



SECURITY AND VOTER EDUCATION TOOLKIT

INTRODUCTION

Boards of elections report receiving frequent calls or emails from voters who question the integrity of Ohio's elections. Some have received requests for tours of their facilities, questions about observing the canvass of election results, and public records requests for election-related material. The purpose of this document is to equip boards to respond effectively and continue to educate the public on how elections are run in Ohio, so that voters have confidence in our democratic process.

RESPONSES TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Below are a few topics that frequently come up with constituents, and facts that boards can use to explain why Ohio is a national leader in election security and accuracy:

1) Ohio is a paper ballot state.

- a) Every vote cast in Ohio is documented by either paper ballot or a voter-verified paper audit trail. In the November 3, 2020 General Election, 66.5% of ballots cast in Ohio were paper ballots marked by the voter by their own hand. The remaining 33.5% of ballots were machine-marked and verified by the voter with the voter-verified paper audit trail.
 - i) In 47 counties, voters use pre-printed paper ballots that are hand marked by each voter. For example, Cuyahoga and Hamilton Counties (two of the three largest in the state) use paper ballots.
 - ii) In 28 counties, voters use a ballot marking device that prints the ballot for the voter to review the choices they make after reviewing their actual choices on the ballot marking device. The ballot is then scanned in a ballot scanner.
 - iii) In 13 counties, voters utilize a Direct Recording Electronic (DRE) voting machine with a voter-verified paper audit trail on which the voter may review their choices after reviewing their choices on the screen.

- (1) A voter-verified paper audit trail is required by law. See [R.C. 3506.01\(H\)](#).
- b) All Ohio counties provide absentee voters who apply to receive a ballot by mail with a paper ballot. 61.7% of absentee ballots were cast by mail in the November 3, 2020 General Election. The other 38.3% of absentee ballots were cast in person during the early voting period.

2) No voting machines are connected to the internet. Ever. In fact, the law prohibits connecting a voting machine to the internet in any way, and machines certified for use in Ohio are tested for networking capabilities.

- a) Certified systems used in Ohio are examined by an independent Voting System Test Laboratory and the bipartisan Ohio Board of Voting Machine Examiners to ensure they are secure and function as intended. This includes a check for any wireless network capabilities.
- b) All boards of elections are required to conduct a full series of logic and accuracy (L&A) testing on all voting equipment and are required to conduct pre-election public testing to ensure that all electronic voting systems are accurately and uniformly tabulating votes cast during an election. L&A testing is the systematic pre-election testing of every component of a voting system with every ballot style to demonstrate that the ballots are accurate and that votes cast will be tabulated properly. Each board of elections is required to conduct L&A testing before every election on every single voting machine and each component of automatic tabulating equipment, including backup machines and equipment. Boards are prohibited from deploying any voting equipment that has not undergone L&A testing.
- c) Each board of elections must test its automatic tabulating equipment prior to the start of the unofficial canvass to ensure the accurate counting of the votes cast for all offices and on all questions and issues.
- d) Voting machines are locked down, under strict bipartisan custody, and tamper-evident seals are placed on components once tested. Bipartisan election officials verify that the tamper-evident seals are unbroken before the equipment may be used.

3) To register to vote in Ohio, voters must present proper identification.

- a) A qualified elector may register to vote with their current and valid driver's license number or the last four digits of their Social Security number.
- b) If an applicant who registers by mail does not include one of those numbers on the application, they must enclose a copy of one of the following: the applicant's current and valid photo identification, military identification, or a current (within the last 12 months) utility bill, bank statement, paycheck, government check, or other government document (other than a notice of voter registration mailed by a board of elections) that shows the applicant's name and current address.
- c) Whenever a board of elections receives a new or updated voter registration form and the information is entered into the county's voter registration system, the board issues an Acknowledgment Notice to that voter, informing them of their registration status, polling location, and identification requirements for voting. Whenever an Acknowledgement Notice is returned undeliverable, the board investigates. If the board is unable to verify the voter's correct address, the board changes the registration to an inactive status, and unless the voter confirms their address by the voter registration deadline, the voter must cast a provisional ballot.

4) Ohio voters must present identification before casting a ballot.

- a) When a voter comes to cast a ballot in person during the early voting period or Election Day, they must present valid identification to the election officials prior to receiving a ballot.
- b) All absentee voters who request a ballot by mail must provide identification, including signature verification, on both the application and ballot return/identification envelope.
- c) The absentee ballot application is compared to the board of elections records prior to providing a ballot, and the identification envelope is compared to the board's records prior to counting an absentee ballot. Each board of elections maintains the absentee ballot application and identification envelope after each election.

5) After voting concludes in an election, election officials canvass the results - twice.

- a) The canvass is the tally of votes for any given election. Ohio performs both unofficial and official canvasses, which ensures that every ballot cast is included in the election totals.
- b) The unofficial canvass of an election must be conducted on Election Night in accordance with state law. The unofficial canvass must be conducted in full view of the members of the board of elections and any observer appointed in accordance with [R.C. 3505.21](#). The counting of ballots for the unofficial canvass is continuous until the unofficial canvass is complete.
- c) Boards of elections may begin the official canvass of an election no earlier than the 11th day after the election and must begin no later than the 15th day after the election. Each board of elections must complete its official canvass and certify the results no later than the 21st day after the election.

6) Bipartisan post-election audits are conducted in each of Ohio’s 88 counties.

- a) Post-election audits ensure that the results of the official canvass match the choices made by voters as recorded on the paper ballot or voter-verified paper audit trail.
- b) These post-election audits are done following every election. The post-election audit conducted statewide in all 88 counties following the 2020 general election returned a statewide accuracy rate of 99.98%. See the Secretary of State’s press release for more information: <https://www.ohiosos.gov/media-center/press-releases/2021/2021-01-05/>.

POLL WORKER RECRUITMENT

If citizens have any doubts about the integrity of the elections process, one of the best ways for them to learn is to serve as a poll worker. Here is an example of how to recruit:

“The front line of ensuring election integrity is people, and we will be relying on citizens like you, from both parties, as we prepare for local, state, and federal elections in the future. To be a part of protecting Ohio’s elections and assuring access to every legal voter, consider serving as a poll worker with your county board of elections. Your paid training and work as a poll worker will give you first-hand experience in the work done in all 88 counties to protect the security and accuracy of our elections.”

OPEN HOUSE TOURS

We encourage boards of elections to schedule open house events for the public as a way to educate voters and answer their questions. Boards must always balance transparency to the public by ensuring office security. For example, before touring the facilities, visitors should present identification and sign a visitor log. During the tour, board of elections staff must accompany visitors at all times. Please review [Chapter 2](#), Section 1.07 of the EOM for additional physical security requirements.

Boards must report as a Security Event any unauthorized entry or attempts to gain unauthorized access to storage facilities, polling places, early vote centers, and/or offices of the board of elections, per Directive 2019-33 ([Chapter 15](#) of the EOM).

OBSERVERS

During primary and general elections, observers are appointed in Ohio by political parties, groups of candidates, or issue committees to observe the conduct of the election. Boards of elections must allow the presence of observers who present a valid certificate of appointment for the unofficial or official canvass, recount, or post-election audit. Potential observers should be informed of the following:

- 1) The role of observers is limited to observing the proceedings of an election. Accordingly, while observers are permitted to watch and inspect, observers are never permitted to handle any election materials.
- 2) Observers also must not interfere with election officials or poll workers doing their jobs or otherwise slow down the operation of the polling location, board of elections, or early vote center, nor may they interact with voters in a manner that interferes with or disrupts an election.
- 3) Voting location managers, directors, deputy directors, and appointing authorities have the authority to administratively remove observers from their posts for behavior inconsistent with Ohio law or Secretary of State Directive, or that interferes with, impedes, or disrupts an election.
- 4) Law enforcement officials have the statutory duty to remove observers at the order of one of the above-listed election officials.

PUBLIC RECORDS REQUESTS FOR ELECTION MATERIALS

County prosecutors represent the boards of elections and serve as your attorney. You may receive public records requests to inspect ballots, provisional and absentee envelopes,

voting machine tapes and records, and other similar items. We believe it is important to remind you of the following when maneuvering through these public records requests:

When receiving such public records requests, consult with your county prosecutor immediately and inform the Secretary of State's Office. There are two relevant Attorney General's Opinions regarding the application of public records law to ballots, provisional affirmation statements, and poll books: [2004 OAG 050](#) and [2011 OAG 012](#). In summary, ballots and provisional ballot affirmation statements are under seal and become subject to disclosure or inspection only after the period for any recount or elections contest has passed. Similarly, poll books must remain under seal until the board has completed its official canvass of the election.

RESOURCES

The Secretary of State, as the chief election officer, provides several public resources that may help answer additional questions:

1. [The Ohio SOS Website](#)
2. [Election Official Manual](#)
3. [2021 Candidate Requirement Guide](#)
4. [2022 Candidate Requirement Guide](#)
5. [Directives, Advisories, Memoranda, and Tie Votes](#)
6. [Ohio Election Security Infographic](#)
7. [2020 Poll Worker Recruitment Toolkits](#)