.09](#) of this manual for additional information on the BMV/SSA matching process.

⁸⁰[R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(3\)](#).

⁸¹[R.C. 3503.151\(E\)](#); [R.C. 3503.201\(A\)\(1\)\(b\)](#), [\(B\)\(2\)](#), [\(D\)\(1\)-\(2\)](#).

Reject the provisional ballot and cancel the voter's registration if they appear to vote and don't provide the requested information on the Provisional Ballot Affirmation ([Form 12-B](#)) or at the Board office by the fourth day after Election Day.⁸² Follow the procedure in [Chapter 4, Section 4.06](#) of this manual for canceling the voter's registration.

Step 5: Determine whether the voter was registered anywhere in Ohio at least 30 days before the election

Go to Step 6 if the voter was registered to vote anywhere in Ohio at least 30 days before the election.

Otherwise, **reject the provisional ballot**.⁸³

Step 6: Determine whether the voter is a resident of the county and if they are in the correct precinct

Go to Step 7 if:

- The voter is a resident of the county and the precinct in which the provisional ballot was cast.⁸⁴
- The voter moved and provided a new address within the precinct on their Provisional Ballot Affirmation ([Form 12-B](#)).⁸⁵

Remake the ballot and count eligible contests if:

If a voter in BMV/SSA mismatch provides the relevant information on Form 12-B Provisional Affirmation and shows a valid photo ID at the polls or during early voting hours, the ballot must be counted, and the record must not be canceled under R.C. 3503.201(D)(4) (see **Chapter 4** for more information on canceling mismatched provisional voters' voter registration). This voter record must be updated to ACTIVE status and the Provisional flag removed. Should the information provided on the provisional affirmation match the current information in the voter record, the board should note that the voter confirmed the current information, and that record should not be placed in Confirmation status or flagged to vote provisionally due to BMV/SSA mismatch. The board must inform the voter that their information could be incorrect at the source agency.

⁸²[R.C. 3503.201\(D\)\(2\), \(4\).](#)

⁸³[R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(4\)\(a\)\(i\).](#)

⁸⁴[R.C. 3503.01\(A\).](#)

⁸⁵[R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(3\)\(b\).](#)

- The voter cast the provisional ballot in the wrong precinct, but in the correct polling location (including the board office), and a PEO didn't complete and attach [Form 12-D](#) to the provisional ballot envelope.⁸⁶
- The voter cast the provisional ballot in the wrong precinct, but in the correct polling location (including the board office), and a PEO did complete and attach [Form 12-D](#), but the board verified that the PEO sent the voter to the wrong precinct.⁸⁷

Reject the provisional ballot if the voter cast the provisional ballot in the wrong precinct but in the correct polling location (including the board office), AND a PEO completed [Form 12-D](#), AND the board verified the PEO sent the voter to the correct precinct.⁸⁸

The voter cast the provisional ballot in the wrong precinct and polling location.⁸⁹

Step 7: Determine whether the voter already requested and cast a ballot in the election.

Count the provisional ballot if the voter has not cast another ballot.

Reject the provisional ballot if the voter requested and cast an absentee ballot,⁹⁰ and neither of the following exceptions applies:

- **Exception 1:** Count the provisional ballot instead of the absentee ballot if the board determines the absentee ballot is invalid because the voter's signature on the absentee voter's ID envelope doesn't match the signature on file.⁹¹
- **Exception 2:** Count the provisional ballot instead of the absentee ballot if the board does not receive the voter's absentee ballot by the close of polls on Election Day.⁹²

⁸⁶ [R.C. 3505.183\(D\)\(1\)-\(2\)](#).

⁸⁷ [R.C. 3505.183\(D\)\(1\)-\(2\)](#).

⁸⁸ [R.C. 3505.183\(D\)\(1\)](#); [R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(4\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#).

⁸⁹ [R.C. 3505.183\(D\)\(3\)](#).

⁹⁰ [R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(4\)\(a\)\(iv\)](#).

⁹¹ [R.C. 3509.09\(C\)\(2\)](#).

⁹² [R.C. 3501.32\(A\)](#); [R.C. 3509.09\(C\)\(3\)](#); [R.C. 3509.05\(D\)](#).

Section 8.06 Registering to Vote/Updating Address from Affirmation

The board cannot count a provisional ballot if the voter was not registered to vote in Ohio by the voter registration deadline.⁹³ However, a completed Provisional Ballot Affirmation ([Form 12-B](#)) also serves as a voter registration form, a change of address, and/or a change of name form. Even if the provisional ballot envelope is not opened and the ballot is not counted, the board must use the information on the application to register the person as a new voter or to update the voter's address and/or name.⁹⁴

If, after reviewing the Provisional Ballot Affirmation, board employees need more information to register a person to vote, they must contact the individual to request that information.

Section 8.07 Free Access System

Both Ohio and federal law require the state to establish a free access system, in the form of a toll-free number for voters to call and learn whether their provisional ballot was counted.⁹⁵ If the provisional ballot was not counted, the person can learn why, get information on how to register to vote, or resolve issues with their voter registration.⁹⁶

Each provisional voter must be given [Form 12-H](#), which has the toll-free number for the free access system and the deadline for providing ID at the board office.

Only the provisional voter can access information about their provisional ballot.⁹⁷ The board is prohibited from releasing information on a provisional ballot through the free access system to anyone other than the provisional voter.⁹⁸

⁹³ [R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(4\)\(a\)\(i\)](#).

⁹⁴ [R.C. 3505.182\(F\)](#).

⁹⁵ [52 U.S.C. § 21082\(a\)\(5\)\(B\)](#); [R.C. 3505.181\(B\)\(5\)\(b\)](#).

⁹⁶ [R.C. 3505.181\(B\)\(5\)\(b\)](#).

⁹⁷ See [R.C. 3505.181\(B\)\(5\)\(b\)](#).

⁹⁸ [2011 Ohio Op. Att'y Gen. No. 2011-012](#), at 2-110.

Section 8.08 Public Records

WHEN PROVISIONAL BALLOT AFFIRMATIONS CAN BE DISCLOSED

Provisional ballot affirmations are public records. However, they are not subject to disclosure or inspection under a public records request until after the time period for any recount or election contest has passed.⁹⁹ A Safe at Home participant's confidential voter record is not a public record and is not subject to disclosure even after that time.¹⁰⁰ As with all public records requests, boards must consult with their county prosecutor before fulfilling requests for provisional ballot affirmations.

The Secretary of State's retention schedule establishes the length of time boards must keep provisional ballot affirmations. The [retention schedule](#) is available on the Secretary of State website and in [Appendix A, Resources](#) of this manual.

PROVISIONAL BALLOT AFFIRMATION AS VOTER REGISTRATION FORMS

If a Provisional Ballot Affirmation ([Form 12-B](#)) is used to register an individual to vote, it must be kept permanently per the retention schedule, because it serves as the individual's voter registration application.

⁹⁹[2011 Ohio Op. Att'y Gen. No. 2011-012, at 2-105.](#)

¹⁰⁰[R.C. 149.43\(A\)\(1\)\(ee\).](#)

Chapter 8 Checklist: Provisional Voting

Before the Election

- ❑ Supply each precinct with enough provisional materials:
 - [Form 12-B](#) (Provisional Ballot Affirmation)
 - [Form 12-H](#) (Provisional Ballot Notice)
 - [Form 12-D](#) (For voters who insist on voting in the wrong precinct)
 - [Form 10-L](#) (For name changes)
 - [Form 12-O](#) (For religious objections)
 - [Form 10-U](#) (For challenged voters)
 - Ballots for each ballot style
- ❑ Train PEOs on how to handle provisional voters:
 - Check if voters are in the right precinct.
 - Provide proper forms.
 - Direct voters to right precincts when needed.
 - Fill out [Form 12-D](#) when needed.
- ❑ Create a policy if staff will check provisional ballots before the Official Canvass.

During Early Voting Period

- ❑ Process provisional ballots for voters who:
 - Moved within the county without updating their address.
 - Changed name and moved within the county or to a new precinct without updating their information.
 - Moved outside the county but within Ohio without updating their information.
- ❑ Set up teams with members from each major party to deliver provisional ballots to ill/disabled/infirm voters who:

- Changed name/address without updating registration.
- Cannot vote in person due to illness/disability/infirmity.
- Fill out [Form 11-I](#) asking for ballot delivery.
- Submit requests no later than seven days before election.

After Election Day (Four Day Cure Period)

- ❑ Stay open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday after Election Day.
- ❑ Allow provisional voters to:
 - Provide missing ID.
 - Provide information to fix challenges.
- ❑ Send religious objection form information to the Secretary of State by the close of business on the fourth day.

Processing Provisional Ballots

- ❑ Have teams with both parties check provisional ballot forms.
- ❑ Group ballots into categories (for example - okay to count, missing signature).
- ❑ For religious objections, get verification from Secretary of State (by seventh day) on BMV photo ID status.
- ❑ Hold a public board meeting to vote on eligibility of each provisional ballot.
- ❑ Follow the 7-step check process for each ballot:
 1. Check the five required items on form.
 2. Verify photo ID was provided.
 3. Process religious objections (if any).
 4. Verify voter identity.
 5. Confirm voter registration in Ohio.
 6. Verify county and precinct residence.
 7. Check if voter already cast another ballot.

- ❑ Do not open provisional envelopes until after voting on eligibility of all provisional ballots.
- ❑ Begin Official Canvass no earlier than fifth day after election.
- ❑ Finish counting provisional ballots and Official Canvass by the 21st day after election.
- ❑ Process Provisional Ballot forms as voter registration updates even when ballots aren't counted.
- ❑ Keep provisional ballot materials according to Secretary of State retention schedule.

Public Records and Communication

- ❑ Provide toll-free access system for voters to check provisional ballot status ([Form 12-H](#)).
- ❑ Release provisional ballot information only to the provisional voter.
- ❑ Hold provisional ballot forms from public record requests until after the time for recounts or election contests has passed.
- ❑ Protect private voter records of Safe at Home participants from disclosure.



CHAPTER 9: ELECTION DAY VOTING¹

Section 9.01 Election Day Voting Introduction

Chapter 9 explains how to run polling places on Election Day, including setting up voting equipment, checking in voters, and handling different ballot types. It covers checking voter IDs, helping voters with disabilities, managing official observers, and keeping campaign activities outside the 100-foot neutral zone. The chapter also explains how to close the polls, count ballots, and safely return all materials to the board office with a team from both political parties.

Remember that the board must have completed the bipartisan, public Logic and Accuracy (L&A) testing prior to any equipment being used. Follow the instructions in [Chapter 5, Section 5.10](#). Boards generally test equipment used in early voting shortly after receiving the Secretary of State's *Form of the Ballot* directive up to about a week before early voting and may do all of the testing at once or do the remainder incrementally leading up to Election Day.

Coordinating with Vendors

The board must have at least one coordination call with each voting system vendor prior to early voting and Election Day. See [Chapter 12, Section 12.04](#) for more details on this coordination requirement.

¹[Directive 2026-36](#).

Section 9.02 Early Voting and Election Day EAP Communication Plan

The board must have at least one printed copy of its Election Administration Plan (EAP) on hand for early voting and Election Day at the board offices. Virtual copies should also be available to key election officials.

Review and ensure that Section III of the EAP, Pre-Election Day and Election Day communication plan [Chapter 2, Section 2.08](#), has the following resources up-to-date:

- utilities contact numbers
- checklist that determines the confirmation of voting hours, location
- frequently visited websites that are needed to do the job effectively
- local and national media outlets with names, email, and phone numbers
- standard template for press releases on letterhead, with prepopulated contact information, in a standard press release format
- all county board of elections social media platforms listed and the contact information for those who have passwords
- points of contact phone number and email address for issues and complaints, both internal and from the public
- a location identified and noted for all press conferences that may need to be scheduled
- a list of communication partners to assist with communication needs (example: community partners and state partners)

The board must also have a plan in place to address potential misinformation and disinformation related to the election. It must notify the Ohio Secretary of State of any urgent communication needs, as the office is prepared to assist county boards with urgent communication matters. The Ohio Secretary of State will provide additional training in the development of a communication response plan.

Section 9.03 Delivery and Return of Ballots and Equipment

DELIVERY TO POLLING LOCATION

Boards must get voting equipment to polling places before or on Election Day.² If board personnel deliver equipment early:

- Keep it secure at all times.
- Prevent any access or tampering.
- Allow only these people to access it:
 - precinct election officials (PEOs)
 - voting location manager
 - board staff

Never store voting equipment at a PEO's home, vehicle, or place of employment. PEOs must never keep the equipment overnight.

At a polling location, store voting equipment as the manufacturer suggests and in a clean and climate-controlled environment. Don't put it where it could get wet or in an area that might flood.

If board employees put removable media storage cards in voting machines when they are delivered to a polling place or transferred to a PEO, the board must use tamper-proof seals. Each seal needs its own unique number that matches a particular voting machine. Keep records of these numbers on three lists (two lists must be kept in

A Precinct Election Official (PEO)

is a registered voter who, on Election Day, is an official responsible for proper and orderly voting in their assigned precinct/polling location.

A Voting Location Manager (VLM)

is a PEO who oversees the election process. They manage the opening and closing of the polling location and transport ballots and voting materials to the board of elections after the polls close. By law, this official must belong to the same political party as the candidate for governor who received the most votes in that precinct during the last state election for governor.³

²[R.C. 3501.11 \(H\)-\(I\); R.C. 3501.37.](#)

³[R.C. 3501.22\(A\).](#)

a secure location at the board office, one with the director and the other with the deputy director).

PEOs must check all pieces of voting equipment for damage when setting up and closing. Precinct election officials must record inspections in the maintenance/event log from the board of elections. They must note any signs of damage or tampering.

Use a Chain of Custody Log ([Form 400](#) or local equivalent) to track who handles voting equipment, election supplies, and/or ballots. Train PEOs to check tamper-evident seals properly.⁴

POLLING LOCATION SECURITY AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE

PEOs must control all voting equipment, keys, digital storage devices, ballots, and election supplies at all times. PEOs must promptly report any suspicious activity or damage to the equipment to the board of elections. Give each voting location manager an emergency contact list.

Teach PEOs that in emergencies, keeping people safe comes first. They should only take voting equipment, election supplies, and ballots if it may be done safely. If workers remove these items from a polling location, at least one PEO (better two, one from each major party) must stay with the equipment and supplies at all times.

SECURE RETURN OF BALLOTS, ELECTION DAY SUPPLIES, AND ELECTRONIC POLLBOOKS

When polls close, a bipartisan team must return all ballots and supplies to the board office or other designated place. The team must include the voting location manager and a worker or appointee from the other party who has sworn to safely transport election materials.⁵

PEOs must seal each electronic pollbook with a tamper-evident seal before return.⁶ If it uses a removable data storage unit or makes paper records, workers must seal these items too.

Before and after the polls close, election officials must check voting booths for any signs that do not relate to that election. They must remove election signs, including candidate

⁴[R.C. 3505.15.](#)

⁵[R.C. 3505.31.](#)

⁶[R.C. 3505.31.](#)

withdrawal notices. Tell PEOs during training whether any notices should be kept for future elections.

When moving ballots and election supplies, the bipartisan team must ride in the same vehicle. The board can have others, like law enforcement officials, go with them. One team may transport the ballots and supplies for a whole multi-precinct site.

Section 9.04 List of Registered Voters

The board must give Official Precinct Voter Registration Lists⁷ to each precinct. These must be updated and posted at these times:

1. First posting at 6:30 a.m.⁸ after the voting location manager marks who voted early or absentee and early. List names in alphabetical order when possible. PEOs must keep updating the other copies as people vote.⁹
2. Second posting at 11 a.m.¹⁰ showing who voted since 6:30 a.m. Workers keep updating other copies.
3. Third posting at 4 p.m. showing who voted from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.¹¹ No more postings needed after this.

Party affiliation must be on the lists posted on Election Day.¹²

Anyone can come in to check these lists and take notes.¹³ They can't wear campaign clothing or items and can't disrupt voting. They may not remove the posted Precinct Voter Registration List, so post the lists securely.

⁷[R.C. 3503.23\(A\)](#), the board of elections shall prepare an official precinct voter registration list from the statewide database, showing all qualified voters' names, addresses, and recent primary election party affiliations, arranged alphabetically insofar as practicable, except as restricted by law.

⁸[R.C. 3503.23\(B\)\(1\)](#); [R.C. 3501.32\(A\)](#).

⁹[R.C. 3503.23\(B\)\(1\)](#).

¹⁰[R.C. 3503.23\(B\)\(2\)](#).

¹¹[R.C. 3503.23\(B\)\(2\)](#).

¹²[R.C. 3503.23\(A\)](#).

¹³[R.C. 3503.23\(C\)](#).

Section 9.05 Pollbooks – Paper or Electronic

The pollbook (or poll list) is needed for every election. PEOs use it to check if a voter is registered and eligible to vote in that election at that precinct.

POLLBOOK CONTENTS

A pollbook must have:

- The voter's name
- The voter's address
- An image of the voter's signature
- A space for the voter to sign¹⁴
- The capability to flag a voter as required to vote a provisional ballot and the reason why the voter needs to do so.

In a party primary election, the pollbook needs a space to record which party ballot the voter picks.

The pollbook may have other details officials need in order to give the right ballot type (like ballot style number, districts, etc.).

Pollbooks can be paper or electronic.¹⁵ Electronic pollbooks have the same voter information as paper ones.

Each voter must sign the pollbook. For electronic books, voters sign on a pad or screen. If a voter can't sign, their legally appointed helper (attorney-in-fact) may sign for them.¹⁶

PAPER POLLBOOK BACKUPS

If the board uses electronic pollbooks, it must have paper pollbook backups for each check-in station. If the backup plan splits paper pollbooks alphabetically, it's okay to have split backup pollbooks. The board can give a full copy of the pollbook to each

¹⁴[R.C. 3505.18](#).

¹⁵[R.C. 3503.23](#).

¹⁶[R.C. 3505.18](#); [R.C. 3501.382](#). Generally, signing or affixing a signature to an election-related document requires a person's written, cursive-style legal mark written in that person's own hand. However, voters with a disability may personally affix their signature through the use of a reasonable accommodation, including the use of assistive technology or an augmentative device such as a signature stamp. See [R.C. 3501.011\(A\)](#), [3501.382\(F\)](#) and related [OAG 2015-012](#). In counties with electronic pollbooks, if a voter is physically unable to sign and cannot be accommodated on the electronic poll book, the voter may affix their signature in the backup paper pollbook. In the alternative, the voter may have a properly appointed attorney-in-fact sign on the voter's behalf.

check-in station, but it must have a way to ensure voters get only one ballot. Plan how voters will check in to keep the process accurate and efficient.

If problems with electronic pollbooks require PEOs to switch to paper backups on Election Day, they should use them until polls close. However, if the board tells them to return to the electronic pollbooks after switching to paper, it must have a clear plan to keep accurate records of voter activity. The policy must explain exactly when PEOs may switch back. This standard should consider how much voter activity must be accurately transferred from the backup paper pollbook to the electronic pollbook.

Train PEOs to use backup paper pollbooks. This includes how to pick the right ballots based on precinct or split, and how to make and post Precinct Voter Registration Lists.

SPECIAL MARKINGS IN THE POLLBOOK

Mark the pollbook to show voters who may need special processing (like a 17-year-old voter) or who must use provisional ballots.

- **17-Year-Old Voter**

Ohio law lets 17-year-olds who will be 18 by the next general election vote in primaries, but only for nominating candidates and presidential convention delegates.¹⁷ This is because they'll be able to vote for the nominees at the November general election.

Like all voters, 17-year-olds must be registered and show a valid ID.

Voters who are 17 at the time of the primary cannot vote on:

- State Party Central Committee
- County Party Central Committee¹⁸
- Questions and Issues

The ballot style for 17-year-old voters is on the board voting system and in its board instructions.

- **First-time Registrant By-Mail**

¹⁷[Schwerdtfeger v. Husted](#), 2016 Ohio Misc. LEXIS 18, Franklin C.P. No. 16 CV 002346 (March 11, 2016). [R.C. 3503.01](#); [R.C. 3503.011](#); [R.C. 3503.07](#). *State ex rel. Webber v. Felton*, 77 Ohio St. 554 (1908).

¹⁸[R.C. 3513.14](#), State and county party central committees are elected at the primary election.

Federal law requires special handling for first-time registrants by mail who didn't provide valid ID when registering (driver license number, last four digits of Social Security number, or copy of acceptable form of ID). Mark these voters in the pollbook as needing to show ID to vote a regular ballot. Federal law requires all voters to show ID before casting a regular ballot.¹⁹ If any voter doesn't, they must vote provisionally.

- **Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV)/Social Security Administration (SSA) Mismatch**

Federal law and state law requires comparing new voter registrations with records from the Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) or Social Security Administration (SSA) to check ID info (the voter's driver license number and/or the last four digits of the voter's Social Security number).²⁰ If the information provided by the voter and entered in the registration system doesn't match other government databases, the board must place the voter in CONFIRMATION status and send the voter a Voter Information Confirmation Notice [Form 10-C](#) or [Form 10-D](#) and mark or "flag" the voter in provisional status with the corresponding code (see also [Chapter 4, Section 4.09](#)).²¹

The following codes and legal values will appear in the pollbook.

¹⁹[52 U.S.C. § 21083\(b\)](#).

²⁰[52 U.S.C. § 21083\(a\)](#); [R.C. 3503.151\(E\)](#).

²¹[R.C. 3503.201\(A\)\(1\)\(b\)](#).

PROVISIONAL REASON	Code Description	Associated BMV_MATCH_CODE
NULL/Blank	The voter is not required to vote a provisional ballot.	
ADD	The voter must verify their address (returned undeliverable acknowledgement).	Applied at BOE
SSN	The voter must verify the last 4 digits of their SSN4 (BMV/SSA mismatch on the SSN4).	Hold for future value
DOB	The voter must verify their date of birth (BMV/SSA mismatch on DOB).	DYNNNN DYNYYN DYYNNN DYYYNN
DLN	The voter must verify their driver license number/state ID number (BMV/SSA mismatch on the DLN).	DN
MMM	The voter must verify their driver license number/state ID number, last four of their SSN AND their date of birth (BMV/SSA mismatch on DLN, SSN4 and DOB).	NN_
MDB	The voter must verify their driver license number/state ID number AND date of birth (BMV/SSA mismatch on DLN and DOB).	Hold for future value
MDS	The voter must verify driver license number/state ID number AND last four of their SSN (BMV/SSA Mismatch on DLN and SSN4).	Hold for future value
MBS	The voter must verify their date of birth AND the last four of their SSN (BMV/SSA Mismatch on DOB and SSN4).	Hold for future value

These codes will indicate to precinct election officials why the voter must cast a provisional ballot.

- **Requested Absentee Ballot**

Flag voters who request absentee ballots (either by mail or in person) in the pollbook.²² If they come on Election Day, they must vote provisionally. This is true even if they say they never got or returned their absentee ballot.²³ Update all pollbooks with these flags, including on Election Day, using a supplemental list. For electronic pollbooks, upload the supplemental absentee voter list before polls open.

Don't let PEOs accept completed absentee ballots at polling places on Election Day.²⁴ Voters must return absentee ballots to the board office before polls close at 7:30 p.m. on Election Day.²⁵

- **Undeliverable Acknowledgment Card**

When an acknowledgment notice comes back as undeliverable, board employees must send a confirmation notice ([Form 10-C](#) or [10-D](#)) by forwardable mail giving the voter a chance to fix or confirm the information on file with the board. The board must mark or "flag" the voter in provisional status with the corresponding code in Section 4.09.²⁶

- **Former Ohio Resident — Presidential Election Only**

(This is not a common occurrence.)

Mark the pollbook "Former Resident's Presidential Ballot" for former Ohio residents who have filed a Certificate of Intent to Vote in a Presidential Election. On Election Day, these former residents must vote at the precinct and polling location where they last lived in Ohio.²⁷

- Give these voters a centrally counted, optical scan, paper ballot from their former Ohio precinct.
- After they mark their ballot, the voter must put it in an envelope clearly labeled "Former Ohio Resident's Presidential Ballot."

²²[R.C. 3509.09\(A\).](#)

²³[R.C. 3509.09\(B\).](#)

²⁴[R.C. 3509.05\(D\).](#)

²⁵[R.C. 3509.05\(D\).](#)

²⁶[R.C. 3503.19\(C\); R.C. 3503.201.](#)

²⁷[R.C. 3504.01.](#)

For more information, please refer to [Chapter 7, Section 7.06](#).

Section 9.06 Finding Voters, Identification, Ballot Type

FINDING VOTERS IN POLLBOOK — PAPER OR ELECTRONIC

PEOs Must Direct Voters to Correct Polling Location

Voters are responsible for registering their correct address, knowing their precinct and polling location, and bringing valid ID on Election Day. Precinct and voting location info is available online at [Find My Polling Location](#).

When voters are at the wrong precinct, PEOs must direct them to their correct precinct and polling location. Workers must explain that a provisional ballot cast in the wrong precinct won't count and give the voter the board's phone number.²⁸ Train poll workers on these rules.

Use Form 12-D for Wrong Precinct but Correct Polling Location

A provisional ballot cast in the wrong precinct of a multi-precinct polling place may count if PEOs didn't tell the voter they were in the wrong precinct.²⁹

If a voter won't go to their correct precinct, let them cast a provisional ballot but explain it won't count.³⁰ To document this, PEOs must fill out [Form 12-D](#) and attach it to the voter's provisional ballot envelope.³¹

If PEOs don't complete and attach [Form 12-D](#), the board must remake and count the provisional ballot for any contest the voter could vote for in their correct precinct.

²⁸[R.C. 3505.181\(C\)](#).

²⁹[R.C. 3505.181](#).

³⁰[R.C. 3505.181\(C\)\(1\)](#).

³¹[R.C. 3505.181\(C\)\(2\)](#).

IDENTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS – For the Purpose of Voting –

ACCEPTABLE		UNACCEPTABLE
Driver License	State ID	Non Renewable/Non Transferable Credential
U.S. Passport	Interim ID	Ohio Mobile ID
U.S. Passport Card	U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs ID	Identifier (on the back)
U.S. Military ID or Ohio National Guard ID	U.S. Military Dependent ID	

Make sure your voice is heard! Learn more at VoteOhio.gov

IDENTIFICATION

Ohio law requires every voter to say their full name and current address and show photo ID when arriving at the polls on Election Day.³² [Posters showing acceptable ID](#) are available on the Secretary of State's website.

Acceptable photo IDs must not be expired and include:

- An Ohio driver license, state ID card, or interim ID form issued by the BMV or deputy registrar.

Note: An Ohio driver license or state ID with an old address IS ACCEPTABLE if the voter's current address is in the pollbook.

- A U.S. passport or passport card.
- A U.S. military ID card, U.S. military dependent ID card, Ohio National Guard ID card, or U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs ID card.³³

³²[R.C. 3505.18.](#)

³³[R.C. 3501.01\(AA\).](#)

For more info on voter identification, see [Directive 2023-03](#).

The following forms of ID are **NOT** acceptable for voting:

- driver license or photo ID card from a different state
- mobile IDs
- Social Security card
- birth certificate
- utility bill
- bank statement
- government check
- paycheck
- insurance card
- registration notice from the board of elections
- Ohio Mobile ID
- driver license or ID that contains a “Non-Renewable/Non-Transferable” identifier
- driver license or ID that contains a “Noncitizen” identifier (but may be used in conjunction with [additional proof of citizenship](#), such as a U.S. Passport, Certificate of Citizenship, or Certificate of Naturalization)

CHOOSING VOTER BALLOT TYPE

Regular Ballots

Give voters a regular ballot if they meet the following requirements:

- The voter’s name and address are in the pollbook.
- They provide a valid photo ID.³⁴

³⁴[R.C. 3505.18](#).

- For name changes, they provide proof of the legal name change (like a marriage license, court order, or other document showing both current and prior names) and complete and sign a Notice of Change of Name ([Form 10-L](#)).³⁵

If a voter changed their name but has no proof, they must vote provisionally.³⁶

If a voter moved within the same precinct, they must fill out a Voter Registration Form to update their address in the county's voter files before voting a regular ballot.³⁷

Provisional Ballots

Voters must cast a provisional ballot when:

- Their name isn't in the pollbook or supplemental voter list.³⁸

Note: Before giving a provisional ballot, PEOs must make sure the voter is in the correct precinct and is not eligible to cast a regular ballot in a different precinct or polling location. If they're in the wrong precinct, direct them to the correct one.³⁹

- They don't show proper or valid photo ID.⁴⁰
- They show photo ID which includes a notation indicating the individual is a noncitizen of the United States and they do not provide proof of citizenship when challenged under [R.C. 3505.20\(A\)](#).
- They moved to a different precinct without updating their voter registration by the deadline (30 days prior to the election).⁴¹
- They changed their name and moved to a different precinct without updating their voter registration by the deadline (30 days prior to the election).⁴²
- They changed their name and don't have proof of the legal name change.⁴³

³⁵[R.C. 3503.16\(B\)\(1\)\(b\)](#).

³⁶[R.C. 3505.181\(C\)\(1\)](#).

³⁷[R.C. 3503.16\(B\)\(1\)\(a\)](#).

³⁸[R.C. 3505.181\(A\)\(1\)](#).

³⁹[R.C. 3505.181\(C\)\(1\)](#).

⁴⁰[R.C. 3505.181\(A\)\(2\)](#).

⁴¹[R.C. 3505.181\(A\)\(6\)](#).

⁴²[R.C. 3505.181\(A\)\(6\)](#).

⁴³[R.C. 3505.181\(A\)\(6\)](#).

- Note: Voters who changed their name but didn't update their registration may cast a regular ballot if, before or on Election Day, the voter shows election officials proof of their legal name change, such as a court order or marriage license, that includes both their former and current names and completes [Form 10-L](#).⁴⁴
- Their signature doesn't match the signature on file.⁴⁵
- They were challenged and the challenge was resolved against the voter.⁴⁶
- Their registration notice was returned to the board as undeliverable.^{47*}
- The voter received a confirmation notice due to a database mismatch in the voter's registration information, and the voter failed to provide the requested information more than 14 days before the election (see also ***Election Day Mismatch Verification***).⁴⁸
- They requested an absentee ballot.⁴⁹
- They already cast a ballot in that election.

For reasons marked with an asterisk (*), flag these voters in the pollbook as needing to cast provisional ballots.

For additional information on the casting and counting of provisional ballots, see [Chapter 8, Provisional Voting](#).

Election Day Mismatch Verification

If a registered voter does not correct an issue with their registration more than 14 days⁵⁰ before the election, the voter will be required to cast a provisional ballot.⁵¹

On Election Day, the registered voter must complete [Form 12-B Provisional Ballot Affirmation](#) and provide the information needed to correct their registration. If the

⁴⁴[R.C. 3503.16\(B\)\(1\)\(b\)](#).

⁴⁵[R.C. 3505.181\(A\)\(7\)](#).

⁴⁶See [Advisory 2019-03](#); [R.C. 3505.181\(A\)\(5\)](#).

⁴⁷[R.C. 3505.181\(A\)\(4\)](#).

⁴⁸[R.C. 3503.201\(A\)\(1\)\(b\)](#); [R.C. 3503.201\(D\)\(1\)](#).

⁴⁹[R.C. 3505.181\(A\)\(3\)](#).

⁵⁰[R.C. 3503.23](#).

⁵¹[R.C. 3503.201\(D\)\(1\)](#).

registered voter does not provide this information on Election Day, they must submit it within four days after the election for their provisional ballot to be counted.⁵²

Step-by-Step Instructions for Poll Workers on Election Day Mismatch Verification

1. Check the pollbook and identify the issue
 - When the voter states their name and address, locate their record.
 - If the pollbook shows the voter has an unresolved registration issue (and is flagged to vote provisional), continue to Step 2.
2. Explain the situation in plain terms
 - We suggest you say something like this to the voter: *"Your registration record has an issue that hasn't been corrected yet, and a new state law requires us to get that corrected so your ballot can be counted. This is an effort to make sure Ohio has accurate voter rolls, and by fixing that now, we make sure you won't have problems in the future. In order to do that, you are required to vote a provisional ballot, and as long as your information is verified your vote can still count."*
3. Provide the provisional ballot materials
 - Issue the voter a provisional ballot and the required provisional ballot paperwork per your precinct supplies.

Give the voter [Form 12-B Provisional Ballot Affirmation](#)

- Provide [Form 12-B Provisional Ballot Affirmation](#).
- Instruct the voter to complete it fully and accurately.
- Ask the voter to provide the needed information on [Form 12-B Provisional Ballot Affirmation](#). Tell the voter to include the information required to correct their registration (for example, updated address/name information or other required details shown by the pollbook flag).

⁵²[R.C. 3503.201\(D\)\(1\), \(2\)](#).

- If your procedures allow poll workers to review for completeness, do a quick check for missing sections without coaching the voter on what to write.
4. If the voter has supporting documents with them, follow site procedures
 - If the voter offers documents/info at the polling place, follow your board's instructions on what can be accepted/recorded at the polling location.
 - If the voter does not have the information or documents with them, proceed to Step 7.
 5. Clearly explain the "4-day deadline"
 - Tell the voter: *"If you don't provide the required information today, you must provide it to the board of elections within four days after Election Day or your provisional ballot may not count."*
 - Provide any written handouts your board supplies, including Updated [Form 12-H](#), and point the voter to where/how to contact the board (address, phone, hours) if that information is included in your materials.

6. Ensure the provisional ballot is properly completed and secured
 - Confirm the voter has:
 - completed [Form 12-B Provisional Ballot Affirmation](#), and
 - placed their voted ballot in the correct envelope.
 - Secure the ballot and forms according to the chain of custody instructions.
7. Mark the pollbook correctly
 - Record that the voter cast a provisional ballot, following your pollbook/poll pad steps.
8. Escalate if anything is unclear

If the pollbook flag is confusing, the voter's status is ambiguous, or the voter disputes the requirement, contact the Voting Location Manager or the board immediately and follow their direction.

SIGNING POLLBOOK — PAPER OR ELECTRONIC

After deciding the ballot type, the voter must sign or make their legal mark⁵³ in the pollbook (paper or electronic). If a voter can't sign, they may make a mark on the signature line, and the PEO who watched must write the voter's name after the mark.⁵⁴

If the voter is physically unable to mark the pollbook, their attorney-in-fact can sign for them.⁵⁵ Voters must fill out and [Form 10-F](#) or [Form 10-G](#) with the board office to have an attorney-in-fact. If a voter has this form on file with the board, the attorney-in-fact's signature will be noted in the pollbook. The attorney-in-fact must come with the voter to sign for them. Compare the signature to the one on file, and if it matches, give the voter a regular ballot.⁵⁶

Note that an attorney-in-fact is different from a power of attorney. For someone with power of attorney to sign election forms, they must have a valid attorney-in-fact appointment on file with the board.

⁵³[R.C. 3501.011](#); [R.C. 3505.18\(B\)](#).

⁵⁴[R.C. 3505.18\(B\)](#).

⁵⁵[R.C. 3505.18\(B\)](#).

⁵⁶[R.C. 3501.382](#).

GIVING A REGULAR BALLOT/AUTHORITY TO VOTE

After the voter has signed the pollbook, give an Authority to Vote slip, Voter Access card or Ballot card for their correct precinct and/or split and let them vote. If using paper ballots, detach the next ballot from Stub B (leaving Stub A attached), give it to the voter, and call the voter's name and stub number on each of the ballots. The PEO should write the stub numbers opposite the voter's signature in the pollbook. The voter then goes to one of the voting booths to mark their ballot privately.⁵⁷ No mark shall be made on any ballot which would in any way enable any person to identify the person who voted the ballot.⁵⁸

CURBSIDE VOTING

Curbside voting helps voters with disabilities who can get to the polling location but cannot enter.⁵⁹ They send someone inside to tell election officials they need to vote curbside. Display information about curbside parking and eligibility.

When a voter requests curbside voting:

1. One poll worker checks the pollbook for the voter's name.
2. If the voter is qualified and in the correct precinct, write their name and address on a blank sheet of paper or find it in the electronic pollbook.
3. Two officials from different parties take this information outside to the voter.
4. The voter confirms their name and address are correct.
5. The voter provides appropriate ID, which workers must check.
6. The voter signs the sheet or electronic pollbook.
7. The officials return to the polling place and verify the voter's signature in the pollbook.
8. They mark "Curbside Voter" next to the voter's name in the pollbook.
9. They get the correct paper ballot and proper envelope or secrecy sleeve (an envelope in the supply kit labeled: "Curbside Ballot Envelope or secrecy sleeve")

⁵⁷[R.C. 3505.18\(B\).](#)

⁵⁸[R.C. 3505.18\(B\).](#)

⁵⁹[R.C. 3501.29\(C\).](#)

for voted regular curbside ballots, or “Provisional Curbside Ballot Envelope” for voted provisional curbside ballots).

10. They take the appropriate ballot and corresponding envelope or secrecy sleeve to the voter outside.
11. They explain how to mark the ballot.

The voter marks the ballot and puts it in the envelope or sleeve (provisional voters must complete [Form 12-B Provisional Ballot Affirmation](#) and receive [Form 12-H Provisional Ballot Notice](#)).

12. The two election officials return the sealed ballot to the polling location and put it in the proper ballot container. Boards should have a policy that determines whether these are scanned centrally or in the polling location.

If the curbside voter can’t sign their name:

1. The two election officials witness the voter’s mark on the form or electronic pollbook.
2. They return it to the polling place.
3. They write “Curbside Voter – Unable to Sign” next to the voter’s name in the pollbook.

If the curbside voter can’t mark their ballot, the two election officials follow procedures for voters who need marking help.⁶⁰ See **Section 9.09**.

Section 9.07 Marking the Ballot

TIME TO MARK BALLOT

Voters may take up to 10 minutes in a voting booth when all booths are full and others are waiting. However, give voters enough time to mark and check their ballot. The 10-minute limit doesn’t apply to voters using accessible voting machines.⁶¹

If a voter is taking a long time, two workers from different parties may politely ask if they need help.

⁶⁰[R.C. 3505.24.](#)

⁶¹[R.C. 3505.23.](#)

REPLACEMENT BALLOTS

If a voter tears, spoils, makes a mistake on, or damages a paper ballot, they may return it for a new one. Voters using electronic voting machines don't need a replacement ballot because they can change their selections before casting the ballot.

When giving replacement ballots:

- If a voter returns a damaged ballot, they must fold it to hide any marks they made.
- If they make a mistake on the second ballot, give them a third ballot.
- Never give more than three ballots to any voter.
- When receiving a returned damaged ballot, PEOs must write "Defaced" on the back and place it and the stub in the proper containers.
- Voters using paper ballots must return every ballot issued to them before they leave, even unmarked ones.⁶²

FLEEING VOTERS

If a voter uses a voting machine but leaves without pressing the cast ballot button, two PEOs from different parties must cancel that ballot.

If a voter gets an optical scan paper ballot but leaves without feeding it into the scanner (or if the scanner rejects it due to an over-vote or blank ballot and the voter doesn't fix it), two PEOs from different parties must put that ballot in the spoiled ballot container.

In both cases, the PEOs must note this for ballot-reconciliation purposes.

LIST OF WRITE-IN CANDIDATES

The board must give each polling place a list of declared write-in candidates.

Don't post this list but show it to voters who ask to see it. The board may, but isn't required to, post a list of write-in candidates on its website.

⁶²[R.C. 3505.23](#).

Section 9.08 Helping Voters

State and federal laws require polling places to be accessible to people with disabilities. The Help America Vote Act⁶³ requires that all voters must be able to vote privately and independently.

The Americans with Disabilities Act⁶⁴ sets standards for equal access to public facilities, including polling places. See also [Chapter 6, Section 6.02](#).

Never deny anyone the right to vote because of mobility, vision, speech, cognitive, intellectual, or hearing impairments.⁶⁵

Voters with disabilities may ask for help marking their ballots. They can choose a person to help them or ask for two PEOs, one from each party. Voters may choose anyone except their employer, an agent of their employer, a union officer or agent, or any candidate on the ballot.⁶⁶

Train the board PEOs on the rights of voters with disabilities and how to help them effectively and respectfully.

The Secretary of State's office publishes a [Precinct Election Official Manual](#) before major elections with guidelines for communicating and helping voters with disabilities.

Section 9.09 Challenge of Elector by PEOs

On Election Day, only PEOs or the voting location manager may challenge voters, and only for these reasons:⁶⁷

- The voter is not a U.S. citizen.⁶⁸ See [Non-Citizen Challenges](#) below.
- The voter has not lived in Ohio for 30 days prior to the election.
- The voter doesn't live in the precinct.
- The voter is not old enough to vote.

⁶³52 U.S.C.A § 21081(a)(3)(A).

⁶⁴52 U.S.C.A. § 12131-12165.

⁶⁵52 U.S.C.A § 21081(a)(3)(A).

⁶⁶R.C. 3505.24.

⁶⁷R.C. 3505.20.

⁶⁸*Boustani v. Blackwell* (2006), 460 F.Supp.2d 822.

If challenged for one of these reasons, the voter should fill out [Form 10-U Affidavit-Oath-Examination of Person Challenged](#) (:

- If a majority of PEOs decide the voter is eligible to vote after they complete [Form 10-U Affidavit-Oath-Examination of Person Challenged](#), give them a regular ballot.
- If the voter refuses to complete [Form 10-U Affidavit-Oath-Examination of Person Challenged](#), they must vote provisionally, and workers must note this on the Precinct Elections Officials Problems and Corrections page or Precinct Election Officials Notes page.

If a majority of the PEOs can't determine eligibility, give the person a provisional ballot.⁶⁹

MANDATORY CHALLENGE OF RIGHT TO VOTE FOR NONCITIZENS

All voters must be U.S. citizens eligible to vote in Ohio and must show a valid photo ID.⁷⁰

If a person intending to vote appears at a polling place and provides an Ohio driver license, state ID, or interim ID that indicates the person is not a U.S. citizen, election officials are required to challenge the voter's eligibility under [R.C. 3505.18](#).

If the person challenged provides proof of U.S. citizenship⁷¹ documents and completes an affidavit (Updated [Form 10-U](#)), they may cast a regular ballot.⁷² If the person challenged does not provide proof of U.S. citizenship and completes [Form 12-B Provisional Ballot Affirmation](#), to have the provisional ballot counted, the voter must provide proof of U.S. citizenship to the board of elections within the four-day post-election cure period. The next section describes the process to verify citizenship.

⁶⁹[R.C. 3505.20](#).

⁷⁰[R.C. 3505.18\(A\)\(1\)](#); [R.C. 3509.051\(B\)](#).

⁷¹As defined in [R.C. 3501.01\(EE\)](#). See [Directive 2026-02](#) for a list of acceptable documents.

⁷²[R.C. 3505.20\(A\)](#).

Step by Step Instructions for Poll Workers on Citizenship Verification at Polling Locations⁷³

1. Greet the voter and collect the basics

Ask the voter to state their name and current address.

Locate the voter in the pollbook.

2. Review the voter's identification

If the license or ID contains a "NON-RENEWABLE/NON_TRANSFERABLE" identifier (on the front side), the identification is not valid.

If the voter presents an Ohio driver license, Ohio state ID, or interim ID, check the card carefully (paying close attention to the back side, which would indicate the word "NONCITIZEN" if the person is not a U.S. citizen).

If the ID contains a "NONCITIZEN" identifier (on the back side), the identification requires additional proof of citizenship, and you must proceed with a challenge of the voter's eligibility.

Only ask for additional proof of citizenship from people who show a photo ID with a "noncitizen" mark or otherwise unauthorized form of photo ID. (See [Boustani v. Larose, N.D. Ohio No. 1:06CV2065, 2024 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 196824, at *18 \(Oct. 30, 2024\)](#) for more information).

3. Issue the required eligibility challenge

Inform the voter (calmly and neutrally) that the ID presented indicates that they are not a citizen of the United States, as required by Ohio law, and that the law requires you to challenge their eligibility to cast a ballot.

4. Have the voter complete Updated [Form 10-U](#)

Provide [Form 10-U Affidavit–Oath–Examination of Person Challenged](#).

Ensure the voter completes the form as instructed.

Follow your normal steps for administering the affirmation of U.S. citizenship per your training.

⁷³[R.C. 3505.18\(A\)\(3\)](#).

4. Determine whether the voter can vote a regular ballot or must vote a provisional ballot

If the voter provides acceptable proof of U.S. citizenship⁷⁴ at the polling place:

The voter may vote a regular ballot (per your board's instructions), and you should document the resolution according to procedure.

If the voter does not provide acceptable proof of U.S. citizenship at the polling place:

The voter must vote a provisional ballot.

5. Issue the provisional ballot, if required

Provide the voter with the provisional ballot materials and any required provisional forms, as outlined in your precinct procedures.

Make sure the voter completes all required provisional paperwork before the ballot is secured.

6. Give clear “next steps” for the voter

Inform the voter that their provisional ballot will only count if they provide proof of U.S. citizenship to the board of elections within four days of Election Day.

Provide [Form 12-H Provisional Ballot Notice](#) and any additional information as instructed by your board of elections (and point out office location/hours if included).

Document and secure materials

If board policy permits and the pollbook allows, mark the record to reflect the following:

- the challenge,
- [Form 10-U](#) completion, and
- that a provisional ballot was issued (if applicable).

⁷⁴ As defined in [R.C. 3501.01\(EE\)](#). See [Directive 2026-02](#) for a list of acceptable documents.

Secure the provisional ballot and forms according to chain-of-custody procedures.

Escalate if something is unclear

If the voter disputes the process, is missing from the pollbook, or you are unsure about acceptable documents, contact the voting location manager or the board immediately and follow their directions.

Boards of elections are required to provide updated and sufficient training on non-citizen challenges to poll workers and voting location managers, who should be prepared to clearly explain the new requirement for verifying proof of U.S. citizenship to individuals intending to vote.

Proof of citizenship documents include:⁷⁵

- A current Ohio driver license or Ohio state ID number, if the Secretary of State has already confirmed that citizenship documents were provided to the Bureau of Motor Vehicles;
- A current Ohio driver license or state ID issued on or after April 7, 2023, or a copy of the front and back of the ID, as long as it does not say the person is a non-U.S. citizen;
- A U.S. birth certificate, certification of birth, or consular report of birth abroad (or a copy of one of these);
- A valid U.S. passport or passport card, or a copy of the passport's ID page or both sides of the passport card;
- A Certificate of Naturalization or Certificate of Citizenship, or a copy of one of those documents;
- An approved immigration notice (Form I-797) showing approval of a request to replace a naturalization or citizenship document, or an equivalent document issued by the federal government.

If the voter's current legal name is different from the name shown on their citizenship document, the voter must also provide proof of the name change, such as a marriage certificate or court order.

If a person's U.S. citizenship status is challenged at the polling place and they cast a provisional ballot, the board of elections must provide the individual with Form 12-H

⁷⁵ [R.C. 3501.01\(EE\)](#).

Provisional Ballot Notice Handout, which lists the acceptable documents and explains the next steps the voter may need to take for their ballot to be counted.⁷⁶

For a complete list of acceptable and unacceptable forms of voter IDs with photos, see “Voter Identification Requirements” in the [Precinct Election Official Manual](#).

Section 9.10 Observers

GENERAL RULES

Qualifications

All observers (except recount observers⁷⁷ and [Congressional Election Observers](#)⁷⁸) must be qualified Ohio voters.⁷⁹ They don’t need to be registered in the county where they observe.

People Not Eligible to Observe⁸⁰

These people cannot serve as observers at early voting sites, board offices before the Official Canvass, or precincts on Election Day:

- peace officers in uniform⁸¹
- state highway patrol trooper in uniform
- firefighters in uniform
- armed services or militia members in uniform
- anyone wearing any other uniform
- anyone carrying a weapon
- candidates (unless they’re on a party controlling committee, or appointed to observe an Official Canvass, recount, or election audit)⁸²
- election “monitors” (organizations may call people “monitors,” but Ohio law only recognizes official observers)

⁷⁶[R.C. 3505.182](#).

⁷⁷[R.C. 3513.03](#).

⁷⁸[COCOA Act of 2024](#).

⁷⁹[R.C. 3505.21\(B\)](#).

⁸⁰[R.C. 3505.21\(B\)](#).

⁸¹[R.C. 2935.01\(B\)](#).

⁸²[R.C. 3505.21\(B\)](#).

Pay

Observers cannot accept pay from any county, city, village, or township for serving as an observer.⁸³

Oath

Every observer is required by law to take this oath prior to observing:

"You do solemnly swear that you will faithfully and impartially discharge the duties as an official observer, assigned by law; that you will not cause any delay to persons offering to vote; and/or that you will not disclose or communicate to any person how any elector has voted at such election."⁸⁴

On Election Day, a PEO must give this oath. For other types of observers, an election official, director, or deputy director may administer the oath. When observing over multiple days, observers don't need to retake the oath but should affirm to an election official that they understand they remain under oath.

Watching and Inspecting

Observers may only watch election proceedings. They may never handle any election materials.

Observers may move freely where ballots are being cast, processed, counted, or recounted, as long as they don't engage in prohibited activities.⁸⁵ The board may deny observers access to areas where ballots are not being handled.

Observer Communication

Communication with Election Officials

Observers may not interfere with election officials running the election. They may have casual conversations with officials during slow times to gather information about the process, but their statutory purpose is to watch. Observers may not enforce laws or

⁸³[R.C. 3505.21\(F\)](#).

⁸⁴[R.C. 3505.21\(F\)](#).

⁸⁵Observers at a precinct are permitted to "watch every proceeding of the precinct election officials from the time of the opening until the closing of the polls." Observers are also permitted to "inspect the counting of all ballots in the polling location or board of elections from the time of the closing of the polls until the counting is completed and the final returns are certified and signed." [R.C. 3505.21\(C\)](#). However, Observers shall not be permitted to witness the examination and opening of identification envelopes returned by, and the processing and counting of absent voter's ballots cast by, electors who have confidential voter registration records in a manner that would permit the observers to learn the identities or residence addresses of those electors. [R.C. 3509.06](#).

advocate for voters. They may leave the voting area to contact the board of elections with concerns, which the board may address when appropriate.

Audio and Video Devices

Observers cannot use any electronic or audio/visual recording devices in ways that disrupt the election, intimidate voters, or violate ballot secrecy or voter privacy. They cannot use phones, walkie-talkies, or other communication devices to discuss the election inside a polling place. As long as they aren't harassing,⁸⁶ they may collect information from the posted registration lists.⁸⁷

Observers may use communication devices and audio/video devices if:

- The devices make no noise (low vibration is allowed).
- They only send and receive text messages, emails, or other nonverbal communications.
- They don't take photos, videos, or record conversations inside.
- They don't talk inside the polling place using the device.
- They don't create disruptions.
- They don't use devices to interfere with an election or intimidate voters.

Limitations

Prohibitions

Observers must not:

- Campaign in any way.
- Block voters from reaching or leaving the polling place.
- Disrupt the election.
- Intimidate, harass, or try to influence voters or PEOs.
- Carry weapons.
- Violate ballot secrecy or voter privacy.⁸⁸

⁸⁶As defined by [R.C. 3501.90](#).

⁸⁷[R.C. 3503.23\(C\)](#).

⁸⁸Unless specifically exempted by law, all observers are subject to the statutory prohibitions in Title 35 of the Revised Code.

Observers cannot enforce laws or advocate for voters before PEOs.

Removal

While the board must allow observers throughout the election process, it can remove observers who violate Ohio law or Secretary of State directives or who interfere with the election.⁸⁹

Only the voting location managers, directors, deputy directors, and appointing authorities can remove observers. Law enforcement officials must remove observers when ordered by these officials.⁹⁰

If an observer is removed, the voting location manager, director, deputy director, or appointing authority may take their certificate of appointment and return it to the board office with a note about the removal.

WHO MAY APPOINT OBSERVERS

These “appointing authorities” may appoint observers at primary, special, or general elections:

- any political party (county or state) supporting candidates on the ballot⁹¹
- any group of five or more candidates⁹²
- ballot issue committee recognized by the board as supporting or opposing a ballot issue.
 - Any committee advocating for or against a ballot issue may petition the board asking to be recognized as the committee entitled to appoint observers. File these petitions by 4 p.m., 20 days before the election. If multiple committees file to be recognized for the same issue, the board must decide which committee gets to appoint observers. The board must decide at least 12 days before the election and notify each committee by registered mail.⁹³

⁸⁹[R.C. 3501.33](#); [R.C. 3505.21](#).

⁹⁰[R.C. 3501.33](#); [R.C. 3505.21](#).

⁹¹[R.C. 3505.21\(B\)](#).

⁹²[R.C. 3505.21\(B\)](#).

⁹³[R.C. 3505.21\(E\)](#).

TYPES OF OBSERVERS

Ohio law provides for six types of election observers. A person may observe at multiple locations during the election process.

- **Observers at Early In-Person Absentee Voting Locations**

An appointing authority may appoint one observer at the early in-person absentee voting location.⁹⁴ Depending on the county, this may be at the board office or another designated site.

- During early voting:
 - Observers may switch with others on different days.
 - Only one observer per appointing authority may watch at once.
- **Appointment Notice Deadline** - 11 days before early in-person absentee voting starts.
- **Amendment Deadline** - 4 p.m. the day before the observer serves.⁹⁵

- **Observers at Precincts on Election Day**

An appointing authority may appoint one observer per precinct on Election Day. Observers may cover multiple precincts, but each precinct may have only one observer from each appointing authority.⁹⁶

Note: A precinct cannot have more than six total ballot issue committee observers. When there are more than six, the committees must agree on which observers will serve. If they don't agree, PEOs must choose six observers to represent both sides of the issues.⁹⁷

Precinct observers may be present from one-half hour before polls open until PEOs finish processing ballots, complete other post-closing tasks, and return the ballots and other supplies to the board.

⁹⁴[R.C. 3505.21\(A\).](#)

⁹⁵[R.C. 3505.21\(C\).](#)

⁹⁶[R.C. 3505.21\(C\).](#)

⁹⁷[R.C. 3505.21\(E\).](#)

- **Appointment Notice Deadline** - 11 days before Election Day.
- **Amendment Deadline** - 4 p.m. the day before Election Day.⁹⁸

- **Observers at a Board Office Before the Official Canvass**

An appointing authority may appoint one observer to watch provisional ballot casting at the board office, ballot counting on Election Day, and absentee/provisional ballot processing before canvassing.⁹⁹

The board can allow an appointing authority to appoint more than one observer to the office when appropriate. For instance, when processing provisional ballots will take several days, the board could allow an appointing authority to appoint multiple observers and substitutions for them.

Note: Observers appointed to the board office may also observe at any precinct in the county. An appointing authority may have only one such observer, who must file their certificate of appointment with the board. They must also present a copy to the voting location manager at precincts.¹⁰⁰

The board must notify observers of when it will process and count absent voters' ballots and determine provisional ballot eligibility.

- **Appointment Notice Deadline:** 11 days before the first date the observer is appointed to serve.
- **Amendment Deadline:** 4 p.m. the day before the election or the first date the observer is appointed to serve.¹⁰¹

- **Official Canvass Observers**

These appointing authorities may designate a qualified voter to observe the Official Canvass:

- county political party executive committees
- Independent/nonpartisan candidate nominating committees

⁹⁸[R.C. 3505.21\(A\), \(C\); R.C. 3506.13.](#)

⁹⁹[R.C. 3505.21\(C\).](#)

¹⁰⁰[R.C. 3505.21\(C\).](#)

¹⁰¹[R.C. 3505.21\(C\).](#)

- Ballot issue petition committees
- Any committee that opposed a ballot issue and was allowed an observer at the election¹⁰²
- **Appointment Notice Deadline:** Before the Official Canvass begins.
- **Recount Observers**
 - Candidate Recounts:

Each candidate may observe the recount and can designate one additional person. This person does not need to be an elector. If the board performs the recount at multiple stations, the candidate may appoint enough observers to have one at each active station.¹⁰³
 - Question or Issue Recounts:

The committee chairperson supporting or opposing the issue may observe a recount and appoint legal counsel to observe.¹⁰⁴

Appointment Notice Deadline: Within five days after the board posts the notice about recount dates and times.

Recount observers may freely observe but cannot interfere or touch ballots. They cannot challenge the board's determination of whether or not a ballot or vote is counted.¹⁰⁵ Such challenges are reserved for a Contest of Election.¹⁰⁶

- **Post-Election Audit Observers**

Any entity that appointed regular or Official Canvass observers may appoint post-election audit observers.

- **Appointment Notice Deadline:** Within five days after the board issues a public notice about post-election audit date and time.
- **Amendment Deadline:** The day before the post-election audit.

¹⁰²[R.C. 3505.32\(B\).](#)

¹⁰³[R.C. 3515.03](#); [R.C. 3505.21](#).

¹⁰⁴[R.C. 3515.03](#).

¹⁰⁵[OAG 74-103](#).

¹⁰⁶[R.C. 3515.08](#).

FORMS

The Secretary of State's office provides forms for observer appointments. There are two forms for each of the six types of observers ([Forms 214-219](#) and [Form 220](#)).

1. Notice of Appointment and Amendment of Appointment

The appointing authority must notify the board in writing of appointees' names, addresses, and locations where they'll serve. They may file amendments until 4 p.m. the day before the appointed observation date.¹⁰⁷

Amendments may substitute observers at the same location but cannot add new locations or additional observers beyond what's legally permitted.

2. Certificate of Appointment

After filing a timely notice of appointment with the board, the appointing authority must issue a certificate of appointment to the observer.

Observers present their certificate to the appropriate election official when arriving at their observation location.¹⁰⁸

Appointing authorities should file original documents with the board in person. However, fax or email with a PDF attachment is acceptable. The appointing authority is responsible for any transmission problems.

CONGRESSIONAL ELECTION OBSERVERS

The Confirmation of Congressional Observer Access Act of 2024 (COCOA Act) requires states to grant access to Congressional Election Observers for federal elections.¹⁰⁹

A Congressional Election Observer is a House or Senate employee designated in writing by the chair or ranking minority member of:

- The Committee on House Administration of the House of Representatives.
- The Committee on Rules and Administration of the Senate, or any successor committees.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷[R.C. 3505.21\(C\)](#).

¹⁰⁸[R.C. 3505.21\(C\), \(E\)](#).

¹⁰⁹[COCOA Act of 2024](#).

¹¹⁰[COCOA Act of 2024, \(sec.304\)\(d\)](#).

These observers gather information about elections, including for contested elections in Congress.¹¹¹

States must give these observers full access to observe all federal election administration procedures, including areas where ballots are cast, processed, counted, or certified.¹¹²

Congressional Election Observers must not:

- Handle ballots or election equipment.
- Advocate for any position or candidate.
- Reduce ballot secrecy or voter privacy.
- Interfere with voters casting ballots.
- Interfere with election administrator duties.
- Otherwise disrupt election administration.¹¹³

Observers may ask questions of election officials and workers.¹¹⁴

State or local election officials can remove a Congressional Election Observer if they believe the observer has or will engage in:

- Intimidation or deceptive practices prohibited by federal law.
- Disruption of voting, processing, counting, or certification.¹¹⁵

If they are removed, the election official must provide written notice to the relevant Congressional Committee Chairs and Ranking Members within 24 hours explaining why.¹¹⁶

¹¹¹[COCOA Act of 2024. \(sec.304\)\(d\).](#)

¹¹²[COCOA Act of 2024. \(sec.304\)\(b\)\(1\).](#)

¹¹³[COCOA Act of 2024. \(sec.304\)\(b\)\(2\).](#)

¹¹⁴[COCOA Act of 2024. \(sec.304\)\(b\)\(3\).](#)

¹¹⁵[COCOA Act of 2024. \(sec.304\)\(c\)\(1\)\(A\).](#)

¹¹⁶[COCOA Act of 2024. \(sec.304\)\(c\)\(1\)\(B\).](#)

INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS

Sometimes foreign officials visit to learn about U.S. democratic processes, typically through the U.S. Department of State, academic institutions, or similar organizations. Some visits fulfill international treaty obligations.

However, Ohio law limits who may be present in polling locations on Election Day. Only election officials,¹¹⁷ observers, journalists, police officers, people checking voter lists, voters (and their nonvoting age children), or people assisting another voter may enter.¹¹⁸ Since Ohio law doesn't include international observers, they cannot enter polling locations on Election Day.

Section 9.11 Closing the Polls

Train PEOs on proper closing procedures and what to do if voting hours are extended by court order.

All polls must close at 7:30 p.m.¹¹⁹ unless extended by court order.

POLL CLOSING PROCEDURES

About 30 Minutes Before Polls Close

- ❑ PEOs should announce the precinct name repeatedly to voters in line.
- ❑ PEOs should make sure voters are in the correct polling place and precinct.
- ❑ Announce that the polls will close soon but anyone in line at 7:30 p.m. will be able to vote.

Announcement of Close of Polls

- ❑ At exactly 7:30 p.m., the voting location manager must announce, "The polls are closed!"¹²⁰ If people are still waiting to vote, they must be allowed to vote.¹²¹
- ❑ To handle waiting voters:
 - Move the line inside the polling place, or

¹¹⁷As defined in [R.C. 3501.01\(U\)](#).

¹¹⁸[R.C. 3501.35\(B\)](#); [R.C. 3503.23\(C\)](#) [R.C. 3501.35\(B\)\(2\)](#).

¹¹⁹[R.C. 3501.32\(A\)](#).

¹²⁰[R.C. 3505.26](#).

¹²¹[R.C. 3501.32\(A\)](#).

- Place a PEO behind the last person in line at 7:30 p.m. to prevent others from joining.

Court Order

- ❑ If the court extended hours past 7:30 p.m., PEOs need to know who was last in line at 7:30 p.m.
- ❑ Let voters who were in line at 7:30 p.m. vote regular ballots.
- ❑ Voters who arrive between 7:30 p.m. and the court-ordered closing time must vote a provisional ballot¹²²
- ❑ Keep these provisional ballots separate in case the court decision is later overturned.
- ❑ Write "After close of polls by order of the court" on the ID Envelope - Provisional Ballot Affirmation ([Form 12-B](#)).

CLOSING THE POLLING LOCATION

In precincts using direct recording electronic (DRE) voting machines (Touch Screens)

In precincts using DRE machines, PEOs must:

- ❑ Record all ballot statistics on the Balance/Reconciliation Sheet the board provides.
- ❑ Count and record the total number of regular ballots voted (per local board of elections instructions).¹²³
- ❑ Count and record the total number of paper provisional ballots cast by voters who arrived between 6:30 a.m. and 7:30 p.m.
- ❑ In case of a court order, count and record provisional paper ballots cast by voters who arrived after 7:30 p.m.
- ❑ Count and record spoiled or defaced paper ballots.¹²⁴

¹²²[52 U.S.C.A. §21082\(c\).](#)

¹²³[R.C. 3505.26\(E\).](#)

¹²⁴[R.C. 3505.26\(C\).](#)

- ❑ Count and record unvoted paper ballots without removing stubs.¹²⁵
- ❑ Count and record signatures in the pollbook.¹²⁶
- ❑ Post precinct results at the polling location as directed.
- ❑ Double-check ballot statistics and sign the Closing Certificate and Election Day Balance/Reconciliation Sheet.

In Precincts using Optical Scanners

In precincts using optical scanners, the PEOs must:

- ❑ Count and record total regular paper ballots voted.
- ❑ Count and record total paper provisional ballots cast between 6:30 a.m. and 7:30 p.m.
- ❑ **In case of a court order only**, count and record total provisional paper ballots cast after 7:30 p.m.
- ❑ Count and record total damaged paper ballots.
- ❑ Count and record total unvoted paper ballots.
- ❑ Count and record total signatures in pollbooks.
- ❑ Post results at the polling place as directed.
- ❑ Record all statistics (regular, provisional, spoiled and defaced, unvoted) on the Election Day Balance/Reconciliation Sheet provided.
- ❑ Double-check ballot statistics and sign Closing Certificate and Election Day Balance/Reconciliation Sheet.

In Precincts using Electronic Pollbooks

In precincts using electronic pollbooks, PEOs must:

- ❑ Seal each electronic pollbook with a tamper-evident seal before returning it.

¹²⁵[R.C. 3505.26\(B\).](#)

¹²⁶[R.C. 3505.26\(A\).](#)

- ❑ If an electronic pollbook uses removable media storage or produces a paper record, seal these with a tamper-proof seal and put them in a proper container before return.¹²⁷
- ❑ Transport any electronic pollbook, removable media storage, and paper records to the board office, like other election materials.

In All Precincts

Finally, in all precincts, the PEOs must:

- ❑ Bring in flags and remove signs from inside and outside the polling place.
- ❑ Close and pack voting equipment following board directions.
- ❑ Securely pack ballots and supplies.
- ❑ Immediately return them to the board or a designated drop-off location (see Secure Return of Ballots and Election Day Supplies below).

SECURE RETURN OF BALLOTS AND ELECTION DAY SUPPLIES

After closing, a bipartisan team must return all ballots and supplies to the board office or other designated location. The team must include:

- The voting location manager.
- An employee or appointee from a different political party who has sworn to properly transport election materials.¹²⁸

The bipartisan team must travel in the same vehicle. Additional people, such as a law enforcement official, may accompany them. One team may transport the materials for an entire multi-precinct polling location.

¹²⁷[R.C. 3505.31.](#)

¹²⁸[R.C. 3505.31.](#)

Section 9.12 Partisan Primary Elections

CHALLENGES BASED ON PARTY AFFILIATION

PEOs, board members, directors, deputy directors, and clerks can only challenge a voter's party affiliation when they doubt the voter belongs to the party whose ballot they request.¹²⁹

The board cannot require every voter, or those who voted a ballot for a different political party in the past, to sign a "Statement of Person Challenged as to Party Affiliation" ([Form 10-W](#), [Form 10-X](#), or [Form 10-Z](#)) before voting in person or by mail. Such a policy goes beyond what the law allows.¹³⁰ The law expects infrequent party challenges based on an official's personal knowledge, similar to challenges about a person's qualifications or whether they received payment for their vote.¹³¹ Any challenge is serious and shouldn't be automatic.

Ohio's primary process balances voters' participation rights with political parties' association rights. Officials cannot challenge party affiliation unless they have personal knowledge suggesting the voter doesn't belong to that party. In these rare cases, use [Form 10-W](#), [Form 10-X](#), or [Form 10-Z](#) as appropriate, according to [R.C. 3509.06\(D\)](#) and [R.C. 3513.20](#).

ISSUING A BALLOT DURING A PRIMARY ELECTION

When issuing primary election ballots, PEOs should ask voters what type of ballot they want: a political party ballot or issues-only ballot. If voters ask about the choices, the PEO should explain the political party ballot choices, if any. After a voter chooses, the PEO must record this choice in the pollbook by marking either the political party or that an issues-only ballot was requested.¹³²

Next, PEOs must give the voter the proper ballot or voting authority slip/device and direct them to the appropriate voting area.

¹²⁹[R.C. 3513.19\(A\)\(3\)](#).

¹³⁰[R.C. 3513.19](#).

¹³¹[R.C. 3513.19\(A\)](#).

¹³²[R.C. 3513.18](#), there shall be provided in the pollbooks pages on which shall be recorded the names of all electors voting on said question or issue and not voting in such primary.

Section 9.13 Required Postings

REQUIRED POSTINGS, GENERALLY

The board must post several voting-related signs inside and outside the polling location.

Signs Outside

PEOs must place:

- ❑ One large flag at the polling place entrance.¹³³
- ❑ Two small flags 100 feet from the entrance.¹³⁴ These flags establish the “neutral zone”.
- ❑ Directional signs from parking areas or streets to the polling location entrance.

Signs Inside

PEOs must display these notices where voters can easily see them:

- ❑ precinct signs identifying the precinct, especially where lines might form
- ❑ Voting Rights Information Poster
- ❑ Secure the Vote Poster
- ❑ information on federal and state laws against fraud and misrepresentation
- ❑ Special Voting Instructions Poster explaining regular ballot and provisional ballot procedures
- ❑ official sample ballot
- ❑ full text of condensed ballot language for state or local issues
- ❑ notice about voting more than once at the same election ([Form 10-V](#))
- ❑ any other notice or poster required by law or provided by the Secretary of State

Place one set of these notices at eye level for seated voters or those using wheelchairs (about four feet from the floor).

¹³³[R.C. 3501.30\(A\)\(3\).](#)

¹³⁴[R.C. 3501.30\(A\)\(4\).](#)

Before each election, check the [Secretary of State's website](#) for the current list of required signs.

Section 9.14 Prohibitions

CONGREGATING, CAMPAIGNING, DISTRIBUTING FOOD, OR SOLICITING INSIDE A POLLING LOCATION

Polling places are “neutral zones” with specific rules about who may enter and what conduct is allowed.

Only allow these people to enter the polling location during the election:¹³⁵

- election officials¹³⁶
- observers¹³⁷
- police officers
- people checking voter lists
- voters (and their nonvoting age children)
- journalists
- people assisting voters

Place two small U.S. flags 100 feet from the polling place entrance (or as close to 100 feet as possible), marking the neutral zone.¹³⁸ The only people allowed in this zone, or within 10 feet of voters waiting outside the zone, are election officials, observers, police officers, or voters waiting to vote.¹³⁹ No one can campaign, loiter, try to influence voters, or prevent or delay voters from entering or leaving.

¹³⁵[R.C. 3501.35\(B\)](#); [R.C. 3503.23\(C\)](#).

¹³⁶[R.C. 3501.01\(U\)](#). An “election official” includes the following individuals: (1) Secretary of State; (2) Employees of the Secretary of State serving in an elections-related capacity; (3) Members, director or deputy director, and/or employees of a board of elections (including part-time and temporary employees); and (4) Voting location manager and other precinct election officials.

¹³⁷[R.C. 3505.21](#). Includes congressional election observer.

¹³⁸[R.C. 3501.30\(A\)\(4\)](#).

¹³⁹[R.C. 3501.30\(A\)\(1\)](#).

No campaigning, campaign materials, or food distribution is allowed inside the neutral zone.¹⁴⁰ However, these activities are allowed outside the neutral zone (beyond the flags or 10 feet from voters in line).

Ohio law prohibits offering “money or other valuable thing” to influence voting.¹⁴¹ Food, discounts, and similar items count as bribes under Ohio laws.¹⁴²

ATTIRE AND PARAPHERNALIA

Attire and paraphernalia at polling places must follow electioneering laws.¹⁴³ Items or clothing showing the political party names, candidates, or support or opposition to ballot issues are prohibited. PEOs can ask people to remove or cover offending items. If a voter refuses, they must still be allowed to vote if eligible.¹⁴⁴ The official should refer the voter’s name and address to the board in case it wants to consult the county prosecutor.

Acceptable attire includes school spirit wear like jackets, jerseys, or hats with the school’s name or mascot, even if a school levy is on the ballot. Prohibited items explicitly advocate for or against a ballot measure, candidate, or party, like “Vote for Bob” or “Defeat the Levy.” Slogans indirectly related to political issues without specific advocacy are allowed.

Election officials should prioritize maintaining peace and being sure voters can cast their ballots without feeling intimidated.

COLLECTING SIGNATURES AT A POLLING LOCATION

Groups sometimes gather petition signatures outside polling places. This is not permitted inside or within the neutral zone marked by the small U.S. flags.¹⁴⁵ However, they can collect signatures outside the neutral zone.

PROBLEMS WITH CONDUCT AT A POLLING LOCATION

The board must instruct PEOs to contact the board office or law enforcement immediately if they experience problems with anyone’s conduct at a polling place.

¹⁴⁰[R.C. 3501.35\(A\)](#).

¹⁴¹[R.C. 3599.01\(A\)\(3\)](#). See also the prohibitions contained in [R.C. 3599.02](#).

¹⁴²Even a professor’s award of extra credit to a student who votes in an election has been considered “a thing of value.” [OAG 96-033](#).

¹⁴³[R.C. 3501.35\(A\)](#).

¹⁴⁴[R.C. 3501.33](#).

¹⁴⁵[R.C. 3501.35\(A\)](#). *United Food & Commercial Workers Local 1099 v. City of Sidney* (6th Cir. 2004), 364 F.3d 738 (circulators were not deprived of their free speech rights when they were prohibited from collecting signatures within the “campaign-free zone”).

UNLAWFUL POSSESSION OF BALLOTS

No PEO can possess or transfer ballots outside their official Election Day duties.¹⁴⁶

Section 9.15 Media Access to Polling Locations

MEDIA ACCESS INSIDE THE POLLS

As used in this section, members of the media encompass a person engaged in, connected with, or employed by any news medium, including a newspaper, magazine, press association, news agency, or wire service, a radio or television station, or a similar medium. They work in gathering, processing, transmitting, compiling, editing, or disseminating information for the general public.¹⁴⁷

Election officials must give members of the media reasonable access to polling places as long as they don't interfere with workers or voters.¹⁴⁸

Consider these factors when determining reasonable access:

- whether the member of the media is credentialed (from an accredited news source)¹⁴⁹
- how long they stay at a polling location
- length of voter lines
- size and layout of the polling location
- protecting voter privacy during the journalist's presence
- member of the media's conduct
- how the member of the media's presence affects voters and election officials

No one, including members of the media, may disrupt voting, interfere with the election, intimidate voters, or compromise ballot secrecy. The board and voting location

¹⁴⁶[R.C. 3599.07](#).

¹⁴⁷[R.C. 3501.35\(B\)\(2\)](#) establishes that "journalist" has the same meaning as in [R.C. 2923.129](#). That section has since been revised and longer includes the definition of "journalist". The definition provided herein is the definition used in [R.C. 2923.129 prior to September 29, 2015](#), and is the same definition used in other sections of the Revised Code, including in [R.C. 149.43](#).

¹⁴⁸[Beacon Journal Publishing Company, Inc. v. Blackwell](#) (6th Cir. 2004), 389 F.3d 683 at 685; [R.C. 3501.35\(B\)\(2\)](#).

¹⁴⁹A board of elections does not issue credentials to journalists. A journalist should already possess press credentials. These credentials are sufficient to grant the journalist access to a polling location.

managers may remove members of the media if they do these things. Members of the media must ask voters' permission before recording them at polling places.

No one may try to bypass the observer process by claiming to be a member of the media.

Train board employees and voting location workers to inform the director and deputy director when members of the media visit polling places.

EXIT POLLING AT A POLLING LOCATION

Exit polling isn't considered electioneering and is allowed within 100 feet of polling place entrances (within the area marked by the small U.S. flags).¹⁵⁰

People conducting exit polls cannot enter polling places, disrupt the election, or otherwise break the law. They also cannot wear anything that could be seen as campaigning for or against candidates or issues on the ballot.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰*American Broadcasting Co., Inc. v. Blackwell* (S.D. Ohio 2006), 479 F.Supp.2d 719 at 744.

¹⁵¹[R.C. 3501.35](#); [R.C. 3599.24](#).

Chapter 9 Checklist: Election Day

Before Election Day

- ☐ Deliver and secure voting equipment.
- ☐ Prepare and update voter registration lists.
- ☐ Create paper pollbook backups for electronic pollbooks.
- ☐ Train officials on all procedures, especially provisional ballots.
- ☐ Process observer appointments.
- ☐ Prepare signs and required postings.

Election Day Setup

- ☐ Post required flags and signs.
- ☐ Place one large flag at entrance.
- ☐ Place two small flags 100 feet from entrance.
- ☐ Display all required inside notices and posters.
- ☐ Post first copy of registered voter list at 6:30 a.m.

During Voting Hours

- ☐ Verify voter ID and eligibility.
- ☐ Direct voters to correct precincts when needed.
- ☐ Issue proper ballot types (regular or provisional).
- ☐ Update and post voter lists at 11 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- ☐ Provide assistance to voters who request it.
- ☐ Monitor neutral zone for prohibited activities.
- ☐ Process curbside voters when requested.

Closing Procedures

- ❑ Announce closing at 7:30 p.m.
- ❑ Allow voters in line at closing to vote.
- ❑ Count all ballot types and voting statistics.
- ❑ Complete Balance/Reconciliation Sheet.
- ❑ Pack materials securely.
- ❑ Transport all materials via bipartisan team.
- ❑ Post results at the polling location.

Special Situations

- ❑ Handle court-ordered extended hours correctly.
- ❑ Process challenges according to legal requirements.
- ❑ Work with observers properly.
- ❑ Provide reasonable access for journalists.
- ❑ Address voter needs without delay.



CHAPTER 10: CANVASSING THE VOTE¹

Section 10.01 Introduction to Canvassing the Vote

This chapter covers the process for counting votes and certifying election results. The chapter includes the specific steps for conducting both the Unofficial Canvass on Election Night and the Official Canvass within 21 days. It includes how to handle provisional ballots, late-arriving absentees, and tied races. The chapter also details the reporting requirements and retaining election materials.

Section 10.02 Activities Before the Polls Close

PROCESSING ABSENTEE BALLOTS

Return Methods

All absentee ballots must be returned by mail or in person to the board office. No ballot may be returned by fax or email. **Ohio law prohibits the electronic return of an absentee ballot and the processing or counting of any ballot returned electronically.**²

The board must examine each returned absentee ballot envelope for eligibility before removing the ballot from the envelope.³

When Processing Can Begin

The board may begin processing, but not tabulating, absentee ballots no earlier than the day after voter registration closes.⁴

What "processing" includes is described below.

¹[Directive 2026-37](#).

²[R.C. 3509.05\(C\)\(1\)](#).

³[R.C. 3509.06\(D\)\(1\)-\(4\)](#).

⁴[R.C. 3509.06\(F\)](#).

For Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) Ballots

- ☐ Checking if a UOCAVA voter signed the ballot by close of polls.⁵
- ☐ If the board received the UOCAVA ballot by the close of polls on Election Day at the office for in-person delivery, or by the fourth day after Election Day for mail delivery, the ballot is deemed submitted for mailing by 12:01 a.m. on Election Day.⁶
- ☐ **Please note that a postmark is not required for a UOCAVA ballot to be valid.** The board must count an otherwise valid UOCAVA ballot regardless of whether it contains a timely postmark, a late postmark, an illegible postmark, or no postmark.⁷

For All Absentee Ballots

- ☐ Confirming receipt of regular absentee ballots by deadline (7:30 p.m. on Election Day).⁸
- ☐ Opening absent voter's ballot envelopes that are valid.⁹
- ☐ If a ballot is not sealed in the ID envelope, don't look at the markings on the ballot. Place the ballot in the identification envelope and seal it.
- ☐ Determining whether the stub is still attached.¹⁰
- ☐ Preparing ballot for scanning.¹¹
- ☐ Identifying absentee voter's ballots that cannot be read or are rejected by the ballot scanning device to determine if they need to be remade so they can be read by the scanner. This includes remaking UOCAVA ballots transmitted by the board to the UOCAVA voter by email or fax.

Important Reminder: All absentee voters (except those voting in person with ID) must place their ballot in the ID envelope and seal it.¹² Make this requirement clear to voters. If an absentee ballot arrives not sealed in its identification envelope, board employees must seal the envelope. If the ballot isn't inside the ID envelope, don't look at the markings on the ballot; place the ballot in the ID envelope and seal it.

⁵[R.C. 3511.11\(B\)](#).

⁶[R.C. 3511.11\(A\)-\(B\)](#).

⁷[R.C. 3511.11\(B\)](#).

⁸[R.C. 3501.32\(A\)](#); [R.C. 3509.05\(D\)](#).

⁹[R.C. 3509.06\(F\)\(2\)](#).

¹⁰See [R.C. 3509.07\(E\)](#).

¹¹[R.C. 3509.06\(F\)\(4\)](#).

¹²[R.C. 3509.05\(A\)](#).

SECURING EARLY IN-PERSON VOTING MATERIALS

Before starting early in-person absentee voting each day, a bipartisan team of board employees must:

- Inspect all voting equipment and ballot boxes.
- Verify all tamper-evident seals are intact.
- Program voting equipment to use all available security features, including passwords, to open or close the equipment.

At the close of early in-person absentee voting each day, a bipartisan team of board employees must:

- Secure all pollbooks, voting equipment, voted ballots, and ballot boxes.
- Store pollbooks, voting equipment, voted ballots, and ballot boxes in a manner that prevents unauthorized access.
- Ensure that when any voting machine is powered down after the close of early voting each day, the machine does not tabulate any votes cast on it.

Handling Incomplete or Non-Conforming ID Envelopes

If the board receives an absentee ballot ID envelope with missing information or information that doesn't match the voter's registration record, and it can't determine the voter's eligibility without the information,¹³ board employees must:

- Promptly contact the absentee voter (call or email if possible) to quickly notify them about the deficiency on their ID envelope and give them an opportunity to supplement the information on the ID envelope so their ballot can be tabulated.
- Give the voter [Form 11-S](#) to supplement their information.
- Include a courtesy reply envelope (pre-addressed return envelope) with every [Form 11-S](#) issued.

¹³In addition to a person's driver's license number, there are other numbers that appear on the license. If the absentee voter provided a different number found on their driver's license that is not the driver's license number (two alphabet letters followed by six numbers), the Board must notify the voter of such error by phone, by email, or in writing, within two business days of receiving the application or voted ballot. The voter must be permitted to appear in person at the Board office to provide the correct information. In the case of a returned absent voter's ballot, the voter has until the fourth day after Election Day to provide this information to enable their ballot to be counted. See [R.C. 3509.06\(D\)\(3\)\(b\)](#).

- The voter must provide the necessary information in writing on [Form 11-S](#) (in person or by mail).¹⁴

What to Include on Form 11-S

- Print the voter's name and registration address in the spaces provided.
- Identify the specific information that is missing or in error (the "nature of the defect").
- Voter only needs to provide the information that cures the defect.
- Voter must sign and date [Form 11-S](#) only if their original signature on the ID envelope was missing or didn't match the signature on file.

ID Number Mismatch Process

If the voter's Ohio driver license number or last four digits of their Social Security number (SSN) on the ID envelope doesn't match the information in the database, and the voter returns [Form 11-S](#) with the same information, board employees must:

- Review the board's voter registration records, including original paper records if necessary.
- Check before the fourth day before the election.
- Determine if the mismatch is due to a data entry error.

Mailing Form 11-S

If a voter requested the ballot be mailed to an address other than their registration address, and their ID envelope is "defective," board employees must send [Form 11-S](#) to both the registration address AND the ballot mailing address the voter requested.

Form 11-S Deadlines

The board must follow this schedule when reviewing completed absentee ballot ID envelopes and issuing [Form 11-S](#) to absentee voters:

- ☐ For "defective" envelopes received from the start of absentee voting through the third Saturday before an election: Issue [Form 11-S](#) within two business days.

¹⁴[R.C. 3509.06\(D\)\(3\)\(b\)](#). Regardless of whether the voter requested assistance in casting the absentee ballot, if a voter requests assistance to supplement the voter's identification envelope, the board of elections must send two employees, not of the same political party, to the voter to provide assistance. See *Ray v. Franklin County Board of Elections*, No. 2:08-cv-1086, 2008 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 116433, at *19-20 (S.D. Ohio, Nov. 17, 2008).

- ☐ For “defective” envelopes received between the third Monday and last Friday before an election: Issue [Form 11-S](#) within one calendar day.
- ☐ For “defective” envelopes received between the Saturday before an election and 7:30 p.m. on Election Day: Issue [Form 11-S](#) the same day.

“Issued” means [Form 11-S](#) has been presented by the board to the United States Postal Service (USPS) with accurate first-class postage affixed by the board necessary for first-class delivery.

Note: The board doesn’t need to send [Form 11-S](#) for ballots received after 7:30 p.m. on Election Day.

Form 11-S Return Methods

Voters may return completed [Form 11-S](#):

- In person.
- By mail or private delivery service (e.g., UPS, FedEx, etc.).
- Through any person authorized by state law to return the voter’s absentee ballot.¹⁵

For voters with disabilities or UOCAVA voters, the board must provide reasonable accommodations as follows:

- ☐ Voters with Disabilities – Send a bipartisan team of board employees to the voter if they need help to supplement the voter’s ID envelope, even if they didn’t need help with the original ballot.¹⁶
- ☐ UOCAVA Voters – Notify the voter using the same method they requested their ballot (email, fax, or mail).

Form 11-S Deadline

A completed [Form 11-S](#) must be received by the fourth day after the election in order to cure a defective absentee ballot ID envelope and have the ballot included in the Official Canvass, which may begin the fifth day after the election.¹⁷

¹⁵ [R.C. 3509.05\(C\)\(1\)](#); [R.C. 3509.06\(D\)\(3\)\(b\)](#).

¹⁶ *Ray v. Franklin County Board of Elections*, No. 2:08-cv-1086, 2008 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 116433, at *19-20 (S.D. Ohio, Nov. 17, 2008).

¹⁷ See [R.C. 3505.32\(A\)](#); [R.C. 3513.22\(A\)](#); [R.C. 3509.06\(D\)\(3\)\(b\)](#).

MANDATORY STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS FOR COUNTING ABSENTEE BALLOTS

Step 1: Determine Whether the Ballot Was Timely Submitted

In-Person Delivery

- Must be delivered to the board by 7:30 p.m. on Election Day.¹⁸
- May be returned to your board's early voting location for early in-person absentee voting at any time during early voting hours.¹⁹

Mail Delivery

- Non-UOCAVA absentee ballots must be received at your board office no later than the close of polls on Election Day.²⁰
- UOCAVA absentee ballots must be received at your board office no later than the fourth day after Election Day.²¹

Decision Point

- ☐ If the absentee ballot was not timely submitted, reject the absentee ballot.²²
- ☐ If the absentee ballot was timely submitted, proceed to Step 2.

Step 2: Check Required Information

The identification envelope must have enough information to identify the voter and to determine their eligibility to cast the ballot.²³

Minimum Required Information

Name²⁴

- Note: The board must preprint the voter's name from the voter registration record onto the absentee ballot ID envelope.
- If the voter writes a different name that doesn't match the preprinted name, reject the absentee ballot.²⁵

¹⁸[R.C. 3501.32\(A\)](#); [R.C. 3509.05\(C\)\(1\)](#), (D).

¹⁹[R.C. 3509.05\(C\)\(1\)](#); [R.C. 3509.051\(A\)\(1\)](#).

²⁰[R.C. 3509.05\(C\)\(1\)](#), (D).

²¹[R.C. 3511.11\(B\)](#).

²²[R.C. 3509.05\(D\)](#).

²³[R.C. 3509.06\(D\)\(3\)\(a\)](#); [R.C. 3509.07\(A\)](#).

²⁴[R.C. 3509.06\(D\)\(3\)\(a\)\(i\)](#).

²⁵[R.C. 3509.07\(A\)](#).

- Ohio law does not permit an absentee ballot identification envelope to be used as a voter registration update form (i.e., change of name form).

Signature²⁶

- The signature must correspond with the signature in the voter registration file.
- If the signature on the envelope or [Form 11-S](#) doesn't match, reject the absentee ballot.²⁷

Proper Identification²⁸

- Ohio driver license or state ID card number
- Last four digits of voter's Social Security number, or
- Copy of the voter's current and valid photo ID²⁹

See the **Voter Identification Requirement Chart** at the end of this chapter for more information.

Important Notes

- An absentee voter is not required to provide the same form of ID they used when registering.
- If an ID data field in the board system or statewide database is blank, board employees may enter the information from the absentee ID envelope to complete the voter's registration record once the data is confirmed.
- Carefully review voter registration records for errors before rejecting any ballot.
- If the absentee voter has not provided a form of proper identification on the absentee identification envelope or [Form 11-S](#), the board must reject the absentee ballot.³⁰

Decision Point

- ☐ If an absentee voter provided their name, signature, and proper ID on the absentee identification envelope or [Form 11-S](#), and the board can confirm the absentee voter's eligibility, proceed to Step 4.

²⁶[R.C. 3509.06\(D\)\(3\)\(a\)\(iv\).](#)

²⁷[R.C. 3509.06\(D\)\(1\), \(3\)\(b\); R.C. 3509.07\(A\).](#)

²⁸[R.C. 3509.06\(D\)\(3\)\(a\)\(v\).](#)

²⁹[R.C. 3509.06\(D\)\(3\)\(a\)\(v\)\(I\)-\(III\).](#)

³⁰[R.C. 3509.07\(F\).](#)

- ❑ If an absentee voter provided their name, signature, and proper ID on the absentee identification envelope or [Form 11-S](#), but the board cannot determine the absentee voter's eligibility, proceed to Step 3.

Step 3: Check if Voluntary Information on the Absentee ID Envelope Confirms Voter's Eligibility

Only if the board cannot confirm eligibility based on the required information the absentee voter provided, check the voluntary information on the absentee ballot identification envelope.

Residence Address³¹

- Failure to complete the address on an absentee ID envelope is not a reason to reject an absentee ballot.³²
- If sufficient information exists to confirm eligibility, count the ballot.³³
- If the voter has a confidential voter registration record (participant in Safe at Home program), they only need to provide their program participant ID number.³⁴

Preprinted Address Issues

- The board is required to preprint the voter's address as it appears in the voter registration record onto the absentee ballot identification envelope.
- If the voter writes a different address, Ohio law does not permit an absentee ballot ID envelope to be used as a voter registration update form (change of address form).

If an absentee ballot ID envelope shows the voter's registration information is out-of-date and they are required to vote a provisional ballot (for example, if the address written by the voter is outside of the precinct in which the voter is registered), the absentee ballot cannot be counted.³⁵

³¹[R.C. 3509.06\(D\)\(3\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#).

³²[Ne. Ohio Coal. for the Homeless v. Husted](#), 837 F.3d 612, 618, 637-38 (6th Cir. 2016).

³³[R.C. 3509.06\(D\)\(2\)\(a\)](#), (4).

³⁴[R.C. 3509.06\(E\)\(1\)](#).

³⁵[R.C. 3505.181\(A\)\(6\)](#); [R.C. 3509.07\(C\)](#).

Address Evaluation Guidelines

- Mailing address (such as Columbus) may not be the same as the political subdivision (for example, City, Village, or Township) in which the voter resides (for instance, the City of Bexley).
- The political subdivision, ZIP Code, and/or city (as assigned by the USPS) are generally not relevant to eligibility.
- Voter's address is sufficient when the number and street are in your county. **Only use your county's voter registration system or the statewide voter registration database (SWVRD) when determining whether or not the address on an absentee ballot identification envelope is valid.**
- Do not use the property records of a county auditor, county treasurer, or county engineer maps to determine validity.
- If the board must use the voter's address to confirm eligibility, don't require technical precision (i.e., allow for minor errors like reversed digits) and be aware that technical mistakes in the address may not be cited as reasons to reject an absentee ballot.³⁶

Date of Birth³⁷

- Failure to complete the date of birth field on an absentee identification envelope is not a reason to reject an absentee ballot.³⁸
- If sufficient information exists to confirm eligibility, count the ballot.³⁹
- Do not reject an absentee ballot for the sole reason that the date of birth is missing, insufficient, or incomplete.⁴⁰

Decision Point

- ☐ If the board must use date of birth to confirm eligibility, do not require technical precision.⁴¹ Mistakes in date of birth (such as accidental switching of month and

³⁶*Ne. Ohio Coal. for the Homeless v. Husted*, 837 F.3d 612, 618, 637-38 (6th Cir. 2016).

³⁷*R.C. 3509.06(D)(3)(a)(iii)*.

³⁸*Ne. Ohio Coal. for the Homeless v. Husted*, 837 F.3d 612, 618, 637-38 (6th Cir. 2016).

³⁹*R.C. 3509.06(D)(2)(a), (4)*.

⁴⁰*Ne. Ohio Coal. for the Homeless v. Husted*, 837 F.3d 612, 618, 637-38 (6th Cir. 2016).

⁴¹*Ne. Ohio Coal. for the Homeless v. Husted*, 837 F.3d 612, 618, 637-38 (6th Cir. 2016).

year, mistakenly writing the current date, or inverting digits) may not be cited as reasons to reject an absentee ballot.⁴²

- ☐ If the board cannot determine eligibility from the properly provided required information, and the voluntary information on the absentee ID envelope doesn't help confirm the absentee voter's eligibility, the board must reject the absentee ballot.⁴³
- ☐ If the board cannot determine eligibility from the properly provided required information, but the voluntary information on the absentee ID envelope allows the board to confirm the absentee voter's eligibility, proceed to Step 4.

Step 4: Open Eligible Absentee Ballots and Confirm Contents

Decision Point

- ☐ If the eligible absentee ballot contains more than one ballot of any kind, or any voted ballot that the voter was not entitled to vote, reject the absentee ballot.⁴⁴
- ☐ If Stub A is detached from the eligible absentee ballot, reject the absentee ballot.⁴⁵
- ☐ If the correct ballot is enclosed in the absentee identification envelope and Stub A is attached to the absentee ballot, count the ballot.⁴⁶

For Rejected Ballots

1. Write "Not Counted" on the back of the ID envelope.
2. Include the reason, as listed in [R.C. 3509.07](#), that the ballot was not counted.
3. Retain the rejected ballot according to established retention schedules.⁴⁷

TIMING OF BALLOT COUNTING

All valid absentee ballots returned by the close of polls on Election Day, whether returned in person, at a drop box, or by mail, must be included in the Unofficial Canvass.⁴⁸

⁴²*Ne. Ohio Coal. for the Homeless v. Husted*, 837 F.3d 612, 618, 637-38 (6th Cir. 2016).

⁴³[R.C. 3509.06\(D\)\(3\)\(a\)](#); [R.C. 3509.07\(A\)](#); *Ne. Ohio Coal. for the Homeless v. Husted*, 837 F.3d 612, 618, 637-38 (6th Cir. 2016).

⁴⁴[R.C. 3509.07\(D\)](#).

⁴⁵[R.C. 3509.07\(E\)](#).

⁴⁶[R.C. 3509.06\(D\)\(1\), \(2\)\(a\), \(4\)](#).

⁴⁷[R.C. 3509.07](#).

⁴⁸See [R.C. 3505.30](#); [R.C. 3509.05\(D\)](#).

Ballots whose identification envelopes were insufficient but were cured by the fourth day following the election must be included in the Official Canvass.⁴⁹

REMAKING BALLOTS TO RESOLVE TECHNICAL OR VOTER INTENT ISSUES

When Ballots Need to be Remade

Teams of equal numbers of board employees from each major party can sort problem ballots into separate groups or categories for board review. This can be done through early voting and throughout the day on Election Day. The board must review each of these groups to decide which ballots to remake.

- **Damaged or Technical Problem Ballots**

If a team finds a ballot marked correctly but has problems that prevent scanning because the ballot is folded, torn, or mutilated, or the ballot has technical or printing deficiencies (for example, timing marks on the ballot are misaligned, improperly cut ballots are causing skew, etc.), they can remake it. Both the remade and original ballots must stay separate and uncounted until the board determines whether the remade ballots are necessary.

- **Voter Intent Cases**

The board has the power to decide voter intent when a voter marks the ballot differently than instructed.⁵⁰ The board must vote as a board in public session to determine voter intent before remaking these ballots.⁵¹

Look for a consistent mark throughout the ballot that is contrary to voting instructions. Count the following marks as valid if used consistently:

- Circled candidate, question, or issue choice
- Circled oval
- X-mark, checkmark, or other clear mark in the oval
- Marks made with pens that the scanner can't read⁵²

⁴⁹ [R.C. 3505.32\(A\)](#); [R.C. 3509.06\(D\)\(3\)\(b\)](#); [R.C. 3513.22\(A\)](#).

⁵⁰ [R.C. 3505.28](#).

⁵¹ See [R.C. 121.22\(B\)\(1\)\(a\)](#), (C); [R.C. 3505.27](#); [R.C. 3505.28](#).

⁵² [R.C. 3506.21\(B\)\(1\)](#).

After a majority of board members decide voter intent,⁵³ follow the procedures in this chapter for remaking the optical scan ballot. If three board members don't agree on any part, count only the parts of the ballot where three board members do agree.⁵⁴

If a voter marks only part of the ballot incorrectly, don't remake it. Run the ballot through the scanner, which will count only properly marked votes.⁵⁵

Procedures for Remaking Ballots

If the board decides a ballot needs to be remade because it's damaged, has technical problems, or the voter marked the entire ballot incorrectly, then a team remakes it in one of two ways.

Remake Manually

- ☐ One team member reads aloud the voter's choice.
- ☐ Another team member from the opposite party fills in the corresponding oval.
- ☐ Both team members verify that the remade ballot matches the voter's choice.
- ☐ Mark the original ballot to distinguish it from the remade ballot.
- ☐ A best practice is to use a code (such as "OVB1" for Original Voted Ballot 1). Mark the remade ballot with a matching code (such as "RB1" for Remade Ballot 1).
- ☐ Place the code where it won't interfere with counting.
- ☐ After remaking all the eligible ballots, count them.

Do not count any remade ballot until the board confirms it's eligible.

Remake Using Software

The board can also use its voting system's software to remake ballots:

- ☐ A bipartisan team must locate the ballot that needs to be remade.
- ☐ Display the ballot image during an open board meeting.
- ☐ The board must verify and accept any remade ballot before counting it.
- ☐ Print the system report documenting the remake.

⁵³[R.C. 3501.11](#); [R.C. 3505.28](#).

⁵⁴[R.C. 3505.27](#); [R.C. 3503.21](#). Tie votes on voter intent are not submitted to the Secretary of State. See [R.C. 3505.27](#); [R.C. 3503.21](#).

⁵⁵See [R.C. 3506.21\(B\)\(2\)](#).

- ☐ Keep this report with each batch of remade ballots.

Retention of Original and Remade Ballots

Keep both the original and remade ballots for the required time period. For more information, see **Section 10.06, Records Retention** later in this chapter.

Section 10.03 Unofficial Canvass (After the Polls Close)

OPEN MEETINGS DURING THE CANVASS

The board must remain in session from when polls open on Election Day until it receives results from all precincts in the county and reports them to the Secretary of State.⁵⁶

Board members must also meet in person to:

- Determine the validity of provisional ballots.⁵⁷
- Certify official results.⁵⁸
- Certify recount or post-election audit results.⁵⁹

Boards are encouraged to livestream their meetings, particularly during the canvass process. Advertise livestreams on social media and show video of staff doing tasks the public would normally see in person. Always allow the public to attend in person, too.

CONDUCTING THE UNOFFICIAL CANVASS

Conduct the Unofficial Canvass on election night according to state law⁶⁰ and the procedures outlined here. Include all eligible Election Day and absentee ballots in the Unofficial Canvass.⁶¹ Ensure all removable media with tabulated results are properly processed into the board's election management system (EMS). Use a checklist to track each removable media as it is processed.

Conduct the Unofficial Canvass where board members and observers can watch in accordance with [R.C. 3505.21](#).⁶² Count ballots continuously until finished.⁶³

⁵⁶[R.C. 3505.30](#).

⁵⁷[R.C. 3501.11](#); [R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(3\)](#).

⁵⁸[R.C. 3501.11](#); [R.C. 3513.22\(C\)](#).

⁵⁹[R.C. 3501.11](#); [R.C. 3505.331\(A\)](#).

⁶⁰See [R.C. 3505.30](#).

⁶¹See [R.C. 3505.27](#) (requiring the counting of regular ballots cast at precinct polling locations); [R.C. 3509.06\(A\)](#) (requiring the counting of eligible absentee ballots); [R.C. 3511.11\(A\)-\(B\)](#) (requiring the counting of uniformed service and overseas voter absentee ballots).

⁶²[R.C. 3505.27](#).

⁶³[R.C. 3505.29](#).

Include in the Unofficial Canvass:

- All regular ballots cast at polling places.
- Any backup paper ballots.
- All valid absentee ballots received before polls closed.⁶⁴

Do not include:

- Provisional ballots.
- Rejected absentee ballots.

When required, report results for specified contests to the Secretary of State's office periodically through election night.⁶⁵ Instructions will be provided when the Secretary decides periodic reporting is required.

Provide supplemental statistics, described in the **Election Night Reporting, Supplemental Statistics** subsection, when reporting the last precinct or shortly after. Report vote totals promptly, even if supplemental statistics aren't ready. Upload election results, then submit supplemental statistics when ready. Vote totals and supplemental statistics should not be delayed because the board has not yet completed its ballot reconciliation procedures.

Submit supplemental statistics before ending the Unofficial Canvass. These must be submitted before the board and its employees go home at the close of election night.

Post-Election Public Testing of Automatic Tabulating Equipment

Each board must test all automatic tabulating equipment after Election Day counting is done before returns are approved as official.⁶⁶ This ensures accurate counting of votes cast for all contests.⁶⁷

The testing must be completed by a bipartisan team, and the board must publicly announce the time and place of all testing.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ [R.C. 3505.27\(C\)](#).

⁶⁵ [R.C. 3505.27\(C\)](#).

⁶⁶ [R.C. 3506.14\(B\)](#).

⁶⁷ See [R.C. 3506.14\(A\)\(2\)](#).

⁶⁸ [R.C. 3506.14\(C\)](#).

Follow all instructions in [Chapter 5, Sections 5.09 and 5.10](#), when testing the board voting machines and tabulating equipment.

Inspecting and Tabulating Ballots

After testing, the board must designate teams with equal numbers from each major party to inspect and/or tabulate ballots:

1. Optical Scan - Precinct Count (Ballots Tabulated at Precincts)

- ☐ Verify board employees have received removable media and results report from each precinct.
- ☐ Tabulate votes stored on removable media devices.

For ballots (other than provisional ballots) cast at the precinct but not fed into the optical scanner, process them following the central-count procedures below or according to directions above for inspecting and remaking a ballot when needed (for example, a curbside ballot or a ballot placed into the emergency slot of the ballot box during rare instances that the precinct-based scanner was offline, etc.).

2. Optical Scan - Central Count (Ballots Tabulated at Board Office)

The board may scan absentee ballots starting the day after voter registration closes, but don't tabulate them yet.

- ☐ Inspect every ballot rejected by the tabulator to find the cause:
 - The ballot is folded, torn, or damaged.
 - The ballot has misaligned timing marks.
 - Voter consistently failed to follow marking instructions.
 - Ballot contains overvotes.
 - State law allows the board to count the following marks as valid if used consistently throughout a ballot:
 - Circled candidate, question, or issue choice.
 - Circled oval.
 - X-mark, check mark, or other clear mark in the oval.

- Marks made with pens that the scanner can't read.⁶⁹

Remake these ballots so they can be processed. See previous instructions in this chapter on remaking an optical scan ballot.

- ☐ For overvotes (voting for too many candidates), no vote counts for that contest. The board must check the ballot to see if there was any other reason the tabulator rejected it.
- ☐ If a voter filled in the oval for a candidate and also wrote in the same candidate's name, it is not an overvote. Set the ballot aside and remake it.

3. Processing and Tabulating Direct Recording Electronic (DRE) Machine

- ☐ Verify board employees received removable media and reports from each precinct or polling place.
- ☐ Tabulate votes stored on the removable media.

UNOFFICIAL CANVASS OF WRITE-IN CANDIDATES

Ballots with potential write-in votes should be set aside for inspection. Bipartisan teams should inspect and tabulate them.

Count a write-in vote as valid when:

- The voter wrote an eligible candidate's first and last names. Follow the manual hand count instructions in [Chapter 11, Section 11.08](#).
- The voter wrote only the first or last name of the candidate, if only one eligible write-in candidate has that name.

If multiple write-in candidates share the same first or last name, the voter must provide enough information to determine their intent.

For hand counting ballots, follow the instructions in [Chapter 11, Post-Election Audit Procedures](#).

Do not break the seal on the canister or tape on the Voter-Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) to determine unofficial results. If board employees must break the seal for any reason besides recounts or a state-ordered audit, contact the Secretary of State's Elections Division before proceeding.

⁶⁹[R.C. 3506.21\(B\)\(1\)](#).

The board may report as its Unofficial Canvass for write-in candidates the write-in vote totals from its voting system. This counts how many write-in votes were recorded, not whether they were for eligible write-in candidates.

However, the Unofficial Canvass must include only valid write-in votes for eligible candidates when:

- ☐ The only candidates for a contest are write-ins, and there are more candidates than positions to fill.
- ☐ The number of write-in votes for that contest equals or exceeds the number of votes for a candidate whose name is printed on the ballot.

Write-In Candidates on Optical Scan Ballots

If a voter selects a candidate whose name is printed on the ballot and also writes in a candidate, this creates an overvote. The vote doesn't count for that contest. See previous sections on remaking optical scan ballots.

Write-In Candidates on DRE Machines

To count votes for eligible write-in candidates, the board may use:

- Summary reports from DRE machines.
- Additional reports created by precinct election officials (PEOs) as required by the board.
- Data uploaded from voting machines' removable media to the central tabulation system.

ELECTION NIGHT REPORTING (ENR)

The board must report election results for certain contests to the Secretary of State's office using the County Submission System (CSS).⁷⁰ Election Night Reporting standard requirements, by election cycle, are below.

⁷⁰See [R.C. 3505.27\(C\)](#). Please also refer to the *Election Night Reporting User Guide* provided to the board by email pre-election.

Presidential Even-Numbered Year	Statewide and Congressional Offices Even-Numbered Year	Odd-Numbered Years
• President and Vice President of the United States • Justices of the Supreme Court • United States Senator • United States Representative to Congress • State Senator • State Representative • Judge of Court of Appeals • County Commissioners • County Auditor (if a vacancy occurred that requires an unexpired term election) • Prosecuting Attorney • Clerk of the Court of Common Pleas • Sheriff • County Recorder • County Treasurer • County Engineer • Coroner • Judge of Court of Common Pleas • Judge of the County Court • Statewide Issues	• Governor and Lieutenant Governor • Attorney General • Auditor of State • Secretary of State • Treasurer of State • Chief Justice of the Supreme Court • Justice of the Supreme Court • United States Senator • Representative to Congress • State Senator • State Representative • Judge of the Court of Appeals • County Commissioner • County Auditor • Judge of the Court of Common Pleas • Judge of County Court • Statewide Issues	• Statewide Issues

The board can hand-enter the results, but using the upload tool is more efficient and reduces data entry errors. It must use the USB drives provided by the Secretary of State's office to keep the ENR system and election management system secure. Each USB drive can only be used once.

For the Unofficial Canvass, the board needs to provide summary-level election results instead of precinct-level results. Board employees will upload precinct-level results for the Official Canvass.

INITIAL REPORTING

The board must log in to the CSS by 7:45 p.m. on election night. If there are any delays in reporting results, notify Secretary of State personnel immediately.

Vote totals for absentee ballots should be uploaded by 8 p.m. unless there are technical issues. If board employees are uploading partial absentee results, do not count the initial upload again. For help with technical issues, contact the board's voting system vendor.

When the board uploads results, indicate zero precincts reporting.

REPORTING SCHEDULE

Boards must begin uploading absentee results by 8 p.m. and will keep uploading results at set times throughout the night. After the board shares its first summary of election results, report the next results at the time assigned to the county.

If the board expects a delay in reporting results, inform the Secretary of State's office. Once all precincts have reported, the board must enter the final vote totals into its system. The board can report final results before the scheduled reporting time if it is ready.

- **"Half-Hour" Counties**

Counties that report results every half hour must start at 8:15 p.m. and continue at 8:45 p.m., 9:15 p.m., 9:45 p.m., and so on, until all precincts have reported their results.

"Half-Hour" Counties: *Allen, Ashtabula, Athens, Belmont, Butler, Clark, Clermont, Columbiana, Cuyahoga, Delaware, Erie, Fairfield, Franklin, Geauga, Greene, Hamilton, Hancock, Jefferson, Knox, Lake, Lawrence, Licking, Lorain, Lucas,*

Mahoning, Marion, Medina, Miami, Montgomery, Muskingum, Portage, Richland, Ross, Sandusky, Scioto, Stark, Summit, Trumbull, Tuscarawas, Union, Warren, Washington, Wayne, and Wood Counties.

- **“Hourly” Counties**

Counties designated as “Hourly” must report summary election results at the start or end of every hour. The board needs to keep reporting until all precincts have submitted their results. If the board decides to report more often, it must still make sure to report on the hour.

“Top-of-the-hour” counties (e.g., 8 p.m., 9 p.m., etc.): *Ashland, Auglaize, Brown, Champaign, Clinton, Crawford, Darke, Defiance, Fulton, Guernsey, Highland, Huron, Logan, Madison, Mercer, Morrow, Ottawa, Pickaway, Preble, Seneca, Shelby, and Williams Counties.*

“Bottom-of-the-hour” counties (e.g., 8:30 p.m., 9:30 p.m., etc.): *Adams, Carroll, Coshocton, Fayette, Gallia, Hardin, Harrison, Henry, Hocking, Holmes, Jackson, Meigs, Monroe, Morgan, Noble, Paulding, Perry, Pike, Putnam, Van Wert, Vinton, and Wyandot Counties.*

“Bottom-of-the-hour” counties will report once at the “Top-of-the-hour” at 8 p.m. and then at the bottom hour as noted above.

- **Reporting Results for Multicounty Contests**

A board in a less populous county of a multicounty jurisdiction (for an office, question, or issue) must report its county’s results to the board of the most populous county before closing its office.⁷¹ Send the results by email. It’s important for the board of the less populous county to send this final report before adjourning.

The board for the most populous county of a multicounty jurisdiction (for an

Prearrange Multicounty Reporting

The most populous county should contact other counties in the contest to prearrange reporting methods, email addresses, and exchange after-hours office numbers, along with cell phone numbers for the director, deputy director, and board chairperson. If they don’t, the other counties should contact them.

⁷¹[R.C. 3505.30.](#)

office, question or issue) must file a combined final Unofficial Canvass by the deadline set by the Secretary of State. The board may use a report from their central tabulating system, create a report outside their system, or use the reporting form from the Secretary of State's office. The report must include:

- Total number of votes from each county in the contest.
- Sum total for all counties.

SUPPLEMENTAL STATISTICS

Boards must quickly provide additional statistics after reporting the last precinct results, or shortly after. Report vote totals as soon as possible, even if the extra statistics are not ready yet. On election night, upload election results first, then send the statistics when they are available. The required additional statistics are:

Counted Ballots

- Total regular Election Day ballots cast and counted from Election Day precincts (do not include absentee).
- Total absentee ballots, including early in-person and by mail, counted.
- Total regular Election Day and absentee ballots cast and counted as part of the Unofficial Canvass.

Outstanding Ballots

- Total number of outstanding UOCAVA absentee ballots (issued but not yet counted).
- Total number of provisional ballots (issued at the polls or the board office before or on Election Day).

SUMMARY AND FINAL REPORTS

Along with the Unofficial Vote Total Summary Report submitted on election night, print the county results from the board's CSS via the "Current County Results" page. Check that both reports match. The Unofficial Vote Total Summary Report, Group Detail Report, **and** the Signature Form must be emailed to Results@OhioSoS.gov. Instructions outlining this requirement will be provided separately.

After receiving the board's reports, the Secretary of State's office will review them and contact the director.

Both the director and deputy director must stay at the office until this call confirms the board's reports have been received and the results match. The director can then release the board's staff.

Final Unofficial Summary Reports

Even-Numbered Election Years

Send all final summary reports to the Secretary of State's Elections Division. A quorum of the board must be present for the Unofficial Canvass. The director, deputy director, and all board members who were present for the Unofficial Canvass must sign a signature form⁷² provided by the Ohio Secretary of State's office to the board by email. No digital or stamped signatures are allowed for these reports.

Required reports and forms include:

- Unofficial Vote Total Summary Report.
 - Group Detail Report (if not included with Summary Report).
 - Write-In Report.
 - Most Populous Report(s) (when applicable).
 - Signature Form.
- ☐ After completing the Unofficial Canvass, print the county results from the board's CSS via the "Current County Results" page and proof this report against the results from the board's CSS.
 - ☐ Scan and email the Secretary of State's office the board's Unofficial Vote Total Summary Report from the board's voting system. Label it clearly as "<County>'s Unofficial Canvass" and include only the county's vote totals. Email it to the Election Results Inbox; the address is provided in the email sent to the board before Election Day
 - ☐ The director and deputy director must not leave the office until Secretary of State staff calls the director to confirm that the board's reports have been received and

On election night, the Secretary of State's office receives, reviews, and compares the board's Unofficial Vote Total Summary Report and Group Detail Report to ensure the data matches between systems.

⁷²[R.C. 3505.33](#) (stating this requirement for general elections); [R.C. 3513.22\(C\)](#) (stating this requirement for primary elections).

reviewed, and the results match. The director is responsible for releasing the board's staff.

- ☐ Submit valid write-in candidate vote totals, if applicable, by the deadline set by the Secretary of State's office using the reporting form provided to the board by email.
- ☐ If the board is the most populous county for any multicounty district, create a separate summary report showing combined vote totals for all counties for that contest. Label it "<County>'s Unofficial Canvass – Most Populous Report" and send it to the Secretary of State's office by the given deadline. The board may use its voting system, the Secretary of State's form, or some other method to provide this information.
- ☐ If the board is the most populous county with write-in candidates described above, submit combined valid write-in vote totals from all counties for that contest. The deadline for this submission will be provided before the election. Mark clearly which contests include vote totals from other counties.

Odd-Numbered Election Years

Except in odd-numbered years when state issues appear on the ballot, email all final reports to the Elections Division address provided by the Secretary of State's office.

- ☐ After completing the Unofficial Canvass, email the Secretary of State's office the board's unofficial vote total report from the board's voting system. Clearly label it as "<County>'s Unofficial Canvass" with only your county's vote totals.
- ☐ If the board is the most populous county of a multicounty district, create a separate report showing combined vote totals from all counties. Label it "<County>'s Unofficial Canvass – Majority County." The board may use its voting system, Secretary of State Form or some other method to provide this information.

Section 10.04 Required Activities Before Official Canvass

POST-ELECTION CURE PERIOD

Curing a ballot refers to the process where voters can fix or “cure” problems with their ballots to ensure their votes count. The board may start processing cured absentee ballots that were originally received by the close of polls on Election Day, as well as UOCAVA ballots that arrive after Election Day, before the board starts the Official Canvass. However, the board must not count such ballots until the Official Canvass begins.⁷³

Each board conducting an election must be open to the public on each of the four calendar days after Election Day during the hours below to allow voters to cure deficiencies on absentee or provisional ballots, as provided for in state law:⁷⁴

- Wednesday, one day after Election Day 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.
- Thursday, two days after Election Day 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.
- Friday, three days after Election Day 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.
- Saturday, four days after Election Day 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

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

AFFIDAVITS OF RELIGIOUS OBJECTION

If a provisional voter didn’t provide photo ID, they have four days after Election Day to:

- Show their photo ID (not a copy) in person at the board office, or
- Complete a religious objection form ([Form 12-O](#)).⁷⁵

If the voter didn’t have a photo ID because of a religious objection to being photographed and they didn’t complete [Form 12-O](#) when they voted a provisional

⁷³[R.C. 3505.32\(A\)](#); [R.C. 3509.06\(F\)](#); [R.C. 3513.22\(A\)](#).

⁷⁴[R.C. 3505.181\(B\)\(7\)](#); [R.C. 3509.06\(D\)\(3\)\(b\)](#).

⁷⁵[R.C. 3505.181\(B\)\(7\)\(a\)-\(b\)](#).

ballot, they must come to the board office in person and complete the affidavit by the fourth day after Election Day.⁷⁶

By 6 p.m. on the fourth day after Election Day, send all completed religious objection forms to the Secretary of State's office. They will check with the Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) to see if the voter has an unexpired photo ID. This check will be done by the seventh day after Election Day.

A religious objection is not valid if either of the following apply:

- The BMV shows the voter has a current photo ID.
- The last four digits of their SSN provided on the affidavit don't match what's in the SWVRD.⁷⁷

Separate instructions will be provided on how to send this information for each voter from the voter registration system or on a spreadsheet that will be provided with instructions under separate cover.

EXAMINING AND COUNTING PROVISIONAL BALLOTS

Before the Official Canvass, verify eligibility of provisional voters and check provisional ballot statements. Follow the **Step-by-Step process for Examining Provisional Ballots** in [Chapter 8, Section 8.05](#) to determine validity.

During the four days after the election, board staff can sort provisional ballots by category to be later voted on by the board.

Reminders on Counting Provisional Ballots

General Provisional Ballot Reminders

- The board must determine the eligibility of *every* provisional ballot before opening and canvassing any of them.⁷⁸
- Observers may watch this process as allowed by law.⁷⁹

When reviewing voter information on provisional ballot affirmations ([Form 12-B](#)), along with instructions found in [Chapter 8, Section 8.04](#), follow these rules:

⁷⁶[R.C. 3505.181\(B\)\(7\)\(a\).](#)

⁷⁷[R.C. 3505.19\(D\).](#)

⁷⁸[R.C. 3505.183\(F\).](#)

⁷⁹[R.C. 3505.183\(F\).](#)

Date of Birth

- Small mistakes in dates of birth are not valid reasons to reject ballots.⁸⁰

Examples: switched month and year numerals, writing today's date, or flipped digits.

- Before rejecting a provisional ballot because the birth date doesn't match the board's records,⁸¹ take a public vote at a noticed meeting.⁸² (The board may have staff group like ballots together and vote on each group rather than individual ballots.)
- If three board members agree that the ballot is otherwise valid (a qualified elector who provided name, address, signature, and a valid ID), count it.⁸³
- When the only problem is a birth date that doesn't match board records, count the ballot.
- If the birth date field is blank, the board cannot count the ballot.⁸⁴
- Check the board's voter registration records first to see if a board error caused any problems.

Address

- Minor technical mistakes (such as S instead of N) in a street address are not valid reasons to reject ballots.⁸⁵
- The postal address (like Columbus) may differ from political subdivision (city, village, or township) where the voter lives (like Bexley). The political

Important: Only use your county voter registration system or the statewide voter registration database to check addresses on provisional ballot affirmations. Do not use property records of a county auditor or treasurer, or county engineer maps.

⁸⁰ *Ne. Ohio Coal. for the Homeless v. Husted*, 837 F.3d 612, 618, 637-38 (6th Cir. 2016).

⁸¹ *R.C. 3505.183(B)(4)(a)(x)*. State law permits a board of elections to count a provisional ballot when the any of the exceptions exist: (a) the month and day of birth on the provisional envelope match the voter file, but the year of birth is different (e.g., the voter wrote the current year "2016" instead of voter's year of birth as recorded in the voter file), (b) the voter's date of birth in the voter file is "1/1/1800"; or (c) the board of elections has found, by a vote of at least three of its members, that the voter has met all of the other statutory requirements for counting a provisional ballot. *R.C. 3505.183(B)(3)(e)(i)-(ii)*; *Ne. Ohio Coal. for the Homeless v. Husted*, 837 F.3d 612, 618, 637-38 (6th Cir. 2016).

⁸² *R.C. 121.22(B)(1)(a), (C), (F)*; *R.C. 3501.11*.

⁸³ *R.C. 3505.183(B)(3)(e)(ii)*.

⁸⁴ See *R.C. 3505.183(B)(3)(e)*.

⁸⁵ *Ne. Ohio Coal. for the Homeless v. Husted*, 837 F.3d 612, 618, 637-38 (6th Cir. 2016).

subdivision, ZIP Code, and/or city (from USPS) are generally not relevant here.

- The address is valid when the street number and name are in your county (except when the same address exists in two different precincts within the same county).
- Examples for ballots cast by voters in Franklin County:

Street No. & Name	City / ZIP	Political Subdiv.	In County?	Valid?
2598 Ruhl Ave.	Columbus, 43209	Bexley	Yes	Yes
2598 Ruhl Ave.	Bexley, 43209	Bexley	Yes	Yes
63 Pinebrooke	Westerville, 43082	Westerville	No	No

Identification

- A voter is not required to provide the same form of identification on a provisional ballot affirmation that they provided when registering to vote.
- In all other matters relative to voter identification, follow the **Voter Identification Requirement Chart** at the end of this chapter.

Data Fields with Null Values

- If a data field in the county voter registration system (CVRS) or SWVRD is “null” (no data is present, or the field has placeholder values, like “1/1/1800” for birth date), the voter meets requirements when they give this information on the provisional ballot affirmation.
- Board employees may enter this information into the CVRS.

CURING ABSENTEE BALLOT DEFECTS

If an absentee ballot ID envelope is missing required information or contains information different from the voter’s registration record, the board must contact the voter to give them an opportunity to supplement their ID envelope so their ballot can be counted.⁸⁶ Send [Form 11-S](#) to the voter based on when the board receives the problem ballot:

⁸⁶[R.C. 3509.06\(D\)\(3\)\(b\)](#).

- **Start of absentee voting through the third Saturday before Election Day:**
Send [Form 11-S](#) within two business days after a “defective” absentee ballot ID envelope is received.
- **Third Monday through last Friday before Election Day:** Send [Form 11-S](#) within one calendar day.
- **Saturday before the election through the close of polls on Election Day:**
Send [Form 11-S](#) on the same day.

When the board has a voter’s phone number or email address, use it to quickly tell them about the problem.

The absentee voter must return the completed [Form 11-S](#) by the fourth day after the election.⁸⁷ They can deliver it in person or by mail.

DOCUMENT REVIEW

Before the 10th day after an election, the board may check pollbooks, poll lists, and tally sheets and compare them to the summary statements from the PEOs.⁸⁸ Board employees may note and fix any errors they find.⁸⁹

Section 10.05 Official Canvass

TIMELINE

Begin the Official Canvass no *earlier* than five days after the election and no *later* than 15 days after.⁹⁰ Complete the Official Canvass and certify the results no later than 21 days after the election.⁹¹ The earliest the board can certify results is after the end of the post-election cure period (four days after Election Day).⁹²

In some cases, particularly in presidential election years, the Secretary of State may order an *expedited* canvass⁹³ to allow time for recounts and to meet Electoral College deadlines. If this happens:

⁸⁷[R.C. 3509.06\(D\)\(3\)\(b\)](#).

⁸⁸[R.C. 3505.32\(D\)](#).

⁸⁹[R.C. 3505.32\(D\)](#).

⁹⁰[R.C. 3505.32\(A\)](#); [R.C. 3513.22\(A\)](#).

⁹¹[R.C. 3505.32\(A\)](#); [R.C. 3513.22\(A\)](#).

⁹²See [R.C. 3505.181\(B\)\(7\)-\(8\)](#); [R.C. 3505.32\(A\)](#); [R.C. 3509.06\(D\)\(3\)\(b\)](#); [R.C. 3513.22\(A\)](#).

⁹³[R.C. 3505.32\(A\)](#); [R.C. 3513.22\(A\)](#).

- The board must begin its Official Canvass six days after the election and be finished within 15 days after the election.
- This includes certifying results and submitting all reports to the Secretary of State's office.
- Upload precinct-level results to CSS.

If the board finishes its certification early during an expedited canvass, it may upload results 19 days after Election Day.

The Secretary of State's office will send the board a survey to pick a time to upload its results.

CONDUCTING THE OFFICIAL CANVASS

All Voting Systems

Include all valid ballots in the Official Canvass:

- eligible ballots from polling places on Election Day
- eligible provisional ballots
- eligible absentee ballots

Test the board's automatic tabulating equipment before and after counting to verify accurate results.⁹⁴ Follow the instructions in [Chapter 5, Section 5.10](#). Remember to publicly announce the date and time of testing.⁹⁵

Tabulation Instructions for Ballots Containing Votes NOT Included in the Unofficial Canvass

First, count all eligible ballots that weren't in the board's Unofficial Canvass.⁹⁶ These ballots include:

- Provisional ballots.⁹⁷
- Absentee ballots cured during the four day post-election period.⁹⁸

⁹⁴[R.C. 3506.14\(B\)](#).

⁹⁵[R.C. 3506.14\(C\)](#).

⁹⁶See [R.C. 3505.32\(A\)](#), [\(C\)](#); [R.C. 3513.21](#); [R.C. 3513.22\(A\)](#).

⁹⁷[R.C. 3505.183\(F\)](#).

⁹⁸[R.C. 3509.06\(D\)\(3\)\(b\)](#).

- UOCAVA ballots mailed on time that were not received by the close of polls but were received within four days after Election Day.⁹⁹
- Challenged ballots the board determined are eligible.¹⁰⁰

Assign bipartisan teams to inspect and/or tabulate these ballots following central-count optical scan ballots instructions in the **Unofficial Canvass, Section 10.03**.

Tabulation Results for Official Certification

After tabulating all ballots not included in the Unofficial Canvass, continue the Official Canvass.

Optical Scan Ballots

- ☐ Upload the removable media with votes centrally counted during the Unofficial Canvass or reimport the data from a saved location.
- ☐ Upload precinct/polling location removable media with votes counted during the Unofficial Canvass, if applicable.
- ☐ Verify the count matches the unofficial count.

If the counts don't match, the board must contact a Secretary of State's Elections Administrator before continuing the canvass.

If the counts match, combine these results with the results of those ballots that weren't in the Unofficial Canvass.

Direct Recording Electronic (DRE) Voting Machines

- ☐ Upload data from removable media containing votes counted during the Unofficial Canvass.
- ☐ Verify the count matches the board's unofficial count.

If the counts don't match, the board must contact a Secretary of State's Elections Administrator before continuing the canvass.

Do not break the seal on the canister or the tape on the Voter-Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) to determine official results. If your board must break the seal for any reason besides recounts or a state-ordered post-election audit, it must contact the Secretary of State's Elections Division first.

⁹⁹[R.C. 3511.11\(B\)](#).

¹⁰⁰See [R.C. 3505.20](#).

If counts match, combine the rerun results of the Unofficial Canvass with the results of those ballots that weren't in the Unofficial Canvass.

RESOLVING TIES

If, after canvassing all votes, more than the number of candidates to be nominated or elected receive the largest and an equal number of votes, the board chair must break the tie by lot.¹⁰¹ Do this in front of a board majority at a properly-noticed public board meeting.¹⁰² Declare the winner before certifying results for that office and ordering a recount.

REPORTS

The Secretary of State's office will provide templates for reporting results. All certifications and reports must be signed by a majority of the board's members before submission.¹⁰³ No digital or stamped signatures are allowed for these reports. Post a copy of the certified election results in the board office for at least five days.¹⁰⁴

Each board must submit the signature form to the Secretary of State's office, provided separately, to certify official election results, including:

- Valid write-in vote totals.
- Supplemental reports for absentee ballots, provisional ballots, and ballots cast by precinct.

Certification of Official Summary Results to the Secretary of State¹⁰⁵

- After completing the Official Canvass, email the Secretary of State's office the Official Vote Total Summary Report generated by the board's voting system. Clearly label it as "<County>'s Official Canvass" with **only** your county's vote totals.
- In addition to the Total Summary Report, include the Group Detail Report (if not included with the Summary Report), the signature form, report forms, electronic

¹⁰¹[R.C. 3505.33](#). Examples of methods used to break a tied candidate race "by lot" include, but are not limited to, the Chair flipping a coin, drawing straws, picking a name written on paper out of a hat, or cutting cards. By contrast, a board does not break a tie in the case of a ballot issue that received an equal number of votes for and against the issue; that issue fails by operation of law, because it did not receive a majority of affirmative votes. See [Ohio Ballot Questions and Issues Handbook](#), at Appendix A (2026).

¹⁰²[R.C. 121.22\(B\)\(1\)\(a\), \(C\), \(F\)](#); [R.C. 3505.33](#); [R.C. 3513.22\(C\)](#).

¹⁰³[R.C. 3505.33](#) (stating this requirement for general elections); [R.C. 3513.22\(C\)](#) (stating this requirement for primary elections).

¹⁰⁴[R.C. 3505.33](#); [R.C. 3513.22\(C\)](#).

¹⁰⁵[R.C. 3505.33](#).

turnout detail by precinct, Statement of Votes Case (SOVC) report, and the absentee and provisional ballot report.

- If the board is the most populous county for any jurisdiction, create a separate report from its voting system, create a report outside the board's voting system, or use a reporting form provided for this purpose. Clearly label it "<County>'s Official Canvass – Most Populous County." Include the total number of votes recorded for the office, question, or issue from each county and the sum total for all counties.¹⁰⁶
 - Mark clearly which contests include vote totals from other counties.

Certification of Official Summary Results to Senate President

Send copies of the board's general or special election official results by email to the President of the Senate for:

- The joint offices of Governor and Lieutenant Governor
- Attorney General
- Auditor of State
- Secretary of State
- Treasurer of State
- United States Senator
- U.S. House of Representatives
- Justices of the Supreme Court of Ohio
- State question or issue(s)¹⁰⁷

Also, if the board is in the most populous county of a district contest for U.S. House of Representatives, send a copy of its official, district-wide results for that district contest **by email** to the President of the Ohio Senate.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶See [R.C. 3505.36](#).

¹⁰⁷[R.C. 3505.33](#).

¹⁰⁸[R.C. 4301.39\(A\)](#).

Certification of Official Summary Results for Local Liquor Option Questions and Local Questions and Issues

Each board must send a completed copy of [Form 126-B](#) to the Secretary of State's Elections Division via email, and to the Ohio Division of Liquor Control¹⁰⁹ via email at LocalOption@com.Ohio.gov, or mail to the following address:

Division of Liquor Control
6606 Tussing Road
Reynoldsburg, Ohio 43068-9005

Certification of Results to the Supreme Court of Ohio

Send election results (most populous county only for multicounty seats) to Supreme Court of Ohio at JudicialElectionResults@sc.ohio.gov.

Certification of Other Types of Questions or Issues

Depending on the type of question or issue, send certification of results to other offices. Forms are available on the Secretary of State's website.

Only the most populous county for multicounty questions or issues needs to provide certification to the offices listed below.

For tax levies and bond issues, certify results to:

- ☐ County auditor of each county where the election was held.
- ☐ Fiscal officer of the subdivision where the election was held.
- ☐ Tax Commissioner of the State of Ohio at dte@tax.state.oh.us.
- ☐ Secretary of State at Results@OhioSoS.gov.

For school district income tax, certify results on [Form 125-A](#) to:

- ☐ The board of education that placed the issue on the ballot.¹¹⁰
- ☐ Ohio Tax Commissioner¹¹¹ at:
Tax Equalization Division
30 E. Broad St., 21st floor
P.O. Box 530
Columbus, OH 43216-0530

¹⁰⁹[R.C. 4301.39\(A\).](#)

¹¹⁰[R.C. 5748.03\(C\).](#)

¹¹¹[R.C. 5748.03\(C\).](#)

☐ Secretary of State at Results@OhioSoS.gov.

Absentee and Provisional Ballot Supplemental Reports

State law requires the Secretary of State to publish a report on absentee and provisional ballots cast and counted.¹¹² Provide this data for absentee and provisional ballots using the form from the Secretary of State's office.

Electronic Precinct-Level Official Canvass Results Report

In even-numbered election years and whenever state issues appear on the ballot, each board must upload an electronic precinct-level results file by the specified deadline. The upload tool will allow the board to do this without data entry errors. The board must use the file format provided by the Secretary of State's office.

The board must also email a separate report showing turnout by precinct from its county's central tabulating system.

TIMELINE FOR REPORTS

Submit all properly completed certifications, signature forms, report forms, and electronic precinct-level results files via upload (if applicable), and electronic turnout detail by precinct via email (if applicable) to the Secretary of State's Elections Division by the specified deadlines.

Keep copies of all completed certification and report forms at the board office.

Section 10.06 Elections Records Retention

GENERAL RULES

Keep records according to:

- Laws that set specific retention periods.
- Retention periods set by the Secretary of State and the county records commission.¹¹³

Contact the county records commission for proper procedures and forms before destroying records.

¹¹²[R.C. 3501.05\(Y\)](#).

¹¹³[R.C. 149.38\(B\)\(1\)](#).

The county records commission includes:

- A county commissioner (as the commission's chairperson).
- Prosecuting attorney.
- Auditor.
- Recorder.
- Clerk of court of common pleas.¹¹⁴

The commission meets when called by the chairperson to create rules for keeping and disposing of county records.¹¹⁵ They review and revise retention schedules, and make sure proper procedures are followed.

The Secretary of State has a [retention schedule](#) for all election-related documents. The board must follow this schedule. For records not listed, check the county retention schedule or ask the county prosecutor.

The link to the latest retention chart is in [Appendix A. Resources](#).

The Secretary of State's office cannot advise the board on public records requests. Consult the county prosecutor before responding to any request or disposing of public records.

SEALED ELECTION MATERIALS

Ballots¹¹⁶ cannot be disclosed or inspected pursuant to a public records request. They must stay sealed until any possible recount or election contest is completed.¹¹⁷ A court order may require ballots to stay sealed for a longer period of time.¹¹⁸

Pollbooks cannot be disclosed or inspected pursuant to a public records request; they must stay sealed until the board completes the Official Canvass.¹¹⁹ A court order may require pollbooks to stay sealed for a longer period of time.¹²⁰

¹¹⁴[R.C. 149.38\(A\).](#)

¹¹⁵[R.C. 149.38\(A\).](#)

¹¹⁶“[B]allots’ include[] any forms in which a record of a vote exists.” [2004 Ohio Atty.Gen.Ops. No. 2004-050, at 2-424.](#)

¹¹⁷[2004 Ohio Atty.Gen.Ops. No. 2004-050, at 2-429.](#)

¹¹⁸[2004 Ohio Atty.Gen.Ops. No. 2004-050, at 2-428.](#)

¹¹⁹[2004 Ohio Atty.Gen.Ops. No. 2004-050, at 2-431.](#)

¹²⁰[2004 Ohio Atty.Gen.Ops. No. 2004-050, at 2-431.](#)

Provisional ballot envelopes cannot be disclosed or inspected pursuant to a public records request. They must stay sealed until any possible recount or election contest is completed. A court order may require provisional ballot envelopes to stay sealed for a longer period of time.¹²¹

The board cannot release information through the free access system to anyone except the voter who cast that ballot. The free access system is the toll-free number for voters to check if their ballot has been counted, established in [R.C. 3505.181\(B\)\(5\)\(b\)](#).¹²² If the board receives a request for sealed materials, consult the county prosecutor.

RETENTION OF BALLOTS

After the recount or election contest period ends, the board must still keep all ballots created for an election.¹²³

- Federal election ballots (both used and unused): at least 22 months following the election.¹²⁴
- Non-federal election ballots (both used and unused): at least 81 days following the election.¹²⁵
- Court orders or pending lawsuits may require a longer retention period.¹²⁶

Election data stored on voting machines' internal memory, removable media, and tabulation servers must be treated as ballots. Keep this data for either 81 days or 22 months, depending on the election type.

The board may transfer data from its tabulation server or removable media to another storage device before the retention period ends as long as it gives public notice at least two business days before the transfer. Keep any device with the transferred voting information for six years from the election date.

The board cannot clear voting machine memory before the retention period ends unless it conducts a recanvass of the election and transfers the data to another source. [R.C. 3505.31](#) states:

¹²¹2011 Ohio Atty.Gen.Ops. No. 2011-012, at 2-105 (citing 2004 Atty.Gen.Ops. No. 2004-050, at syllabus, paragraph 1).

¹²²2011 Ohio Atty.Gen.Ops. No. 2011-012, at 2-105.

¹²³[R.C. 3505.31](#).

¹²⁴[R.C. 3505.31](#). See also [52 U.S.C. § 20701](#).

¹²⁵[R.C. 3505.31](#).

¹²⁶2004 Ohio Atty.Gen.Ops. No. 2004-050, at 2-428.

"In counties where voting machines are used, if an election is to be held within the eighty-one days immediately following a primary, general, or special election or within any period of time within which the ballots have been ordered preserved by the secretary of state or a court of competent jurisdiction, the board, after giving notice to all interested parties and affording them an opportunity to have a representative present, shall open the compartments of the machines and, without unlocking the machines, shall recanvass the vote cast in them as if a recount were being held. The results shall be certified by the board, and this certification shall be filed in the board's office and retained for the remainder of the period for which ballots must be kept. **After preparation of the certificate, the counters may be turned back to zero, and the machines may be used for the election.**"

Follow these steps for recanvass:

- ☐ Provide public notice at least five business days before the recanvass.
- ☐ The recanvass must be open to the public.
- ☐ Before transferring data from DRE machine's internal memory:
 1. Create a separate election data file on the board's tabulation server.
 2. Download data from the internal memory to removable media.
 3. Download voting results from cards to the separate election data file on the board's tabulation server.
 4. Rerun (tabulate) the voting results.
 5. Verify the count matches the unofficial certification count.
 6. Certify the recanvass results.

Do not break the seal on the canister or tape on the Voter-Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) for the recanvass. If the VVPAT seal must be broken for any reason besides recounts, notify the Elections Division of the Secretary of State's office first.

After downloading data from internal machine memory, make sure it's saved on the board's tabulation server before clearing the

If counts don't match, compare original voting results still on the voting machine internal memory to unofficial results on the tabulation server and find the cause of the difference.

memory of the machine. The board must keep the transferred data for 81 days after a non-federal election, or 22 months after a federal election.¹²⁷

¹²⁷[R.C. 3505.31](#).

Chapter 10 Checklist: Canvassing the Vote

Before Election Day

- ☐ Test all voting equipment using bipartisan teams.
- ☐ Give public notice of all testing.
- ☐ Begin processing absentee ballots (scanning but not tabulating).
- ☐ Train PEOs on proper polling place closing procedures.

Election Night (Unofficial Canvass)

- ☐ Count all regular ballots from polling places.
- ☐ Count all valid absentee ballots received by the close of polls.
- ☐ Process and tabulate all removable media from voting equipment.
- ☐ Track each removable media device using a checklist.
- ☐ Review voter intent issues and remake ballots as needed.
- ☐ Count valid write-in votes when required.
- ☐ Report results to Secretary of State as directed.
- ☐ If the board is a less populous county, report to most populous county for multicounty races.
- ☐ If the board is a most populous county, compile results from all counties.
- ☐ Submit supplemental statistics.
- ☐ Document everything with proper signatures.

Between Unofficial and Official Canvass

- ☐ Review provisional ballots for eligibility (don't open them yet).
- ☐ Check for date of birth, address, and ID issues.
- ☐ Hold board votes on provisional ballots with date of birth issues.
- ☐ Examine pollbooks, poll lists, and tally sheets.

- ❑ Fix any errors, defects, or omissions found.

Official Canvass

- ❑ Begin between five to 15 days after election.
- ❑ Test tabulation equipment before and after counting.
- ❑ Process all provisional ballots deemed valid.
- ❑ Process all absentee ballot ID envelopes that have been cured within four days of Election Day.
- ❑ Process valid UOCAVA ballots received within four days of the election.
- ❑ Process any resolved challenged ballots.
- ❑ Combine these results with the Unofficial Canvass results.
- ❑ Break any ties using the lot method in a public meeting.
- ❑ Prepare and submit all required reports.

Records Retention

- ❑ Keep all ballots sealed until the recount/contest period ends.
- ❑ Keep federal election materials for 22 months.
- ❑ Keep non-federal election materials for 81 days.
- ❑ Follow proper procedures before clearing voting machine memory.
- ❑ Document all records according to the retention schedule.
- ❑ Consult with county prosecutor before releasing records.

Special Situations

- ❑ If voting hours are extended by court order:
 - Track voters arriving after normal closing time.
 - Issue provisional ballots to these voters.
 - Mark these provisional envelopes appropriately.

- Keep these provisional ballots separate.
- ▣ If the board needs to clear machine memory before the retention period:
 - Give public notice five days before recanvass.
 - Conduct public recanvass with bipartisan teams.
 - Transfer data to secure storage.
 - Verify all data matches original counts.
 - Create and file certification of the recanvass.

Voter Identification Requirement Chart

Form of ID	Register to Vote	In-Person Absentee Voting	Election Day Voting	Absentee Voting by Mail	Provisional Voting
Ohio Driver License or ID Number	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗
Last 4 of SSN	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗
Ohio Driver License or ID with Current Address	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ohio Driver License or ID with Former Address	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Military or Military Dependent ID, Veteran ID	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
US Passport or Passport Card	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Utility Bill, Bank Statement, Government Check, Paycheck, or Other Government Document with Current Address	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗



CHAPTER 11: POST-ELECTION ACTIVITIES¹

Section 11.01 Post-Election Activities Introduction

After an election, the board must update voter history. It also must verify results through recounts when margins are close and conduct post-election audits of at least five percent of votes cast. The board will use bipartisan teams to manually count ballots, compare them to electronic results, and document any discrepancies that could change election outcomes. These post-election verification processes ensure transparency and accuracy, maintaining voter confidence in Ohio's election system. Finally, the board must issue certificates of nomination/election.

Section 11.02 Voter History

The board must upload voter history to the Statewide Voter Registration Database (SWVRD) no later than 14 days after the official certification.²

Mark a voter as having voted in an election, only if any of the following are true:

- The voter signed the pollbook on Election Day.
- The voter timely returned their ID envelope (including Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) and Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB)), and their ballot was counted.
- The voter voted early in person during the absentee voting period.
- The voter cast a provisional ballot that was counted.³

¹[Directive 2026-38](#)

²Counties with more than 100,000 registered voters must email the Elections Division to schedule their upload in advance.

³[R.C. 3503.15\(C\)\(10\)](#).

After primary elections, program the county voter registration system to show a voter's party affiliation, in accordance with paragraph seven of [R.C. 3513.05](#).

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.

Section 11.03 Recounts - Types

There are two types of recounts: automatic and requested.

AUTOMATIC RECOUNT

The board must conduct an automatic recount when the vote difference between winning and losing nominees, candidates, questions, or issues, is less than a certain percentage of total votes cast. The percentage is described in **Section 11.04** below on automatic recounts.⁴

Recounts: The process of recounting all ballots counted in the Official Canvass and reexamining the reconciliation of the records for a specific contest in an election.

REQUESTED RECOUNT

A requested recount occurs only when an automatic recount is not required by [R.C. 3515.011](#). A requested recount may come from:⁵

- Any candidate who was not declared nominated or elected.
- Any group of five or more qualified voters who voted for a defeated question or issue or voted against a winning question or issue.

Section 11.04 Automatic Recounts

BOARD-DECLARED AUTOMATIC RECOUNTS FOR ELECTIONS WITHIN THE COUNTY

The board must order an automatic recount for any race or issue within your county when the difference between votes cast for a declared winner and loser is less than **one-half of one percent (0.5 percent)** of total votes cast in the contest. Calculate this by

⁴[R.C. 3515.011](#).

⁵[R.C. 3515.01](#).

multiplying total votes by 0.005.⁶ See examples in the subsection below on **Calculating Automatic Recounts**.

When the board orders an automatic recount, follow the procedures outlined in [R.C. 3515.04](#), [R.C. 3515.05](#), and this chapter.

Notify the Secretary of State's office about:

- The race, question, or issue being recounted.
- The date, time, and location of the recount.

SECRETARY OF STATE-DECLARED AUTOMATIC RECOUNTS OF MULTICOUNTY DISTRICT ELECTIONS

The Secretary of State must order automatic recounts for multicounty district races or issues when the difference between votes cast for the declared winner and loser is less than **one-half of one percent (0.5 percent)** of total votes cast in the contest.⁷ This is calculated by multiplying the vote totals by 0.005. See examples in the subsection below on **Calculating Automatic Recounts**.

The most populous county must:

- Notify the Secretary of State's office of the official results⁸ (the vote totals from each county as well as the grand total for the race, question, or issue).
- Request the Secretary to order the automatic recount.

Each board in the multicounty district must:⁹

1. Schedule the recount within the timeframe given in the order from the Secretary of State's office.
2. Notify everyone who must receive notice of the recount.
3. Tell the Secretary of State's office the date, time, and location of the recount.
4. Conduct the recount.¹⁰

⁶[R.C. 3515.011](#).

⁷[R.C. 3515.011](#).

⁸[R.C. 3515.03](#).

⁹[R.C. 3515.03](#).

¹⁰[R.C. 3515.04](#).

5. Report results to the most populous county.

The most populous county then reports results from each county in the multicounty district to the Secretary of State's office.¹¹

SECRETARY OF STATE-DECLARED AUTOMATIC RECOUNTS IN STATEWIDE ELECTIONS

The Secretary of State must order an automatic recount for any statewide election when the vote difference between votes cast for the declared winner and loser is less than **one-fourth of one percent (0.25 percent)** of the total votes cast in the race or issue.¹²

In a statewide recount, each board must:

1. Conduct a recount in its county for the specified contest according to procedures in this section.
2. Report its recount results directly to the Secretary of State's office.¹³

Calculating Automatic Recounts

When One Candidate will be Elected or Nominated

Where there are multiple candidates for a single office but only one to be elected, add all votes in that race together to get the total. For example:

- Candidate A 2,845 votes (declared elected or nominated)
- Candidate B 2,815 votes (declared defeated)
- Candidate C 2,795 votes (defeated)

The total vote for the office is 8,455. One-half of one percent (0.50 percent) of 8,455 is 42.275 ($8,455 \times 0.005$); don't round this number.

Candidate A defeated Candidate B by 30 votes, which is less than 42.275. Since the difference is less than one-half of one percent (0.5 percent), the board would order an automatic recount of votes for all three candidates.

¹¹[R.C. 3515.05.](#)

¹²[R.C. 3515.011.](#)

¹³[R.C. 3515.05.](#)

When Several Candidates will be Elected or Nominated

When several candidates will be elected, only count votes for the candidates whose position is in question. The term “declared winning candidate” means the candidate whose nomination or election is in question.

Using the example below, if five candidates run for three open seats, only the votes cast for Candidates 3, 4, and 5 are regarded as the “total votes” cast for the third seat in computing the margin for an automatic recount. Your board would not include votes cast for Candidates 1 and 2 because their nomination or election is not in dispute.

Declared Winning Candidate: The candidate whose nomination or election is in dispute.

For example:

- Candidate 1 4,200 votes (elected or nominated)
- Candidate 2 2,301 votes (elected or nominated)
- Candidate 3 2,300 votes (declared elected or nominated)
- Candidate 4 2,275 votes (declared defeated)
- Candidate 5 2,250 votes (defeated)

The votes cast for Candidates 3, 4, and 5 total 6,825. One-half of one percent of 6,825 is 34.125 ($6,825 \times 0.005$). Don’t round this number.

Candidate 3 defeated Candidate 4 by 25 votes, which is less than 34.125. Since the difference is less than one-half of one percent (0.5 percent), your board must order an automatic recount. Only recount votes cast for Candidates 3, 4, and 5.

Tied Contest Triggers Automatic Recounts

Any tied contest from the Official Canvass triggers an automatic recount.

For tied candidate races, the board should have resolved the tie by lot at the end of the Official Canvass. If it didn’t, the board must break the tie by lot before starting the recount. The board can only resolve a tie by lot during a public meeting with a board majority present.¹⁴

¹⁴[R.C. 3505.33](#); [R.C. 3513.22 \(C\), \(D\)](#).

Section 11.05 Requested Recount

TYPES OF REQUESTED RECOUNTS¹⁵

Requested Recounts Within a County

Any defeated candidate, nominee, or issue group may file a written request via a letter with the board for a recount of votes in any precinct where the race, question, or issue appeared on the ballot. When the board receives a valid recount request letter, promptly notify the Secretary of State's Elections Division.

Requested Recounts of Multicounty District Elections

Any defeated candidate, nominee, or issue group may file a written letter with the board of the most populous county of the district for a recount of votes in any precinct and in any of the counties where the contest appeared on the ballot. When the board receives a valid recount request letter, promptly tell the Secretary of State's Elections Division.

Requested Recounts in Statewide Elections

Any defeated statewide candidate, statewide nominee, or group for or against a statewide question or issue may file a written request letter with the Secretary of State's office for a recount of votes in any precinct in any county.¹⁶

REQUESTING RECOUNTS¹⁷

Written Letter Requesting a Recount¹⁸

Any declared a losing candidate, or a group of five qualified electors, can request a recount of the election results, as certified by the board, within five days after the board or Secretary of State declares official results.

Where to send the letter:

- Single county contest: filed with that county's board.
- Multicounty contest: filed with the board of the most populous county.
- Statewide contest: filed with the Secretary of State's office.

¹⁵In this section, **recount of votes** means for the race, question, or issue.

¹⁶[R.C. 3515.02](#).

¹⁷[R.C. 3515.01](#).

¹⁸[R.C. 3515.01](#); [R.C. 3515.02](#); [R.C. 3515.03](#).

For Candidate Elections

A candidate not declared nominated or elected may request in writing a recount of votes cast in that contest in some or all precincts where that contest was submitted to the voters.¹⁹

For Questions or Issues

A group of five voters who voted opposite to the certified result may request in writing a recount of votes in some or all precincts where it was on the ballot. In other words, if the question or issue passed, they had voted against it; if the question or issue failed, they had voted for it.

The group filing for a recount must choose one member as chairperson to receive notices about the recount.²⁰

Deposit

The deposit serves as a security to cover the cost of the recount.²¹ If not all requested precincts are counted, the board must refund any unused balance to the applicant(s).²²

Amount

Recount applicants must pay \$80 per precinct²³ by cash, bank money order, bank cashier's check, or certified check.²⁴ Check Biennial Adjustment advisories for any change in recount charges.

Special Depository Fund

The board must deposit all funds from an applicant in a special account with the county treasurer. Include this line item in the board's yearly budget to ensure prompt deposits. Pay recount expenses and refunds from this fund. Any balance that wasn't spent or refunded to the applicant must go into the county's general fund.²⁵

¹⁹[R.C. 3515.01.](#)

²⁰[R.C. 3515.01.](#)

²¹[R.C. 3515.03.](#)

²²[R.C. 3515.07.](#)

²³Last set February 25, 2025, in the [Biennial Adjustment of Recount Charges Advisory 2025-01](#). Boards should always check the most recent [Biennial Adjustment advisories](#) for subsequent changes.

²⁴[R.C. 3515.03](#); [R.C. 3515.072](#).

²⁵[R.C. 3515.07.](#)

ASSESSING RECOUNT CHARGES

Calculating Charges

Calculate all expenses the board incurs due to the request (except regular operating expenses that the board would have incurred whether or not the recount was requested).

The charge per precinct equals the board's total expenses divided by the number of precincts recounted. This charge:

- Cannot exceed \$80 per precinct.
- Cannot be less than \$5 per precinct.²⁶
- Is charged on a per-precinct basis.

Deduct the charge per precinct from the applicant's deposit and refund the balance.²⁷

When Charges Are Not Assessed

Do not deduct charges when either of the following occurs:

- The recount shows that the total number of votes cast in the precinct for the applicant is more than four percent greater than the number of votes originally recorded in that precinct.
- The recount changes the outcome (candidate wins or issue result flips).²⁸

Section 11.06 Preparing for a Recount

SCHEDULING A RECOUNT AND PROVIDING WRITTEN NOTICE

Scheduling

After ordering an automatic recount or receiving a valid request letter, promptly:²⁹

1. Set the time, method, and place for the recount.
2. Hold the recount within 10 days of the order or request letter receipt.

²⁶Last set February 23, 2023, in the [Biennial Adjustment of Recount Charges Advisory 2023-02](#). Boards should always check the most recent [Biennial Adjustment advisories](#) for subsequent changes.

²⁷[R.C. 3515.07](#); [R.C. 3515.072](#).

²⁸[R.C. 3515.07](#).

²⁹[R.C. 3515.03](#).

3. Notify the board of the most populous county (for multicounty recounts) or the Secretary of State (for statewide recounts) of the board's scheduled recount date.

Notice

At least five days before the board's scheduled recount, send notice by certified mail of the time and place of the recount to:³⁰

- Each person who received votes in the contest being recounted.
- For questions or issues, the chairperson of the group who applied for the recount and/or taxing authority, or petitioners who submitted the question or issue to the board.

Waiver of Notice

The board may waive the requirement to mail notice if it receives a written waiver from each person entitled to receive notice.³¹ Even with waivers, the board cannot schedule a recount earlier than the fifth day after completing its official certification.

Observers

Only board members, directors, deputy directors, or designated employees may handle ballots during a recount.³² Appointed observers may attend any recount.³³ See [Chapter 9, Section 9.10](#), for details on recount observers.

Journalists are permitted to attend a recount.

Section 11.07 Stopping an Automatic Recount

BEFORE AN AUTOMATIC RECOUNT STARTS

After an automatic recount is ordered but before it begins, the declared defeated candidate or issue chairperson for the losing side may ask in writing to stop the recount. If more than one declared defeated candidate is entitled to the recount, each must file a written request. If all eligible losing candidates request the recount be stopped, the board must stop it.³⁴

³⁰[R.C. 3515.03.](#)

³¹[R.C. 3515.03.](#)

³²[R.C. 3515.04.](#)

³³[R.C. 3515.03;](#) [R.C. 3505.21.](#)

³⁴[R.C. 3515.03.](#)

AFTER AN AUTOMATIC RECOUNT STARTS

During a recount, the declared losing candidate(s) or issue chairperson may file a written request to stop the recount.

If the board finds the recount results won't change the official results (the winning margin for the declared elected candidate stays the same or increases), it must stop the recount. If not, the board must deny the request to stop and continue counting until all ballots from the precincts involved have been recounted.³⁵

Section 11.08 Recount Procedures

FOR ALL VOTING SYSTEMS³⁶

Note: High-level instructions for the various voting machine types are included below. However, the board's voting machine vendor can provide specific instructions on how to perform recounts for its machine type.

Recount Teams

- ☐ Conduct the recount using teams of election officials equally divided among the two major political parties.

A team of at least two election officials must compare total votes in the contests being recounted to the number of voters in the pollbook or poll list. Document any precinct where votes exceed the number of marked names in the pollbook.

Caution: Do not allow your board's preparations for the recount to become precounting, either in fact or in perception.

Chain of Custody and Election Material Integrity

- ☐ Review chain of custody logs for the ballots, precinct election official (PEO) reconciliation results, and board reconciliation results for each precinct being recounted.
- ☐ Keep sealed ballot envelopes sealed; don't view the actual ballot inside.
- ☐ Check ballots to verify each contest was properly displayed.

³⁵[R.C. 3515.04](#).

³⁶[R.C. 3515.04](#); [R.C. 3501.05](#).

Random Selection

- ☐ Random selection of precincts may occur before the scheduled recount. However, the board must select them during a public board meeting with at least 24 hours' notice to candidates or the issue's chairperson.
- ☐ Randomly select precincts totaling at least five percent of the vote in the race to be recounted.
- ☐ To randomly select:
 - Choose whole precincts.
 - Include all relevant regular ballots (voter verified paper audit trail ³⁷ and/or optical scan paper ballots), provisional ballots, and absentee ballots.
- ☐ Select enough precincts whose total votes equal at least five percent of the total votes in the election at issue. (To calculate this percentage, the number of total votes cast in the election at issue is multiplied by 0.05 and then rounded up to the next whole number, if necessary.)
 - Use a method that ensures every precinct in the jurisdiction to be recounted has the same chance of being selected.

Random Selection

Because applicants requesting recounts must name each precinct to be recounted, "randomly select" only applies where the total number of voters who voted on the contest to be recounted in the named precincts exceeds five percent of the total vote cast in the election to be recounted.

Acceptable methods include casting multicolored dice or drawing slips of paper from a container. If slips of paper are drawn, they and the container must be allowed to be inspected by observers before being mixed together in the container for the drawing.

Hand Counting and Single Precinct Elections

- ☐ Hand count votes cast on optical scan paper ballots for each randomly selected precinct using the **manual hand count procedures**. Include all ballot types (regular, absentee, and provisional, including remakes).

Note: Teams conducting the hand count should not have access to previously certified official results for that precinct.

³⁷[R.C. 3506.18](#).

- ❑ For single-precinct elections like local liquor options, the hand tally is sufficient; no electronic retabulation is needed.

Electronic Results

- ❑ Compare the hand count tally with the electronic results. If they match, run all ballots through the tabulator again using the electronic voting system. Don't re-upload media from the Official Canvass. Start fresh, as if no ballots have been scanned or tabulated.
- ❑ If hand count and electronic results don't match, determine if the error is a result of the hand tally or electronic tally. If, after three rounds of hand-tallying the ballots, they still don't match, hand count all ballots for that contest.
- ❑ If final electronic or hand tallies differ from official certified results of that group of precincts, amend official certified results to match the recount. More details on this are included later in this chapter.
- ❑ After using the tabulator for the recount, retest the program with the premarked test deck.

MANUAL HAND COUNT PROCEDURES

Before starting a manual hand count:

- ☐ Create teams of at least two people, evenly divided between major political parties. The two individuals must track the votes on the Hand Count Tally Reporting Form.
- ☐ Inspect ballots for damage and other irregularities not accounted for by ballot remakes.
- ☐ Check ballots for proper candidate position and verify each candidate or issue has been properly identified.
- ☐ Prepare an in-house Hand Count Tally Reporting Form that lists:
 - Candidates, questions, and issues, or the specific race or issue to be manually hand counted.
 - Type of ballot (regular or provisional ballot voted at the precinct or absentee ballot).
 - Overvotes (mark as "OV").
 - Blank voted offices or issues (mark as "BL" for blank when no votes are cast).
 - Signatures from the Democratic and Republican board members responsible for conducting the manual hand count and the date, once complete.
- ☐ Start the manual hand count in a public board session. The board can recess and let employees perform the count in the presence of credentialed journalists, observers, and board members who wish to attend.³⁸ A board majority is not required during recounting. Once the recount is complete and a majority of members are present, return to public session. The board should have specific procedures for this process.

³⁸[R.C. 3515.03](#).

COUNTIES USING OPTICAL SCAN BALLOTS AS PRIMARY METHOD OF VOTING

Overview

- ☐ Create teams of at least two people, evenly divided between major political parties. The two individuals must track the votes on the Hand Count Tally Reporting Form.
- ☐ Verify that the number of each type of optical scan ballots matches the records of those types of ballots cast in the contest involved.
- ☐ Sort ballots by type using the stack method. Count the votes cast for each candidate, question, and/or issue in each stack. Use the stack method as follows:
 - Create stacks by type, sorting by candidate, yes or no, or for or against vote, and by overvote or blank vote. Do this for each contest to be manually hand counted.
 - Make a separate stack for disputed votes or unclear voter intent, marked with a paper clip or post-it note on the ballot where the question arises. Remember to include these ballots in subsequent stacks for a hand count for another race or issue.
- ☐ State law defines valid marks for optical scan ballots.³⁹ If the board ties on the validity of a mark, don't submit the matter to the Secretary of State.⁴⁰ Instead, see the tie vote section, **Section 11.09**.
- ☐ For optical scan counties using direct recording electronic (DRE) voting machines, include a hand count of the Voter-Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) for DRE machines used in the election in question.

Preparations for Optical Scan Ballots

Recount preparation for precincts randomly selected includes the following steps for reconciliation of paper ballots for the recount:

- ☐ Select the precincts to be used in the recount randomly (see procedures above). If both VVPAT and optical scan paper ballots exist for the same named precincts for the recount, choose just one selection process.

³⁹[R.C. 3506.21](#).

⁴⁰[R.C. 3505.27](#).

- ☐ Make all documentation available for inspection to observers if they ask.
- ☐ Test the voting system as the board did in pre-election and pre-canvass public tests.⁴¹ Reset vote totals to zero after testing.

Verify Optical Scan Ballots

- ☐ Select the paper ballots to be compared with the electronic results for the randomly selected precincts in the recount.
- ☐ Check them to verify that each contest in the recount was properly displayed.
- ☐ Inspect the selected ballots for damage and irregularities not accounted for by ballot remakes.

COUNTIES USING DIRECT RECORDING ELECTRONIC (DRE) VOTING MACHINES AS PRIMARY METHOD OF VOTING

Overview

- ☐ Create teams of at least four people, evenly divided between individuals from major political parties. One from each party unrolls the VVPAT and reads the results. The other two track the votes by marking on the in-house Hand Count Tally Reporting Form.
- ☐ Use the in-house Hand Count Tally Reporting Forms, one form per voting machine per precinct, for the manual hand count of the actual ballots. Use a separate form for any optical scan ballots to be manually hand counted for the precinct.
- ☐ Verify that the number of each type of ballot to be manually hand counted (regular ballots - VVPAT and DRE machine backup optical scan ballots, and provisional and absentee optical scan ballots) matches the board's records of each of those types of ballots cast in the contest involved.
- ☐ Hand count votes on the VVPAT for the selected precincts by voting unit, listing the voting machine serial number on the tally sheet. Tally votes on the form.
- ☐ Hand count provisional ballots (if for an Official Canvass, recount, or audit), and DRE machine backup paper ballots.
- ☐ Sort provisional ballots (if for an Official Canvass, recount, or audit), and DRE machine backup paper ballots by type using the stack method. Count each stack.

⁴¹[R.C. 3506.14](#).

Use the stack method as described above under Counties Using Optical Scan Ballots.

Preparations for DRE Machine Ballots

Recount preparation for direct recording electronic and optical scan (whether precinct-based or central count) vote tabulation machines includes the following steps to verify ballot production.

For precincts randomly selected for the recount:

- ☐ Select precincts to be used in the recount randomly; see procedures above. If there are both VVPAT and optical scan paper ballots for the same-named precincts for the recount, only one selection process is necessary.
- ☐ Make all documentation available to observers if they ask.
- ☐ Test the voting system as the board did in pre-election and pre-canvass public tests.⁴² Reset vote totals to zero after testing.
- ☐ Verify the VVPAT:

Select VVPATs from randomly chosen precincts totaling at least five percent of the total votes cast for the candidate or issue being recounted. The VVPAT will be compared with the electronic results for the precincts randomly selected for the recount.

Note: VVPAT serves as the official ballot to be recounted for the ballots cast on a DRE voting machine.⁴³ Board employees may open the sealed VVPAT for the recount.

- Check VVPATs to verify that each contest, question, or issue is properly identified.
- Check that public counter numbers match the VVPAT numbers and pollbook records.
- Inspect the VVPAT for damage.

⁴²[R.C. 3506.14.](#)

⁴³[R.C. 3506.18.](#)

What to do when VVPAT cannot be used.

- ☐ Determine if any of the following events mean the VVPAT cannot be used for a manual hand count of ballots for a DRE voting machine:
 - The printer on the DRE machine failed.
 - The paper jammed, causing overprinting and preventing being able to read votes on that part of the VVPAT roll.
 - The paper was installed incorrectly, and it did not record votes on that DRE machine.
 - The VVPAT is lost or damaged beyond recovery.
- ☐ Follow these steps when VVPAT cannot be used:
 1. The full board must meet in public session, examine the VVPAT in question and decide if it can be used as the official ballot for votes cast on the DRE machine.
 2. If a majority of the board determines it cannot be used, it must immediately designate staff equally divided between the two major parties to proceed as described in the table below.

DRE Machine Process when VVPAT cannot be used		
DRE Machine Process 1	DRE Machine Process 2	DRE Machine Process 3
The designated staff must produce a readable paper trail from the voting machine with the unusable VVPAT. The board inspects this summary of results and compares it with the electronic results, if any, of the canvass (unofficial or official). If they match, use this paper trail as the official ballot for the manual hand count.	If the designated staff can't produce a paper trail from the voting machine following Process 1, they must immediately upload the votes recorded on the DRE machine's removable media for the election to be manually hand counted and print a report. The board compares this report with the electronic results, if any, of the canvass (unofficial or official). If they match, use this paper report for the manual hand count.	If Process 2 fails, you must immediately upload the votes from the DRE machine's hard drive or internal memory and print a report. Compare these results with the canvass results (unofficial or official). If they match, you must use this paper report for the manual hand count.

If the board has questions about this process or can't produce a usable paper report after trying all three procedures above, contact the Secretary of State's Elections Division at 614-466-2585 and/or email ElectionAdmin@OhioSoS.gov.

For Optical Scan Ballots Cast by Absentee and Provisional Voters

DRE machine counties must follow the procedure from the optical scan section above for the optical scan ballots in the randomly selected precincts.

Include the results of the hand count of those optical scan ballots in the recount.

Verify DRE Machine Ballots

- ☐ Hand count the VVPAT from the randomly selected precincts.
- ☐ Compare the hand count with the electronic results by uploading the removable media from each recounted DRE machine to the central tabulation system. Create a report for only the randomly selected precincts.

Caution: The bipartisan teams conducting the hand count should not know the certified official results for that precinct.

- ❑ If the electronic results and the tally from the hand count match, upload all removable media from each DRE machine where voters could vote on the contest and generate a report.
 - If the electronic results for one machine and hand count tally of the VVPAT from that same machine don't match, determine where the error came from. If, after three rounds of hand tallying they still don't match, use the final hand tally of the VVPAT for that candidate contest, question, or issue.
- ❑ If final electronic tabulation or hand tally of all VVPATs/DRE machines results differ from official certified results of that group of precincts, amend the official certified results to match the recount.

Section 11.09 Post-Recount Considerations

REGARDING TIES

- If the Official Canvass showed a tie and the recount remains a tie, the candidate declared winner by lot at the end of the Official Canvass remains the declared winner. Do not break the tie by lot again.⁴⁴
- If the Official Canvass didn't show a tie but the recount does, the board must break the tie in the recount by lot. Report the method used when submitting the amended results report.

AMENDED ABSTRACT/RESULTS REPORT

After completing or stopping a recount, the board must promptly:

- Prepare and certify an amended results report showing the votes cast in each precinct where the race or issue appeared on the ballot.
- The amended abstract, or results report, must show the recounted votes of the precincts involved.
- Mail copies of the certified amended results report to other boards or the Secretary of State's office as was required with the original results report.
- Keep the original certified amended results report.

⁴⁴[R.C. 3505.33](#).

- Submit an amended results report to the Secretary of State's office even if vote totals don't change in the recount.

The board must make a declaration of the amended result in the same way it made the original declaration.⁴⁵

REMEDIES AFTER PARTIAL RECOUNTS

If an amended declaration shows a different result than originally declared, a person who was originally declared nominated or elected, or any group of five voters that filed a statement with the board, may:

- File a formal request letter within five days after the amended declaration.
- Pay the deposit per precinct for a recount of the votes in precincts not already recounted.

Conduct the recount following the procedures in this chapter.⁴⁶

ADOPTING STRICTER PROCEDURES

The procedures described in this chapter are the minimum requirements for conducting a recount. If a majority of the board believes the results warrant further investigation, the board may use more rigorous procedures. If it adopts stricter procedures:

- Adopt those procedures in a public session.
- Document the procedures.
- Keep that documentation with recount materials.

Any additional procedures must build upon these minimum requirements and cannot weaken them.

⁴⁵[R.C. 3515.05.](#)

⁴⁶[R.C. 3515.06.](#)

Section 11.10 Post-Election Audit Procedures

OVERVIEW

A post-election audit reviews one or more contests in an election to ensure the board-reported results are accurate.

Audits are conducted following any election using procedures from the Secretary of State and in this chapter.⁴⁷ State law requires boards to audit at least three contested races, questions, or issues, in every election.⁴⁸

Only board members or designated employees may handle ballots.⁴⁹

The board should either:

- Designate staff in a board meeting before the election to help handle ballots during the audit. Note this in the board minutes, or
- Adopt a policy designating which employees may handle ballots during an audit.

Post-Election Audit: A review of one or more election contests following procedures from the Secretary of State and in this chapter to confirm your results are accurate.

TIMELINE

The board **must not** conduct the audit before certifying its Official Canvass. The timeline for post-election audits depends on whether there is a recount.

If there is No Recount:

- Start the audit not earlier than six days after the official results are declared.
- Complete it within 21 days of that declaration.⁵⁰
- Certify audit results to the Secretary within five days of completion.⁵¹

The Elections Division will email a form for certifying audit results after each election.

⁴⁷[R.C. 3505.331\(A\)](#).

⁴⁸ [R.C. 3505.331\(B\)\(1\)\(b\)](#).

⁴⁹ [R.C. 3505.331\(C\)](#). Under [R.C. 3599.40](#), a violation of this provision may be a misdemeanor of the first degree.

⁵⁰ [R.C. 3505.331\(A\)](#).

⁵¹ [R.C. 3505.331\(D\)\(1\)](#).

If the Board or Secretary Ordered a Recount of a County-Wide Race, Question or Issue

This counts as one of the three races included in your audit.⁵²

Any Other Recount

- Begin the audit immediately after certifying recount results.
- Complete it within 14 days.⁵³
- Certify audit results to the Secretary by a majority vote of the board within five days of completion.⁵⁴

POST-ELECTION AUDIT OBSERVERS

The post-election audit must be open to the public, journalists, and appointed observers.⁵⁵ The board must give public notice of the time and place of the post-election audit in the same way it announces board meetings.

- Observers may not handle a ballot under any circumstances.
- Authorized authorities may appoint observers. [See Chapter 9, Section 9.10](#), for details on audit observers.
- The public may observe the audit and should be given the same access as statutory observers.
- Observers can watch the precinct selection process and the count.
- The board may limit the number of observers based on space and resources, but must always allow statutory observers, regardless of its space and resources. If limiting the number of observers, it must also randomly select at least two members of the public to observe the audit. Try to accommodate the public as much as possible.
- Journalists may attend any portion of the post-election audit.

⁵²[R.C. 3505.331\(B\)\(1\)\(b\).](#)

⁵³[R.C. 3505.331\(A\).](#)

⁵⁴[R.C. 3505.331\(D\)\(1\).](#)

⁵⁵[R.C. 3505.331\(C\).](#)

PREPARATIONS FOR THE POST-ELECTION AUDIT

Boards of elections will audit at least three contested races, questions, or issues, in every election, as directed by the Secretary of State.⁵⁶

No later than when the board meets to certify the official results, decide:

- Whether to audit by precinct, polling location, or by individual voting machine⁵⁷ (referred to collectively as “units to be audited” for this section).
- When and where the board will select units to be audited.
- Date and place where the audit will begin.

It’s best to audit the smallest unit available. Only audit by polling location if:

- In DRE machine counties, voting machines in a multiple-precinct polling location were not precinct-specific.
- In paper ballot counties, scanners were not precinct-specific on Election Day.

When selecting units to audit, randomly select enough units until the number of votes cast equals **at least five percent** of the total county voter turnout.

- If auditing by precinct and the randomly selected precinct’s public count is greater than or equal to five percent, randomly select one additional precinct.
- If auditing by polling location and the public count from the selected polling location is greater than or equal to five percent, randomly select one additional polling location.

Note: While the board or its employees may organize materials and ballots between selection and audit start, allow observers during preparations and avoid pre-auditing.

General Guidelines

- Include all ballot types when counting votes, including regular ballots (VVPAT and/or paper), counted provisional ballots, and absentee ballots of all types. The

⁵⁶[R.C. 3505.331\(B\)](#).

⁵⁷Here, “voting machine” means automatic tabulating equipment, central counting station, voting machines, and direct recording electronic voting machines as defined in [R.C. 3506.01](#).

board or its employees may open sealed VVPAT for audits, even if there is no recount in the precinct.

- Randomly select units to be audited. Acceptable methods include casting colored dice or drawing numbered slips of paper from a transparent container.
- The board may audit more than five percent if it chooses.

Election records are generally public records⁵⁸ and must be available during post-election audits. These may include:

- Documents showing ballots ordered and received.
- Number of ballots voted, remade, spoiled, and uncounted.
- Absentee and provisional ballots issued, returned, validated, and invalidated.
- PEO and board reconciliation sheets.
- Chain of custody logs.

Boards should consult their county prosecutor for questions regarding public records.

CONDUCTING THE POST-ELECTION AUDIT

Use either a simple, percentage-based post-election audit or a risk-limiting audit.⁵⁹

1. Conduct the audit with teams of election officials equally divided between the two major political parties.
2. A team of at least two election officials must compare total votes cast in the contests being audited to the number of voters in the pollbook or poll list. Document any precincts where votes exceed marked names in the pollbook.

Check ballots to verify each contest is properly identified on the ballot. Observers and the public may watch the inspection but may not handle ballots.

"Ballot" means both paper ballots and VVPAT from DRE machines.

3. For each contest, physically examine and hand count the ballots for each randomly selected unit. Compare the hand count to the certified electronic

⁵⁸[R.C. 149.43.](#)

⁵⁹[R.C. 3505.331\(B\)\(3\).](#)

results for that contest in that precinct or polling location. Document the comparison for each precinct or polling location using the audit reporting workbook.

4. Calculate the accuracy rate of each contest in the audit by:
 - a. Adding all discrepancies for each contest audited.
 - b. Dividing by total ballots audited for that contest.
 - c. Subtracting the resulting number from one (or 100 percent) to get the accuracy rate.
5. The board must escalate the audit if its accuracy rate is below:
 - a. 99.5 percent in contests with margins of one percent or more, or
 - b. 99.8 percent in contests with margins less than one percent.⁶⁰

Escalation means:

- Drawing a second random sample of at least five percent of votes from units not audited in the original sample.
- Auditing these ballots using the same procedures.
- If accuracy remains below 99.5 percent after the second round, investigate the cause.
- Report findings to the Secretary of State's office within the audit completion timeframe.
- The Secretary of State's office may require a 100 percent hand count.⁶¹

If hand counts differ from certified tallies, determine if a mistake occurred in the hand count. If not, the hand count becomes the accurate count. Notify the Secretary of State in writing of any discrepancy.

Use absolute values of each discrepancy so that gains and losses don't cancel out.

⁶⁰[R.C. 3505.331\(B\)\(3\)\(b\)\(ii\).](#)

⁶¹[R.C. 3505.331\(D\)\(2\).](#)

REPORTING AUDIT RESULTS

If the audit changes vote totals from the Official Canvass, amend your board's certification of the official results the same way required for the original official declaration.⁶²

After completing the audit:

- File final results using the audit reporting workbook.
- Send results to the Secretary of State's office within five days via email (subject line: Post-Election Audit) to Results@OhioSoS.gov.⁶³

Section 11.11 Contests of Elections

A contest of election is a court action challenging the nomination or election of any person or the results of any ballot question or issue.⁶⁴ It is generally filed when irregularities are alleged to have changed or made uncertain the result of the election being contested.

Contest of Election: A court action challenging the nomination or election of any person to any public office or the results of any ballot question or issue.

Requirements for a contest of election are in [R.C. 3515.08-3515.16](#). Boards of elections have no jurisdiction or control over a contest of election. Someone interested in bringing a contest of election should consult private legal counsel. Neither a board nor the Secretary of State's office can advise on a contest of election.

If someone files a contest of election in your county, immediately notify the county prosecutor.

Federal office contests are not subject to a contest of election under the provisions of the Ohio Revised Code. These must follow federal law.⁶⁵

⁶²[R.C. 3505.331\(D\)\(3\)](#); [R.C. 3505.33](#).

⁶³[R.C. 3505.331\(D\)\(1\)](#).

⁶⁴[R.C. 3515.08](#).

⁶⁵[R.C. 3515.08\(A\)](#).

STARTING A CONTEST OF ELECTION

Someone may contest election results by:

- Filing a petition with the clerk of the appropriate court within 15 days after results are announced or within 10 days after recount results are announced.
- Getting at least 25 signatures on the petition from voters who cast votes in the race being contested or from the defeated candidate.
- Having at least two of the petition signers or the defeated candidate verify the petition by oath.⁶⁶
- Filing a bond to cover contest costs (determined by the clerk of court).⁶⁷

Those interested in starting a contest of election should consult private legal counsel about which court to petition.

HEARING AND JUDGMENT ON A CONTEST OF ELECTION

The court will:

- Set a hearing 15 to 30 days after petition filing.⁶⁸
- Control and direct the hearing.
- Decide the matter without a jury.⁶⁹
- Render a judgment in the contest of election.⁷⁰

The judgment may be appealed to the Supreme Court of Ohio within 20 days.⁷¹

⁶⁶[R.C. 3515.09.](#)

⁶⁷[R.C. 3515.09.](#)

⁶⁸[R.C. 3515.10.](#)

⁶⁹[R.C. 3515.11.](#)

⁷⁰[R.C. 3515.14.](#)

⁷¹[R.C. 3515.15.](#)

Section 11.12 Certificates of Nomination/Election

Do not issue certificates of nomination or election until that person or their campaign committee has fully complied with campaign finance reporting laws.⁷²

CERTIFICATES OF NOMINATION

Issue certificates of nomination to each person the board had declared nominated at a primary election, except:

- The most populous county of a multicounty district issues certificates of nomination for that district.
- The Secretary of State issues certificates of nomination for statewide offices and U.S. House seats.⁷³

Don't issue certificates of nomination or elections before the recount request deadline passes. Don't issue a certificate of nomination or election for contests with pending or automatic recounts until the recount is complete.

Issue and deliver certificates of election to elected party controlling committee members.⁷⁴ The most populous county issues these for multicounty districts.

Number of Write-In Votes Required for Nomination

A write-in candidate cannot be nominated as a political party's candidate when only write-in candidates are running, unless they get at least as many votes as petition signatures that would have been required to get on the primary ballot.⁷⁵

Make sure the candidate's name on the certificate matches the name as it appeared on the ballot.

Certificates of nomination or elections cannot be issued before the time for requests for recounts expires. The board cannot issue a certificate for nomination or election in a contest that is being recounted, either because someone requested it or it is being done automatically, until the recount is finished.

⁷²[R.C. 3517.11\(D\).](#)

⁷³[R.C. 3513.22\(E\).](#)

⁷⁴[R.C. 3513.24.](#)

⁷⁵[R.C. 3513.23\(B\).](#)

CERTIFICATES OF ELECTION FOR EVEN-NUMBERED YEAR ELECTIONS

Issue certificates of election to each person the board declared elected at a general election, except:

- The most populous county of a multicounty district issues certificates of election for that district.
- The Secretary of State issues certificates of election for statewide offices and U.S. House seats.

Don't issue certificates before the recount request deadline passes. Don't issue certificates for contests with a pending or automatic recount until the recount is complete.⁷⁶

CERTIFICATES OF NOMINATION FOR ODD-NUMBERED YEAR PRIMARY ELECTIONS

In odd-numbered years when no primary is held, declare party candidates nominated as of the 90th day before the primary. Issue appropriate Certificates of Nomination ([Form 155-A](#)) and certify their names to appear on the general election ballot.⁷⁷

GOVERNOR'S COMMISSIONS

Certain elected officials need a commission from the governor before performing their duties.⁷⁸ These include:

- State executive officers.
- County officers.
- Judges of any court of record, including county court.

When the board knows the official election results, immediately mail the original certificate of election to the Secretary of State.⁷⁹

⁷⁶[R.C. 3505.38.](#)

⁷⁷[R.C. 3513.02.](#)

⁷⁸[R.C. 107.05; R.C. 3505.38.](#)

⁷⁹[R.C. 107.07.](#)

SUBMITTING CERTIFICATES TO THE ELECTIONS DIVISION

Before submitting certificates to the Elections Division:

- ☐ Make sure certificates for full-term offices have the correct **term commencing** date.
- ☐ Make sure certificates for unexpired term offices have the correct **term ending** date.
- ☐ Include the division for judicial offices as it appeared on the ballot.
- ☐ Verify the name on the certificate matches the name on the ballot.
- ☐ Check all spelling of names, offices, and other information.
- ☐ Get signatures from the director and a majority of board members on each certificate.

The Secretary of State's office will provide detailed instructions for submitting certificates of election after each even-year general election.

AMENDMENTS

The board may amend its election results until the 81st day after an election. If an amendment would significantly change information submitted to the Secretary of State or change the outcome of a contest, the director must contact the Secretary of State's office. Clearly indicate which office, question, or issue results the board is amending.

The Secretary of State may set an earlier final date for the election results, if required by federal law.⁸⁰

⁸⁰[R.C. 3505.32\(A\)](#).

Chapter 11 Checklist: Post-Election Activities

Post Election Activities

- ☐ Update voter history in the board system.
- ☐ Update party affiliation after primaries.

Recounts

For Automatic Recounts

- ☐ Calculate margins to determine if an automatic recount is required (< 0.5 percent county/multicounty or < 0.25 percent statewide).
- ☐ Notify Secretary of State if an automatic recount is triggered.
- ☐ For Multicounty Automatic Recounts, receive recount order from the Secretary of State's office
- ☐ Schedule a recount within 10 days of the order.
- ☐ Send certified mail notice at least five days before recount to all affected candidates or issue groups.
- ☐ Prepare recount teams (equal political party representation).
- ☐ Randomly select at least five percent of votes cast.
- ☐ Test voting system same as pre-election testing.
- ☐ Prepare all required forms and documentation.
- ☐ Conduct hand count following proper procedures.
- ☐ Compare hand count to electronic results.
- ☐ Follow procedures if discrepancies found.
- ☐ Certify amended abstract of results.
- ☐ Report results to Secretary of State, even if no changes.

For Requested Recounts

- ❑ Verify request received within five days of official results.
- ❑ Confirm proper deposit received (\$80 per precinct).
- ❑ Deposit funds in special depository fund.
- ❑ Follow the same notice and procedure requirements as automatic recounts.
- ❑ Calculate and assess charges (between \$5 to \$80 per precinct).
- ❑ Refund balance of deposit after recount.
- ❑ Do not charge if the candidate gained more than four percent in precinct or outcome changed.

Post-Election Audits

Preparation

- ❑ Designate staff authorized to handle ballots.
- ❑ Schedule audit after Official Canvass (start six days after, complete within 21 days).
- ❑ Decide audit method (precinct, polling location, or machine).
- ❑ Publicly announce audit date, time, and location.
- ❑ Prepare for observers and public attendance.

Conducting the Audit

- ❑ Randomly select units totaling at least five percent of votes cast.
- ❑ Create bipartisan teams for counting.
- ❑ Compare total votes to pollbook numbers.
- ❑ Hand count selected precincts.
- ❑ Calculate accuracy rates for each contest.
- ❑ If accuracy below thresholds (99.5 percent or 99.8 percent), escalate audit.

- ❑ Document all findings in audit reporting workbook.
- ❑ Certify results to Secretary of State by a majority vote of the board within five days of completion.
- ❑ Amend official results if audit shows discrepancies.

Election Contests

- ❑ If contest filed, immediately notify county prosecutor.
- ❑ Preserve all relevant election materials.
- ❑ Cooperate with court as required.

Certificates of Nomination/Election

- ❑ Issue certificates of nomination/election after verifying campaign finance compliance.
- ❑ Submit certificates for governor's commission if applicable.



CHAPTER 12: ELECTION EQUIPMENT AND VOTING SYSTEMS¹

Section 12.01 Election Equipment and Voting Systems Introduction

Chapter 12 explains Ohio's election equipment,² including voting machines³ and electronic pollbooks, and why they need special handling as critical infrastructure.⁴ It covers rules for testing and approving voting equipment before use in elections. The chapter outlines how each county chooses its own voting system⁵ but must follow specific rules to keep elections secure. It also explains what the board can do when it needs to replace equipment.

Section 12.02 Types of Voting Equipment and Systems

Ballot Marking Device (BMD) is a type of voting machine used by voters to record votes on physical ballots. In general, ballot marking devices neither store nor tabulate ballots but only allow the voter to record votes on ballots that are then stored and tabulated elsewhere. ES&S Express Vote and Unisyn FreedomVote are examples of a BMD voting system.

Ballots-on-demand voting systems print ballots as needed. Election officials print ballots at the board office for voters, either in person or by mail. Counties often use this system for absentee voting.⁶

¹[Directive 2026-39](#).

²**Equipment** - a voting machine, marking device, automatic tabulating equipment, software, an electronic pollbook, a voter registration system, or a ballots on demand voting system. See also [R.C. 3506.05\(A\)\(2\)](#).

³**Voting machines** - equipment that records and counts votes (see [R.C. 3506.01\(E\)](#)). They are part of a voting system.

⁴**Critical Infrastructure** - systems and assets vital to the United States. If these systems were damaged, it could debilitate our security, economy, or public health. Since 2017, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has designated our election systems as part of the nation's critical infrastructure.

⁵ **Voting system** - a set of equipment used to define ballots, cast and count votes, and report results. It connects to voter registration systems and produces audit trails. The Election Assistance Commission (EAC) tests and certifies voting systems that meet its standards. The board can find information on each certified system on the EAC website.

⁶[R.C. 3506.01\(J\)](#).

Direct Recording Electronic (DRE) machines are touchscreen voting machines. They record votes through a display with buttons that voters can press. DRE machines process data with computer programs and store voting data in memory.⁷ DRE machines have a Voter-Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT), which is a paper printout showing the voter's ballot choices.⁸ Liberty Vote ImageCast X is an example of a DRE voting machine.

Electronic pollbook is an electronic list of registered voters that can be transported to a precinct or polling location.⁹ In Ohio, electronic pollbooks must pass testing by an independent voting system test laboratory¹⁰ approved by the Election Assistance Commission (EAC). The Board of Voting Systems Examiners (BVSE) must examine them. The Secretary of State must certify them.¹¹

Optical Scan¹² systems use automatic equipment to count votes by reading marks made on a ballot card. Voters can mark their ballots by hand or with a ballot marking device. The optical scan system scans the marked ballots and counts the results. This is the most common voting system used in Ohio. ES&S DS300, Unisyn FreedomVote, Clear Ballot ClearCast, Liberty Vote Clear Ballot ClearCast, and Hart Verity are examples of Optical Scan systems.

Precinct Count Optical Scanner (PCOS) is a portable scanner. It reads marks on paper ballots and records results. Voters feed their ballot into the scanner. The ballot goes into a locked ballot box. One or more PCOS are used in each precinct in counties with optical scan voting systems.

Voter registration systems are software and equipment used by a board of elections or the Secretary of State to process, store, organize, maintain, or retrieve voter registration records.¹³

⁷[R.C. 3506.01\(F\)](#).

⁸[R.C. 3506.01\(H\)](#).

⁹[R.C. 3506.05\(A\)\(1\)](#).

¹⁰[OAC 111:3-9-08\(B\)\(2\)](#).

¹¹[R.C. 3506.05\(B\)](#).

¹²[R.C. 3506.21](#). As used in this section, "optical scan ballot" means a ballot that is marked by using a specified writing instrument to fill in a designated position to record a voter's candidate, question, or issue choice and that can be scanned and electronically read in order to tabulate the vote.

¹³[R.C. 3506.01\(I\)](#).

Section 12.03 Voting Systems in Ohio

Each county selects its voting system for use in all elections. The voting system and its machines are selected by the board, county commissioners (with a recommendation from the board of elections), or by vote of the county's voters.¹⁴ The county may buy or lease the voting equipment.¹⁵

Each board is responsible for:

- Getting and maintaining its voting system and equipment.
- Managing all vendor support arrangements.
- Properly storing and securing its voting equipment.

The board should talk to the county prosecutor before getting a voting system or voting equipment. The county prosecutor or procurement department should be able to help with bidding and contracts.

Vendor - the person (or their agent) who owns, manufactures, distributes, or has the legal right to control the use of equipment. See also [R.C.3506.05\(A\)\(3\)](#).

The Secretary of State has guidelines for proper storage and security of voting equipment and supplies. That information is in [Chapter 3, Security](#) of this manual. Contact the Secretary of State's Elections Division with questions.

The BVSE examines voting systems equipment to ensure they meet requirements of Ohio law before use in elections. If the BVSE determines they meet those requirements, it recommends the Secretary of State certify it.¹⁶ For a current list of certified voting systems and equipment, visit the [Secretary of State's website](#) or contact the Elections Division.

The **Ohio Board of Voting System Examiners (BVSE)** is a bipartisan, five-member board that examines and approves voting systems and equipment for Ohio elections. The Ohio Board of Voting Machine Examiners (BVME) was renamed effective April 9, 2025. See [R.C. 3506.05](#).

¹⁴[R.C. 3506.02](#).

¹⁵[R.C. 3506.03](#).

¹⁶[R.C. 3506.05](#); [O.A.C. 111:3-9-08](#).

Section 12.04 Voting Equipment Vendor Relations

Boards are required to have at least one coordination call with each voting equipment or system vendor to ensure that all documents, training material, and a 24/7 point of contact have been established. This call must occur before the start of early voting and a follow up call should occur before Election Day.

Each of the board's vendors must submit a plan to the board to ensure support during early voting and on Election Day. The plan must detail, at a minimum:

- Staffing plans for early voting and Election Day.
- Virtual communications options if the vendor is not on-site.
- Pre-election meetings to be scheduled.
- Training plans and training materials provided prior to Election Day.
- Any other information that establishes support procedures for a successful election.

Although election vendors play a significant role in the election process, the board should not be solely dependent on the vendor to complete important election processes such as election management system programming, ballot creation, logic and accuracy (L&A) testing, report generation, and other vendor-supported tasks.

Section 12.05 Laws Governing the Sale, Transfer, or Disposal of Voting Equipment

[R.C. 307.12](#) sets rules for how county commissioners can dispose of unneeded, obsolete, or unfit county property. Talk to both the county prosecutor and county commissioners to develop a plan if the board wants to transfer or dispose of voting equipment.

[R.C. 3599.27](#) prohibits unauthorized people from having voting machines or their parts. The law also bans unauthorized people from having marking devices or tabulating equipment. Breaking this law is a fifth-degree felony. Therefore, the Secretary of State prohibits selling or donating voting equipment to private individuals, non-governmental entities, or governmental entities other than county boards of elections. The board may only transfer voting equipment (including voting machines, marking devices, automatic

tabulating equipment, software, voter registration systems, or a ballots-on-demand voting system) and election supporting technologies to other Ohio county boards of elections.

If the board chooses DRE/BMD machines as its primary voting system, it must keep the minimum number of DRE/BMD machines required by [R.C. 3506.22\(B\)](#). Calculate the number according to the formula in [R.C. 3506.22](#).

FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS RELATED TO HAVA FUNDS

For Help America Vote Act (HAVA) compliance, federal law defines “equipment” as personal property with a useful life of over one year that have a per unit cost of \$10,000 or more.¹⁷ This includes capital assets, computing devices, general-purpose equipment, information technology systems, special-purpose equipment, and supplies used for election purposes. Note: This definition is used for HAVA compliance and doesn’t apply to other uses of “equipment” and “voting equipment” in this chapter or other chapters of the Election Official Manual (EOM).

DRE/BMD Formula (R.C. 3506.22):

The higher number between (1) registered voters in the last presidential election or (2) the average of registered voters in the last two presidential elections minus the absentee ballots cast in the last presidential election. Then divide by 175. Round up to whole numbers.

¹⁷[2 CFR 200.1](#) “Equipment”

[EAC Funding Advisory Opinion 08-006](#) states the board may sell voting equipment purchased with HAVA funds and use the money for new voting equipment and other items or activities authorized under HAVA. [The Disposition of Equipment Purchased with HAVA Funds](#) offers more details on this topic.¹⁸ [2 C.F.R. 200.313\(e\)](#) states that items purchased with federal funds worth less than \$10,000 can be sold or disposed of with no further steps. Items worth \$10,000 or more may be sold, but a share equal to the proportion of HAVA funds it used to purchase the items must be set aside to buy new voting equipment or for other HAVA-authorized activities, or deposited to the State Election Fund.¹⁹

U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) - a federal, independent, bipartisan commission established by the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA). It develops guidance for states to meet HAVA requirements and adopt voluntary voting system guidelines. The EAC shares information on election administration. It also accredits testing labs, certifies voting systems, and audits the states' use of HAVA funds. See EAC.gov/About-the-useac/ for more information.

Under current guidance from the Election Assistance Commission (EAC), the board must determine the value of voting equipment based on the separate value of each item, and not collectively as a voting system.²⁰ The board should consult its county auditor to determine the fair market value of the individual items of equipment using accepted accounting methods.

¹⁸Please note that this guidance document incorrectly references a figure of \$5,000. Although this guidance document is otherwise accurate, please reference the updated figure of \$10,000 that is cited in [2 C.F.R. 200.313\(e\)](#).

¹⁹[2 C.F.R. 200.313\(e\)](#).

²⁰Prior EAC guidance held that individual voting machines and supporting equipment should be valued collectively as voting system, and not based on the value of each item of equipment. See EAC FAO 08-007. However, the EAC retracted this guidance in 2017. *In re Retraction of Funding Advisory Opinion FAO 08-007*, Election Assistance Comm'n (June 27, 2017).

SECRETARY OF STATE'S POLICY ON THE SALE, TRANSFER, OR DISPOSAL OF VOTING EQUIPMENT

The Ohio Secretary of State must ensure election security and manage grants for voting equipment.²¹ The board must follow the policy below before transferring or disposing of any voting equipment (including voting machines, marking devices, automatic tabulating equipment, electronic pollbooks, or other voting system equipment).²² Notify the Elections Division to get authorization before selling, donating, or disposing of equipment.²³

Electronic Pollbook iPad Disposal

iPads must be sanitized by the purge method in [NIST 800-88](#), which renders them non-election equipment, and all identifying markings must be removed (e.g., inventory tags, other stickers a board may use, etc.). After proper sanitization, they can be treated as any other county asset and transferred accordingly.

The proper procedure and necessary [form](#) for approval (Form 429) apply regardless of the source of funds for the initial purchase of the equipment.

The board should always consult its county prosecutor and commissioners before selling or donating county-owned voting equipment. The board may need commissioner approval.

Wiping Data and Other Security Concerns

The board must wipe data from the voting equipment's memory before any sale, transfer, or disposal. The data wipe method must be compliant with [National Institute of Standards and Technology \(NIST\) 800-88 Media Sanitization standards](#) and use the "purge" method. Additionally, remove any identifying markings, such as inventory tags, other stickers, etc., that the board may use.

Work with IT professionals to ensure all data is wiped. If another board won't use the equipment, the EAC advises making it a "non-functioning piece of hardware with no software or firmware remaining on the equipment."²⁴ Before erasing data, the board

²¹[R.C. 3501.05](#); Help America Vote Act of 2002, 52 U.S.C.A § 20901.

²²This does not include E-pollbook iPads. See the call-out box to the right of this section.

²³"Equipment" Code of Federal Regulations (2 CFR 200.313).

²⁴"Wiping Election Equipment before Disposal, Sale, or Destruction." U.S. Election Assistance Commission. https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/eac_assets/1/6/Disposal_Sale_Destruction_Voting-Equipment_FINAL_10.13.17.pdf.

must determine if any information stored in the voting equipment must be kept under record retention schedules.

The board may recycle voting equipment that doesn't work. Use a recycling company with expertise in electronic waste management.

Sale of Voting Equipment²⁵

The board may only sell voting equipment to other boards of elections in Ohio. It must get approval from the Secretary of State's office for the sale of voting equipment prior to any sale.

1. Complete [Form 426](#), Agreement of Permanent Transfer via Sale of Voting Equipment.
2. List the quantity, description, and estimated value of the equipment.
3. State how the board will use the money from the sale.
4. Submit the form to the Secretary of State's office at ElectionAdmin@OhioSoS.gov and wait to receive approval before proceeding.
 - a. Submit the form to the Elections Division email box.
5. Keep this form for audits or legal matters regarding the equipment.

The buyer must sign [Form 426](#) Agreement of Permanent Transfer via Sale of Voting Equipment Purchased with HAVA Funds. The cost and delivery terms are between the board and the buyer. Base the price on the current fair market value. Send a copy of the final signed form to the Secretary of State's office.

The board may not sell to:

- Private individuals.
- Non-governmental organizations.
- Any entity that is not another board of elections in Ohio.

Remember, for equipment bought with HAVA funds currently less than \$10,000, the board can use the money as it wishes. If the current per-unit fair market value is \$10,000

²⁵See also [Secretary of State Advisory 2019-05](#).

or more, set aside money equal to the share of HAVA funds used to buy the equipment. Use this money to buy voting equipment or other HAVA-authorized activities.

For example, if the board bought a piece of voting equipment with 80 percent HAVA funds and 20 percent county funds, then 80 percent of the money from the sale of that equipment must be reserved for HAVA purposes. The remaining 20 percent may be used for any board purpose. If HAVA paid for 100 percent, then all money from any sale must be reserved for HAVA purposes.

Before selling, tell the Secretary of State how the board plans to use the HAVA money.

Permanent and Temporary Transfers of Voting Equipment

Donation of Voting Equipment Valued at Less Than \$10,000

A county may donate county property to another county.²⁶ [EAC Funding Opinion No. 08-006](#) says voting equipment worth \$10,000 or more bought with HAVA funds must be sold, not donated. Voting equipment worth less than \$10,000 may be sold or donated. Voting equipment can only be donated to another Ohio board of elections if there is no willing and eligible buyer.

The board must get approval from the Secretary of State's office before it donates voting equipment.

1. Complete [Form 427](#), Agreement of Permanent Transfer via Donation of Voting Equipment.
2. List the quantity, description, and estimated value of equipment.
3. Submit the form to the Secretary of State's office through ElectionAdmin@OhioSoS.gov and wait to receive approval before proceeding.
4. Keep this form for audits or legal matters regarding the equipment.

Under this policy, a board with excess voting equipment may ONLY donate that equipment to another board within Ohio. Both counties' board directors and chairs must sign [Form 427](#). Work out the delivery details between the two counties. Send a final copy of the form to the Secretary of State's office.

²⁶[R.C. 307.12\(D\)](#).

Loan of Voting Equipment

The board must get approval from the Secretary of State's office to loan voting equipment.

1. Complete [Form 428](#), Agreement of Temporary Transfer (Loan) of Voting Equipment.
2. List the quantity, description, and estimated value of the equipment.
3. Submit the form to the Secretary of State's office through ElectionAdmin@OhioSoS.gov and wait to receive approval before proceeding.
4. Keep the form for audits or legal matters regarding the loaned equipment.

Under this policy, a board with excess voting equipment may only loan it to another board within Ohio. Both counties' board directors and chairs must sign [Form 428](#) Agreement of Temporary Transfer (Loan) of Voting Equipment Purchased with HAVA Funds and coordinate the delivery details for the loaned voting equipment between the two counties. Send a final copy of the form to the Secretary of State's office.

Disposal of Voting Equipment

The board must get approval from the Secretary of State's office before disposing of voting equipment. If it has voting equipment that is no longer in working condition due to age or damage, it may dispose of it.

1. Complete [Form 429](#), Voting Equipment Disposal Form.
2. Describe the type, quantity, estimated value, and disposal method of the equipment.
3. The director and chairperson must sign [Form 429](#).
4. Submit the form to the Secretary of State's office through ElectionAdmin@OhioSoS.gov and wait to receive approval before proceeding.
5. Keep this form for audits or legal matters.

Section 12.06 Testing and Certification of Electronic Pollbooks

Any electronic pollbook used in Ohio elections must be approved by the Board of Voting Systems Examiners (BVSE) and certified by the Secretary of State.²⁷ This process follows [R.C. 3506.05](#) and adopted BVSE standards.

Each electronic pollbook must be tested by an independent voting system test lab. It must meet or exceed Ohio's requirements and EAC guidelines.²⁸ After testing, the vendor may apply for BVSE examination. The BVSE reviews the test results and checks the electronic pollbook's functionality. If satisfied, the BVSE recommends the Secretary of State certify the electronic pollbook for use in Ohio elections. The Secretary of State's office notifies boards and the vendor whether the electronic pollbook is certified.

The board can request the standards for the testing and certification. A current list of electronic pollbooks certified for use in Ohio elections is on the [Secretary of State's website](#) or the board can contact the Elections Division.

EVALUATION PRIOR TO THE PROCUREMENT OF ELECTRONIC POLLBOOKS

Before buying an electronic pollbook, the board must evaluate it. The evaluation must include:

- ☐ Review of repair and maintenance policies.
- ☐ Review of training materials and user manuals.
- ☐ Explanation of supplies needed to use the electronic pollbook, their cost, and supply chain.
- ☐ Demonstration of compatibility with board hardware.
- ☐ Demonstration of how it processes and transmits voter records between other board systems.

²⁷[R.C. 3506.05\(B\)](#).

²⁸[O.A.C. 111:3-9-08\(B\)\(2\)](#).

AFTER THE PROCUREMENT OF ELECTRONIC POLLBOOKS

Acceptance Testing by a Board of Elections

After buying an electronic pollbook, the board must conduct acceptance testing using a checklist.

Notification

If the board gets electronic pollbooks, notify the Elections Division of the make/model and vendor selected.²⁹

Communication

Electronic pollbooks with data transmission capability must not use the internet except under a very narrow set of circumstances. If the board transmits data, use a virtual private network (VPN) or a secured access point name (APN). Log all network activity to a security and event management system (SIEM). Networks that electronic pollbooks connect to must implement firewall rules that restrict internet access to only the specific ports, protocols, and endpoints required for electronic pollbook functionality. Never transmit any portion of a voter's Social Security number, driver license number, or state ID number.

The board may send data to the electronic pollbook to update voter information, such as updating records with absentee voting activity.

The board may only transmit data from the electronic pollbook to review preliminary voter turnout statistics, monitor each unit's function, and perform actions approved by the BVSE, using applicable security protocols.

Retention of Records or Images Produced by Electronic Pollbooks³⁰

The board must keep all audit and transaction records from electronic pollbooks, including images of electronic signatures, for at least six years.

²⁹[R.C. 3506.021\(A\)](#).

³⁰[Ohio Secretary of State Retention Schedules, Series CBE-114: Electronic Pollbook Records](#)

Chapter 12 Checklist: Election Equipment and Voting Systems

Equipment Selection and Maintenance

- ❑ Consult the county prosecutor before buying a voting system or equipment.
- ❑ Find a current list of certified systems on the [Secretary of State's website](#).
- ❑ Evaluate the electronic pollbook before buying.
- ❑ Conduct acceptance testing of the electronic pollbook.
- ❑ Notify the Elections Division of the purchase.
- ❑ Properly store and secure all voting equipment.
- ❑ If using DRE/BMD machines as the primary system, maintain the required number ([R.C. 3506.22](#)).

Equipment Sales and Transfers

- ❑ Before selling equipment:
 - Get Secretary of State approval using [Form 426](#).
 - Wipe all data according to [NIST standards](#).
 - If purchased with HAVA funds, calculate the proper amount to set aside.
- ❑ Before donating equipment (valued under \$10,000):
 - Verify it's going to another board in Ohio.
 - Get Secretary of State approval using [Form 427](#).
 - Wipe all data according to [NIST standards](#).
- ❑ Before loaning equipment:
 - Ensure documents are signed by both boards.
 - Get Secretary of State approval using [Form 428](#).
- ❑ Before disposing of equipment:
 - Get Secretary of State approval using [Form 429](#).
 - Wipe all data according to [NIST standards](#).



CHAPTER 13: PETITIONS¹

Section 13.01 Petitions Introduction

Chapter 13 covers the rules for handling petitions for candidates, local and statewide issues, and referenda. The board must review candidate, issue, and referendum petitions to ensure they're valid and have enough signatures. This chapter outlines the basic requirements, candidate petitions, prechecks, circulator requirements, signature verification, how to handle invalid signatures, and rules on where to file. Additionally, it includes different types of state-level petitions, how to examine them, check signatures, and process results.

Section 13.02 Petitions Generally

PETITION BASICS

The board must check all candidate petitions, most types of issue petitions, and referendum petitions for validity and sufficiency.² The Secretary of State provides many petition forms. Board employees can find these forms on the [Secretary of State's website](#).

Always give candidates or issue groups the most current form.³ The Secretary of State updates forms when laws change. It's important to pull petitions directly from the Secretary of State's website each time. If a board employee gives an old form by mistake, the board cannot reject the petition for using that form as long as it meets all other rules.⁴

The board must check every signature on valid part-petitions. Do this even if a candidate or issue already has enough signatures to be on the ballot.

¹[Directive 2026-40](#).

²[R.C. 3501.11\(K\)\(1\)](#).

³[R.C. 3501.38\(L\)](#).

⁴[R.C. 3501.38\(L\)](#).

Ohio law requires “substantial compliance” with petition rules.⁵ This means:

If board employees find minor errors, the petition may still be valid, and the board will determine if the candidate substantially complied with the form.

For statewide candidates, the Secretary of State decides if it’s acceptable.

Decisions depend on each case and consider the facts. The board should talk with its legal counsel, the county prosecutor, when reviewing petitions.

Also, look at municipal charters for any special rules for candidates seeking a city or village office.

CANDIDATE AND LOCAL ISSUE PETITION PRECHECKS

Do not precheck any petition before the original petition has been officially filed with the accompanying filing fee.⁶

Why board employees shouldn’t precheck:

It gives a false sense of security for candidates and issue groups.

Ohio law says candidates are responsible for ensuring their own petition satisfies the requirements of law.

Candidates and issue groups must investigate, learn, and know election laws.

If the board finds it is not valid after it has been filed, it will still have to reject it.

The board could be accused of favoritism or misconduct.

Do Not Precheck Petitions

It is unwise for a board of elections to give a candidate or petitioner the impression that their petition is valid and sufficient before it is officially filed. If the board later determines that the petition is invalid, it must reject it, regardless of whether its staff previously prechecked the same petition. This practice of prechecking petitions has led to some boards of elections facing accusations of incompetence, political favoritism, and misconduct.

⁵[R.C.3513.07; 3513.261](#).

⁶[State ex rel. Chevalier v. Brown](#), 17 Ohio St.3d 61, 63 (1985); [State ex rel. Sturgill v. Lorain Cty. Bd. of Elections](#), 164 Ohio App.3d 272 (2005); [State ex rel. Donegan v. Cuyahoga Cty. Bd. of Elections](#), 136 Ohio App.3d 589, 595 (2000).

Section 13.03 Types of Petitions

CANDIDATE PETITIONS

These resources from the Secretary of State can help prospective candidates and issue petitioners:

[Ohio Candidate Requirement Guide](#)

[Ohio Presidential Guide](#)

[Campaign Finance Handbook](#)

Boards can help by providing free copies of these guides. Board employees can also explain the filing process and tell them what happens after the filing deadline. Some boards also provide public access computers for candidates to check their own petitions.

LOCAL QUESTION AND ISSUE PETITIONS

The board must:

- Review, examine, and certify the sufficiency and validity of local question and issue petitions.

- Make sure they are valid.

- Verify they have enough signatures.

Sometimes another office must approve the petition before it comes to the board. Check municipal charters for special rules.

These resources can help with questions on ballot questions and issues:

[The Ohio Ballot Questions & Issues Handbook: A Guide for Boards of Elections, Taxing Authorities and Political Subdivisions to Placing Questions and Issues on the Ballot](#)

[Guide to Local Liquor Options Elections](#)

Additional checklists for local issues are included at the end of [Chapter 5, Ballots](#).

INITIATIVE

An initiative lets voters propose and vote on new laws or changes to the Ohio Constitution. There are three types:

Citizen-initiated statute:⁷ Voters suggest a new law by filing a petition.

Citizen-initiated constitutional amendment:⁸ Voters suggest a change to the Ohio Constitution by filing a petition.

General Assembly-initiated constitutional amendment:⁹ The Legislature suggests a change to the Ohio Constitution. No petition is needed since it comes from lawmakers.

REFERENDUM

A referendum lets voters say “yes” or “no” to a new law. It starts when voters file a petition after the Ohio General Assembly passes a bill and the governor signs it.¹⁰

Section 13.04 Filing Petitions

WHERE TO FILE DECLARATIONS OF CANDIDACY, NOMINATING PETITIONS, AND QUESTION OR ISSUE PETITIONS¹¹

The rules for where to file depend on the office or issue.

File with the Secretary of State’s office:

Offices or issues submitted to electors throughout the state, including petitions for joint candidates for governor and lieutenant governor.

File with the county board of elections:

Offices or issues just for your county.

Offices or issues for areas smaller than your county.

For districts that cross county lines, file with the board in the most populous county

⁷[Article II, Section 1b of the Ohio Constitution.](#)

⁸[Article II, Section 1a of the Ohio Constitution.](#)

⁹[Article XVI, Section 1 of the Ohio Constitution.](#)

¹⁰[Article II, Section 1c of the Ohio Constitution.](#)

¹¹[R.C. 3513.05; R.C. 3513.261.](#)

To find the most populous county for Congress, State Senate, State Representative, State Board of Education, and Court of Appeals districts, look at the list at the end of the [Candidate Requirement Guide](#).

For Educational Service Center (ESC) districts that cross county lines, file in the county where the ESC's office is located.¹²

UNFAIR POLITICAL CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES NOTICE

When someone files a petition, the board must:

- ☐ Give them a copy of [R.C. 3517.21](#) (Infiltration of Campaign - False Statements in Campaign Materials - Election of Candidate).
- ☐ Have them sign that they received it.¹³

Section 13.05 Filing a Candidate Petition

If a board employee, in their official capacity, is approached by a person who is considering running for office in Ohio, the Secretary of State's [Candidate Requirement Guide](#) can help the potential candidate navigate the legal requirements to get their name on the ballot. This guide is only a brief summary and not a complete digest of laws.

The guide contains information on the terms of office and the conditions candidates must meet: residency requirements, minimum or maximum ages, or other qualifications or legal requirements. Each office has different petition filing requirements, deadlines, forms, filing fees, and locations, and the number of signatures needed. The board provides candidates with at least one copy of a candidate petition form upon request. Candidates may make additional copies of the form as provided by the county board of elections.

Once the candidate has completed filling out and signing the petition, this signed part-petition may be copied prior to obtaining any elector signatures on the part-petitions.

¹²[R.C. 3513.255](#).

¹³[R.C. 3513.33](#). Please note the decision in [Susan B. Anthony List v. Ohio Elections Commission](#), 45 F. Supp.3d 765 (S.D. Ohio, 2014).

However, this original signed part-petition must be filed with the other part-petitions at the office of the appropriate filing entity.¹⁴

CANDIDATE PETITION FORM REQUIREMENTS

Candidate Name

There are special rules for name changes:

If a candidate changed their name in the past five years, they must list both names on the declaration of candidacy and petition.¹⁵

Name changes due to marriage don't count in this rule.¹⁶

Office

The petition must clearly show which office the candidate wants. This helps:

Electors know what they're signing for.

The board knows which office to list on the ballot.

Candidates should include the office precinct or ward if needed.

Term

For unexpired terms, the candidate must list when the term ends.¹⁷

Date of the Election

The petition must show which election they want to be on the ballot. This helps those signing the petition understand which election is at issue.¹⁸

Candidate Signature¹⁹

A candidate must sign the declaration or statement of candidacy.²⁰

¹⁴[R.C. 3513.09](#); [R.C. 3513.261](#).

¹⁵[R.C. 3513.06](#). *State ex rel. Morrison v. Franklin County Board of Elections*, 63 Ohio St. 2d 336 (1980); *Pierce v. Brushart*, 153 Ohio St. 372 (1950); *Martinez v. Cuyahoga Cty. Board of Elections*, 2006-Ohio-16652; *McLaughlin v. Cuyahoga Cty. Bd. of Elections*, 156 Ohio App.3d 98 (2004).

¹⁶[R.C. 3513.06](#).

¹⁷[R.C. 3513.07](#); [R.C. 3513.08](#); [R.C. 3513.28](#).

¹⁸*Hill v. Cuyahoga County Bd. of Elections*, 68 Ohio St.2d 39 (1981); *State ex rel. Stewart v. Clinton Cty. Bd. of Elections*, 124 Ohio St.3d 584 (2010).

¹⁹[R.C. 3513.09](#).

²⁰Generally, signing or affixing a signature to an election-related document requires a person's written, cursive-style legal mark written in that person's own hand. However, voters with a disability may personally affix their signature through the use of a reasonable accommodation, including the use of assistive technology or an augmentative device such as a signature stamp. See [R.C. 3501.011](#), [R.C. 3501.382\(F\)](#) and related [OAG 2015-012](#).

The candidate only needs to sign one part-petition paper. This signed page must be copied on each separate petition paper before electors sign them.

The board must decide if the prospective candidate signed the statement of candidacy before the petition was circulated.

Nominating Petition Portion

If the “Nominating Petition” part of the form is not complete, the board should talk with legal counsel and decide if it meets substantial compliance.

Checking Part-Petitions

Before looking at individual signatures, board employees must:

1. Check the circulator’s statement on the last page.
2. Make sure it is properly completed.

If not, the entire part-petition is invalid.

Fulfilling Public Records Requests

Boards may receive public records requests for copies of the part-petitions for a particular candidate or issue. All part-petitions are public records and must be disclosed according to [R.C. 149.43](#).²¹ When someone requests part-petitions, the board must allow them to inspect or copy the petitions. This is true whether or not the board has marked the petitions or finished checking the signatures.²²

Talk to legal counsel (the county prosecuting attorney) before rejecting, fulfilling, or responding to the request.

NOTE: See **Section 13.09** regarding overcounting and undercounting signatures.

Section 13.06 Filing a Local Question or Issue

The [Ohio Ballot Questions and Issues Handbook](#) and the [Guide to Local Liquor Options Elections](#) are guides for boards, taxing authorities, and political subdivisions that are placing questions or issues on the ballot or are voting on liquor options. See also the checklists at the end of [Chapter 5, Ballots](#).

²¹[R.C. 3513.05](#); [R.C. 3513.262](#); [R.C. 3513.263](#).

²²[R.C. 3513.05](#); [R.C. 3513.262](#); [R.C. 3513.263](#).

Under Ohio law, the board must approve ballot language for local questions and submit it to the Secretary of State's office for review. In some cases, local charters may allow a city, village, or county to dictate its own ballot language. Many boards have policies that delegate the task of preparing and submitting ballot language to staff, facilitating the resolution of any issues before the election.

Local ballot questions may include bond issues, tax levies, income taxes, charter amendments, initiatives, referendums, and zoning plans. Resolutions and petitions filed with the board help clarify the purpose, election date, millage amount, and duration of the levy. Board personnel should ensure that the proposed ballot format meets statutory and board requirements before submission to the Secretary of State's office.

The administrative review process checks that the ballot language matches the information in accompanying documents like resolutions or ordinances. For example, if a resolution states a proposed tax levy of five mills, the ballot must reflect that amount. After the review, the Secretary of State's Elections Division will email the board of elections with the reviewed ballot language. The reviewer may initial the document to indicate approval or include corrections and comments about the ballot language and accompanying documents.

Additional checklists to help the board review questions and issues are included at the end of this chapter.

Section 13.07 How to Submit a Referendum or Initiative Petition

An **initiative** is the process by which a proposed new statute or constitutional amendment is presented to the voters of Ohio for their approval. The Ohio Constitution allows for both initiated statutes and initiated constitutional amendments.

A **referendum** is a process to stay a law recently enacted by the General Assembly until the law itself can be submitted to the voters for approval or rejection at a general election. This process begins when a petition is filed by a group of Ohio electors. The petitions must be filed with the Secretary of State within 90 days after the law or section of law to be referred has been filed with the Secretary of State's office by the governor.

A **Citizen-Initiated Statute** occurs when a citizen believes that an issue is not properly addressed (or addressed at all) in the Ohio Revised Code. They can follow the

procedures outlined in the Ohio Constitution and Revised Code to submit a proposed law (statute) to the people of Ohio for a statewide vote. This process starts when a petition is filed by a group of Ohio electors.

Citizen-Initiated Constitutional Amendments are similar; they occur when a citizen believes that an issue is not properly addressed or not addressed at all in the Ohio Constitution. They can follow the procedures outlined in the Ohio Constitution and Revised Code to submit a proposed constitutional amendment to the people of Ohio for a statewide vote. This process also begins when a petition is filed by a group of Ohio electors.

A **General Assembly-Initiated Constitutional Amendment** requires the legislature to pass a joint resolution to present a proposed constitutional amendment to voters. This type of amendment does not require a petition, as it is not driven by citizen initiative.²³

For referenda or initiatives that require petitions, the voters leading the effort form a committee of three to five members who share their vision. Together, the committee needs to file an initial petition. If the petition is for an initiated statute or constitutional amendment, it is filed with the Ohio Attorney General. If it is for a referendum, it is filed with the Secretary of State.

The filing must include the title, full text, and a brief summary of the proposed law or constitutional amendment. Once the language is approved, the committee can begin the process of gathering signatures. The number of signatures the committee needs to collect is based on the type of petition and the total votes cast in the last gubernatorial election.

- For initiated statutes, at least three percent of the total votes cast in the last gubernatorial election.
- For referenda, at least six percent of the total votes cast in the last gubernatorial election.
- For constitutional amendments, at least 10 percent of the total votes cast in the last gubernatorial election.

²³See also <https://www.ohiosos.gov/office/duties-and-responsibilities/putting-an-issue-on-the-ballot>.

The committee also needs to ensure that they have collected sufficient signatures to demonstrate support from residents in at least half of Ohio's counties. See the Secretary of State's website [Putting an Issue on the Ballot](#) for more information.

After collecting enough signatures, the committee can submit the completed petitions for certification. To submit an issue for certification, the committee must:

- ☐ Mark each part-petition with the county name where it was gathered.
- ☐ Number each part-petition in order within that county.
- ☐ Sort part-petitions by county before filing with the Secretary of State's office.²⁴
- ☐ Provide contact information (name, address, phone number, and email) for the committee chairperson and a representative.
- ☐ File an electronic copy of all part-petitions included in the petition filing (scanned part-petitions that contain one folder for each county containing individually scanned part-petitions in sequential order).
- ☐ Include a summary or manifest containing the number of part-petitions and signatures per county, in a spreadsheet and PDF. Columns should be formatted as follows:
 - Column A – County name.
 - Column B – Total number of part-petitions for that county.
 - Column C – Total number of signatures on the part-petitions listed in Column C.

Column B and C must be totaled at the top of the sheet.

- ☐ File an index of the electronic copy of the petition – by file name, includes county name and sequential number, **OR** a sortable document that includes the petition number, county, signatures, and file name.²⁵
- ☐ Include a count of part-petitions filed per county and the number of signatures on each.²⁶
- ☐ Submit a blank, electronic copy of a part-petition in PDF format.²⁷

²⁴[R.C. 3519.16\(B\)](#).

²⁵[R.C. 3519.16\(B\)](#)

²⁶[R.C. 3519.16\(B\)](#).

²⁷[R.C. 3519.16\(B\)\(1\)](#).

- ☐ Pay a fee of \$25.²⁸

²⁸[R.C. 3513.10\(B\)\(2\)\(a\).](#)

Section 13.08 Petition Circulators

QUALIFICATIONS OF CIRCULATORS

- ☐ Circulators must be at least 18 years old.²⁹
- ☐ Circulators don't need to be an Ohio elector or resident.³⁰
- ☐ Circulators of candidate petitions must belong to the same political party named in the declaration of candidacy.
- ☐ Some convicted felons cannot circulate petitions (see additional information below).³¹
- ☐ State law doesn't require circulators to provide identifying information that would help the board verify if they're disqualified.
- ☐ The board should assume circulators are qualified unless it has clear proof they aren't.

PARTY AFFILIATION OF CIRCULATORS

The board will determine a circulator's party affiliation as follows:

Not an Ohio Elector

If the circulator is not an Ohio elector, accept their claim of party membership in the circulator's statement as true, unless the board has information proving otherwise.

Ohio Elector

An Ohio elector circulating someone else's partisan primary candidacy petition must not have voted in any other party's primary election in the past two calendar years.³² The board should check the circulator's Ohio voting history using the statewide voter registration database. If the circulator voted in another party's primary during the previous two calendar years, the part-petition is invalid.

CANDIDATE AS CIRCULATOR

Candidates may circulate their own part-petition regardless of how they voted in the past two years.³³ If the candidate does not hold elected office or holds an office not

²⁹[R.C. 3503.06\(C\).](#)

³⁰[Citizens in Charge, Inc. v. Husted, S.D. Ohio No. 2:13-cv-935, 2015 U.S. Dist. \(Mar. 16, 2015\).](#)

³¹[Ohio Attorney General Advisory Opinion 2010-002.](#)

³²[R.C. 3513.05, 17.](#)

³³[R.C. 3513.191.](#)

nominated in a party primary, they don't need to file any additional forms. If the candidate holds a partisan public office, they can still run for office for a different party if they file [Form 10-Y](#) Declaration of Intent to Change Political Party Affiliation.

CONVICTED FELONS

Some convicted felons cannot circulate petitions.³⁴ However, state law doesn't require circulators to provide identifying information (such as date of birth, Social Security number, driver license number, etc.) that would help confirm whether a circulator is the same person listed in a voter registration database as disqualified due to a felony conviction.

So, when board employees are checking petitions, assume circulators are qualified unless there is "satisfactory evidence" that they aren't.

WHAT MUST BE IN THE CIRCULATOR'S STATEMENTS³⁵

Each part-petition must have a circulator's statement (called the *Statement of Solicitor*) with:

Circulator's signature.³⁶

How many signatures they witnessed.

For statewide petitions, also include:

Circulator's name.

Circulator's address.³⁷

- The name and address of the person who paid them to circulate the petition (if anyone).

³⁴[OAG 2010-002](#).

³⁵[R.C. 3501.38\(E\)\(1\)](#), [R.C. 3519.05](#).

³⁶Generally, signing or affixing a signature to an election-related document requires a person's written, cursive-style legal mark written in that person's own hand. However, voters with a disability may personally affix their signatures through the use of a reasonable accommodation, including the use of assistive technology or an augmentative device such as a signature stamp. See [R.C. 3501.011](#), [R.C. 3501.382\(F\)](#) and related [OAG 2015-012](#).

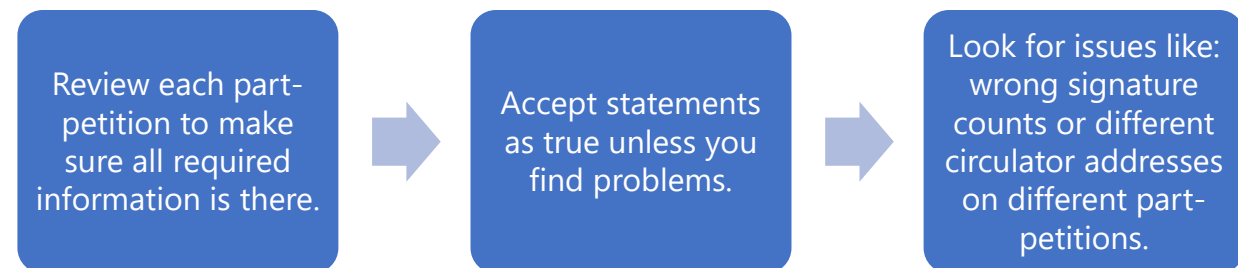
³⁷State law does not define "permanent residence address" for purposes of circulating issue petitions. A board of elections should presume that the address provided by the circulator is the circulator's permanent residence as the statement is signed under penalty of election falsification, which is a fifth degree felony. To the extent that an entity other than the Board believes that the circulator's written permanent residence address is not accurate, an informal objection or formal protest is not properly before a board of elections and should be filed with the Ohio Supreme Court.

Note: If the circulator is a qualified Ohio elector, their address on the statement doesn't have to match the address on file with the board. Do not reject a part-petition just because the consistently used address of the circulator doesn't match the board records.

Check each part-petition to make sure the circulator's statement is complete. Trust the circulator's statement unless the board finds problems in the number of signatures or in the circulator's info across part-petitions. An example might be if the circulator writes a different address on different part-petitions.

Section 13.09 How to Check and Verify Petitions

HOW TO CHECK CIRCULATOR STATEMENTS



When Signature Counts Are Too Low

If the circulator reports FEWER signatures than the total number of uncrossed-out signatures on the part-petition, don't automatically reject the petition. Sometimes circulators report fewer signatures than are actually on the petition (example: they write "20 signatures" but there are 22 signatures on the part-petition).

What to do:³⁸

Don't be too strict or technical.

Don't reject a part-petition *just* because the count is lower than the actual number.³⁹

Only reject it if there are signs of fraud or material misrepresentation.⁴⁰

³⁸*State ex rel. Schwarz v. Hamilton Cty. Bd. of Elections* (1962), 173 Ohio St. 321; *State ex rel. Curtis v. Summit Cty. Bd. of Elections* (2015), 144 Ohio St.3d 405.

³⁹See *State ex rel. Ferrara v. Trumbull Cty. Bd. Of Elections*, 166 Ohio St. 3d 64 (2021).

⁴⁰See *Ohio Mfrs.' Assn. v. Ohioans for Drug Price Relief Act* (2016), 147 Ohio St.3d 42, ¶19.

Circulators must state, under penalty of election falsification, how many signatures they witnessed affixed to the part-petition.⁴¹ The board can reject a part-petition if it has proof of fraud.⁴²

The law requires the board to:⁴³

- Investigate any irregularities and gather evidence.

- Issue subpoenas if needed.

- Report problems to the prosecutor or Secretary of State.⁴⁴

If the board has proof of fraud, document it and [report](#) the incident to the Public Integrity Division of the Secretary of State. .

When Signature Counts Are Too High

If a circulator claims **MORE** signatures than are actually on the part-petition (for example, they write “28 signatures” but there are only five signatures on the part-petition), the board must reject the entire part-petition when:

- It seems like a pattern of fraud.

- The problem happens across many part-petitions filed by one or more circulators for the same petition.⁴⁵

Exception:

- It’s minor counting mistakes.⁴⁶

- There is no sign of fraud.⁴⁷

In these cases, check each signature as usual.⁴⁸

⁴¹[R.C. 3501.38\(E\)\(1\)](#).

⁴²“And nothing in [Ferrara] disturbs the litany of caselaw providing that evidence of fraud triggers full invalidation of a part-petition.” *Ferrara* at ¶22.

⁴³[R.C. 3501.11\(J\)](#).

⁴⁴[R.C. 3501.11\(J\)](#).

⁴⁵“Systemic overcounts . . . are an open invitation to fraud . . . and . . . a part-petition of this type is invalid because, on its face, the attestation of the circulator is false: they did not witness the number of signatures indicated.” *Ohio Mfrs. Assn. v. Ohioans for Drug Price Relief Act*, 149 Ohio St.3d 250, at ¶44.

⁴⁶[Ohio Mfrs. Assn. v. Ohioans for Drug Price Relief Act](#) (2016), 149 Ohio St.3d 250, at ¶44.

⁴⁷*State ex rel. Schwarz v. Hamilton Cty. Bd. of Elections* (1962), 173 Ohio St. 321; [State ex rel. Curtis v. Summit Cty. Bd. of Elections](#) (2015), 144 Ohio St.3d 405 at ¶8.

⁴⁸[State ex rel. Citizens for Responsible Taxation v. Scioto Cty. Bd. of Elections](#) (1992), 65 Ohio St.3d 167.

For Petitions for Statewide Initiatives and Statewide Candidates

If a circulator says someone paid them but doesn't list the employer's address, the board must reject the entire part-petition.⁴⁹

If they don't mention an employer at all, or they give both the name and address of the employer, the board should accept that part of the circulator's statement as valid.

Section 13.10 Processing Voter Registration Forms

Before checking signatures, the board must first process:⁵⁰

All new, valid voter registrations.

All address or name changes.

For Statewide Petitions: Process any voter registrations or address updates that were received by the board or the Secretary of State's office as of the petition filing date.

For Local Petitions: Process any voter registrations or address changes that were received by the board as of the date the petition was filed with the board.

These registrations count as of the petition filing date.⁵¹

Enter any valid registrations received by the petition filing date into the county's voter registration database. See [Chapter 4, Section 4.05](#), for requirements on third parties who return another person's voter registration form.⁵²

⁴⁹[R.C. 3519.05](#); [R.C. 3519.06\(A\)](#).

⁵⁰[R.C. 3501.38\(A\)](#); [R.C. 3519.15](#); [State ex rel. Oster vs. Lorain Cty. Bd. of Elections, 93 Ohio St. 3d 480 \(2001\)](#).

⁵¹[R.C. 3501.38](#); [R.C. 3503.19](#).

⁵²[R.C. 3599.11\(B\)\(2\)\(a\)](#).

Section 13.11 Petition Signers

WHO CAN SIGN PETITIONS

Signers must be:

- ☐ Qualified Ohio electors.⁵³
- ☐ Registered to vote at the address on the petition when it was filed.⁵⁴
- ☐ For partisan primary petitions, a member of the candidate's political party (they voted in that party's primary election, or didn't vote in any other party's primary election in the past two calendar years).⁵⁵

Other rules:

- ☐ For statewide issue petitions, the key date is the date that the board examines the petition.⁵⁶
- ☐ A candidate who signs their own nominating petition doesn't count toward the required minimum number of signatures.⁵⁷
- ☐ 17-year-olds who will be 18 by the election can sign if registered.⁵⁸
- ☐ Voters of any affiliation or no affiliation may sign an independent or a nonpartisan office petition.

RULES ABOUT SIGNATURES⁵⁹

Valid signatures must be:

Original signature of that voter⁶⁰ (see also **Signing for Voters with Disabilities**).

Matching the signature in the board records.⁶¹

⁵³[R.C. 3501.38\(A\)](#).

⁵⁴[R.C. 3501.38\(A\)](#).

⁵⁵[R.C. 3513.05, 17](#).

⁵⁶[R.C. 3519.15](#).

⁵⁷*State ex rel. Kucinich v. Duffy (1970)*, 22 Ohio St.2d 61, 61-62.

⁵⁸[R.C. 3503.06\(B\); 3503.07](#).

⁵⁹[R.C. 3501.011](#).

⁶⁰[R.C. 3501.38\(B\)](#). Generally, signing or affixing a signature to an election-related document requires a person's written, cursive-style legal mark written in that person's own hand. However, voters with a disability may personally affix their signature through the use of a reasonable accommodation, including the use of assistive technology or an augmentative device such as a signature stamp. See [R.C. 3501.011](#), [R.C. 3501.382\(F\)](#) and related [OAG 2015-012](#).

⁶¹If a board of elections has conducted a hearing concerning the consideration of signatures on a candidate or issue petition, it must not disregard evidence produced at that hearing. See *State ex rel. Scott v. Franklin County Board of Elections (2014)*, 139 Ohio St.3d

Written in ink.⁶²

Accept signatures when:

- ☐ Nicknames are used but board employees can confirm their identity of the elector (example: “Jack” for John or “Peg” for Margaret).⁶³
- ☐ Middle initials are included or left out.
- ☐ Electors add their printed name on the petition along with their cursive name.⁶⁴
- ☐ Someone else filled in “non-signature information” (such as printed name, address, county, or the date of signing).⁶⁵

If someone signs more than once:

- ☐ Count only their first valid signature.
- ☐ Mark all later ones as invalid.
- ☐ Mark and track the duplicate.

SIGNER’S ADDRESS

The petition must show where the signer lives, including:

House number.

Street name or Rural Free Delivery (RFD) number.

City, village, or township.

The petition is not required to have the signer’s:

Ward and precinct.

Most board voter registration software systems can record if each signature is valid or invalid. They also can track for duplicate signatures over time and should be able to track more than one petition at a time. These systems should also be able to produce reports of the names, addresses, and valid/invalid code for every signature board employees review.

If the system can’t do these things, or the board does not use that part of the system, contact the Elections Division at ElectionAdmin@OhioSoS.gov.

171; “if undisputed evidence shows a nonmatching signature to be genuine, then the board must count the signature even if it does not match the elector’s legal mark on the voter-registration record” [State ex rel. Crowl v. Delaware Cty. Bd. of Elections](#) (2015), 144 Ohio St.3d 346; [State ex rel. Burroughs v. Summit Cty. Bd. of Elections](#) (2015), 145 Ohio St.3d 220.

⁶²[R.C. 3501.38\(B\)](#).

⁶³[State ex rel. Rogers v. Taft](#) (1992), 64 Ohio St.3d 193.

⁶⁴[R.C. 3501.38\(B\)](#).

⁶⁵[State ex rel. Jeffries v. Ryan](#) (1969), 21 Ohio App.2d 241.

Apartment number.

It is not acceptable for the signer's address to be:

A post office box.

Different from board records of the elector's address. If the elector's address is different from board records:

- Usually, invalidate that signature⁶⁶
- Exception: they used a postal format instead of political subdivision (for instance, writing "Columbus" as the city when the elector's political subdivision is "Perry Township"). Do not reject a signature just because of this type of difference.

SIGNING FOR VOTERS WITH DISABILITIES

While signatures usually must be written by the voter, some electors with disabilities can't physically sign their own name. The law allows these voters to use assistive technology or devices, like a stamp,⁶⁷ or an "attorney in fact."⁶⁸

How it works:

The voter with a disability authorizes someone to sign for them.

This person is called their "attorney in fact."

The voter and attorney in fact must complete [Form 10-F](#) or [Form 10-G](#).

The attorney in fact signs the voter's name while the voter is present.

The board must compare this signature on the petition with the document on file with the board office ([Form 10-F](#) or [Form 10-G](#)).⁶⁹

The properly appointed helper may sign the voter's name to the petition while the voter is present and directs them to do so (acting as an attorney-in-fact under [R.C. 3501.382](#)).

Note: Regular power of attorney documents don't work for election materials. The voter must file [Form 10-F](#) or [Form 10-G](#) with the board.

⁶⁶[R.C. 3501.38\(C\)](#); [R.C. 3519.10](#).

⁶⁷[R.C. 3501.011](#); [R.C. 3501.382\(F\)](#); [OAG 2015-012](#).

⁶⁸[R.C. 3501.382](#).

⁶⁹[R.C. 3501.382\(B\)\(1\)](#).

If someone signs for another person without proper authorization, the board must, at a minimum, invalidate that signature. If the board determines that the circulator knew it was wrong, invalidate the entire part-petition.⁷⁰

DATES

Each signature must be followed by the date.⁷¹ Rules about dates:

Don't reject a signature just because dates are out of order on a petition.

On nominating petitions, reject signatures dated more than one year before filing.⁷²

ILLEGIBLE SIGNATURES

The board must invalidate illegible signatures. A signature is illegible only if BOTH the signature and address are unreadable. If that is the case, board employees can't search the board system to verify the voter.⁷³

DITTO MARKS

Signers can use ditto marks (") to show repeat information such as:⁷⁴

Same date as above.

Same address as above.

Same county as above.

SIGNATURES FROM ONE COUNTY ONLY PER PART-PETITION

Ohio law says each part-petition can only have signatures of electors from one county. If a part-petition contains signatures from more than one county:

- ☐ First, figure out which county has the most signatures.⁷⁵ If most signatures are from your county, process and verify all signatures on the part-petition, but reject any signatures from other counties.
- ☐ Only count and verify the signatures from the majority county.
- ☐ Invalidate any signatures from other counties.

⁷⁰R.C. 3501.38(F).

⁷¹R.C. 3501.38(Q).

⁷²R.C. 3513.262; R.C. 3513.263.

⁷³State ex rel. Owens v. Brunner (2010), 125 Ohio St.3d 130.

⁷⁴State ex rel. Donofrio v. Henderson (1965), 4 Ohio App.2d 183.

⁷⁵R.C. 3513.05, 19; R.C. 3519.10.

- ☐ If most signatures are from a different county, do not process the petitions.
- ☐ For local races, contact the board with the most signatures and the board for the county that is most populous (if a multicounty district) for the specific type of petition filing. Transfer the part-petition to the director or deputy director of that board.
- ☐ For statewide races or issues, use the specific Secretary of State's office guidance on the transfer of petitions for review of that statewide race or issue.

NON-GENUINE SIGNATURES

Only reject the signature of someone not qualified to sign the petition; other valid signatures on the part-petition can be counted. Exception: If a circulator knows but still allows an unqualified person to sign a petition, that petition paper should be invalidated.⁷⁶

Section 13.12 Marking Signatures

The board is responsible for checking each signature for validity. Check each signature one by one.

If a signature is valid, place a check mark in the margin to the left of the signature.

If a signature is invalid, write the appropriate code in the margin to the left of the signature showing why it's invalid.

Use a red ink pen for making these marks.

After checking an entire part-petition, write on the right side of the front page both the number of valid signatures and the initials of the board employee who checked it.

⁷⁶[R.C. 3501.38\(F\)](#).

INVALIDATION REASON CODES

CAN	Candidate	Candidate Petitions Only. Candidate signed his or her own petition.
CIR	Circulator	Signed as an elector the part-petition they were circulating. (This invalidates the circulator's signature as a signer, but not the entire part petition.)
DUP	Duplicate	The person signed more than one part-petition or twice on the same part-petition.
EXP	Expired Signature	Candidate Petitions Only. Candidate petition was signed more than one year before filing.
ILL	Illegible	Both the signature and address are unreadable, so that it is impossible to check the signature against a voter registration record.
NA	No Address	The signer didn't provide their complete address: house number and street name or RFD, and the appropriate city, village, or township. If board officials can figure out the county from other information given, a missing county name isn't fatal. Ward and precinct information is not required.
ND	No Date	The petition doesn't show when the signature was made. (However, acceptable are: month-date-year, month-date, date out of sequence with other signers' dates, ditto marks.)
NG	Not Genuine	The signature doesn't appear to be genuine compared to the signature on file with the board as of the date the board checks the petition.
NR	Not Registered	The signer is not registered to vote. Signers must be qualified electors as of the date the petition is filed or, for a statewide issue petition, as of the date that the board examines the petition.
NRA	Not Registered Address	The address on the petition paper is not the address on file with the board as of the date petition is filed, or for statewide issue petitions, as of the date the board examines the petition.
OC	Other County	The signer lives in another county. Do not cross out signature or address; just place this code in the left margin.
P	Pencil	The signature was written using a pencil.
PC	Photocopy	The circulator's signature is a photocopy and is not an original signature.
WJ	Wrong Jurisdiction	The signer lives in another jurisdiction within the county. Don't cross out signature or address; just place this code in the left margin.
WP	Wrong Party	Candidate Petitions Only. The circulator or signer belongs to a different political party than the one listed on the declaration of candidacy.

Section 13.13 State Issue and Referendum Certification, Challenges and Protests

CERTIFICATION

After checking all the part-petitions, certify the board's findings to the Secretary of State on a certification form.

The board must return verified part-petitions to the Secretary of State's office at least 110 days before the election. The Secretary of State's office will decide if there are enough signatures by the 105th day before the election.⁷⁷

After getting reports from all of the county boards, the Secretary of State will determine if the petition is valid and has enough signatures. They will then notify the petitioners as required.⁷⁸

ADDITIONAL SIGNATURES

If a petition doesn't have enough valid signatures, the issue committee has 10 more days to collect and file more signatures. When this happens, the Secretary of State will:

- Post the extra petition form on their website.⁷⁹

- Tell the committee chairperson about the shortage and provide forms.⁸⁰

- Send the extra petition form to boards of elections, which must provide a copy to anyone who asks.⁸¹

The committee can only submit additional signatures on the form provided by the Secretary of State. Only signatures collected during the 10-day period can be submitted.⁸²

The board then has eight days from getting the extra signatures to check and return them to the Secretary of State's office. The Secretary will decide if the extra signatures are enough by the 65th day before the election.⁸³

⁷⁷[R.C. 3519.16\(E\)](#).

⁷⁸[R.C. 3519.16](#); *see* [Article II, Section 1g, Ohio Constitution](#).

⁷⁹[R.C. 3519.16\(F\)](#).

⁸⁰[R.C. 3519.16\(F\)](#).

⁸¹[R.C. 3519.05\(D\)](#); [R.C. 3519.16\(F\)](#).

⁸²[R.C. 3519.16\(F\)](#).

⁸³[R.C. 3519.16\(F\)](#).

CHALLENGES/PROTESTS

Only the Supreme Court of Ohio can hear challenges to state issue petitions and signatures.⁸⁴ Don't accept protests at the board office. Challenges must be filed with the Supreme Court of Ohio no later than 95 days before the election.⁸⁵

When checking part-petitions and signatures, only follow guidance from the Secretary of State's office or board legal counsel.

⁸⁴ [Art.II, §1g of the Ohio Constitution](#); [R.C. 3519.16](#).

⁸⁵ [Art.II, §1g of the Ohio Constitution](#).

Chapter 13 Checklist: Petitions

Before Petition Filing Season

- ☐ Download and maintain the most current petition forms from the Secretary of State's website.
- ☐ Review and understand the petition requirements in the [Ohio Candidate Requirement Guide](#).
- ☐ Train staff on proper petition review procedures.
- ☐ Prepare supplies (red pens for marking, etc.).

When Providing Forms to Candidates/Issue Groups

- ☐ Verify board employees are providing the most current form version from the Secretary of State's website.
- ☐ Provide candidates with relevant guidebooks ([Candidate Requirement Guide](#), etc.).
- ☐ Explain the filing process without pre-checking petitions.

When Petitions Are Filed

- ☐ Verify filing fee is paid.
- ☐ Process any new voter registrations or changes received by the filing date.
- ☐ Make sure the board Voter Registration Database is current.
- ☐ Provide the filer with a copy of [R.C. 3517.21](#) on unfair campaign practices and get written acknowledgment.

Circulator Requirements and Part-Petition Review

- ☐ Verify circulator's statement is complete and properly signed.
- ☐ Check if circulator meets qualifications (age, party affiliation if required).
- ☐ Ensure statewide petitions include circulator's name and address.

- ☐ Check if circulator's employer information is required and included (for statewide petitions).
- ☐ Determine if the petition contains signatures from only one county.
- ☐ Note the number of signatures claimed versus actual signatures.

Signature Verification

- ☐ Verify each signature against voter records in the board system.
- ☐ Check if signers are registered at the address listed.
- ☐ Ensure signatures match those on file.
- ☐ Check that signers are qualified electors.
- ☐ Verify partisan primary petition signers are members of the stated party.
- ☐ Check that signatures are in ink and dated.
- ☐ Look for duplicate signatures.

Documentation

- ☐ Mark valid signatures with a check mark.
- ☐ Mark invalid signatures with the appropriate code explaining why.
- ☐ Document the total number of valid signatures on the front of each part-petition.
- ☐ Initial the front of each part-petition after review.
- ☐ Maintain accurate records of all petition reviews.

Special Circumstances

- ☐ Handle attorney-in-fact signatures properly, verifying against Form [10-F](#) or [Form 10-G](#).
- ☐ Address issues with illegible signatures.
- ☐ Address part-petitions with signatures from multiple counties.
- ☐ Investigate any evidence of fraud or irregularities.

When Processing Completed Part-Petitions for Statewide Issues or Referendum

- ☐ Sort part-petitions into valid and invalid groups.
- ☐ Complete the certification form with the board's findings.
- ☐ Return all part-petitions and the board certification to the Secretary of State by the deadline.

If Supplemental Petitions Are Filed:

- ☐ Check signatures within eight days of receipt.
- ☐ Make sure signatures were collected during the 10-day supplemental period.
- ☐ Verify signatures appear on the official supplemental form.

Remember

- ☐ Only the Supreme Court of Ohio can hear challenges to statewide petitions.
- ☐ Only follow guidance from the Secretary of State or your county prosecutor.
- ☐ Document any evidence of fraud and report it to the Secretary of State.



CHAPTER 14: CANDIDATES¹

Section 14.01 Candidates, Introduction

This chapter explains the different types of candidates in Ohio elections and the board's responsibilities for each. It includes information about filing requirements, protests, and what to do when candidates withdraw or die.

Section 14.02 Types of Candidates

PARTISAN CANDIDATES - DECLARATION OF CANDIDACY²

A partisan candidate runs for office with a political party. A candidate must:

- File the proper declaration form with the board.
- Pay the required fee.

The filing deadline is 4 p.m., 90 days before the primary.³

The person's name will appear on the party's primary ballot of the political party named on their declaration of candidacy.⁴

A person who doesn't currently hold any elective office can run in any party's primary election regardless of party affiliation established by voting.⁵

A person who currently holds an elective office that doesn't use primaries can also run in any party's primary election regardless of party affiliation established by voting.⁶

¹Directive 2026-41.

²[R.C. 3513.04](#); [R.C. 3513.05](#); [R.C. 3513.07](#); [R.C. 3513.08](#); [R.C. 3513.09](#); [R.C. 3513.10](#); [R.C. 3513.191](#).

³[R.C. 3513.05](#).

⁴[R.C. 3513.04](#); [R.C. 3513.13](#).

⁵[R.C. 3513.191\(B\)](#).

⁶[R.C. 3513.191\(B\)](#).

A person who currently holds an elective office that uses primaries typically may not run in a different party's primary. However, if they want to become a candidate in a different party's primary, they must:⁷

- Complete [Form 10-Y](#) Declaration of Intent to Change Political Party Affiliation, and
- File it by 4 p.m., 30 days before the primary's filing deadline, and
- File the form with the same official with whom they'll file their declaration of candidacy and petition.⁸

A person can only file [Form 10-Y](#) once every 10 years.⁹

INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES - NOMINATING PETITION¹⁰

Independent candidates don't belong to a political party. To run as an independent, the candidate must:

- File a nominating petition by 4 p.m. the day before the primary.¹¹
- Be certified by the board.¹²
- Be truly independent from any political party.¹³

When filing, an independent candidate (except for judicial candidates) can ask in writing to be listed on the ballot as:

- A "nonparty" candidate.
- An "other-party" candidate.
- Without any designation at all.

If the independent candidate doesn't request a designation, their name will be on the ballot without any designation.¹⁴

⁷[R.C. 3513.191\(A\).](#)

⁸[R.C. 3513.191\(C\).](#)

⁹[R.C. 3513.191\(C\)\(3\).](#)

¹⁰[R.C. 3513.257](#); [R.C. 3513.261](#); [R.C. 3513.262](#); [R.C. 3513.28](#).

¹¹[R.C. 3513.257](#); [R.C. 3513.261](#); [R.C. 3513.262](#); [R.C. 3513.28](#).

¹²[R.C. 3513.263](#).

¹³*Morrison v. Colley*, 467 F.3d 503 (6th Cir. 2006); *Jolivet v. Husted*, 694 F.3d 760 (6th Cir. 2012). See also *State ex rel. Davis v. Summit County Board of Elections*, 137 Ohio St.3d 222 (2013).

¹⁴[R.C. 3513.257](#).

NONPARTISAN CANDIDATE - NOMINATING PETITION¹⁵

In the case of some offices, Ohio law doesn't allow partisan nominations (even where the candidate is selected in a partisan primary). These offices include:

- County court judge¹⁶
- Township office¹⁷
- Some municipal positions¹⁸

Nonpartisan candidates are those candidates who run for these offices. Most nonpartisan candidates are nominated by petition. The filing deadline is usually 4 p.m., 90 days before the general election. Confirm the filing deadline for each nonpartisan office in the county.

In townships or villages with less than 2,000 people, all candidates are nominated by petition unless voters choose to have partisan primaries.¹⁹ If not, all candidates are designated as nonpartisan candidates.

Township candidates will be nominated by petition as nonpartisan candidates unless either:²⁰

- Township voters petitioned for partisan elections.
- Past township elections were partisan.

Municipal candidates will be nominated by petition as nonpartisan candidates unless:²¹

- Municipal voters petitioned for partisan elections.
- Past municipal elections were partisan.
- A municipal charter provides otherwise.

All nonpartisan candidates must file nominating petitions to get on the ballot.²²

¹⁵[R.C. 1907.13](#); [R.C. 3513.251](#); [R.C. 3513.259](#); [R.C. 3513.261](#).

¹⁶[R.C. 1907.13](#).

¹⁷[R.C. 3513.253](#).

¹⁸[R.C. 3513.251](#).

¹⁹[R.C. 3513.01\(C\)](#).

²⁰[R.C. 3513.01\(C\)](#).

²¹[R.C. 3513.01\(C\)-\(D\)](#); [R.C. 3513.251](#); [R.C. 707.21](#); [Ohio Const. Article XVIII, Section 7](#).

²²[R.C. 3513.262](#).

WRITE-IN CANDIDATES - DECLARATION OF INTENT²³

Write-in candidates' names don't appear on the ballot. They must:

- File a declaration of intent form by 4 p.m., 72 days before the primary or general election.
- Meet all requirements for the office.

The board can only count votes for write-in candidates who filed a valid declaration. The Secretary of State provides the [declaration of intent form](#).

Write-ins are allowed for most, but not all, elections. The board cannot accept a write-in declaration for a municipal office if no primary election is held.²⁴

Section 14.03 When No Primary Election is Held or a Primary Election is Canceled

WHEN NO PRIMARY IS HELD²⁵

In odd-numbered years, statutory municipalities that normally hold partisan primaries will skip the primary if either:

- No one filed valid declaration of candidacy forms for nomination as a candidate for election to any office on the general election ballot.
- The number of candidates of one party doesn't exceed the number of positions available for that party.

²³[R.C. 3513.041](#); [1970 Op. Att'y. Gen. No. 1970-011](#); [1973 Op. Att'y. Gen. No. 1973-094](#).

²⁴[R.C. 3513.02](#); [1973 Op. Att'y. Gen. No. 1973-094](#).

²⁵[R.C. 3513.02](#).

If a primary election is canceled, the board must:²⁶

1. Declare the would-be candidates as nominated 90 days before the primary.
2. Issue appropriate certificates of nomination.
3. Certify their names for the general election ballot as if a primary had been held.

Section 14.04 Candidate Requirements

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

The Secretary of State creates candidate forms as required by law. They are available on the [Secretary of State's website](#). The board must give candidates the most current version of the form.²⁷

REQUIRED CANDIDATE DISCLOSURES

Ethics Commission Financial Disclosure

Candidates for these positions must file financial disclosure statements with the Ohio Ethics Commission ([Ethics.Ohio.gov](#)):

- state office
- county office
- city office
- school board (in districts with more than 12,000 students)²⁸

Candidates for other offices must also file with the relevant authorities. Forms and further information are available from:

- Joint Legislative Ethics Committee [JLEC-OLIG.State.oh.us](#)
(For Ohio House and Senate candidates)
- Supreme Court of Ohio - [Board of Professional Conduct](#)
(Judges, judicial candidates, and magistrates)
- U.S. House of Representatives – [Office of the Clerk](#) (For U.S. House candidates)

²⁶[R.C. 3513.02.](#)

²⁷[R.C. 3501.38\(L\).](#)

²⁸[R.C. 102.02.](#)

- [U. S. Senate](#)
(For U.S. Senate candidates)
- [Federal Election Commission](#) (For presidential and vice-presidential candidates)

Campaign Finance Reporting

When a candidate files petitions, give them materials about:

- Campaign finance reporting.
- Compliance rules (including section [3517.21](#) of the Revised Code).
- Rules about unfair political campaign activities.

The board must get written confirmation from the candidate that they received these materials.²⁹

More information is available in the [Campaign Finance Handbook](#), [Ohio Campaign Finance Reporting Calendar](#), and other publications on the Secretary of State's website at [OhioSoS.gov](#).

Some cities and villages have additional campaign finance rules. Municipal candidates should check with their municipal government for more information.

Special Office Requirements

Some offices (such as county sheriff, judge, coroner, etc.) have specific educational and professional requirements. Candidates should review the [Candidate Requirement Guide](#) from the Secretary of State's office and consult with private legal counsel about these requirements.

Filing Fees³⁰

Each candidate must pay a filing fee when submitting forms. The fee:

- Is set by [R.C. 3513.10](#).
- Varies by office.
- Is nonrefundable.³¹

²⁹[R.C. 3513.33](#); [R.C. 3517.11\(B\)\(1\)](#).

³⁰[R.C. 3513.10](#).

³¹[R.C. 3513.10\(F\)\(1\)](#).

- Must be paid to the same office where the candidate files (i.e., county board or the Secretary of State).³²

There is no filing fee for a party office (i.e., delegate to a national convention, county central committee, or state central committee).³³

The board must pay a portion of each filing fee to the Ohio Election Integrity Commission Fund.³⁴ The fee amount is listed in division (B) of [R.C. 3513.10](#).

Section 14.05 Multiple Offices, Legal Restrictions, and Withdrawals

RUNNING FOR MULTIPLE OFFICES

Candidates may not run for more than one office at a time.³⁵ Additionally, unsuccessful primary candidates are generally prohibited from running for most offices in the following general election. Someone who ran in the primary but wasn't nominated can only file to run in the general election held in the same year for one of these offices:³⁶

- city, local, or exempted village Board of Education
- Educational Service Center board member
- township trustee

Someone who filed for the primary but wasn't on the ballot (because their petitions weren't certified or they withdrew) can be a write-in candidate for any office **in the general election** held in the same year.³⁷

The Supreme Court of Ohio says primary and general elections are separate elections, not two parts of the same election.³⁸ "Same election" in [R.C. 3513](#) does not mean the same election year.³⁹

³²[R.C. 3513.10\(D\)](#).

³³[R.C. 3513.10\(C\)](#).

³⁴[R.C. 3513.10\(B\)](#), (E).

³⁵[R.C. 3513.052](#).

³⁶[R.C. 3513.04](#).

³⁷[R.C. 3513.041](#). If a person filed to be a candidate for nomination at the primary election but the person's petitions were not certified or the person withdrew as a candidate and no primary election was ultimately required, the person can still be a write-in candidate for the same office or some other office at the general election held in the same year.

³⁸*State ex rel. Brinda v. Lorain Cty. Bd. of Elections*, 115 Ohio St.3d 299.

³⁹The *Brinda* interpretation of "same election" applies to all the statutes in [R.C. Chapter 3513](#) that use the phrase "same election."

The Supreme Court of Ohio has said a person only “seeks” a party nomination if they actually appeared on the primary ballot as a choice for voters.⁴⁰

KEY LEGAL RESTRICTIONS

Generally, someone who has already filed to be a candidate is prohibited from being a write-in candidate for another race in the same election. If someone files to be a candidate in a federal, state, or county race, they are prohibited from being a write-in candidate for a state or county office in the same election. If someone files to be a candidate for a municipal or township office or local school board or Educational Service Center board member, they are prohibited from being a write-in candidate for such offices in the same election.⁴¹

The board is prohibited from accepting a nominating petition for a school board position from someone who has already filed for a municipal or township office in the same election.⁴²

A person who was on the primary ballot and eligible to receive votes cannot file as an independent or write-in candidate for the general election, except for educational boards or township trustee.⁴³

However, a person who filed for the primary but wasn’t on the ballot (because their petition wasn’t certified or they withdrew) or whose name appeared but was not eligible to receive votes can be a write-in candidate for any office at the general election held in the same year.⁴⁴

WITHDRAWN CANDIDACIES

A candidate who timely withdraws (before the board reviews their petition and before the filing deadline) may file a new petition, even for the same office.⁴⁵ A valid notice of withdrawal cannot be rescinded.⁴⁶

⁴⁰*State ex rel. Knowlton v. Noble Cty. Bd. of Elections*, 126 Ohio St. 3d 483 (2010).

⁴¹[R.C. 3513.041](#).

⁴²[R.C. 3513.254](#).

⁴³See *Knowlton*, supra note 35.

⁴⁴See *Brinda*, supra note 33.

⁴⁵*State ex rel. Coble v. Lucas County Board of Elections*, 130 Ohio St.3d 132 (2011).

⁴⁶[R.C. 3513.30\(D\)-\(E\)](#).

Section 14.06 Protest of Certified Candidates⁴⁷

PROTEST PROCEDURE

A protest is a written objection to the certification of a candidacy, issue, or ballot.

For a valid protest against the candidacy of any person:

- It must be in writing.
- It must list specific legal ground(s).
- It must be filed with the board or the Secretary of State (wherever the candidate filed).

After the board gets a valid protest, it must:

- Set a time and place for a hearing.
- Notify the candidate and the protester.
- Allow both parties (or their legal counsel) to speak at the hearing.
- Determine the merits of the protest.

When resolving a protest, the board is acting in a quasi-judicial capacity (like a court).⁴⁸ Consult the county prosecutor as soon as the board gets a protest. Review the section on *Acting in Quasi-Judicial Capacity* in [Chapter 2, Section 2.02](#), of this manual. The board's decision is final.

Note: Without a timely protest, the board is prohibited from invalidating any candidacy or petition after the 60th day before an election.⁴⁹

TYPES OF PROTESTS

Protests Against Primary Candidates⁵⁰

Who can file:

- party's controlling committee

⁴⁷R.C. 3513.041; R.C. 3513.05; R.C. 3513.262; R.C. 3513.263.

⁴⁸R.C. 3501.39; *State ex rel. City of Upper Arlington v. Franklin Cty. Bd. of Elections*, 2008-Ohio-5093, 119 Ohio St. 3d 478, 895 N.E.2d 177.

⁴⁹R.C. 3501.39; see *State ex rel. Yeager v. Richland Cty. Bd. of Elections*, 136 Ohio St.3d 327, 2013-Ohio-3862, 995 N.E.2d 228, ¶ 22.

⁵⁰R.C. 3513.05.

- A voter who:
 - Is in the same party as the candidate.
 - Is eligible to vote for the candidate.

A voter is considered a member of the candidate's political party if they either:

- Voted only in that party's primary in the current year and last two calendar years.
- Didn't vote in any other party's primary in that period and other evidence supports their party affiliation.⁵¹

Filing deadline: 4 p.m. on the 74th day before the primary election.

Protests Against Write-In Candidates⁵²

Who can file: Any voter eligible to vote for the write-in candidate.

Filing deadline:

- Primary election write-in candidates: 4 p.m. on the 67th day before the primary.
- General election write-in candidates: 4 p.m. on the 67th day before the general election.

Protests Against Independent Candidates⁵³

Who can file: Any voter who can vote for the candidate.

Filing deadline: 4 p.m. on July 30, or, if it was a presidential primary, by the end of the 12th week after the primary.

Protests Against Nonpartisan Candidates⁵⁴

Who can file: Any voter who can vote for the candidate.

Filing deadline: 4 p.m. on the 74th day before the general election.

⁵¹[*State ex rel. Bender v. Franklin Cty. Bd. of Elections*, 157 Ohio St.3d 120, 2019-Ohio-2854.](#)

⁵²[R.C. 3513.041.](#)

⁵³[R.C. 3513.262.](#)

⁵⁴[R.C. 3513.263.](#)

RECONSIDERATION FOR CANDIDATES NOT CERTIFIED

If the board didn't certify a candidate for the ballot because they found the petition invalid or it didn't meet requirements, the candidate can ask the board to reconsider its determination.

Unlike a protest hearing, reconsideration hearings aren't mandatory. But if the board decides to have a hearing, it must consider evidence offered at the hearing showing the candidate or issue should be on the ballot.⁵⁵

Conduct these hearings like protest hearings. Give proper notice and allow representation.

Section 14.07 Death of Candidate Before Primary Election⁵⁶

PARTISAN CANDIDATE DEATH

If a candidate dies before the primary, usually the vacancy isn't filled unless a charter says otherwise.⁵⁷ However, there are exceptions when only one person filed for a party's nomination.⁵⁸

Partisan Candidate Dies More Than 10 Days Before Primary⁵⁹

When only one person filed for a party's nomination and the person dies more than 10 days before the primary,:

- The deceased candidate's party may select a replacement.
- Any major political party may select a candidate if either of the following applies:
 - No one filed for that party's nomination.
 - Only one person filed a valid declaration of candidacy, but the person withdrew, died, or was disqualified under [R.C. 3513.052](#), and the vacancy wasn't filled.

⁵⁵[Scott v. Franklin County Board of Election](#), 139 Ohio St. 3d 171 (2014).

⁵⁶[R.C. 3513.17](#); [R.C. 3513.30](#).

⁵⁷[R.C. 3513.17](#).

⁵⁸[R.C. 3513.30](#).

⁵⁹[R.C. 3513.30\(A\)](#).

The appropriate political party committee can fill the vacancy the same way vacancies are filled after the primary.⁶⁰ However, the required certification must be filed with the Secretary of State, a board of the most populous county of a district, or the board where most of the population of a subdivision is located, respectively, no later than 4 p.m. of the 10th day before the primary, or any other board no later than 4 p.m. of the fifth day before the primary.

If a Partisan Candidate Dies Within 10 Days of the Primary⁶¹

If only one person filed for a party's nomination and dies 10 days or less before the primary, the deceased candidate is considered as winning the nomination. The vacancy is treated as if they died on the day after the primary.

Section 14.08 Death of Candidate Prior to General Election⁶²

MAJOR PARTY NOMINEE DIES AFTER THE PRIMARY⁶³

If a primary winner dies, their party committee can select a replacement by:

1. Calling a meeting (give committee members at least two days' notice of time, place, and purpose of the meeting).
2. Have a majority of committee members present at the meeting.
3. Selecting a replacement by majority vote of those present.
4. Certifying the name in writing and under oath from the chairperson and secretary of the meeting.
5. Filing by these deadlines:
 - For multicounty candidacies: by 4 p.m. on the 10th day before the general election with the board of the most populous county (or the Secretary of State for statewide candidacies).

⁶⁰[R.C. 3513.30\(A\)\(2\).](#)

⁶¹[R.C. 3513.30\(A\)\(3\).](#)

⁶²[R.C. 3513.30](#); [R.C. 3513.31](#).

⁶³[R.C. 3513.31\(G\).](#)

- For single-county candidacies: by 4 p.m. of the fifth day before the general election with the appropriate board.

The certification must include the candidate's written acceptance of the nomination.

MINOR POLITICAL PARTY NOMINEE DIES AFTER THE PRIMARY⁶⁴

If a minor party nominee dies, the vacancy may be filled according to that party's rules. The certification process is the same as for major parties, with the same deadlines.⁶⁵

WHEN AN INDEPENDENT OR NONPARTISAN CANDIDATE DIES⁶⁶

If an independent or nonpartisan candidate dies before the 10th day before the general election:

- A majority of the petition's committee of five may select a replacement.
- They must file certification (signed and sworn under oath by a majority of the members) by 4 p.m., five days before the general election. They must file with the election officials with whom the petition nominating the original candidate was filed (i.e., the same board or other official).
- They must include the candidate's written acceptance of the nomination.

OTHER PARTIES' RIGHTS WHEN A VACANCY OCCURS⁶⁷

When a candidate who was nominated in a primary or by nominating petition withdraws, dies, or is disqualified before the general election:

- Another major party without a candidate for that office may select one.
- A nominating petition's committee of five may fill the vacancy if their nominee died and wasn't replaced.

These vacancies are filled in the same way a vacancy in a party nomination or nomination by petition is filled.

⁶⁴[R.C. 3513.31\(G\).](#)

⁶⁵[R.C. 3513.31\(A\)-\(E\).](#)

⁶⁶[R.C. 3513.31\(H\).](#)

⁶⁷[R.C. 3513.31\(K\).](#)

Section 14.09 Candidate Withdrawal

WITHDRAWAL DEADLINES

General Rule on Withdrawals

A candidate may withdraw at any time before an election by filing a written statement of withdrawal with the same office where they filed their original paperwork (the board or the Secretary of State).⁶⁸ A valid notice of withdrawal cannot be rescinded.⁶⁹

Presidential Primary Election Withdrawals

For presidential primaries, partisan presidential candidates must withdraw by 4 p.m. on the 40th day before the primary.⁷⁰

VALID NOTICE OF WITHDRAWAL⁷¹

A withdrawal of candidacy must be:

- In writing.
- Filed with the same office where the candidate filed originally.

The board cannot act on a reported withdrawal until it gets the official written notice from the candidate. Once filed, a valid notice of withdrawal cannot be rescinded.⁷²

FILLING VACANCIES ON GENERAL ELECTION BALLOT⁷³

Major Political Party Vacancies

If a primary nominee withdraws, the party committee may select a replacement by:

1. Calling a meeting (give committee members at least two days' notice of time, place, and purpose of the meeting).
2. Having a majority of members present at the meeting.
3. Selecting a replacement by majority vote.

⁶⁸[R.C. 3513.30\(B\) and \(D\)](#).

⁶⁹[R.C. 3513.30\(D\)-\(E\)](#).

⁷⁰[R.C. 3513.30\(C\)](#).

⁷¹[R.C. 3513.30\(B\)-\(E\)](#).

⁷²[R.C. 3513.30\(D\)-\(E\)](#).

⁷³[R.C. 3513.31\(A\)-\(E\)](#).

4. Certifying the name of the person in writing and under oath by the chairperson and secretary by the 86th day before the general election.
5. Including the nominee's written acceptance.

Minor Political Party Vacancies⁷⁴

Minor political parties fill vacancies according to their party's rules.

The chairperson and secretary of the meeting must:

- Certify the replacement in writing and under oath by the 86th day before the general election.
- Include the nominee's written acceptance.

Independent or Nonpartisan Vacancies⁷⁵

If an independent or nonpartisan candidate withdraws:

- A majority of the petition's committee of five may select a replacement.
- They must certify the replacement, in writing and under oath, by the 86th day before the general election.
- Include the replacement's written acceptance.

Other Parties' Rights When a Vacancy Occurs⁷⁶

When a nominated candidate withdraws, dies, or is disqualified prior to the general election:

- Another major party that hasn't nominated a candidate for that office may fill the vacancy.
- A nominating petition's committee of five may fill the vacancy if their nominee died and wasn't replaced.

These vacancies are filled the same way a vacancy in a party nomination or nomination by petition is filled.

⁷⁴[R.C. 3513.31\(A\)-\(E\).](#)

⁷⁵[R.C. 3513.31\(F\).](#)

⁷⁶[R.C. 3513.31\(K\).](#)

FILLING UNEXPIRED TERMS

If an officeholder dies or resigns before the end of their term, the immediate vacancy is filled in accordance with the statute governing the specific office. However, in some cases, an election may be required if the unexpired term is long enough.⁷⁷ If an officeholder dies or resigns after the 115th day before a primary election and someone can be elected at the next general election to finish the unexpired term:⁷⁸

- Each party's committee may select a candidate following the same process as for a withdrawal prior to a general election described in **Section 14.09**.⁷⁹
- Certification deadlines depend on when the vacancy happens:
 - Before the 86th day before the general election: File by 4 p.m. on the 86th day or the 10th day after the vacancy occurs, whichever is later.
 - From the 86th day before the next general election through the 46th day before the general election: File by 4 p.m. on the 10th day after the vacancy occurs.
 - Less than 46 days before the general election: File by 4 p.m. on the 36th day before the general election.
- Any person desiring to run for the vacancy as an independent candidate must file a statement of candidacy and nominating petition no later than 4 p.m. on the 10th day after the vacancy occurs, or by 4 p.m. of the 50th day before the general election if the vacancy occurs less than 62 days before the general election. The nominating petition must contain the lesser of 750 signatures or the number required under R.C. 3513.257.⁸⁰

If a person was already nominated in a primary or by petition under [R.C. 3517.012](#), the party committee cannot select and certify another candidate.

⁷⁷The issue of how the immediate vacancy should be filled and whether an election is required to fill the remainder of an unexpired term are issues to be resolved by the relevant jurisdiction/their legal counsel. When an election is required, the question of the selection of candidates is governed by [R.C. 3513.31](#).

⁷⁸[R.C. 3513.31\(I\)](#); see [Filling Vacancies in Elective Office](#).

⁷⁹A county executive committee is not prohibited from making a nomination in anticipation of a vacancy. See [State ex rel. Barth v. Hamilton County Bd. of Elections](#), 65 Ohio St. 3d 219, 602 N.E.2d 1130, 1992 Ohio LEXIS 2894 (Ohio 1992).

⁸⁰[R.C. 3513.31\(J\)](#).

Section 14.10 Special Circumstances

GOVERNOR/LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR CANDIDATE VACANCIES⁸¹

Death, Withdrawal, or Disqualification Before the Primary Election

- If a candidate for governor or lieutenant governor dies, withdraws, or is disqualified prior to the 70th day before the primary: The joint candidate for the other position appoints a replacement and certifies the name and address to the Secretary of State by the 65th day before the primary.
- If a candidate dies between the 70th and 10th day before the primary: The joint candidate makes the appointment and certifies the name and address to the Secretary of State by the fifth day before the primary.

Death, Withdrawal, or Disqualification Before the General Election

If a primary-nominated candidate for governor or lieutenant governor withdraws before the 90th day or dies before the 10th day before the general election, the vacancy is filled according to [R.C. 3513.31](#).⁸² These processes are outlined generally under **sections 14.08 and 14.09**, but candidates or party committees should consult their legal counsel should questions arise.

If an independent candidate for governor or lieutenant governor withdraws before the 90th day or dies before the 10th day before the general election⁸³:

- A majority of the petition's committee of five selects a replacement.
- For withdrawals: Certify by the 86th day before the general election.
- For deaths: Certify by 4 p.m. on the fifth day before the general election.
- Include written acceptance of the replacement.

If a vacancy in a joint candidacy for governor and lieutenant governor isn't filled, the entire candidacy is invalidated and removed from the ballot.⁸⁴

⁸¹[R.C. 3513.311](#).

⁸²[R.C. 3513.311\(E\)](#).

⁸³[R.C. 3513.311](#); [R.C. 3513.31\(F\)](#), (H).

⁸⁴[R.C. 3513.311\(G\)](#).

U.S. CONGRESSIONAL CANDIDATE VACANCIES

Death, Withdrawal, or Disqualification Before the Primary Election⁸⁵

If only one person filed for a party's nomination as a representative to Congress and that person withdraws or dies before the primary:

- A special election is scheduled, but only held if the race is contested.
- The Secretary of State sets the filing deadlines.
- The state pays all costs of this election.
- At this special election:
 - The withdrawn or deceased candidate's party may select a replacement candidate for Congress.
 - Other major parties may select candidates if they had no candidates or their only candidate withdrew or died.

If no special election is held, the Secretary of State issues a certificate of nomination to the person after the most populous county in the district confirms this.

Death, Withdrawal, or Disqualification Before the General Election⁸⁶

If a party's nominee for Congress withdraws or dies before the 90th day before the general election:

- A special election is scheduled, but only held if the race is contested.
- The Secretary of State sets the filing deadlines.
- The state pays all costs of this election.

If only one person filed a valid declaration of candidacy, that person automatically receives the nomination to appear on the ballot as that party's candidate.

⁸⁵[R.C. 3513.301.](#)

⁸⁶[R.C. 3513.312.](#)

Chapter 14 Checklist: Candidates

When Candidates File

- ☐ Give candidates newest forms from the Secretary of State website.
- ☐ Check filing deadlines.
- ☐ Collect filing fees.
- ☐ Send required portion to Ohio Election Integrity Commission Fund.
- ☐ Give candidates campaign finance materials.
- ☐ Get written confirmation they received these materials.

When Reviewing Petitions

- ☐ Check if partisan candidates voted in the right primaries.
- ☐ Make sure candidates aren't filing for multiple offices when not allowed.
- ☐ Process [Form 10-Y](#) for candidates changing parties.
- ☐ Certify qualified candidates.

When Handling Protests

- ☐ Accept written protests by these deadlines:
 - Partisan candidates: 4 p.m., 74 days before primary
 - Write-in candidates: 4 p.m., 67 days before election
 - Independent candidates: 4 p.m. on July 30
 - Nonpartisan candidates: 4 p.m., 74 days before the general election
- ☐ Schedule hearings.
- ☐ Notify all parties.
- ☐ Talk to the county prosecutor.
- ☐ Let both sides speak at hearings.
- ☐ Make fair decisions.

When Candidates Die or Withdraw

- ❑ Accept written withdrawal statements.
- ❑ If a candidate dies, follow procedures based on:
 - Type of candidate.
 - Timing before election.
 - Type of office.
- ❑ Allow party committees or petition committees to select replacements.
- ❑ Process replacement forms by legal deadlines.
- ❑ For governor/lieutenant governor or congressional races, follow special rules.
- ❑ Cancel primaries if needed.



CHAPTER 15: POLITICAL PARTIES¹

Section 15.01 Political Parties, Introduction

This chapter helps boards track party affiliations, process minor party petitions, and handle party nominations in Ohio elections. It explains major and minor party differences and shows boards how to verify petitions, manage party committees, and follow key deadlines. The chapter also guides boards through their duties when parties fill committee vacancies.

Section 15.02 Party Affiliation

PRIMARY ELECTION

In primary elections, voters decide which candidates will serve as their party's nominee to run for specific offices in the general election. Voters also elect members of the political party's controlling committees, convention delegates, and convention alternates.² Some local or state issues may also appear on primary ballots.

In Ohio, voters join a political party by voting in its primary.³ They don't pick a party when they register to vote. If issues are on the ballot in their area, voters who don't want to join a party can ask for an issues-only ballot.⁴

Boards must record each voter's party's primary choice.

¹[Directive 2026-42](#).

²[R.C. 3501.01\(E\)\(1\)-\(2\)](#).

³[R.C. 3513.05](#); [R.C. 3513.19\(A\)\(3\)](#).

⁴[R.C. 3505.06](#).

DETERMINING PARTY AFFILIATION

For purposes of signing or circulating a petition of candidacy for party nomination or election, a voter is a party member if they:

- Voted in that party's primary in the past two years.
- Didn't vote in any other party's primary in the past two years.⁵

Boards must update voting records and party affiliations after each primary. See [Chapter 4, Voter Registration](#), for more details.

ELECTED OFFICIALS CHANGING PARTY AFFILIATION

Elected officials can run in a different party's primary by filing [Form 10-Y](#).⁶ Their form must:

- Be filed by 4 p.m., 30 days before the primary election filing deadline⁷.
- Be filed with the same office where they'll file to run.
- State which party's nomination they seek.⁸

After filing [Form 10-Y](#), a person can't file another one for 10 years.⁹

Section 15.03 Major versus Minor Political Parties

Ohio has two types of parties: major and minor.

MAJOR PARTIES

A **major** party is one whose candidate for governor or nominees for presidential electors got at least 20 percent of the votes in the last regular state election.¹⁰ Ohio currently has two major parties: Democratic and Republican.

⁵[R.C. 3513.05 17](#); [R.C. 3513.19\(A\)\(3\)](#).

⁶[R.C. 3513.191\(C\)\(1\)](#).

⁷[R.C. 3513.05](#).

⁸[R.C. 3513.191\(C\)\(1\)](#).

⁹[R.C. 3513.191\(C\)\(3\)](#).

¹⁰[R.C. 3501.01\(F\)\(1\)](#).

MINOR PARTIES

A **minor** political party is one that formed when voters filed a valid petition with the Secretary of State that satisfied the requirements of [R.C. 3517.01](#).¹¹

A minor political party retains its status when it receives at least 3 percent but less than 20 percent of votes for its candidate for governor or its nominees for presidential electors in the last regular state election.¹²

Section 15.04 Minor Political Parties

ESTABLISHING A MINOR POLITICAL PARTY

Groups can become minor parties:

- **Through the Petition Process**

A group files a party creation petition ([Form 4-A](#)) if they:

- ☐ Received less than three percent of the votes for their candidate for governor or nominee for presidential elector, or
- ☐ Didn't run a candidate for governor or nominees for a presidential election in the most recent regular state election.¹³

The party formation petition filed with the Secretary of State must:

- ☐ Have voter signatures equal to at least one percent of the total vote for governor or presidential electors from the last election.
- ☐ Include 500+ voter signatures from each of at least half of Ohio's congressional districts.
- ☐ State the group's plan to form a political party and join the next even-numbered year general election that is at least 125 days after the filing date.
- ☐ Name a committee of three to five petitioners who will speak for the group.¹⁴
- ☐ Name the new party (which can't be similar to any existing party name).¹⁵

¹¹[R.C. 3501.01\(F\)\(2\)\(b\)](#).

¹²[R.C. 3501.01\(F\)\(2\)\(a\)](#).

¹³[R.C. 3517.01\(A\)\(1\)\(b\)](#).

¹⁴[R.C. 3517.01\(A\)\(1\)\(b\)](#).

¹⁵[R.C. 3517.01\(A\)\(2\)](#).

Once the petition is filed, the new political party exists by law. It can now nominate candidates to appear on the ballot in the next general election that is more than 125 days away.¹⁶

- After the party petition is filed, the Secretary of State sends the petition papers to county boards.¹⁷ The board must check the signatures from your county and return the papers to the Secretary of State no later than 118 days before the general election.¹⁸ The board must also certify whether the signatures are valid or invalid.¹⁹
- Any voter may file a written protest against the petition with the Secretary of State no later than 114 days before the general election.²⁰
- The Secretary of State decides if the petition is valid and tells the committee no later than 95 days before the general election.²¹

Groups can retain minor party status:

- **Through Election Results**

A group whose candidate for governor or nominees for presidential electors receive at least 3 percent but less than 20 percent will remain a minor party for four years.²²

NOMINATION OF CANDIDATES

Each person who wants to run as a new party's candidate must file a nominating petition both:

- After the party petition is filed.
- No later than 110 days before the general election.²³

¹⁶[R.C. 3517.012\(A\)\(1\).](#)

¹⁷[R.C. 3517.012\(A\)\(2\)\(a\).](#)

¹⁸[R.C. 3517.012\(A\)\(2\)\(b\).](#)

¹⁹[R.C. 3517.012\(A\)\(2\)\(b\).](#)

²⁰[R.C. 3517.012\(A\)\(2\)\(c\).](#) The protest will be resolved in the same manner as specified under [R.C. 3501.39](#), but only after the Secretary of State has determined the sufficiency of the petition. [R.C. 3517.012\(A\)\(2\)\(c\); R.C. 3501.39\(A\)\(1\).](#)

²¹[R.C. 3517.012\(A\)\(2\)\(d\).](#)

²²[R.C. 3501.01\(F\)\(2\)\(a\).](#)

²³[R.C. 3517.012\(B\)\(1\).](#)

Each candidate must use a nominating petition prescribed by the Secretary of State ([Forms 4-C through 4-G](#)). The candidate must include the new party's name on the petition.²⁴

For state offices, candidates need at least 50 signatures from voters who haven't voted in other party primaries in the current year or the past two years.²⁵ The nominating petition for the state candidate must be filed with the Secretary of State's office.²⁶

For district or local offices, candidates need at least five signatures from voters who haven't voted in a different party's primary in the current year or past two calendar years.²⁷

For multicounty races, candidates must file petitions at the board of elections in the county with the largest population in the district, according to the last federal census.²⁸ In single-county races, candidates file petitions with that county's board.²⁹

Each board must check all signatures no later than 105 days before the general election.³⁰ Protests may be filed up to 100 days before the general election.³¹

The Secretary of State or the county board of elections must decide if the nominating petitions are valid and notify the candidate and the committee designated in the party formation petition 95 days before the general election.³²

The party committee must send the Secretary of State a valid list of its candidates no later than 75 days before the general election.³³ These names will be on the general election ballot as the party's choices.³⁴

²⁴[R.C. 3517.012\(B\)\(1\)](#). With the exception of [R.C. 3505.03](#), [R.C. 3505.08](#), [R.C. 3506.11](#), [R.C. 3513.31](#), [R.C. 3513.311](#), and [R.C. 3513.312](#), the provisions of the Revised Code concerning independent candidates who file nominating petitions also apply to candidates who file nominating petitions under [R.C. 3517.012](#), [R.C. 3517.012\(B\)\(1\)](#).

²⁵[R.C. 3517.012\(B\)\(2\)\(a\)](#). This requirement applies to petitions for joint candidates for the offices of governor and lieutenant governor. [R.C. 3517.012\(B\)\(2\)\(a\)](#).

²⁶[R.C. 3513.257](#).

²⁷[R.C. 3517.012\(B\)\(2\)\(b\)](#).

²⁸[R.C. 3513.257](#).

²⁹[R.C. 3513.257](#).

³⁰[R.C. 3517.012\(B\)\(3\)\(a\)](#).

³¹[R.C. 3517.012\(B\)\(3\)\(b\)](#). The protest must be filed in the same manner as specified in [R.C. 3513.263](#), [R.C. 3517.012\(B\)\(3\)\(b\)](#).

³²[R.C. 3517.012\(B\)\(3\)\(c\)](#).

³³[R.C. 3517.012\(C\)\(1\)](#).

³⁴[R.C. 3517.012\(C\)\(1\)](#).

If a candidate's nominating petition isn't valid, or if the committee doesn't certify the candidate, they won't be on the general election ballot.³⁵

The slate certification must:

- ☐ Use [Form 4-B Minor Political Party Slate of Certified Candidates](#) from the Secretary of State.
- ☐ Be signed by all committee members named in the party formation petition.
- ☐ List only one person per office (or one set of joint candidates for governor/lieutenant governor).³⁶

If the party formation petition fails, none of the party's candidates will be on the ballot.³⁷

PRESIDENTIAL AND VICE-PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES OF A RECOGNIZED PARTY

Minor parties must certify their picks for President and Vice President to the Secretary of State 90 days before the election and should use [Form 4-C](#).³⁸ The certification must include a list of 17 electors who would vote in the Electoral College if the candidates win.³⁹

NEW PARTY'S FIRST PRIMARY ELECTION

At a new party's first primary election, any voter can join that party regardless of their prior party affiliation.⁴⁰

CONTROLLING COMMITTEE OF A MINOR POLITICAL PARTY

Minor parties pick committee members by their own rules.⁴¹ A party must file a list of its controlling committee members and other party officials with the Secretary of State's Office within 30 days of their election or appointment.⁴²

A minor party can elect controlling committees in a primary election in the even-numbered year by filing a plan for party organization with the Secretary of State's office

³⁵[R.C. 3517.012\(C\)\(2\).](#)

³⁶[R.C. 3517.012\(C\)\(1\).](#)

³⁷[R.C. 3517.012\(C\)\(3\).](#)

³⁸[R.C. 3505.10\(B\)\(3\).](#)

³⁹[R.C. 3505.10\(B\)\(3\).](#)

⁴⁰[R.C. 3517.016.](#)

⁴¹[R.C. 3517.02.](#)

⁴²[R.C. 3517.02.](#)

90 days before the primary.⁴³ The plan must state which offices will be elected and how candidates qualify for those offices.⁴⁴ Candidates must qualify at least 19 days before the election.⁴⁵ Alternatively, minor parties may choose committee members according to party rules instead of through elections. In that case, the party must file the names and addresses of all committee members and officers with the Secretary of State's office.⁴⁶

BYLAWS OF MINOR POLITICAL PARTIES

Each political party must file a copy of its constitution and bylaws with the Secretary of State's office within 30 days of adopting or changing them.⁴⁷ These are filed via email at PartyCommittees@OhioSoS.gov.

Section 15.05 Major Political Parties

CONTROLLING COMMITTEE OF A MAJOR POLITICAL PARTY

The controlling committees of each major political party must include:

- ☐ A state central committee consisting of two members (one man and one woman) from each congressional or state senate district in the state, as the outgoing committee determines.
- ☐ A county central committee with one member from each precinct or ward/township in the county.
- ☐ Other committees as needed by party rules.⁴⁸

Both major political parties elect their state central committees by state senate district.

All committee members must belong to the party and are elected by direct vote in even-year primaries.⁴⁹ Committee members serve either two-year or four-year terms, as decided by party rules.⁵⁰ Currently, Republicans and Democrats serve four-year terms.

⁴³[R.C. 3517.03.](#)

⁴⁴[R.C. 3517.03.](#)

⁴⁵[R.C. 3517.03.](#)

⁴⁶[R.C. 3517.03.](#)

⁴⁷[R.C. 3517.02.](#)

⁴⁸[R.C. 3517.03.](#)

⁴⁹[R.C. 3517.03.](#)

⁵⁰[R.C. 3517.03.](#)

Each major party's controlling committee elects an executive committee with powers set by the party's controlling committee and by law.⁵¹ For multicounty judicial, state senatorial, or congressional districts, the chair and secretary of each county central committee constitute the district committee.⁵² For single-county judicial, senatorial, or congressional districts, the county central committee constitutes the district committee.⁵³

COUNTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE MAY WAIVE THE PETITION REQUIREMENT

A county central committee may decide, 120+ days before a primary, that its candidates don't need to file petitions.⁵⁴ If this happens, candidates must file a declaration of candidacy instead of collecting signatures.⁵⁵

If a county central committee has waived the petition rule, it can reinstate the petition requirement for later elections.⁵⁶ This must be done 120+ days before the next primary election at which candidates for the county central committee are elected.⁵⁷ After that, candidates must file petitions again and meet all other requirements.⁵⁸

Use [Form 2-L](#) for county central committee candidates who need petitions, and [Form 2-M](#) for those who don't.

WRITE-IN CANDIDATES

Special rules exist for write-in candidates for party controlling committees:

- Boards can't accept declarations of intent to be a write-in candidate for state central committee spots.⁵⁹ If no one files to run, the office does not appear on the ballot.⁶⁰

⁵¹[R.C. 3517.03.](#)

⁵²[R.C. 3517.03.](#)

⁵³[R.C. 3517.03.](#)

⁵⁴[R.C. 3513.051\(A\).](#)

⁵⁵[R.C. 3513.051\(A\).](#)

⁵⁶[R.C. 3513.051\(B\).](#)

⁵⁷[R.C. 3513.051\(B\).](#)

⁵⁸[R.C. 3513.051\(B\).](#)

⁵⁹[R.C. 3513.14.](#)

⁶⁰[R.C. 3513.14.](#)

- Boards can accept valid declarations of intent for write-in candidates for county central committee spots.⁶¹ The boards must add a write-in space on the ballot.⁶²

ELECTED, NOT NOMINATED

Party central committee members are elected, not just nominated, during a primary election.⁶³

- **17-year-old Voters**

Voters who are 17 at the primary can't vote for:

- State Party Central Committee.
- County Party Central Committee.
- Questions and Issues.

However, in presidential primaries, 17-year-olds can vote for delegates.⁶⁴

- **Party Loyalty Rule**

A person can't run for a party committee if they voted in a different political party's primary in the last two years.⁶⁵

Since committee members are elected, not nominated, at the primary, the exceptions to this rule don't apply.⁶⁶

ORGANIZATIONAL MEETINGS OF MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES

⁶¹[1970 Ohio Atty.Gen.Ops. No. 1970-11, at 2-22.](#)

⁶²[1970 Ohio Atty.Gen.Ops. No. 1970-11, at 2-22.](#)

⁶³[R.C. 3517.03.](#)

⁶⁴*State ex rel. Schwerdtfeger v. Husted*, Franklin Co. C.P. No. 16CV-2346, 2016 Ohio Misc. LEXIS 18, at *23-24 (March 11, 2016).

⁶⁵[R.C. 3513.191\(A\).](#)

⁶⁶[R.C. 3513.191\(B\)-\(C\).](#)

- **Meeting Requirement**

Ohio law requires members-elect of county central committees to meet between six and 15 days after the board certifies election results, including any recounts in county central committee races.⁶⁷

To be recognized as the party central committee, the committee must verify for the board of elections that proper procedure has been followed for all meeting, notice, and roster requirements.

- **Notice**

The committee's secretary must mail a notice to each new member about the time and place of the organizational meeting.⁶⁸ The county central committee must give a copy to the board at least five days before the meeting, and the board must publicly post the notice.⁶⁹

- **Roster**

Each county political party must file the names and addresses of all members and officers of its central and executive committees with its board and the Secretary of State promptly after the organization of the committees.⁷⁰ The roster can be in any format, as long as it has names, addresses, districts, and titles (such as chair, secretary, etc.). The roster is emailed to PartyCommittees@OhioSoS.gov.

PARTY CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

Each party must file its rules (constitution and by-laws) with the Secretary of State's office within 30 days after making or changing them.⁷¹ These are sent to PartyCommittees@OhioSoS.gov.

⁶⁷[R.C. 3517.04.](#)

⁶⁸[R.C. 3517.04.](#)

⁶⁹[R.C. 3517.04.](#)

⁷⁰[R.C. 3517.06.](#)

⁷¹[R.C. 3517.02.](#)

FILLING VACANCIES⁷²

In a Controlling Committee

When a vacancy is created due to death, resignation, moving away, or other reasons, the controlling committee (or executive committee, if authorized) fills the vacancy by majority vote of the members of such committee.⁷³

When a county central or executive committee fills a vacancy after its organizational meeting, it must promptly report the new member's name to the board and the Secretary of State.⁷⁴ Changes are emailed to PartyCommittees@OhioSoS.gov.

In Elected Office

Various laws set rules for filling vacancies in elective offices. County party central committees fill some county and city vacancies.

When a county office is vacant, the board's director must notify the central committee of the party that nominated the person who left about the central committee's right to appoint someone to fill the vacancy. Boards can use [Form 292](#) for this.

The group with the right to appoint must know which laws apply and take appropriate action. The county party central committee should consult with their legal counsel about the process. Note that when filling a vacancy in public office, the county party central committee may be acting as a public body and be subject to Ohio's Sunshine Laws.⁷⁵

When an elective office is filled, the appointing group must certify it to the board and Secretary of State within seven days. Use [Form 291](#) for this. The form may be mailed to the Secretary of State's office at the address on the form or emailed to PartyCommittees@OhioSoS.gov.

⁷²For a more comprehensive breakdown of filling vacancies in elective office, see [Filling Vacancies in Public Elective Office](#), found in [Appendix A, Resources](#).

⁷³[R.C. 3517.05](#).

⁷⁴[R.C. 3517.06](#).

⁷⁵[1980 Ohio Atty.Gen.Ops. No. 1980-083, at 2-2-328](#).

Chapter 15 Checklist: Political Parties

After Primary Elections

- ☐ Update voter party affiliation records based on primary participation.
- ☐ Certify election results for party central committee members.
- ☐ Ensure party committee organizational meetings occur within the required timeframe.
- ☐ Publicly post notice of organizational meetings (when provided by the party).
- ☐ Receive and maintain a roster of committee members and officers.

Minor Party Formation

- ☐ Verify signatures on petition papers from your county.
- ☐ Return certified petition papers to the Secretary of State by the 118th day before the general election.
- ☐ Process candidate nominating petitions.
- ☐ Verify signatures are from qualified electors who haven't voted in another party's primary.
- ☐ Certify nominating petitions no later than 105 days before the general election.
- ☐ Process any protests filed against petitions.

Vacancies in Office

- ☐ Notify the appropriate party's central committee of a vacancy in the county office ([Form 292](#)).
- ☐ Receive a completed certificate of appointment to fill vacancy from the party central committee ([Form 291](#)).
- ☐ Issue a certificate of appointment to the appointee ([Form 155-B](#)).
- ☐ Forward the required documentation, including a copy of the certificate of appointment, to the Secretary of State.

Form Maintenance

- ❑ Keep current copies of these required forms:
 - [Form 10-Y](#) (Declaration of intent to run in a different party primary)
 - [Forms 2-L](#) and [2-M](#) (County central committee petitions)
 - [Forms 4-B](#) through [4-G](#) (Minor party nominating petitions)
 - [Form 291](#) (Certificate to fill vacancy)
 - [Form 292](#) (Certificate of political party affiliation)

Special Notes

- ❑ 17-year-old voters cannot vote for central committee members or issues.
- ❑ Write-in candidates are not permitted for state central committee.
- ❑ Write-in candidates are permitted for county central committee.



CHAPTER 16: MISCELLANEOUS DUTIES¹

Section 16.01 Miscellaneous Duties Introduction

This chapter covers important duties that the board of elections must do beyond standard election tasks, including:

- Handling vacancies in offices.
- Managing removals and recalls.
- Running advisory elections when needed.
- Evaluating poll workers.
- Keeping online voter information tools up to date.

Section 16.02 Vacancy in Elective Office

An office becomes vacant when someone dies, resigns, is suspended, or is removed before their term ends. Someone is usually picked to fill the empty position. Sometimes voters must elect someone to finish the rest of the term. This depends on:

- The specific office with the vacancy.
- When the vacancy occurred.

The U.S. Constitution, Ohio Constitution, Ohio Revised Code, and local government charters explain how to fill a vacant office by appointment, depending on the function of that office. The person appointed can serve the remainder of the term or until an election is held to select someone to fill the remainder of the unexpired term.²

When a county office becomes vacant, the board's director must tell the central committee of the former official's political party about their right to pick someone new.

¹[Directive 2026-43](#).

²See [R.C. 3.02](#); [R.C. 503.24](#); [R.C. 733.31](#); [R.C. 3521.03](#).

Use Secretary of State [Form 292 Certificate by Board of Elections - Political Party that Nominated the Last Occupant of County Office](#) for this.

APPOINTING AUTHORITY'S DUTY

The group with the power to select someone to fill a vacant office must figure out which laws apply and follow them. [Filling Vacancies in Elected Offices](#) outlines these laws. These groups include city councils, village mayors, a board of township trustees, the county central committee of a political party, school boards, and others.

When someone is picked to fill the empty office, the group that picked them must certify it to both the board of elections and the Secretary of State within seven days.³ Political parties can use [Form 291](#) to report when they have filled the vacancy in a city or county office. Other appointing authorities must write their own notice of an appointment and certify it to the board.

BOARD DUTIES AFTER SOMEONE IS SELECTED

1. Issue Certificates of Appointments

The board of elections (or the Secretary of State for statewide offices) must give the new officeholder a certificate of appointment.⁴ The board must use [Form 155-B](#) (Certificate of Appointment to Fill Vacancy in Elective Office) for this.

2. Submit Documents for Governor's Commission

A new person picked to fill any county office or judgeship must get a commission from the governor before they can start work.⁵ The board sends the following items for county offices to the Elections Division of the Secretary of State's office:

- ☐ The notice from the group that made the pick ([Form 291](#)).
- ☐ The certificate of appointment completed by the board ([Form 155-B](#)).
- ☐ Any other needed documents (for example, [Form 292, Certificate by Board of Elections - Political Party that Nominated the Last Occupant of County Office](#)).

³[R.C. 3.02\(B\)](#).

⁴[R.C. 3.02\(B\)](#).

⁵[R.C. 107.05](#).

The Secretary of State's office mails a governor's commission for the new official to the clerk of the court of common pleas in the new official's county. The clerk then delivers it to the new official.⁶

Section 16.03 Removing Officials

RECALL – ONLY FOR CITY AND VILLAGE OFFICIALS

A recall lets voters decide whether to remove (recall) a city or village official from office. Its use is very limited. It can only happen in cities or villages where voters have approved:

- A special form of local government (a charter or plan from [Chapter 705 of the Revised Code](#)), **AND**
- Rules that allow recall in that local home rule government.⁷

Note: Recall is not available in regular cities or villages or in special ones (limited home rule municipalities) that haven't adopted the recall rules. Voters also can't recall state, township, district, or county officials, except in counties with a charter that specifically allows recall.

For more on the recall process, see Chapter 11 in the [Ohio Ballot Questions & Issues Handbook](#).

REMOVAL – ALL PUBLIC OFFICES

Ohio law says that any public official, as described in the official classification in [Section 38 of Article II of the Ohio Constitution](#), may be removed by judicial action of a court for good cause. To be removed from office, a court of competent jurisdiction must find the public official guilty of certain kinds of misconduct and other causes provided by law. To remove someone, a court must find the official guilty of misconduct for one or more of the following reasons:

- willfully and flagrantly exercising authority not allowed by law
- refusing or willfully neglecting to enforce the law or perform any official duty imposed upon them by law

⁶[R.C. 107.07](#).

⁷[Lockhart v. Boberek \(1976\)](#), 45 Ohio St.2d 292, 294; [R.C. 705.91](#); [R.C. 705.92](#).

- gross neglect of duty
- gross immorality
- drunkenness
- wrongdoing (including misfeasance (negligent actions), malfeasance (illegal actions), or nonfeasance (nonaction))⁸

For more information on removal through the courts, see Chapter 11 in the [Ohio Ballot Questions & Issues Handbook](#).

REMOVAL – OFFICIALS WITH FISCAL DUTIES

Ohio law also has rules for removing public officials who have fiscal responsibilities. These officials include:

- County auditors and treasurers.
- Township fiscal officers.
- Village fiscal officers, clerk treasurers, and clerks.
- City auditors and treasurers.
- Similar officers in chartered municipalities.⁹

These officials may be removed for:

- Purposely, knowingly, or recklessly failing to perform a fiscal duty expressly required by law with respect to the fiscal duties of the office.
- Purposely, knowingly, or recklessly committing any act expressly forbidden by law in respect to their fiscal duties.¹⁰

This type of removal starts when an authorized person files a sworn affidavit and evidence with the Auditor of State. The people authorized by law to file such an affidavit and evidence are:

- County treasurers or commissioners (against county auditors).¹¹

⁸[R.C. 3.07](#).

⁹[R.C. 319.26](#); [R.C. 321.37](#); [R.C. 507.13](#); [R.C. 733.78](#).

¹⁰[R.C. 319.26\(A\)](#); [R.C. 321.37\(A\)](#); [R.C. 507.13\(A\)](#); [R.C. 733.78\(B\)](#).

¹¹[R.C. 319.26\(A\)](#).

- County commissioners or auditors (against the county treasurers).¹²
- Four township residents (against township fiscal officers).¹³
- Members of city or village councils (against village or city fiscal officers).¹⁴

People with questions about this removal process should consult with private legal counsel, the county prosecutor (for county and township officials), municipal legal counsel (for municipal officials), or the Office of the Auditor of State.

REMOVAL – CITY OR VILLAGE OFFICER

A complaint can be filed in court against city or village officials under [R.C. 733.72](#). This method is only available when the officer is:

- Getting an illegal payment.
- Has a private interest in a public contract.
- Is guilty of wrongdoing (negligent actions and illegal actions).

The complaint is filed with the probate judge in the county where the city or village is located.

People with questions about this type of removal should consult with private legal counsel.

Section 16.04 Advisory Elections

An advisory election is a nonbinding vote on a question that city or village officials put on the ballot to see what voters think. It is not the same as voting on an actual law or charter amendment. It just tests what people think about the proposed legislation. Officials may hold an election on the actual legislation later.¹⁵

Important: Only cities or villages can hold advisory elections. Other governments (like the state, counties, townships, school districts, etc.) cannot hold them.

¹²[R.C. 321.37\(A\)](#).

¹³[R.C. 507.13\(A\)](#).

¹⁴[R.C. 733.78\(B\)](#).

¹⁵In [State ex rel. Bedford v. Cuyahoga Co. Board of Elections \(1991\)](#), 62 Ohio St.3d 17, the Court held that [Article XVIII, Section 3 of the Ohio Constitution](#) (commonly referred to as the “home rule” provision) grants a municipality the authority to hold an advisory election, absent a specific prohibition against holding such an election in the municipality’s charter, the Ohio Revised Code, or the Ohio Constitution.

When city or village officials ask the board to put an advisory question on the ballot, the board should check its charter (if they have one) to see if advisory elections are allowed. If the charter doesn't prohibit advisory elections, the board may proceed. If the charter does seem to prohibit them, the board should talk to its legal counsel (the county prosecuting attorney).

All advisory election ballots must include the heading "Advisory Election."

Section 16.05 Voter List for Jury Duty

On the date ordered by the common pleas court, the board must make a current list of voters for the county and file it with the commissioner of juries.

The file must include all voters registered in the county from the last general election (include ACTIVE-ACTIVE and ACTIVE-CONFIRMATION status voters), except for voters who haven't voted at least once during the past four years. The list also cannot include any voters with confidential records under the Safe At Home program.¹⁶ The file should only have full names, registration addresses, and birth dates, unless more information is requested by the court. Send the file securely in accordance with the jury commissioner's directions.

Section 16.06 Poll Worker Evaluations

All boards must have fair ways to assess their poll workers (called precinct election officials or PEOs).

Here are the minimum standards the board must check when rating PEOs. These rules also apply to workers doing early in-person absentee voting.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Opening and Closing of Polling Places

- Did the polling place open and close on time?
- Did PEOs print and sign zero tapes and summary reports?
- Did PEOs sign the oath?

¹⁶[R.C. 2313.06\(A\)\(1\)\(b\)](#); [R.C. 111.44](#).

- Did PEOs correctly open and close the voting machines?

Self-Reporting Problems

- Did PEOs correctly report voting machine problems to the board?
- Did PEOs correctly report when they were running low on ballot supplies?

Handling of Provisional Ballots

- Did PEOs correctly give out provisional ballots to voters?
- Did PEOs send voters that were in the wrong polling place to the right one?

Reconciliation after Polls are Closed

- Did PEOs match up all their numbers correctly?
- Did PEOs sign the reconciliation certification document?

See also [Chapter 6, Section 6.03](#) on poll worker duties and responsibilities.

Section 16.07 Voter Online Tools

Each board must offer these lookup tools on its website:

VOTER REGISTRATION STATUS

This tool must let voters find where they're registered to vote in the county. If they need to update their address, give them a link to do this. If a voter can't be found in the system, give them links to register. This tool must be available year-round. Make sure updates are made in the board's system promptly so they show up in the Statewide Voter Registration Database quickly.

ABSENTEE BALLOT STATUS

This tool must allow absentee voters to track their ballot from application to counting. It must show:

- When their absentee application was approved.
- When the ballot was mailed or issued.
- When the board got the voted absentee ballot back.
- When the ballot was accepted for counting (or why it wasn't and the deadline to fix any problems).

This tool must be available starting at least 46 days before an election and be available 35 days after.

POLLING PLACE LOOKUP

This tool must help voters find their correct polling place based on their registration address. Boards may also offer a link to online directions. Keep this tool available year-round. Boards need to make sure changes to polling locations are promptly sent to the Statewide Voter Registration Database.

SAMPLE BALLOT

This tool must let voters see and print their correct sample ballot for the upcoming election based on their registration address. It must be available starting 46 days before the election.¹⁷

OTHER RULES ON LOOKUP TOOLS

Since election information changes, boards must update these lookup tools regularly. Board employees should update changes to a voter's registration information or absentee ballot status each business day. Polling location or sample ballot changes must also be updated quickly.

Make sure the board website can handle peak traffic during busy election periods. Work with IT staff and vendors to ensure the board's site can handle presidential-year activity levels.

Each board must have strong security for its website and lookup tools.

The website must be designed with voters in mind. Check that:

- ☐ Users can easily find the board's site using online search engines.
- ☐ The site is easy to use (clear links, organized info, and plain language).
- ☐ The site works on different devices and browsers.

The board must ensure that its website is accessible and usable to voters with disabilities.

¹⁷[R.C. 3511.04\(B\)](#).

Section 16.08 Ranked Choice Voting Prohibition

Ranked choice voting (RCV), otherwise known as “instant runoff voting,” is a method of nominating or electing candidates in which:

1. Voters rank candidates on the ballot in order of preference.
2. Votes are tabulated in rounds. In each round, one or more candidates are nominated or elected, or a last-place candidate is defeated.
3. Votes are transferred from nominated, elected, or defeated candidates to the voter’s next-ranked candidate(s) in order of preference.
4. Tabulation ends when a candidate receives either a majority of votes cast or when the number of candidates nominated or elected equals the number of offices to be filled, as applicable.¹⁸

RCV is prohibited in any primary or general election in Ohio, except as permitted by Article X and Article XVIII of the Ohio Constitution,¹⁹ which establish home rule by counties and municipal corporations, respectively. Adopting RCV carries financial penalties for the county or municipal corporation, however.²⁰

When a county or municipal corporation has adopted (or revoked) the use of RCV in its primary or general elections, the board must promptly notify the Secretary of State’s office by emailing Elections@OhioSoS.gov the applicable resolution or ordinance.²¹ The Secretary of State must then report the adoption (or revocation) to the Department of Taxation.²²

¹⁸[R.C. 3501.01\(EE\)](#).

¹⁹[R.C. 3505.011\(A\)](#); [R.C. 3513.141\(A\)](#).

²⁰[R.C. 3505.011\(B\)](#); [R.C. 3513.141\(B\)](#); [R.C. 5747.504\(B\)](#), (D)(3).

²¹[Directive 2026-23](#).

²²[R.C. 3505.011\(B\)-\(C\)](#); [R.C. 3513.141\(B\)-\(C\)](#).

Chapter 16 Checklist: Miscellaneous Duties

When a Vacancy Occurs

- ☐ Determine what type of office it is.
- ☐ Note the date the vacancy occurred.
- ☐ Figure out which laws apply to fill it.
- ☐ For county offices: Tell the central committee of the former official's political party ([Form 292](#)).

After an Appointment is Made

- ☐ Receive certificate of appointment from the appointing authority (within 7 days).
- ☐ Give certificate of appointment to the appointee ([Form 155-B](#)) and send a copy to the Secretary of State.
- ☐ For county offices, give to the Secretary of State:
 - Notice of appointment from appointing authority.
 - Certificate of appointment filled out by the board.
 - Any other required documentation.

Managing Recall Procedures (City and Village Offices)

- ☐ Be sure the city or village has adopted:
 - A form of limited home rule.
 - The recall process as part of that government.
- ☐ Follow steps in Chapter 11 of [Ohio Ballot Questions & Issues Handbook](#).
- ☐ Make proper ballot materials if recall vote is approved.

Handling Advisory Elections (City and Villages Only)

- ☐ Make sure request comes from a municipality (not county, township, etc.).
- ☐ Check their charter to see if it's allowed.

- ❑ If needed, consult with the county prosecutor.
- ❑ Be sure all advisory election ballots include “Advisory Election” heading.
- ❑ Run the election normally.

Making Jury Lists

- ❑ Note date ordered by common pleas court.
- ❑ Make a file:
 - Including all registered voters from the last general election.
 - Leaving out voters who haven’t voted in past four years.
 - Leaving out voters with protected records under the Safe at Home program.

Include:

- Full names.
 - Registration addresses.
 - Dates of birth.
- ❑ Any other specifically requested information.
 - Send file securely to commissioner of jurors.

Evaluating Precinct Election Officials (PEOs)

- ❑ Create fair rating standards.
- ❑ Make sure they apply to workers conducting early in-person absentee voting.
- ❑ Check:
 - Opening and closing procedures.
 - Correct operation of voting machines.
 - Correct reporting for problems with voting machines and ballot supplies.
 - How they handle provisional ballots.
 - How they direct lost voters.

- How they balance their numbers.

Maintaining Voter Information Tools Online

■ Registration lookup tool:

- Shows where voters are registered (give links to update if needed).
- Provide links for voters not found in system.
- Keep available year-round.
- Update regularly.

■ Absentee ballot tracker:

- Shows application approval date.
- Shows when ballot was mailed.
- Shows when ballot came back.
- Shows if ballot was accepted or why not and deadline to fix issues.
- Make available 46 days before through 35 days after election.

■ Polling location lookup tool:

- Shows where voters vote.
- Maybe gives directions.
- Available year-round.
- Updated promptly when location changes.

■ Sample ballot tool:

- Can view/print correct sample ballots.
- Available 46 days before election.
- Update promptly with any changes.

❑ Website

- Can handle peak election traffic.
- Uses industry-standard security.
- Designed with voters in mind:
 - Findable with search engines.
 - Easy to navigate.
 - Works on all devices and browsers.
- Works for people with disabilities.
- Updated often.

Prohibition on Ranked Choice Voting

- ❑ Email Elections@OhioSoS.gov with the resolution or ordinance of a county or municipal corporation that has adopted or rescinded RCV in its primary or general elections.



APPENDIX A: RESOURCES

Section A.01 Secretary of State Resources

The following resources are available on the Secretary of State's website.

1. **Beginning Terms of Office**
<https://www.ohiosos.gov/assets/election-administration-beginning-terms-of-office.pdf>
2. **Filling Vacancies in Public Elective Offices**
<https://www.ohiosos.gov/assets/election-administration-filling-vacancies.pdf>
3. **Secretary of State Records Retention Chart for Boards of Elections**
<https://www.ohiosos.gov/assets/elections-administration-retention-schedule.pdf>
4. **Ohio Secretary of State's Ethics Policy**
<https://www.ohiosos.gov/assets/election-administration-ethics-policy.pdf>
5. **Ohio Ballot Questions and Issues Handbook**
<https://www.ohiosos.gov/assets/ballot-questions-and-issues-handbook.pdf>
6. **Polling Accessibility Checklist**
<https://www.ohiosos.gov/assets/ada-checklist.pdf>
7. **Accessible Parking Guide**
<https://www.ohiosos.gov/assets/ada-parking-guide.pdf>
8. **Directive 2023-03 (Voter ID)**
<https://www.ohiosos.gov/assets/dir2023-03.pdf>
9. **Precinct Election Official Manual**
<https://www.ohiosos.gov/assets/poll-worker-training-manual.pdf>
10. **County Voting Equipment**
<https://www.ohiosos.gov/elections/elections-administration/voting-systems-and-the-board-of-voting-systems-examiners#voting-equipment>

11. **Forms and Petitions**
<https://www.ohiosos.gov/elections/elections-administration/forms-and-petitions>
12. **Guide to Local Liquor Options Elections**
<https://www.ohiosos.gov/assets/guide-to-local-option-liquor-option-elections.pdf>
13. **Ohio Candidate Requirement Guide**
<https://www.ohiosos.gov/assets/candidate-requirement-guide-2026.pdf>
14. **Ohio Presidential Guide**
<https://www.ohiosos.gov/assets/2024-presidential-guide.pdf>
15. **Campaign Finance Handbook**
<https://www.ohiosos.gov/assets/campaign-finance-handbook-complete.pdf>
16. **Ohio Elections Calendar 2026**
<https://www.ohiosos.gov/assets/election-calendar-2026.pdf>
17. **Constitution of the State of Ohio**
<https://www.ohiosos.gov/assets/constitution-of-ohio.pdf>
18. **Security Supplement for Vendor Contracts**
<https://www.ohiosos.gov/assets/final-2025-security-supplement.pdf>

Section A.02 Other Resources

The following resources are available outside of the Secretary of State's website.

1. **Sunshine Law Manual**

www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/YellowBook

2. **Ohio Ethics Commission**

<https://ethics.ohio.gov/>

3. **Attorney General Compatibility of Positions**

<https://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/About-AG/Service-Divisions/Opinions/Compatibility-of-Public-Offices-or-Positions>

4. **Election Assistance Commission (EAC) Guide for Making Voting Accessible**

https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/electionofficials/QuickStartGuides/Making_Voting_Accessible_EAC_Quick_Start_Guide_508.pdf

5. **About the EAC**

<https://www.eac.gov/about>

6. **NIST Guidelines for Media Sanitation**

<https://nvlpubs.nist.gov/nistpubs/SpecialPublications/NIST.SP.800-88r1.pdf>

7. **Ohio Revised Code**

<https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-revised-code>

8. **Ohio Administrative Code**

<https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-administrative-code>

9. **Ohio Attorney General**

<https://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/>

10. **NIST Digital Identity Guidelines**

<https://pages.nist.gov/800-63-3/sp800-63b.html>

11. **CISA Email and Web Security**

<https://www.cisa.gov/news-events/directives/bod-18-01-enhance-email-and-web-security>

12. **MS-ISAC Registration**

<https://learn.cisecurity.org/ms-isac-registration>

Section A.03 Required Candidate Disclosures

Information regarding required candidate disclosures:

1. **Joint Legislative Ethics Committee**

<http://www.jlec-olig.state.oh.us/>

2. **Ohio Board of Professional Conduct**

<https://www.bpc.ohio.gov/financial-disclosure-statements>

3. **United States House of Representatives Financial Disclosure Reports**

<https://disclosures-clerk.house.gov/FinancialDisclosure>

4. **United States Senate Select Committee on Ethics Financial Disclosure**

<https://www.ethics.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/financialdisclosure>

5. **Federal Election Commission**

<https://www.fec.gov/>

6. **Ohio Ethics Commission**

<https://ethics.ohio.gov/>

Section A.04 Continuing Education

The following programs count for training credits:

New Election Official Training Program (6 credits) – Training from Secretary of State’s office; offered at least twice per year.

Annual Conference and Ohio Association of Election Officials’ Winter

Conference (about 1 credit per hour) – The Secretary of State’s office will provide a credit schedule with the final agenda. All board members, directors, and deputy directors must participate in the annual summer conference in person, virtually, or by watching a recording.

In-Person Secretary of State Regional Training – (various topics) Sessions awarded credit on an hour-by-hour basis.

Secretary of State’s Topical Webinars (1 credit per hour, partial credit for shorter webinars) – Must participate in entire live webinar for credit.

Ohio Association of Election Officials' (OAEo), Ohio Registered Election Official (OREO) Program, and/or the Election Center Certified Election and Registration Administrator (CERA) Program (credits based on agenda) – Multicourse certification programs.

OAEo Regional District Meetings (credits based on agenda) – Regional meetings on election administration.

National Conferences, Workshops, and/or Seminars by Election Center and/or the International Association of Clerks, Recorders, Election Officials and Treasurers ("IACREOT") (one credit per conference event).

U.S. Election Assistance Commission Webinars and/or Workshops (0.5 credit per event).

Continuing Legal Education (CLE) (1 credit per session/event) – Must relate to local election administrators, including Ohio public meetings, public records, and ethics laws. Submit your request for credit with documentation to the Secretary of State's office.

Secretary of State programs or initiatives – New Election Official Mentorship program, working groups, or other events as determined by the office. Credit assigned per event or program.