



DIRECTIVE 2020-13

July 17, 2020

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

Re: Preparation for the Statewide Mailings of Absentee Ballot Applications for the
November 3, 2020 General Election

SUMMARY

Since 2012, the General Assembly has authorized the Secretary of State to send absentee ballot applications to all Ohio voters in gubernatorial and presidential general elections. This year, the Ohio Controlling Board has authorized the Secretary of State's Office to use federal funds to conduct a statewide mailing of absentee ballot applications for the upcoming November 3, 2020 General Election.¹ This Directive requires each board of elections to update its voter registration database and resolve duplicate records in preparation for the Secretary of State's statewide mailing.

BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

To ensure fairness and uniformity across counties, to reduce lines at polling places on November 3, 2020, and to make participation in the 2020 General Election as safe, accessible and convenient as possible, the Secretary of State's Office will mail an absentee ballot application by non-forwardable mail to every registered Ohio voter in "active" or "confirmation" status.

The absentee ballot application will be pre-filled with the voter's name, current address, and local voter identification number (represented numerically and as a barcode) and mailed to the voter's address as it appears in the Statewide Voter Registration Database ("SWVRD"). The voter must complete the absentee ballot application by providing the voter's date of birth, identification, and signature before sealing the application in the reply envelope and submitting it to the voter's county board of elections in person or by mail, with the voter affixing a first-class stamp.² The United States Postal Service ("USPS") is expected to deliver the initial applications during the first two weeks of September 2020.

¹ R.C. 3501.05.

² R.C. 3509.03.

INSTRUCTIONS

I. PREPARATION FOR INITIAL MAILING

To facilitate the initial mailing of absentee ballot applications, each county board of elections must do all of the following:

- Enter into the county voter registration database all new voter registrations and changes of address or name, including information from returned confirmation notices received through July 24, 2020, and ensure that those new registrations and changes have been transmitted to the SWVRD. **Do not wait until July 29, 2020, to enter new voter registrations, changes of address or name, or information from returned confirmation notices. The board must enter this information into its county voter registration database at least once a week throughout July.**
- No later than July 29, 2020, resolve all in-county and cross-county duplicate records that exist as of July 24, 2020. Remember, it is *never* an acceptable practice for any county board of elections to simply “keep” a voter registration record to avoid resolving duplicate records.
- No later than July 24, 2020, review all alternate mailing addresses in the SWVRD (e.g., P.O. Boxes) for the county and make sure that all alternate mailing addresses associated with a voter’s record in the SWVRD are current and relevant to the elector’s voter registration rather than some other election administration purpose (i.e., if the board has populated the elector’s alternate mailing address with the address for a previous election’s absent voter ballot and that alternate mailing address was sent to the SWVRD as the elector’s alternate mailing address, that address should be removed since it is associated with absentee balloting rather than voter registration).

II. PREPARATION FOR SUPPLEMENTAL MAILINGS

In early October, the Secretary of State’s Office will supplement the first mailing by sending an absentee ballot application to any individual who has registered to vote or changed their name or address between July 29, 2020 and October 2, 2020. To facilitate this mailing, each board of elections must do all of the following:

- Enter into the county voter registration database all new voter registrations and changes of address or name, including information from returned confirmation notices received through September 30, 2020, and ensure that those new registrations and changes have been transmitted to the SWVRD. **Do not wait until October 2, 2020 to enter new voter registrations, changes of address or name, or information from returned confirmation notices. The board must enter this information into its county voter registration database at least once a week throughout September.**
- No later than 5:00 p.m. on October 2, 2020, resolve all in-county and cross-county duplicate records that exist as of September 30, 2020.

The Secretary of State's Office will conduct a second supplemental mailing for any individual who registered to vote or changed their name or address between October 3 and October 9, 2020. To facilitate this mailing, each board of elections must do all of the following:

- Enter into the county voter registration database all new voter registrations and changes of address or name, including information from returned confirmation notices received through October 9, 2020, and ensure that those new registrations and changes have been transmitted to the SWVRD. **Do not wait until October 9, 2020 to enter new voter registrations, changes of address or name, or information from returned confirmation notices.**
- No later than 5:00 p.m. on October 9, 2020, resolve all in-county and cross-county duplicate records that exist as of October 8, 2020.

III. MANDATORY POSTING AT VOTING LOCATIONS ON ELECTION DAY

All county boards of elections must post a copy of the statewide absentee ballot application mailing at each polling location on Election Day as a reference for voters who are marked in the pollbook as having to cast a provisional ballot on account of having requested an absentee ballot. The prescribed posting will be provided to county boards of elections under separate cover at a later date.

If the board has any questions about this Directive, please contact the Secretary of State's elections counsel at (614) 728-8789.

Yours in service,



Frank LaRose
Ohio Secretary of State