



DIRECTIVE 2021-18

August 23, 2021

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

Re: Ballots for November 2, 2021 General Election

SUMMARY

This Directive provides the certified form of the official ballots to be used in the November 2, 2021 General Election.

INSTRUCTIONS

Please note that, in lieu of issuing a separate Directive with specific details covering ballot layout, proofing, and quantities, the Secretary of State's Office is issuing only this Directive, which must be used in conjunction with [Chapter 4 \(Ballots\) of the Election Official Manual \("EOM"\)](#) when preparing ballots for this election. [Chapter 4 of the EOM](#) provides specific instructions on the following subjects:

- Ballot format;
- Voter instructions;
- Ballot stubs;
- Candidate ballots (names, restrictions, political party, rotation, etc.);
- Questions and issues ballot;
- Ballot proofs;
- Overlaps;
- Bid requirements;
- Ballot quantities;
- Logic and accuracy testing; and
- Public test.

I. VERIFYING DISTRICT RELATIONSHIPS

Before programming any aspect of the central tabulating system for the November 2, 2021 General Election, boards of elections must verify the accuracy of district relationships in the central tabulating system against the county's voter registration system. This is to ensure that each voter receives the correct ballot style (i.e., the correct combination of candidate offices and issues) based upon that voter's residential address.

As a part of the review for accuracy of district relationships between the county’s voter registration system and its tabulating system, boards of elections must ensure the following by September 10, 2021:

1. The Secretary of State’s precinct codes (three alphabet letters) are accurate in the tabulating system and, if appropriate, the county’s voter registration system; and
2. The precinct names correspond between the two systems.

Note: Boards must upload any changes to district relationships (including wards and precincts) that have been made locally in the county’s voter registration system (“VRS”) to the statewide voter registration database (“SWVRD”). Each board must use the report our Office will provide on September 3, 2021 to ensure that all SOS Precinct ID Codes provided on the report match the board’s voter registration system. Boards will have until September 10, 2021 to return the reviewed report noting any changes.

In addition, boards must verify at least one voter record for each precinct in the SWVRD against the county’s VRS to ensure accuracy.

II. OFFICIAL BALLOT FORMS

The certified ballot forms accompanying this Directive are for offices that will appear on the ballot for the November 2, 2021 General Election. The ballot order must have the partisan offices listed first, followed by Judge of the Municipal Court and Clerk of Municipal Court, which are followed by the other nonpartisan offices. The names of all candidates who have not withdrawn must be arranged, rotated, and printed upon the ballot in accordance with the provisions of Ohio Revised Code Chapters [3505](#), [3506](#), and [3513](#) and [Chapter 4 of the EOM](#).

A. Statutory Municipalities v. Home Rule Municipalities

A statutory municipal corporation is a city or village that is governed by the general laws of Ohio (i.e., the Revised Code of Ohio). A municipal corporation that has adopted a form of limited home rule may have adopted provisions governing elections for municipal offices or issues that differ from general statutory provisions. If specific home rule provisions relating to elections cannot be harmonized with the statutory provisions, the home rule provisions will control elections of the home rule municipality.¹ Questions about the applicability or implementation of home rule provisions should be directed to the municipal corporation’s legal counsel (i.e., City Attorney, Director of Law).

¹ [R.C. 3505.03](#) and [3505.04](#); If a city or village has adopted a charter or one of the three alternate forms of home rule government set forth in Revised Code [Chapter 705](#) (i.e., commission plan, city manager plan, or federal plan), the board must refer to the charter or appropriate provisions of [R.C. Chapter 705](#) to determine the following: what officers are to be elected; the term of each office to be elected; the method of nomination (e.g., partisan primary election, nonpartisan primary election, or nominating petition) for each office; and the form of the ballot, if such ballot is prescribed by charter.

B. Order of Offices for All Candidate Ballots

Offices for which candidates may be elected are presented on the ballot first, followed by the questions and issues. If there is both a full and unexpired term for the same office, boards must place the full term first, followed by the unexpired term. The order of offices for the November 2, 2021 General Election shall be as follows:²

1. Partisan City Offices

1. Mayor
2. President of Council
3. Auditor
4. Treasurer
5. Director of Law
6. Member of Council at Large
7. Member of Council – Ward

2. Partisan Village Offices

1. Mayor
2. Clerk-Treasurer
3. Clerk
4. Treasurer
5. Member of Council
6. Member of Board of Trustees of Public Affairs

3. Nonpartisan Offices

1. Judge of Municipal Court
2. Clerk of Municipal Court
3. City Offices (order of offices same as above)
4. Village Offices (order of offices same as above)
5. Township Trustees
6. Township Fiscal Officer (if a vacancy occurred that requires an unexpired term election)
7. Member of Governing Board of Educational Service Center
8. Member of Board of Education (City, Local, and Exempted Village)

4. Blank Spaces for Write-In Votes

A write-in space must be provided on the ballot for every office for which the board of elections received a valid declaration of intent to be a write-in candidate.³

² For the 11th and 15th Congressional Districts, the first office on the ballot will be Representative to Congress (unexpired term ending January 3, 2023). Boards of elections administering a Special Congressional General Election in the 11th or 15th District must review the accompanying ballot forms designated for that election.

³ [R.C. 3513.041](#).

C. Official Questions and Issues Ballot

Offices for which candidates may be elected are presented on the ballot first, followed by the questions and issues. The Official Questions and Issues Ballot must be used for all voting systems. The ballot form contains examples of some of the local questions and issues that may appear on the ballot. Not every category of question/issue will appear on every ballot in every county, so please apply as much of the form as is appropriate to the ballots in your county. Additional instructions on headings, ballot language, and percentage of votes can be found in [Chapter 4 of the EOM](#).

Questions and issues must be grouped together in the following political subdivision order for elections held in 2021:⁴

- County
- Municipal
- Township
- School and Other Districts

No statewide issue will appear on the November 2, 2021 Ballot.

Each board of elections may determine the specific order in which the questions/issues within each group are placed on the ballot in that county; however, a board should adopt a method for doing so (i.e., ordered alphabetically or by date filed, etc.). Absentee ballots must contain identical ordering of issues within groups of regular ballots.

Please review the appropriate sections of the Ohio Revised Code, local charter (if applicable), and the [Questions and Issues Handbook](#) for ballot language and formats that are not on the attached Official Questions and Issues Ballot.

III. ABSENTEE BALLOTS

Each board of elections must have absentee ballots printed and ready for use by Friday, September 17, 2021 (46 days before the November 2, 2021 General Election) for Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (“UOCAVA”) voters, and by Tuesday, October 5, 2021 for regular (non-UOCAVA) absentee voters.⁵

Boards must use the current absentee instructions ([Form 12](#)) and print them on standard letter-sized paper. Each board must ensure that the proper postage amount is printed in the box provided on the instructions (see “Postage Rate Increase” below). Our Office recommends boards print the instructions in color to allow the contents to stand out.

Boards of elections must send a copy of each absentee ballot (candidates and questions and issues) to the Secretary of State’s Office at least 47 days before the election, by Thursday, September 16, 2021. Absentee ballots must be uploaded to the SharePoint site.

⁴ [Question and Issues Handbook](#), pp. 1-12; [R.C. 3505.06\(B\)](#).

⁵ [R.C. 3509.01](#) and [R.C. 3511.04](#).

IV. POSTAGE RATE INCREASE

On August 29, 2021, the postage rate will increase for several mailing methods that boards may use to mail registration forms, absentee ballots, and other election-related materials. This rate increase may also apply when voters return their absentee ballots. If a voter or board uses “Forever” stamps, those stamps are still valid for the increased rate. The United States Postal Service released a booklet with all prices [here](#) and a chart [here](#). Each board must review and update the absentee instructions provided to each voter to ensure that the correct postage amount is detailed.

V. CURING ABSENTEE BALLOT APPLICATIONS

If a board of elections receives an absentee ballot application that does not contain all of the required information, the board must promptly notify the voter of the additional information required. Boards must utilize telephone numbers and email addresses to complete this process as quickly as possible. However, if electronic contact is not possible, boards must attempt to correct the missing information by mail. Boards should ultimately retain a completed application from the voter at the board office.⁶

The Secretary of State’s Office will issue a Directive regarding the unofficial and official canvass procedures for the November 2, 2021 General Election. That Directive will include additional information regarding the cure period for absentee and provisional ballots.

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

⁶ [R.C. 3509.04\(A\)](#).