



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\(A\)](#).

⁶⁰ See [R.C. 3505.30](#).

⁶¹ See [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\(B\)](#).

⁶⁷See [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	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗