

DIRECTIVE 2026-48

October 2, 2026

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

Re: Canvass and Certification of the November 3, 2026, General Election

SUMMARY

This directive outlines the procedures that boards of elections must follow when conducting both the Unofficial and the Official Canvasses of the November 3, 2026, General Election.

To assist boards of elections with any problems, questions, or concerns on Election Day, the Secretary of State's office is staffed on Election Day from 6 a.m. until all boards report their unofficial results to our office. Boards should contact the Secretary of State's office using a dedicated phone number that will be emailed before November 3, 2026.

All directors, deputy directors, and board members must ensure that they are able to receive emails and other communications sent from the Secretary of State's office via a .gov email address on November 3, 2026 (including after the polls close).

PART ONE - UNOFFICIAL CANVASS

The Unofficial Canvass of the November 3, 2026, General Election must be conducted on election night in accordance with state law¹ and the processes and procedures outlined in [Chapter 10, Section 10.03](#) of the Election Official Manual (EOM). Each board of elections must ensure all eligible Election Day and absentee ballots are tabulated and reported in its Unofficial Canvass. Boards must ensure all memory cards containing tabulated results are properly processed within their election management system (EMS). Each board must have a dedicated document to ensure it meets this requirement (e.g., a checklist or chart to check off once a memory card is processed).

¹ See [R.C. 3505.27](#) (requiring the counting of regular ballots that were cast at precinct polling locations); [R.C. 3509.06](#) (requiring the counting of eligible absentee ballots); [R.C. 3511.11\(A\)-\(B\)](#) (requiring the counting of uniformed service and overseas voter absentee ballots).

Boards must also maintain strict inventory control over all USB drives used during testing and mock election activities. USB drives containing mock election or test data must be clearly identified, accounted for, and stored for retention before Election Day. Boards must have a documented process to verify that only USB drives properly prepared for the current election are used. This process must prevent any USB drive containing mock election or test data from being introduced into the EMS during Election Night Reporting.

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

I. PROCESSING ABSENTEE BALLOTS

Boards of elections may begin processing (including scanning, but not tabulating) absentee ballots on October 6, 2026, the day after the close of voter registration. Boards must begin this process prior to Election Day to ensure the Unofficial Canvass includes all absentee ballots received by the close of polls on November 3, 2026. Ohio law prohibits boards from tabulating any absentee ballot prior to 7:31 p.m. on Election Day.³ If a court orders polls to remain open later than 7:30 p.m. on Election Day, boards will receive a directive with specific instructions.

II. ELECTION NIGHT REPORTING (ENR)

State law requires boards of elections to provide election results for certain contests to the Secretary of State's office.⁴ Election Night Reporting (ENR) for the November 3, 2026, General Election will consist of results for the following races:

- Governor and Lieutenant Governor
- Attorney General
- Auditor of State
- Secretary of State
- Treasurer of State
- Justice of the Supreme Court (Full term commencing 1/1/2027)
- Justice of the Supreme Court (Full term commencing 1/2/2027)
- U.S. Senator (Unexpired term ending 1/3/2029)

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

³ [R.C. 3509.06\(F\)](#).

⁴ [R.C. 3505.27\(C\)](#).

- Representative to Congress
- State Senator
- State Representative
- Judge of the Court of Appeals
- Judge of the Court of Common Pleas
- County Court Judge
- County Commissioner
- County Auditor
- County Office (if a vacancy occurred that requires an unexpired term election)
- Statewide Issue 3

All counties must use the Secretary of State's County Submission System (CSS) to provide summary results for Statewide Issue 3 and all candidates that appear on the county's ballot.

Although boards of elections will have access to manually key the results within the time frames below, the upload tool allows each board to do so more efficiently and accurately by mitigating data entry errors. Boards must use the secure USB drives provided by the Secretary of State's office to ensure the security of the ENR system and EMS. The USB drives must be used only once.

For the Unofficial Canvass, boards must provide summary-level election results, rather than precinct-level results. Boards will upload precinct-level results for the Official Canvass.

A. Initial Reporting

Each board of elections must log in to the CSS no later than 7:45 p.m. on November 3, 2026. A board must immediately notify Secretary of State personnel if they experience any delays in completing any portion of the results reporting activity.

Each board of elections must upload vote totals for absentee ballots by 8 p.m., unless the voting system is technologically unable to do so. If necessary, counties may upload partial absentee results. If a board uploads partial absentee results at 8 p.m., it must not double-report the initial upload. Contact the board's voting system vendor if you need technical assistance. The board must enter zero precincts reporting when it uploads its absentee results.

B. Reporting Schedule

ENR begins with the first upload of absentee results by 8 p.m. and will continue at the assigned time throughout the night. After the board uploads its first summary election results, it must report on one of the following time increments assigned to the county:

1. “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.

“Half-hour” counties must report at each half hour beginning at **8:15 p.m.** and every half hour thereafter (e.g., 8:45 p.m., 9:15 p.m., 9:45 p.m., etc.) and must continue reporting until all precincts report results.

A board of elections must notify Secretary of State personnel if there will be a delay in reporting results. After 100 percent of the precincts have reported, boards must enter the final vote tallies into their CSS. The board does not have to wait until its designated reporting time before reporting the final results.

2. “Hourly” Counties

“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.

Note: “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.

“Hourly” counties must report summary election results at the top *or* bottom of every hour, as specified above, and continue reporting until all precincts have reported. If the board reports more frequently than that, it must still report on the hour.

A board must notify Secretary of State personnel if it will be delayed in reporting results. After 100 percent of the precincts have reported, boards must enter the final vote tallies into their CSS. The board does not have to wait until its designated reporting time before reporting the final results.

C. Supplemental Statistics

Boards of elections must provide supplemental statistics upon reporting the county's last precinct or shortly thereafter. **Boards must promptly report vote totals, even if supplemental statistics are not yet available.** On election night, upload the election results first and then submit the statistics when available. The required supplemental statistics are as follows:

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).

III. SUMMARY AND FINAL REPORTS

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

- Unofficial Vote Total Summary Report
- Group Detail Report (if not included with Summary Report)
- Write-In Report
- Most Populous Report(s) (when applicable)
- Signature Form

In addition to the Unofficial Vote Total Summary Report submitted on election night, each board must print their county results from their CSS via the “Current County Results” page and proof this report against the results from their EMS. 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.

On election night, after the Secretary of State’s office receives, reviews, and compares the board’s Unofficial Vote Total Summary Report and Group Detail Report, a Secretary of State staff member will contact the director.

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

PART TWO - POST-ELECTION CURE PERIOD

I. DAYS AND HOURS

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

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| • Wednesday, November 4, 2026 | 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. |
| • Thursday, November 5, 2026 | 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. |
| • Friday, November 6, 2026 | 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. |
| • Saturday, November 7, 2026 | 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. |

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

⁵ [R.C. 3503.201\(D\)\(2\)](#); [R.C. 3505.181\(B\)\(7\)-\(8\)](#); [R.C. 3509.06\(D\)\(3\)\(b\)](#).

II. AFFIDAVITS OF RELIGIOUS OBJECTION⁶

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

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

If the voter did not have a photo ID because of a religious objection to being photographed and the voter did not complete [Form 12-O](#) at the time they voted a provisional ballot, the voter must appear at the board office and complete the affidavit by the fourth day after Election Day (**Saturday, November 7, 2026**).

No later than 6 p.m. on Saturday, November 7, 2026, boards of elections must transmit the information in the completed affidavits to the Secretary of State's office, which then must consult the Bureau of Motor Vehicles' (BMV) database to determine whether the BMV issued a currently unexpired photo ID to that voter. The Secretary of State's office will complete this verification no later than the seventh day after Election Day. The Affidavit of Religious Objection is not valid if the BMV has issued a currently unexpired photo ID or if the last four digits of the voter's SSN provided on the affidavit do not match those digits in the Statewide Voter Registration Database (SWVRD). To compile the information for each voter, each board must supply the necessary data either by export from the voter registration system or by completion of a spreadsheet that will be provided with instructions under separate cover.

III. EXAMINING AND COUNTING PROVISIONAL BALLOTS

Boards of elections must follow the "Mandatory Step-by-Step Process for Determining Eligibility" procedures outlined in [Chapter 8, Section 8.05](#) of the Election Official Manual. Board staff, working in bipartisan teams, may begin examining provisional ballot envelopes the day after the election, as long as the board has adopted a provisional ballot policy allowing its staff to do so. The bipartisan teams may categorize provisional ballots into groups of like ballots (e.g., ballots that have been verified and eligible to be

⁶ [R.C. 3505.181\(B\)\(7\)](#); [R.C. 3505.182\(D\)\(1\)-\(3\)](#); [R.C. 3505.183\(B\)\(3\)\(d\)](#); [R.C. 3505.19\(C\)](#).

counted, provisional affirmations that are missing the voter's signature, etc.) for the board to consider. However, the board must not examine the provisional ballot affirmation of any provisional ballot cast by an individual who must provide photo ID, complete an affidavit of religious objection, or provide additional information to determine the individual's eligibility until the individual does so or until the fifth day after Election Day, whichever is earlier.⁷

It is important to remember that only the board members themselves can determine the validity of each provisional ballot. The board must, by a majority vote, determine whether to accept and count the provisional ballots in a properly noticed public meeting. No provisional ballot envelope may be opened or counted until the board has voted on the eligibility of every provisional ballot cast in the election.⁸

IV. CURING ABSENTEE BALLOT DEFECTS

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

- [Form 11-S](#) must be issued no later than two business days after a "defective" absentee ballot identification envelope is received by the board of elections from the start of absentee voting (Tuesday, October 6, 2026) through the third Saturday prior to the election (Saturday, October 17, 2026).
- [Form 11-S](#) must be issued no later than one calendar day after a "defective" absentee ballot identification envelope is received by the board of elections between the third Monday (Monday, October 19, 2026) and the last Friday prior to the election (Friday, October 30, 2026).
- [Form 11-S](#) must be issued on the same day that a "defective" absentee ballot identification envelope is received by the board of elections between the

⁷ [R.C. 3505.183\(G\)\(2\)](#). For the correct version of R.C. 3505.183(G)(2), see [H.B. 458 \(134th General Assembly\)](#).

⁸ [R.C. 3505.183\(F\)](#).

Saturday prior to the election (Saturday, October 31, 2026) and 7:30 p.m. on Election Day (Tuesday, November 3, 2026).

When a phone number or email address is on file with the board of elections, the board must use that contact information to promptly notify the voter about the deficiency on their identification envelope. The absentee voter must provide the missing required information in writing on [Form 11-S](#), either by in-person delivery or by mail by the fourth day after the election (**Saturday, November 7, 2026**).⁹

PART THREE - OFFICIAL CANVASS

I. SCHEDULE FOR OFFICIAL CANVASS¹⁰

A board must begin the Official Canvass no earlier than the fifth day after the election (Sunday, November 8, 2026) nor later than the fifteenth day after the election (Wednesday, November 18, 2026). Each board must complete the Official Canvass and certify no later than the twenty-first day after the election (Tuesday, November 24, 2026).

II. PREPARING FOR OFFICIAL CANVASS

Boards of elections may start processing cured absentee ballots that were originally received by the close of polls on Election Day and UOCAVA absentee ballots that arrive after Election Day before the board starts the Official Canvass, but boards must not count such ballots until the Official Canvass begins.¹¹ Board members and employees are prohibited from disclosing partial or final results of any contest in the election between the completion of the Unofficial Canvass and the certification of official results.

III. INSTRUCTIONS FOR OFFICIAL CANVASS

Each board of elections must follow the instructions for pre-canvass activity outlined in [Chapter 10, Section 10.04](#) of the Election Official Manual. Boards must also follow the rules and procedures for conducting the Official Canvass outlined in [Chapter 10, Section 10.05](#) of the Election Official Manual. Prior to the tenth day after Election Day, each board must reconcile results with records from the pollbooks and voter registration system to ensure that only one ballot per voter is counted.¹² This includes ensuring that

⁹ [R.C. 3509.06\(D\)\(3\)\(b\)](#).

¹⁰ [R.C. 3505.32\(A\)](#).

¹¹ See [R.C. 3509.06\(F\)](#); [R.C. 3513.22\(A\)](#).

¹² [R.C. 3505.32\(D\)](#).

all returned absentee ballots are entered in the voter registration system and reconciling the list of voters whose ballots were returned with the number of physical ballots returned.

IV. FORMS FOR OFFICIAL CERTIFICATION

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

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

A. Certification and Reporting of Official Results¹³

Each board of elections must complete and provide **all** the following the same day it completes its official certification but no later than **Tuesday, November 24, 2026**:

- Official Vote Total Summary Report
- Group Detail Report (if not included with Summary Report)
- Signature form
- Report forms
- Electronic turnout detail by precinct
- Statement of Votes Cast (SOVC) report
- Absentee and provisional ballot report

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

The board of elections for the most populous county in any multicounty jurisdiction or district must generate a separate report from its voting system, create a report outside its voting system, or use a reporting form that will be provided after the Unofficial Canvass. This report must be clearly labeled "[County's] Official Canvass – Most

¹³ [R.C. 3505.33](#).

Populous County.” The report must include the total number of votes recorded for the office, question, or issue from each county in a multicounty jurisdiction and the sum total for all counties. The board must clearly mark the contest(s) for which the board is the most populous county to clearly identify it as a contest containing vote totals from other counties. The board must email the report(s) to Results@OhioSoS.gov.

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

B. Providing Results to Other Entities

1. Certificate of Official Summary Results for Elections

Each board of elections, if applicable, (or the most populous county only if it is a multicounty seat) must certify the results of elections to the following¹⁵:

Supreme Court of Ohio at: JudicialElectionResults@SC.Ohio.gov.

2. Certificate of Official Summary Results to Senate President

Each board of elections must send to the President of the Senate a copy of the board’s official election results for all of the following: the joint offices of Governor and Lieutenant Governor; the offices of Attorney General, Auditor of State, Secretary of State, and Treasurer of State; Justices of the Supreme Court of Ohio; United States Senator; and Statewide Issue 3. In addition, the most populous county of a district contest for U.S. House of Representatives must send a copy of its official, district-wide results for that district contest to the President of the Senate. The results must be sent to the following address:

President of the Senate at: Erin.Papachristoudis@ohiosenate.gov

3. Liquor Option Questions

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

Division of Liquor Control
6606 Tussing Road
Reynoldsburg, Ohio 43068-9005

¹⁴ [R.C. 3501.05\(Y\)](#).

¹⁵ [R.C. 3505.30](#).

4. Local Questions and Issues

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

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

The board of elections of the most populous county must certify the results of an election on a school district income tax on Secretary of State [Form 125-A](#) to the following offices and agencies:¹⁶

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

PART FIVE - POST-CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

I. CERTIFICATES OF NOMINATION

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

II. RECOUNTS

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

¹⁶ [R.C. 3505.33](#); [R.C. 5748.03\(C\)](#).

certification of official results.¹⁷ A recount must take place no later than 10 days after an application for a recount is filed or an automatic recount is declared.¹⁸

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

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

III. POST-ELECTION AUDIT

Boards of elections must perform a post-election audit of three contests after the November 3, 2026, General Election. When a board conducts an audit, it must follow the procedures outlined in [Chapter 11, Section 11.10](#) of the Election Official Manual. Additional instructions will be provided after the Unofficial Canvass.

IV. VOTER HISTORY

All boards of elections must upload voter history for the November 3, 2026, General Election to the SWVRD no later than 14 days after the board's official certification. Counties with more than 100,000 registered voters must email Lauren Price at LPrice@OhioSoS.gov to schedule their upload in advance. After voter history is transmitted, the Secretary of State's office will compare the total ballots cast to the total number of voters participating in the election. Once all required reconciliation procedures are complete, Secretary of State staff will notify the board that it has been released to resume voter registration activities.

For purposes of assigning voter history, each board of elections must follow the instructions outlined in [Chapter 11, Section 11.02](#) of the Election Official Manual. The election name to submit the history for the election is **2026_NOV_GEN**.

¹⁷ [R.C. 3515.02](#).

¹⁸ [R.C. 3515.03](#).

V. CANCELLATION OF VOTER RECORDS¹⁹

If a provisional ballot cannot be counted for the reason listed below, the board of elections must cancel the voter's registration, notify the voter, and provide an explanation. The board must send the voter a Failure to Count Provisional Ballot Notice ([Form 255-I](#)).

- The voter failed to provide the board of elections the information needed to verify their voter registration information after a mismatch between Ohio's voter registration database and the databases of the Bureau of Motor Vehicles and/or the Social Security Administration.

This cancellation must take place within 10 days after the board is released to begin voter registration activities and does not prohibit the voter from reregistering at any time in the future.

VI. RETENTION OF BALLOTS

Because ballots for the November 3, 2026, General Election include candidates for election to federal offices, each board of elections is required by law to retain all ballots prepared for the election — both used and unused — for 22 months following the election.²⁰ If the board uses a voting system and software that captures images of ballots as they are scanned by a high-speed scanner, those images may be subject to disclosure pursuant to a public records request and must be retained. Accordingly, consult with the county prosecuting attorney regarding the retention of those images.

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

Yours in service,



Frank LaRose
Ohio Secretary of State

¹⁹ [R.C. 3503.201\(A\)\(1\)\(b\), \(B\)\(2\), \(D\); R.C. 3503.21\(A\)\(1\), \(F\).](#)

²⁰ [R.C. 3505.31.](#)