



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
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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
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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
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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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