



Report on November 3, 2020 Election

Overview of 2020 General Election

While the 2020 General Election was more similar to a traditional election than the 2020 Primary Election¹, there were still changes in how this election was administered. There were changes to the early voting schedule, changes to voting locations to provide a safer in-person voting experience, a statewide mailing of forms to request a mail-in ballot, and almost half of the participating voters choosing to vote by mail. These changes were made in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to provide a safe way for voters to participate in the State's presidential general election. Despite the changes and new voting methods for many voters, over 3 million – 74.5% of eligible voters – voted in this election.²

While this election was not a vote-by-mail election, almost half of voters who voted requested and returned a mail-in ballot. Since the State's first vote-by-mail election in June, election officials worked diligently to improve the process and contracted with an experienced printer with the capacity to print, insert, and mail over 1.7 million ballot packets.

This election saw the expanded use of ballot drop off boxes. First used statewide in the June 2 primary election, there were 283 ballot drop off locations³ across the State for voters to return voted ballots. These custom-made boxes were well received by voters - over 1 million voters returned their mail-in ballots this way - and provided voters with a convenient way to return their voted ballots without using the United States Postal Service.

Election officials continued to procure large quantities of a variety of personal protective equipment for voters and election officials to provide the safest environment possible for casting and counting ballots. These supplies and equipment included masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, face shields, plexiglass dividers, and floor stickers to show 6-foot distance between voters.

This report provides a timeline of the changes to this election, an overview of the November 3 election, and considerations for future elections. Additional data is available on the State Board of Elections' (SBE) website under "Press Room."⁴

¹ A report on the June 2 Primary Election is available at https://elections.maryland.gov/press_room/June%202020Election%20Report_Final%2007022020.pdf.

² See Appendix 1 for turnout information by jurisdiction.

³ There were 284 boxes at 283 locations. Oriole Park at Camden Yards in Baltimore City had two ballot drop off boxes.

⁴ See https://elections.maryland.gov/press_room/index.html.



Timeline for and Changes to the 2020 General Election

On July 8, 2020, Governor Hogan released a letter⁵ stating that the November 3 election would be conducted as a traditional election - that is, with in-person voting at early voting centers and election day voting at neighborhood polling places and mail-in voting for voters who needed or preferred to vote a mail-in ballot. Additionally, he requested that SBE send to all eligible voters the application to request a mail-in ballot and make every effort to promote early voting, voting by mail, and voting at off-peak times. Governor Hogan also committed to encouraging State employees to serve as election judges and providing personal protective equipment for election officials and election judges.

In a letter dated August 3, 2020, Governor Hogan requested an update on the application mailing to eligible voters and a plan to conduct the November 3 election. In response, SBE outlined in a letter dated August 4 all of the steps necessary to mail applications to almost 4 million voters, election officials' efforts to establish a data processing center to process the large number of applications expected, and State Board members' consideration of requests from the local boards of elections to consolidate voting locations.

On August 6, 2020, Governor Hogan sent another letter restating his direction to send to all eligible voters a form to request a mail-in ballot, recruit and train election judges, open early voting centers, and offer "robust" election day voting options.


After the State Board's August 7 meeting, the Chairman of the State Board shared in an August 9 letter to the Governor the members' unanimous approval of the use of vote centers on election day and preference to place the election day vote centers in facilities used as existing early voting centers and public high schools. The letter requested that the Governor authorize the use of vote centers on election day, extend to election day vote centers the laws applicable to polling places, and suspend certain provisions that only applied to polling place based voting.

On August 10, the Governor issued a proclamation⁶ granting the State Board the authority to create election day vote centers. The proclamation also required compliance with public health guidance and maximum notice to voters about the use of election day vote centers and other voting locations, systems, and procedures.

Under the authority granted to the State Board in the Governor's August 10 Proclamation, the

⁵ This and other letters referenced in this section are included in Appendix 5.

⁶ This proclamation is in Appendix 5 immediately following the Governor's letter dated August 10.



members established at its August 12 meeting the dates for early voting. Early voting was approved from October 26 through November 2⁷.

In its August 19, August 28, September 4, and September 11 meetings, the members of the State Board approved election day vote centers in each jurisdiction⁸. For each jurisdiction, the members reviewed the proposed election day vote centers' locations, the number of voters who lived within five miles of a proposed election day vote center, the ability of the proposed facility to handle in-person voting and accommodate social distancing, and the local boards' ability to staff the locations with election judges. Over the four meetings, the members approved 321 election day vote centers.

Applications for a mail-in ballot were mailed to eligible voters on August 24 and 25, and in mid-September, the mailings of ballot packets began. The first round of ballot packets was for requesting military and overseas voters, and these ballots were sent on or before September 18⁹. Ballot packets for requesting domestic, civilian voters were sent starting September 24. Over the next several weeks, over 1.7 million ballots were sent to requesting voters.

Over 3 million voters – 74.6% – participated in the November 3 election. All of the local boards certified their results, and the Board of State Canvassers certified results on December 4. The presidential electors met on December 14 to cast their votes for President and Vice-President, and this certification was sent to the United States Senate.

A more detailed timeline is in Appendix 2.

Voting Trends in Maryland

Voters in Maryland historically vote in person. Until the 2010 elections, this meant voting on election day in neighborhood polling places. Early voting was introduced in 2010, and the number of locations and days has expanded since 2010. Over 90% of voters vote in person during early voting or on election day. Most voters still vote in-person on election day, but the percentage of voters taking advantage of early voting is steadily increasing.

⁷ Under Election Law Article, §10-301.1, early voting starts the second Thursday before an election ends the Thursday before an election.

⁸ The members also approved early voting centers if the previously approved early voting center were not sufficient to comply with public health guidance.

⁹ The federal Military and Overseas Empowerment Act requires election officials to send ballots to requesting military and overseas voters no later than 45 days before election day. For this election, September 19 was the 45th day before election day.

The percentage of Maryland voters who request a ballot and vote by mail¹⁰ has been stable over time until the 2020 elections. The figure below shows ballots sent to requesting voters as a percentage of total voter turnout for each election since the 2004 General Election.

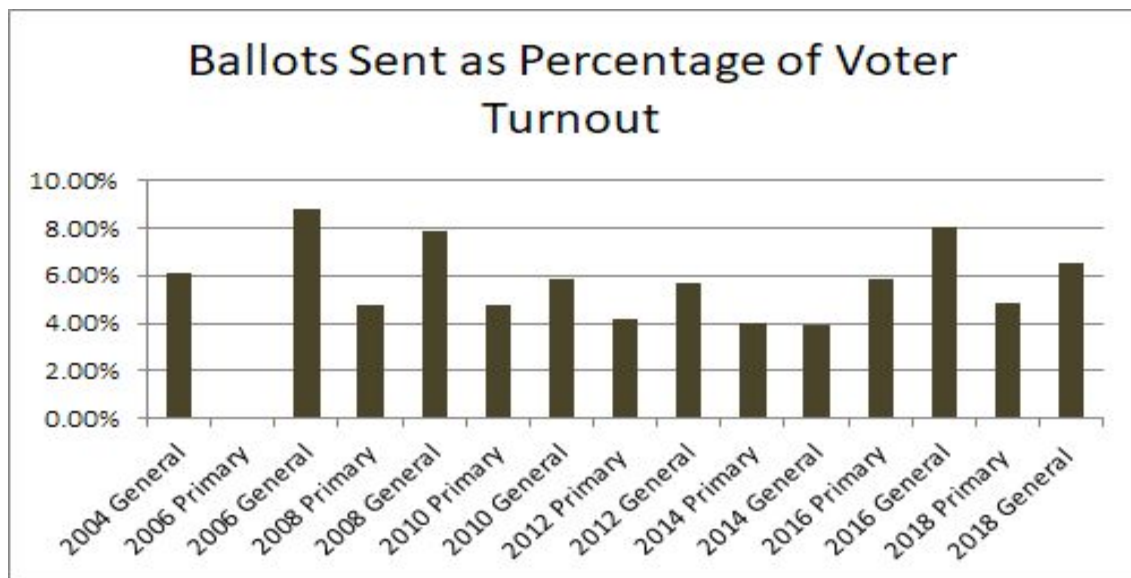



Figure 1: Ballots Sent to Voters as a Percentage of Voter Turnout¹¹

Because the June 2 election was conducted primarily by mail, a vast majority of voters - 97% - voted by mail. About half of voters who voted in the November 3 election voted by mail. To receive a ballot in this election, voters needed to submit a request for a mail-in ballot. Over 1.7 million voters submitted requests, and 1.5 million voters - 49.8% of voters who voted in this election - returned voted ballots.

In 2016, election officials implemented same day registration and address change during early voting. Same day registration on election day was implemented in the June 2 election and was available for the November 3 election. Since its implementation, over 15,000 individuals have registered to vote and over 17,000 voters have changed address as a result of this process. In this

¹⁰ Voting by mail has traditionally been referred to as “absentee voting” in Maryland. With the enactment of Chapters 36 and 37 of the 2020 Laws of Maryland, this process is now referred to as mail-in voting. Mail-in voting is the same process as absentee voting - that is, voters who wish to receive a ballot in the mail submit a written or electronic request for a ballot, and election officials send the ballot. While absentee or mail-in ballots are identical in content as vote-by-mail ballots and the voter’s steps to vote and return the ballot are the same, the difference is whether the voter asks for the ballot (absentee or mail-in ballot) or whether election officials automatically mail voters ballots (vote-by-mail ballots).

¹¹ Absentee voting data from 2010 to 2020 is available in SBE’s “Press Room” at https://elections.maryland.gov/press_room/index.html. Reports of absentee voting by “canvass” show absentee voting as a percentage of voter turnout.



election, over 26,500 individuals registered and voted during early voting or on election day, and over 7,300 voters updated their addresses during early voting.¹²

Voter Education

Because of the changes to how the November 3 election was conducted and in response to the Governor's August 10 Proclamation¹³, it was necessary to educate voters about how to request and vote a mail-in ballot and when and where to vote in person. The resulting statewide, diverse voter education campaign was successful in educating voters about registering to vote, updating their registration or verifying that it was correct, and how to vote - either in person or by mail.

The campaign was statewide and included TV, radio, digital, earned media, and grassroots and community-based efforts. Over 3½ months, there were:


- Over 84 million impressions¹⁴
- Over 4 million views of videos
- Over 870,000 clicks on the ads
- More than 1,400 articles and stories placed in media outlets around the State

Equally important are the organizations and coalitions - over 1,900 of them - that shared important information about this election. Election information and sample messages and icons were also provided to the members of the Maryland General Assembly for distribution in their messages to constituents. SBE staff participated in over 25 special community events, including webinars and town halls, to inform voters about the electoral process. These efforts resulted in many thousands of voters learning about the election.

¹² This data is available in SBE's "Press Room" at https://elections.maryland.gov/press_room/index.html. Same day registration and address change reports are available for the 2016 Primary Election, 2016 General Election, 2018 Primary Election, 2018 General Election, and 2020 Primary Election.

¹³ Section A(d) of the August 10 Proclamation requires that the State Board "provide maximum notice as possible to voters about use of voter centers in the General Election, as well as other appropriate education regarding alternate voting locations, systems, and procedures established."

¹⁴ This campaign differed in three significant ways from the 2020 Primary Election. First, there was more competition for advertising spots. This meant that the cost per spot was higher. Second, the campaign ran different messages at the same time (e.g., encouraging voters to register to vote and encouraging voters to request a ballot). Third, this campaign included multiple, complicated messages asking the viewer to act, rather than the primary election when the awareness campaign focused on how to vote the mail received in the mail. Some of the ads in this campaign were static images showing a deadline that did not require the viewer to take any specific action.



There were specific efforts to reach minority voters. The voter outreach team included GreiBO – a Baltimore-based firm to assist with stakeholder outreach to the African American community statewide, including key influencer messaging, in-community events and social media for Baltimore City residents – and Cool & Associates – a team focused on stakeholder outreach to the Hispanic community and Spanish-speaking earned media. These efforts were enhanced by Gilberto Zelaya of the Montgomery County Board of Elections, who was the face of the Spanish-speaking outreach efforts.

The budget for this campaign was \$1,952,000.¹⁵ KO Public Affairs subcontracted with Mission Media to develop the TV, radio and digital campaigns and conduct the media buy. KO also subcontracted with Sandy Hillman Communications, a minority business enterprise (MBE), to help manage, with Campfire Communications, stakeholder outreach across the State working; Cool & Associates, a public relations firm specializing in Hispanic media and stakeholder outreach; and GreiBO to oversee African American media relations and stakeholder outreach. GreiBO led an in-community engagement and paid social media program partnering with other organizations. The creative design, production costs and media buy with Mission Media accounted for nearly 74% of the overall budget. Nearly 79% of the remaining budget was allocated to MBE firms for statewide stakeholder outreach, earned media, translation services, Spanish-speaking paid media, AAPI media and in-community engagement.

The campaign delivered several key messages, and the associated data points demonstrate the success of the voter education campaign.

- Sharing information about how to register to vote and update existing registrations. This message was delivered in August and September, and voters listened. Typically, voter registration activity peaks around the voter registration deadline in October, but in this election, new voter registrations and updates to existing records peaked in September. Moving the peak earlier gives the local boards more time to process the forms.
- Promoting voting by mail as the safest way to vote in a pandemic. This message resonated with voters as shown by the dramatic increase in the percentage of voters who voted by mail. Over 1.7 million voters asked for a mail-in ballot, and almost 50% of voters who participated in this election voted by mail. In prior elections, this percentage ranged from 4-8%.

¹⁵ This amount includes \$1,377,000 of State funds and \$575,000 of grant funds. In September 2020, SBE received funds from the Center for Election Innovation & Research to support voter education and communication efforts leading up to the election. The grant funds were used to buy more ads and conduct more stakeholder outreach.


- Reminding voters to return their mail-in ballots. In this election, 88.6% of voters who requested a mail-in ballot returned it. This is the highest “return rate” since the 2008 General Election.
- Reminding voters to sign the oath and timely return their ballots. 99.76% of the returned ballots were counted. Typically, election officials count about 98% of returned ballots.
- Informing voters about using a ballot drop box to return voted ballots. Since this was the first election cycle using ballot drop boxes, usage data is only available from the 2020 Primary Election. In that election, 13% of voters used a ballot drop box to return their ballots. In this election, about two-thirds of voters - over 1 million voters - who received a mail-in ballot used a ballot drop box to return their voted ballots.
- Asking voters who wanted to vote in person to vote early - that is, vote during early voting and vote early during the early voting period. Over 987,000 voters voted during early voting, and over 439,000 voters voted on election day. This is the first election in which more voters voted during early voting than on election day. This is also the first election where the two busiest early voting days were early in the voting window (the 1st and 3rd days) rather than the last two days.
- Inform voters about the same day registration and address change process. 26,568 individuals used the same day registration process during early voting or on election day. This represents a 60% increase from the 2016 General Election data for early voting. Same day registration on election day was new for this election, and over 13,500 individuals used this process to register and vote.
- Promoting SBE’s [online voter look-up tool](#) as a place to find out where to vote and how to track a ballot. Over 370,000 searches were conducted on the voter look-up tool on election day. The election day usage is significantly greater than in prior elections. In the 2016 General Election, over 170,000 searches were conducted on election day. On election day for the 2018 General Election, there were over 200,000 searches.

A 110-page report is available on SBE’s website under “Press Room” and “2020 Press Releases, Public Relations and Voter Outreach, and Election Reports.”¹⁶ The report includes sample graphics from the November 3 campaign.

This statewide effort to educate individuals about their voting options and how to vote was supplemented by social media outreach and mailings by SBE and the local boards. SBE’s social media platforms saw over 4 million combined views, and each local board published and shared messages on their social media accounts.

In addition to mailing almost 4 million eligible voters the form to request a mail-in ballot, SBE coordinated other pre-election mailings to provide individuals with important election information. There were two mailings to individuals who appear eligible to vote but are not yet

¹⁶ See https://elections.maryland.gov/press_room/documents/SBE%20Final%20Campaign%20Report_2020.pdf



registered. The first mailing was sent to over 58,000 individuals before the deadline to register to vote, while the second mailing to over 550,000 individuals was sent after the deadline to register to vote but before early voting started. The first mailing included information on how to register to vote before the voter registration deadline, while the second mailing included information about the same day registration process during early voting and on election day.

With data from the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services and assistance from advocacy organizations, SBE coordinated a mailing of voter registration and mail-in voting information and forms to eligible individuals at detention centers in 21 counties.¹⁷ 2,700 individually addressed packets were mailed to eligible individuals in State correctional facilities, and 5,000 unaddressed packets were shipped to local correctional facilities for distribution to eligible individuals at that facility. Of the 2,700 individually addressed packets, over 1,100 were returned to SBE. This undeliverable rate was not unexpected since individuals in correctional facilities may have left the facility by the time the mailing arrived.


The local boards also sent sample ballots to every eligible voter who did not submit a request for a mail-in ballot. This mailing included not only the content of the voter's ballot but also information about the voting days and hours, voting locations, the voting system, and other important election information.

Considerations for Future Elections

Based on the success of this campaign, SBE believes that future statewide campaigns are critical to informing voters how to vote, how to make sure their ballots are counted, and of any changes to the registration and voting process. Educating voters about the impact of the upcoming redistricting and apportionment process and any significant legislative changes will be important for the 2022 elections. The campaign used in this election can be used as a model moving forward, and the icons developed for this campaign can be used in future elections.

SBE is also monitoring legislation in the 2021 Legislative Session that provides election information to eligible individuals in correctional facilities and will continue to work with the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services and advocacy organizations to educate individuals in correctional facilities about how to participate in the election process. Based on the return rate of individually addressed packets, providing the correctional facilities with

¹⁷ Individuals in detention centers are eligible to vote if they are awaiting trial or if they are serving time for a misdemeanor conviction. The local boards of elections in Charles, Garrett, and Montgomery Counties have existing agreements with county detention centers and regularly provide election materials.



unaddressed packets for distribution may be the most effective way to provide this information to eligible individuals.¹⁸ State and local election officials can provide additional packets if needed.

Voter Support

Call Center

As with previous elections, SBE contracted with a call center, CMD Outsourcing Solutions, Inc. in Baltimore, to assist with the volume of phone calls in the weeks leading up to the November 3 election. The call center began supporting SBE and 17 local boards of election on August 27th and provided support through November 25. The call center operated Monday through Saturday, for a total of 76 days.

Over the course of the 76 days, the call center answered 182,653 inquiries.¹⁹ In the last two comparable elections – the 2012 and 2016 Presidential General Elections, the call center handled 108,393 calls and 49,628 calls, respectively. In the 2018 General Election, the call center received 30,952 calls.

The call center began operating at its customary pre-election staffing level. However, the first week of operations was when the mail-in ballot applications started to arrive in voters' mailboxes and the voter education campaign promoted our 1-800-222-VOTE number as a place for voters to obtain trusted election facts. The call center immediately felt the impact of the mailing and education campaign and responded to over 10,000 inquiries. During the call center's busiest week - October 12 - 17, the call center representatives handled over 28,000 inquiries. The call center responded to the demand and added more staff and hours to support voters. Although there were times when the call volume exceeded its capacity, the call center continually increased its capacity to manage the incoming calls.

Email Support & Outreach

SBE uses one email account (absentee.sbe@maryland.gov) to provide support for the mail-in voting process, and a separate account (info.sbe@maryland.gov) for general inquiries. While both

¹⁸ Providing correctional facilities with unaddressed packets provides more flexibility in packet distribution. They can be distributed as eligible individuals come to the facility and re-distributed if an individual declines the information.

¹⁹ 68,329 (37.4%) of those inquiries were to one of SBE's phone numbers. The call center received more inquiries for the Prince George's County Board of Elections than any other local board. There were 26,782 inquiries (14.66%) handled for the Prince George's County Board of Elections.

addresses are operational all year, there is a substantial increase in incoming emails in the months and weeks leading up to an election.

From June 4 through November 20, over 3,300 emails were exchanged with the absentee.sbe account, and 10,500 emails were exchanged with the info.sbe account. For the week of October 25, over 2,300 emails were exchanged with hundreds of email exchanges per day.

For the November 3 election, SBE sent over 4.5 million emails informing voters that their ballots were being prepared or available for electronic delivery, their voted ballots had been received, and finally, their voted ballots had been counted.²⁰ While these statuses are available on SBE's [online voter look-up tool](#), voters were very appreciative of receiving this information in their inbox.²¹

Online Support

SBE's suite of online systems²² served thousands of voters in this election and hundreds of thousands of voters in 2020. In 2020, over 2.3 million electronic voter registrations and ballot requests were submitted. Table 1 below shows the number and percentage of electronic transactions by source. By comparison, there were 705,152 electronic transactions submitted in 2018.

²⁰ Emails were sent to voters who had requested a mail-in ballot and for whom SBE had an email address. SBE also sent emails when a voter's application for a mail-in ballot was processed and if the voter's application was untimely.

²¹ The most frequent compliment SBE received for this election was about the emails. Examples include:

- Thank you very much for emailing me (Sat Nov 14th, Subject: 'Your Ballot has been Counted!') recently to confirm that my absentee vote WAS counted. I was actually extremely worried that I did something wrong in filling in the form and that my vote would end up being spoiled, as I've never voted by mail before. And to have this email in my inbox was beyond reassuring - it was reaffirming and it's really gone a long way to make me feel included, that I took part in what I considered a hugely monumental opportunity to share my voice in this Presidential election. I'm being genuine that on reading your absentee ballot confirmation email, you made my day!!
- I wanted to thank whoever made it easy during the pandemic to vote without standing in line on Election Day. I received info about requesting a mail in ballot and followed the process online. I then received my ballot and mailed the completed ballot. Then I received an email informing me my ballot was received. Then I received another email when my ballot was counted. Thank you. Just wanted to say your organization does good work and we appreciate all of your support to making our election process successful.

²² SBE's suite of online systems has five systems - online voter registration and ballot request system, a streamlined ballot request system, voter look-up tool, vote center locator, and online ballot delivery system.

Source of Transactions	Number	Percentage ²³
Motor Vehicle Administration ²⁴	987,719	42%
Online Voter Registration & Ballot Request System	737,721	31%
Online Ballot Request System	490,463	21%
Facebook	55,638	2%
Maryland Health Benefit Exchange	26,649	1%
Department of Human Services	28,035	1%
Office of the Comptroller	3,781	0.2%
Maryland Transit Authority	228	~0.0%

Table 1: Source of Electronic Transactions

In the two weeks before the voter registration deadline (October 13), over 83,400 transactions were submitted via the online voter registration system.

After the June 2 election, SBE streamlined the online voter registration and ballot request system to create a simpler, online way to request a mail-in ballot. This system - the online ballot request system - went live on August 17, and in just over two months, over 490,000 voters used it to request a mail-in ballot for this election. Over 133,000 requests for mail-in ballots were submitted via this system between October 6 and October 20.


The online voter look-up tool and vote center locator were also in high demand in this election. On election day alone, there were about 370,000 searches on our voter look-up tool and vote center locator. This compares to over 170,000 searches on election day for the 2016 General Election and over 200,000 searches on election day for the 2018 General Election.

Considerations for Future Elections

For the 2022 election, SBE will work with the State's call center to plan for and manage expected

²³ The total of the "Percentage" column does not equal 100% because SBE includes same day registration transactions as electronic transactions but this data is not included in this table. Same day registration data is discussed elsewhere in this report.

²⁴ The Motor Vehicle Administration and other designated State agencies offer customers the opportunity to register to vote. These new or updated registrations are transmitted electronically to SBE and therefore, reported as electronic transactions.



capacity, expand SBE's capacity to manage the email accounts, explore technical solutions to help respond to emails.

SBE plans to continue to send emails with important information about voter's mail-in ballots and implement an online, simple way for voters to update their email addresses. Currently, the only way to update their email address online is to use the online voter registration system and provide an updated email address. Since this process requires that the voter provide more information is necessary, SBE will develop an online system that allows voters to update their email address after appropriately authenticating themselves.


In-Person Voting

Preparing for In-Person Voting

Once the Governor authorized the use of election day vote centers for this election, the local boards identified large facilities that could accommodate voting and comply with social distancing guidelines. In some cases, the local boards proposed new facilities as early voting vote centers because the previously approved facilities could not accommodate voting with social distancing guidelines. At meetings in August and September, the members of the State Board considered the voting population served by each facility, the features of each facility, and the ability to staff each facility and approved these new facilities. All told, there were 81 approved early voting centers and 321 approved election day vote centers.

For each facility, the local boards designed the layout and flow of each vote center to accommodate social distancing and public health guidelines. This included providing places where voters could pick up masks and use hand sanitizer, mounting plexiglass dividers on tables, determining how many voters could access the voting room and still comply with social distancing guidelines, and verifying that voting booths and places where voters might congregate (e.g., lining up to feed voted ballots into the scanner) were separated by 6 feet.

In response to the Governor's and other organizations' call for voters to serve as election judges, thousands of voters across the State responded. Over 22,000 individuals used SBE's online submission form to indicate their interest in serving as an election judge, and this response meant that the local boards were able to fully staff and have an adequate number of voters available to serve if one of the over 14,200 assigned election judges was unable to serve. State and local election officials are hopeful that the voters who responded to the call agree to serve in the 2022 elections.



To provide the safest environment as possible, SBE worked with the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) Maryland Responds - Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) to recruit volunteers to serve as Health Ambassadors. Six local boards requested Health Ambassadors, and 381 individuals contributed approximately 9,100 volunteer hours.²⁵ While election judges were conducting the election, these individuals were solely focused on the safety of voters and election judges. They distributed face masks and hand sanitizer to voters as needed, sanitized commonly touched surfaces, provided health information, and helped voters maintain 6-foot social distancing while waiting in line.

After the June 2 Primary Election, SBE committed to providing precinct-level results for this election, and precinct-level results were posted on SBE's website in early December. This effort required significant time and planning by SBE and the local boards and resulted in an 1300% increase in the number of ballot styles to create, proof, print and deploy.²⁶ Some local boards needed more or redesigned transport carts to store and deploy the increased number of ballot styles, and the importance of verifying the voter's ballot style was stressed to election judges.

Early Voting

There were 81 early voting centers. For the first time, more voters voted during early voting - 987,373 - than on election day - 439,094, and the busiest early voting days were at the beginning - not the end - of early voting. As explained above, the voter outreach effort encouraged voters who preferred or needed to vote in person to vote early in this period, and they did. Figure 2 below shows the number of voters who voted each day of early voting.

²⁵The local boards in Baltimore City and Carroll, Harford, Montgomery, Prince George's, and Worcester Counties requested this assistance. Health Ambassadors were assigned to 27 early voting centers and 98 election day vote centers in these jurisdictions.

²⁶ There were 2,000 ballot styles in this election. If election results were not provided by precinct, there would have been 150 ballot styles.

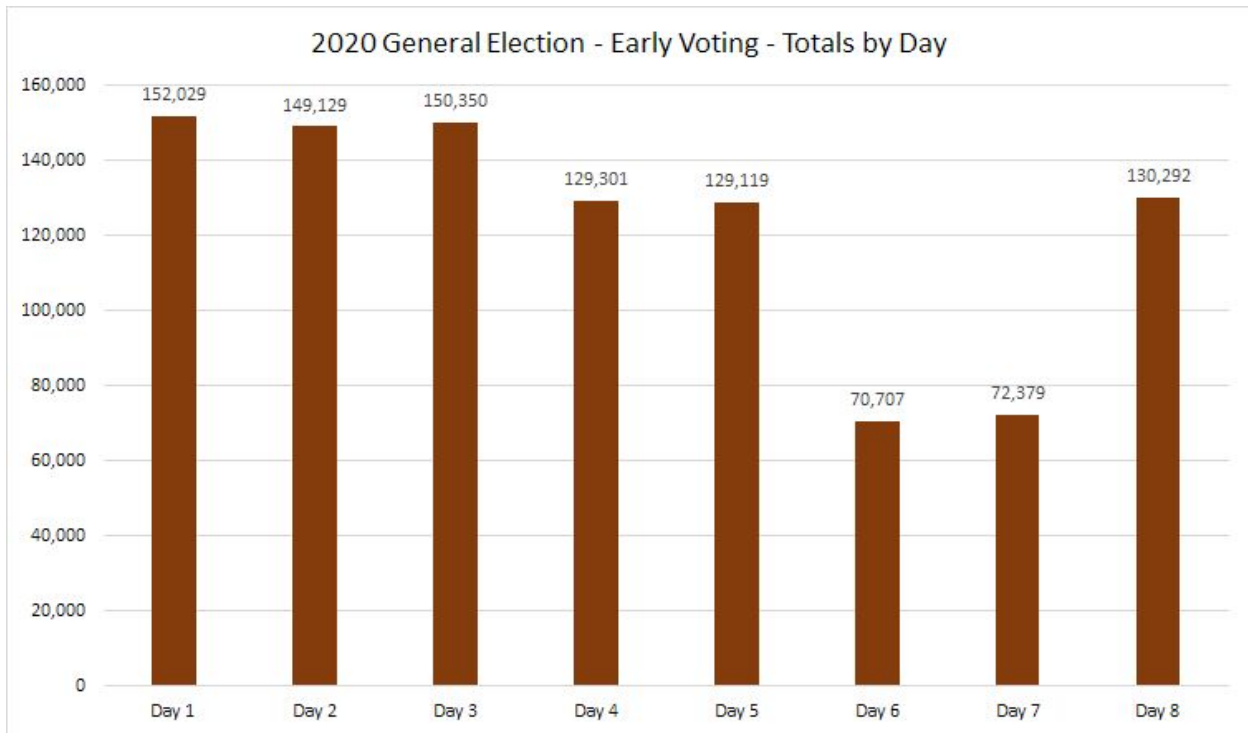


Figure 2: Early Voting Turnout by Day

Traditionally, the early voting period starts the 2nd Thursday before election day and continues through the Thursday before election day. In prior elections, the last two days of early voting have been the busiest days and the days with the least amount of votes are the Saturdays and Sundays.

Under authority granted to the State Board for this election, the members of the State Board changed the early voting period to the 2nd Monday before the election (October 26) through the Monday before election day (November 2), including the weekend before election day. While the busiest days changed, the least busy days did not - the Saturday and Sunday of the early voting period continued to be the least busy days.

Although comparisons with prior elections' early voting data may not be appropriate because of the number of voters who voted by mail in this election, the percentage of voters who voted early was the highest of any election. Figure 3 shows the early voting turnout as a percentage of total voter turnout.

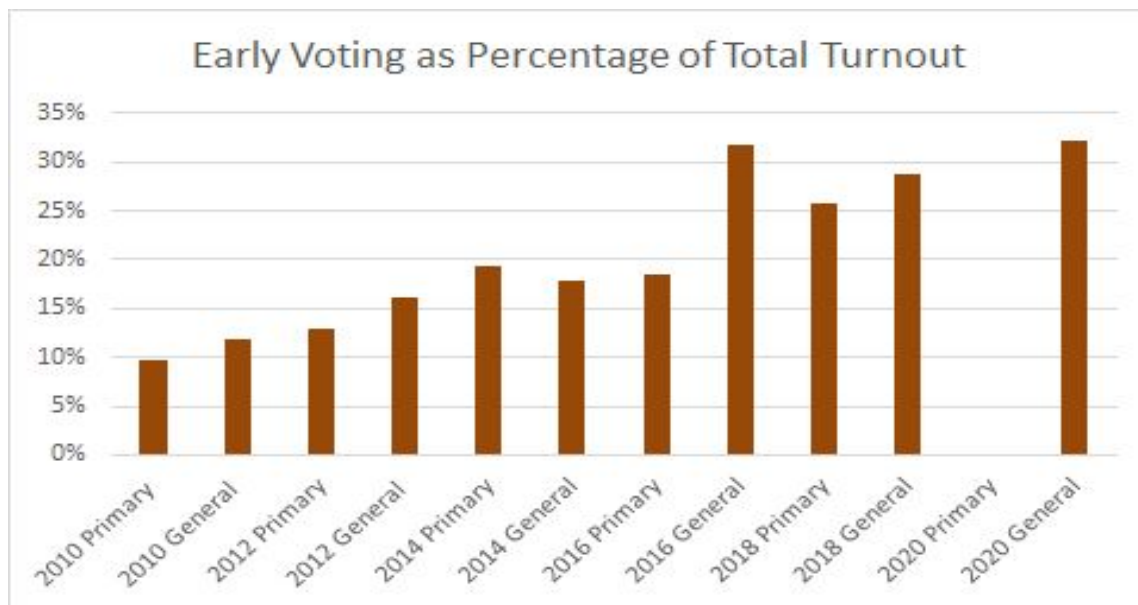


Figure 3: Early Voting as a Percentage of Total Voter Turnout²⁷

Election Day

There were 321 election day vote centers where 439,094 voters voted on November 3. This represents 14% of the voters who participated in this election.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, voters on election day voted at vote centers instead of the traditional neighborhood polling places. This change was necessary for two reasons. First, election judges were resigning due to the public health emergency and moving to the vote center model required less election judges. Second, many of the neighborhood polling places could not accommodate voters and social distancing guidelines. Both the members of the State Board and the Maryland Association of Election Officials recommended this model, and the Governor authorized it in his August 10 proclamation. While the vote center model has been used since 2010 for early voting, this was the first election in Maryland using vote centers on election day.

The facilities used on election day were larger and could accommodate more voters more safely than the traditional neighborhood polling places. Several of the 321 election day vote centers were very large facilities - such as Oriole Park at Camden Yards and FedEx Field - serving as vote centers for the first time.²⁸

²⁷ Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was no early voting for the 2020 Primary Election.

²⁸ Other large facilities - sometimes called "super vote centers" - included Baltimore City Community College, the University of Maryland College Park's Xfinity Center, Show Place Arena, and the Montgomery County Conference Center (Marriott Bethesda North).

The use of vote centers on election day provided voters with more flexibility. Instead of having to vote at a specific location, voters could vote at any election day vote center in the jurisdiction where they live. To ensure that each election day vote center had all ballot styles in that jurisdiction, election officials ordered more ballots - 19.1 million ballots - than in any prior election.

Provisional Voting

There were more provisional ballots cast - 112,162 ballots - and counted - 96.7% of the provisional ballots cast - in this election than in any election in Maryland. Figure 4 below shows the percentage of accepted in full²⁹, accepted in part³⁰, and rejected provisional ballots since the 2012 Primary Election.³¹

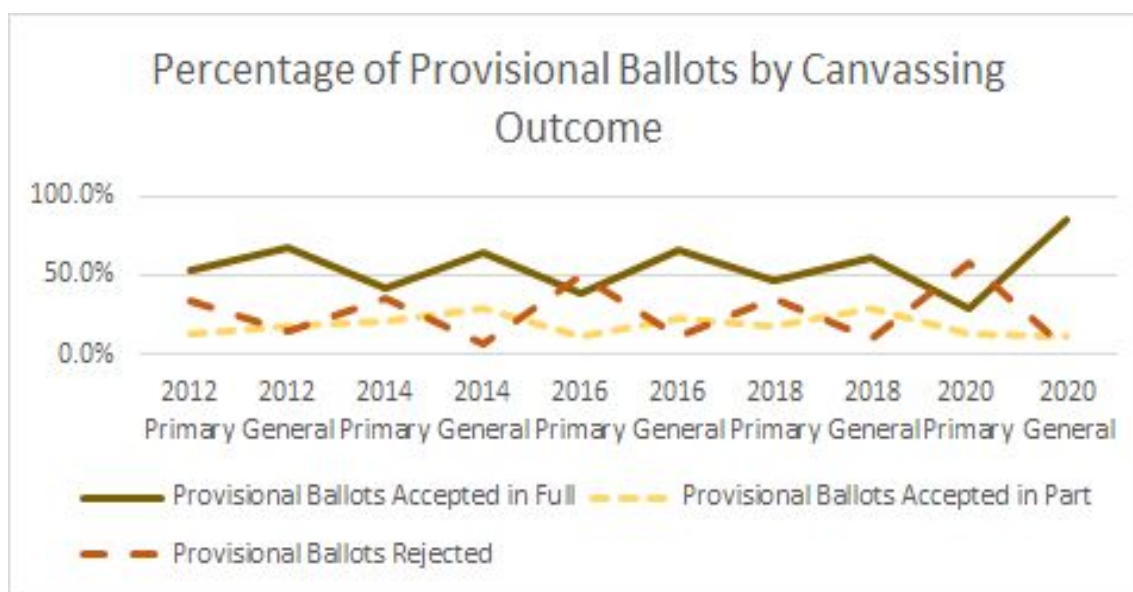


Figure 4: Percentage of Provisional Ballots by Canvassing Outcome

Over time, the most common reasons why provisional ballots are rejected in a general election are: (1) the voter is not registered to vote; (2) the voter already voted; and (3) the voter did not

²⁹ A provisional ballot is accepted in full if the voter is registered to vote and votes the ballot associated with the voter's residential address. Of the 112,162 provisional ballots cast in this election, 95,391 were accepted in full.

³⁰ A provisional ballot is accepted in part if the voter is registered to vote but votes a ballot that is not associated with the voter's residential address. The local boards accept this ballot and count votes for contests for which the voter is eligible to vote. All statewide contests would be counted, but a vote for a candidate for Congress would only count if the voter lives in that Congressional District. Of the 112,162 provisional ballots cast in this election, 13,087 were accepted in part.

³¹ The rejection rate for provisional ballots in primary elections is higher than general elections since many voters who vote a provisional ballot in a primary election requested a ballot for a political party with which they are not affiliated. In a general election, all voters receive the same ballot. Party affiliation is irrelevant.

sign the oath on the provisional ballot application.³² Figure 5 shows the percentage of ballots rejected for these reasons in general elections since 2012.

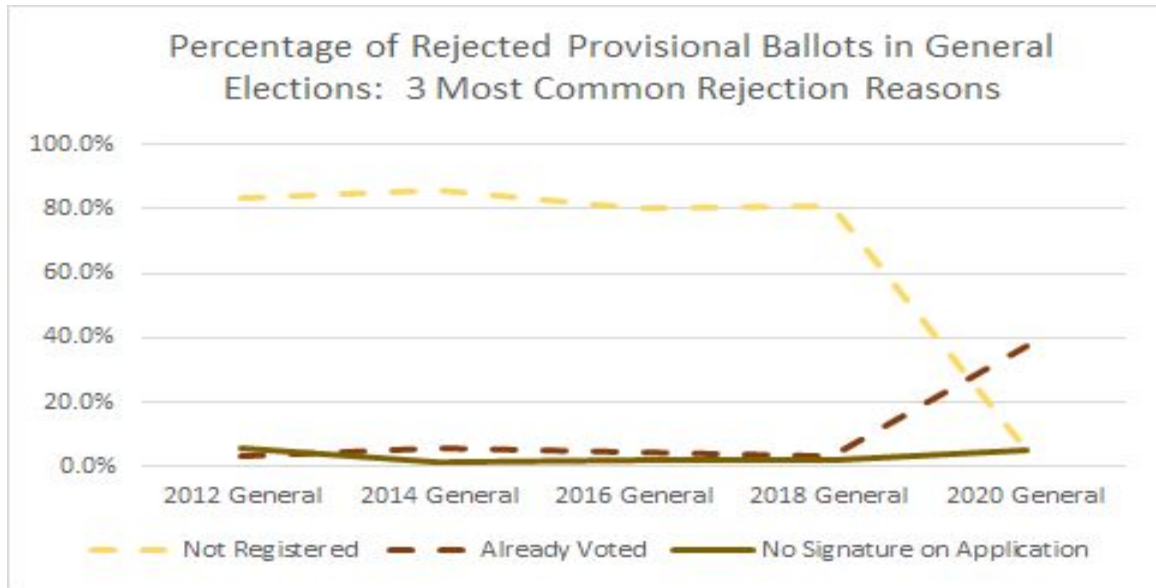


Figure 5: Percentage of Rejected Provisional Ballots in General Elections Rejected for the Three Most Common Rejection Reasons

Requiring voters who have already voted or issued a mail-in ballot to vote a provisional ballot ensures that each voter only votes once. The provisional ballot is counted as long as the voter does not also vote and return the requested mail-in ballot. If the voter voted and returned the mail-in ballot and also voted a provisional ballot in this election, the mail-in ballot was counted and the provisional ballot was rejected.³³

State and local election officials expected the increase in the percentage of provisional ballots rejected because the voter had already voted. This increase is attributed to mailing to all eligible voters the form to request a mail-in ballot and voters completing and returning the form but then deciding to vote in person.³⁴ SBE's voter education campaign included explaining that voters who received a mail-in ballot but decided to vote in person would be required to vote a provisional ballot.

³² This is required by Election Law Article, §11-303(d)(2)(ii).

³³ Counting the mail-in ballot was authorized by an emergency change to Regulation 33.11.06.04C. The State Board approved this emergency change at its September 4, 2020 meeting. The emergency change was effective on October 13, 2020 and expired on December 31, 2020. Notice of the emergency change was published in the November 6, 2020 issue of the *Maryland Register* (Vol. 47, Issue 23).

³⁴ Anticipating this outcome, State and local election officials included on the form to request a mail-in ballot the following statement: If you request a mail-in ballot and decide to vote in person, you will have to vote a provisional ballot.

These three most common rejection reasons were not, however, the most common rejection reasons in this election. Figure 6 shows the top eight reasons why provisional ballots were rejected in the November 3 election.

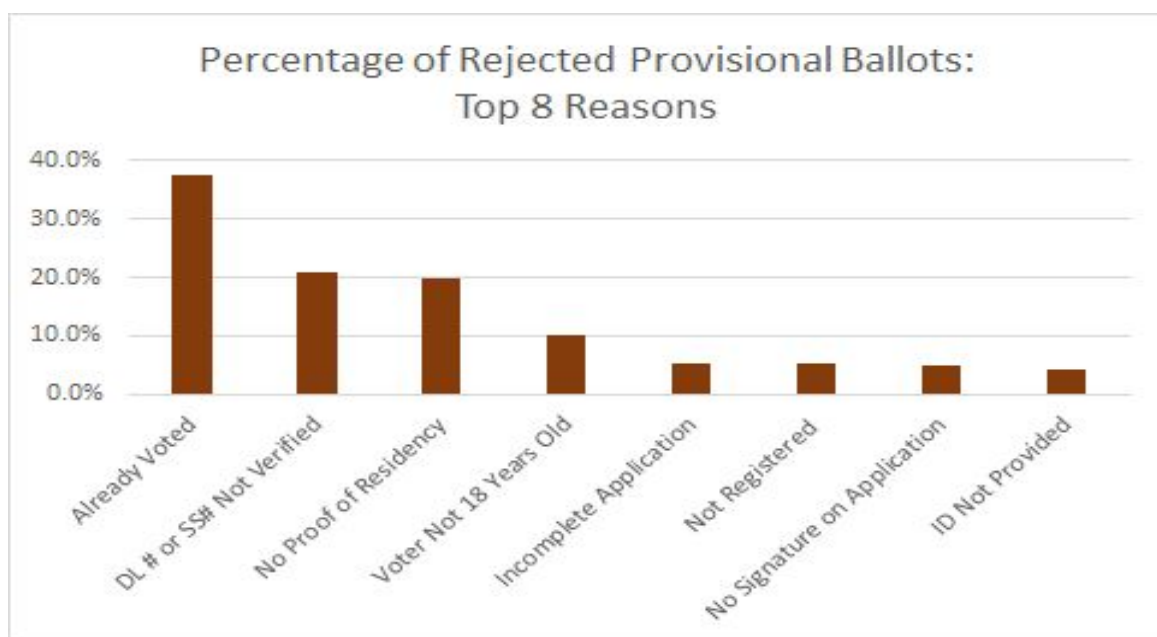


Figure 6: Top 8 Reasons for Rejected Provisional Ballots in the 2020 General Election

With the introduction of same day registration, provisional ballots are no longer issued because someone is not registered to vote; the individual can register and vote at a voting location. This change is responsible for the disappearance of that rejection reason from Figure 5. The most common rejection reason in this election was that the voter had already voted or been issued a ballot - 37.5% of the rejected provisional ballots were rejected for this reason. As explained above, this is because voters voted and returned the mail-in ballot (which was counted) and then decided to vote in person.³⁵ Further analysis will be conducted into the provisional ballots rejected because the individual using the same day registration process to register and vote did not provide proof of residency to determine what actions can be taken to reduce the number of provisional ballots rejected for this reason.

³⁵ State and local election officials anticipated this outcome and included on the form to request a mail-in ballot the following statement: If you request a mail-in ballot and decide to vote in person, you will have to vote a provisional ballot.



Considerations for Future Elections

The election day vote center model worked well for this election. If this becomes the permanent model for election day voting, State and local election officials will analyze the number and placement of these vote centers, review the types of facilities used, and identify preferred features.

Further analysis will be conducted into the provisional ballots rejected because the individual using the same day registration process to register and vote did not provide proof of residency to determine what actions can be taken to reduce the number of provisional ballots rejected for this reason.

Vote by Mail

The 2020 elections saw Maryland transition to elections with significantly more voters voting by mail. The June 2 election was Maryland's first statewide vote-by-mail election, and the November 3 election saw about one-half of participating voters deciding to vote by mail.³⁶ Before these elections, the most ballots sent to voters were 225,000 ballots in the 2016 General Election.


The Request Process

Unlike the June 2 election when ballots were mailed automatically to all eligible voters, voters who wished to vote by mail had to request a mail-in ballot. To facilitate this process and in response to the Governor's July 8 letter, SBE contracted with a mailhouse to produce and mail to eligible voters the application to request a mail-in ballot and a postage paid return envelope to return the completed application.³⁷ The vendor mailed approximately 4 million application forms on August 24 and 25.

While planning for this mailing, State and local election officials were also preparing to set up a data processing center to process the large number of expected requests. The Maryland Department of Transportation - Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) provided computers and

³⁶ The special general election for the 7th Congressional District was primarily a vote-by-mail election. In that election, over 157,000 voters participated and 99.3% voted by mail. 1,000 voters voted in-person at one of the three election day vote centers.

³⁷ Applications were not sent to voters who had already requested a mail-in ballot and the request had been processed by their local board of elections.



space at its Glen Burnie facility³⁸, and the Department of Budget Management (DBM) assisted SBE with recruiting and hiring temporary employees to staff the data processing center. Under the guidance of local election officials supervising the work at the data processing center, the individuals working at this data processing center processed almost 172,000 requests for mail-in ballots. This effort would not have been possible without the assistance provided by MVA and DBM.

Because of the significant data processing by the local boards and the data processing center at MVA, voters who requested a mail-in ballot were able to receive it in time to vote and return it. A similar processing plan will be required for any election in which applications for a mail-in ballot are mailed to requesting voters.

Preparing and Sending Ballot Packets

The 2020 elections were the first statewide elections in which postage for returning voted ballots was pre-paid. In previous elections, voters affixed postage to return voted ballots, but the enactment of Chapters 36 and 37 of the 2020 Laws of Maryland meant that State and local governments paid the postage to return voted ballots.³⁹ Election officials were already using USPS' Intelligent Mail Barcodes, which enable timely and accurate tracking of mail pieces, but before the June 2 election, some local election officials needed to establish a business reply permit for use on the return envelopes. These permits were also used for the November 3 election.

In response to the issues experienced in the June 2 election⁴⁰, SBE used another mailhouse to produce, insert, and mail ballots for the November 3 election. Ballots packets to requesting military and overseas voters were mailed by the federal deadline⁴¹, and on September 24, mailings to requesting domestic, civilian voters began. Over a six day period, more than 750,000 ballot packets were mailed. Frequent mailings occurred through October 26, when the local boards began mailing packets. In total, the mailhouse produced and mailed over 1.5 million ballot packets over a 37-day period.


The vendor and State and local election officials worked closely with USPS representatives to deliver blank ballots and later, the return voted ballots. The USPS was responsive in assisting State and local election officials finding and delivering delayed ballot packets.

³⁸ The University of Maryland Global Campus (UMGC) offered a facility for a second data processing center, but this second center was not used for this election.

³⁹ Chapters 36 and 37 did not require prepaid postage for ballots delivered electronically.

⁴⁰ SBE's [report on the June 2 election](#) identified various issues with the production and mailing of ballots for this election. See pages 11-12.

⁴¹ See footnote 9.



SBE also delivered blank ballots electronically to requesting voters.⁴² These voters - 9.7% of all voters who requested a mail-in ballot - received an email when their ballots are ready and access and print their ballots from an SBE system. 62% of voters who printed their ballots from this system printed a blank ballot and marked their ballots by hand, while the remaining voters used the system's online ballot marking tool to mark their ballots.⁴³ Since voted ballots cannot be returned electronically, voters who received their blank ballot electronically must print and return their voted ballot by mail or at a ballot drop off box.

Returning Voted Ballots

Almost 89% of voters who requested a mail-in ballot returned it. This is the highest rate of return since the 2008 General Election, when the return rate was 90%.

The process of returning ballots was made easier by the increased number of ballot drop off locations across the State. There were 321 ballot drop off locations across the State. In many ways, the ballot drop off boxes became the image of the 2020 elections⁴⁴ and voters clearly liked the alternate way to return their voted ballots.

State and local election officials developed procedures to ensure the security of ballots in the ballot drop off boxes. All of the ballot drop off boxes were under 24/7 surveillance, and some local boards arranged for increased patrolling and monitoring by local law enforcement. The local boards retrieved ballots at least once a day and followed detailed procedures when collecting and transporting voted ballots to the local board.⁴⁵

The table below shows the percentage of ballots returned at a ballot drop off box by county. The number in parentheses is the number of ballot drop off locations available in that jurisdiction.

⁴² Electronic delivery of blank ballots is required by both federal and State law. The federal Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act (42 U.S.C. 1973ff-1) requires electronic delivery for military and overseas voters, and Election Law Article, § 9-306(b) allows any voter requesting a mail-in ballot to request electronic delivery of a blank ballot.

⁴³ The online ballot marking tool allows voters to make their selections on a computer and print a ballot with the voter's selections marked. This tool allows most voters with disabilities to vote independently and privately.

⁴⁴ Images of the ballot drop off boxes are in Appendix 4.

⁴⁵ The procedures required that the person collecting the voted ballots be a sworn election official, have a criminal background check on file (unless the individuals collecting the ballot was a member of the local board of elections), and display a State or county ID. When retrieving ballots, the election official verified that the numbered seals on the box matched the seal numbers recorded on a chain of custody report and recorded the number of removed ballots. The receiving official verified the number of ballots received and stored the voted ballots in a secure location at the local board.

Percentage of Ballots Received at a Ballot Drop Off Box			
Allegany (2)	44.86%	Harford (5)	67.45%
Anne Arundel (32)	71.25%	Howard (9)	68.90%
Baltimore City (32)	62.28%	Kent (2)	61.46%
Baltimore County (44)	68.12%	Montgomery (50)	71.75%
Calvert (7)	61.28%	Prince George's (42)	74.18%
Caroline (2)	49.59%	Queen Anne's (2)	64.16%
Carroll (6)	67.20%	Saint Mary's (11)	50.00%
Cecil (6)	61.11%	Somerset (3)	36.04%
Charles (6)	74.35%	Talbot (2)	70.46%
Dorchester (1)	42.59%	Washington (4)	52.55%
Frederick (8)	71.82%	Wicomico (4)	53.05%
Garrett (2)	42.17%	Worcester (2)	47.58%
Statewide		68.69%	

Table 2: Percentage of Ballots Returned at a Ballot Drop Off Box

Based on their use in the June 2 election, it was clear that additional ballot drop off boxes would benefit more voters and provide more options for returning voted ballots. Immediately after the June 2 election, SBE ordered over 200 more ballot drop boxes for the November 3 election. These extra boxes meant that there would be a ballot drop off box at each early voting center and local board office⁴⁶, and many local boards had additional boxes to place at locations throughout their jurisdiction.

Based on a preliminary analysis, the cost of the ballot drop off boxes themselves was more than offset by the costs associated with paying postage to return about 1 million ballots.⁴⁷ There are, however, other costs associated with the ballot drop off boxes, including expenses related to providing 24/7 security and retrieving voted ballots from the boxes for up to five weeks.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Due to the geography and population density, the Garrett County Board of Elections did not have a ballot drop off box at their office. Garrett County had two early voting centers, and ballot drop off boxes were located at both centers.

⁴⁷ The average cost to return a voted ballot is \$1.00. The total cost for the 270 ballot drop off boxes was \$467,833.

⁴⁸ The first delivery of ballot drop off boxes was September 28 - 30. Some jurisdictions were able to use county employees to retrieve ballots, while other jurisdictions hired individuals to perform these tasks. In some jurisdictions, the local government assigned employees who were unable to work due to the pandemic to the local board. These individuals performed many tasks to support the election, including helping retrieve ballots from ballot drop off boxes.

Before the 2022 elections, State and local election officials will review the usage of each ballot drop off box and determine whether the locations of the ballot drop off boxes should be changed.

Counting Ballots

For both elections in 2020, there were exponentially more ballots to count than a traditional election.⁴⁹ To assist with this process, State and local election officials procured equipment (such as ballot joggers and electric envelope openers) to make the organizing and opening of the envelopes more efficient.

The local boards were authorized to start counting ballots on October 1 but were required to embargo the results until voting ended on election day. Although all of the local boards started counting ballots before election day, the local boards counted a significant number of ballots after election day. This meant that, for at least a few contests, the “winners” were not known until after election day.

State law requires that the counting of ballots be accessible to the public. In response to the public health emergency, many of the facilities in which the local boards count ballots were closed to the public. This meant that public access to the canvassing of ballots was provided via live stream. For those facilities where the public could not observe the canvass in person, local election officials provided the public with access to view the canvassing process and view and listen to discussions of the local boards of canvassers.⁵⁰


The table below provides county-level data about the number of ballots sent and the percentage of those ballots that were voted and returned to the local boards. It also shows the percentage of the received ballots that were accepted and rejected.⁵¹

County	Ballots Sent	Percentage of Ballots Received	Percentage of Ballots Accepted	Percentage of Ballots Rejected
Allegany	10,018	89.94%	99.79%	0.21%
Anne Arundel	167,766	88.94%	99.78%	0.22%
Baltimore City	163,139	84.72%	99.58%	0.42%

⁴⁹ For example, the local boards canvassed over 175,000 ballots in the 2016 General Election.

⁵⁰ The local boards convene as the local boards of canvassers to count ballots.

⁵¹ This information for prior elections is available in SBE’s “Press Room” on its website. See https://elections.maryland.gov/press_room/index.html.



Baltimore County	240,346	88.61%	99.73%	0.27%
Calvert	23,151	91.20%	99.84%	0.16%
Caroline	4,279	85.44%	99.70%	0.30%
Carroll	39,636	91.12%	99.77%	0.23%
Cecil	16,368	86.83%	99.76%	0.24%
Charles	46,045	88.06%	99.83%	0.17%
Dorchester	5,724	86.32%	99.64%	0.36%
Frederick	70,167	89.88%	99.76%	0.24%
Garrett	4,155	88.21%	99.86%	0.14%
Harford	56,126	88.24%	99.68%	0.32%
Howard	110,805	90.09%	99.84%	0.16%
Kent	4,414	89.42%	99.87%	0.13%
Montgomery	386,161	90.31%	99.79%	0.21%
Prince George's	275,344	87.32%	99.78%	0.22%
Queen Anne's	10,219	86.50%	99.82%	0.18%
St. Mary's	24,314	89.95%	99.89%	0.11%
Somerset	2,837	83.89%	99.79%	0.21%
Talbot	10,075	90.26%	99.80%	0.20%
Washington	24,775	88.32%	99.64%	0.36%
Wicomico	17,383	86.95%	99.83%	0.17%
Worcester	11,529	86.37%	99.72%	0.28%
Statewide	1,724,776	88.61%	99.76%	0.24%

Table 3: Ballots Sent, Received, Accepted and Rejected

As shown in Table 3, the vast majority of ballots returned by mail - 99.76% - were counted. The overall acceptance rate for the November 3 election was the highest percentage since 2006, when

SBE began reporting this type of data. The average acceptance rate since the 2012 Primary Election is 97.97%.

Under State law and regulations, there are fourteen reasons why ballots cannot be accepted and counted, but the two most common reasons are the ballot is late for the election⁵² and the voter did not sign the oath on the return envelope. Figure 7 below shows the percentage of ballots rejected for the two most common rejection reasons over time.

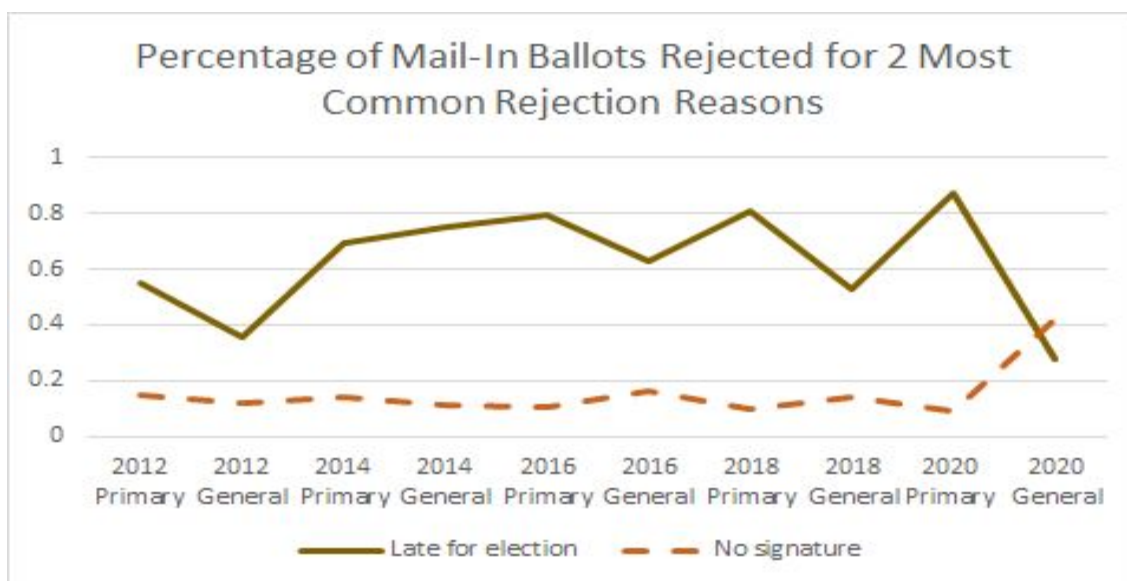



Figure 7: Percentage of Mail-In Ballots Rejected for 2 Most Common Rejection Reasons⁵³

The percentage of ballots rejected for being late decreased by 35% from the average percentage of rejected, untimely ballots since the 2012 Primary Election and decreased by 60% from the 2020 Primary Election⁵⁴. This significant decrease is the result of the public education campaign and its emphasis on the timely return of voted ballots and the use of ballot drop off boxes, which enabled voters to bypass the United States Postal System and ensure timely delivery of their voted ballots.

⁵² A ballot is late for an election if the ballot is: (1) postmarked after election day; or (2) received after 10 am on the second Friday after the election. See Regulation 33.11.03.08 of the Code of Maryland Regulations.

⁵³ A comparison of the rejection reasons by ballot type - mail-in voting and vote-by-mail - shows more mail-in ballots (11.51% of rejected mail-in ballots) were rejected due to no signature than vote-by-mail ballots (9.34% of rejected vote-by-mail ballots.) A similar comparison for ballots rejected for being late shows the opposite; that is, more vote-by-mail ballots (87.27% of rejected vote-by-mail ballots) were rejected for being late than mail-in ballots (82.35% of rejected mail-in ballots).

⁵⁴ Since the 2012 Primary Election, the percentage of ballots rejected because they were late varies significantly; the percentage ranges from 36% in the 2016 General Election to 81% in the 2018 Primary Election. The average of elections between the 2012 Primary Election and the 2018 General Election is 64%. In the 2020 Primary Election, 87% of the rejected ballots were rejected because they were late.




Because many voters in Maryland were voting by mail for the first time, the State Board instructed the local boards to contact voters who submitted a ballot that did not include a signature on the return envelope. This process meant that hundreds of voters were able to provide a signed oath and have their ballots be accepted and counted.

While Figure 7 shows an increase in the percentage of ballots rejected because the oath was not signed, this increase is merely the result of a significant decrease in the number of ballots rejected because the voted ballot was not timely received. Of the 1.5 million ballots returned for counting, only 1,552 ballots - 0.102% - of all ballots returned for counting - were rejected for not having a signed oath.

Considerations for Future Elections

For future elections, State and local election officials will:

1. Document the process to establish a data processing center and plan to implement one for any election where a significant number of voters are expected to request a mail-in ballot.
2. Continue SBE's expanded team to manage the mailhouse contract and process and evaluate if additional support is needed.
3. For future primary elections, review information printed on the voter's return envelope and print only the information that is necessary for processing.
4. Continue to mail ballots at least 30 days before the election. This provides sufficient time for the USPS to deliver ballots and for voters to review their ballots, vote their ballots, and timely return their voted ballots. This window also provides time for election officials to send replacement ballots if the voter did not receive or made a mistake when marking the initial ballot.
5. Research options to provide voters with the ability to track their ballots. USPS data is currently available to election officials but not to voters. This information would enable voters to obtain this information without needing to contact an election official. Ideally, voters and election officials would view real-time data.
6. Continue to use an envelope design that prevents a voter's signature from being visible while the voted ballot is in transit to the local board.

- 
7. Continue to conduct a voter education campaign on how and when to return voted ballots and the importance of voters signing the oath on the return envelope.
 8. Review the usage and location of ballot drop off boxes to guide the number and placement of ballot drop off boxes for future elections.
 9. Codify the process of contacting voters who returned a voted ballot without signing the oath and obtaining a signed oath.⁵⁵
 10. Review other government sources for updating voter registration data and if other trusted government sources are identified, work with the Maryland General Assembly to allow the use of this data for future elections.

Since local election officials were able to start counting ballots before election day in both the 2020 Primary and General Elections, there were meaningful election results available election night. Since this change was authorized by the Governor's election-related proclamations, the ability to count ballots before election day will not continue beyond the current state of emergency unless there is a change to Election Law Article, §11-302(b).⁵⁶


Election Results and Audits

Election Results

Reporting unofficial, election night results is a collaborative effort between State and local election officials. When pollworkers return critical election supplies after voting is over, local election officials load into a secure database the memory devices from the scanners that tabulate ballots at voting locations. Once the results are transferred from the memory devices into the database, State election officials have a secure way to transfer these unofficial results to a State server for posting to the website. The website updates every time new results files are received.

⁵⁵ House Bill 57 of the 2021 Legislative Session includes a requirement that the local boards try to contact a voter who returned a voted mail-in ballot without a signed oath. SBE has the authority under Election Law Article, §§ 2-101(b)(4) and 9-303(a) to adopt regulations requiring the local boards to do this.

⁵⁶ Election Law Article, §11-302(b)(1) prohibits a local board from opening a return envelope with a voted mail-in ballot inside before 8 am on the Wednesday after election day. House Bill 341 of the 2021 Legislative Session would authorize a local board to start opening returning envelopes 14 days before election day.




Election results are not typically released until all voters in line at 8 pm are inside a voting room. This is to ensure that unofficial election results do not influence voters' decisions to vote or for whom they wish to vote.

Since there were voting locations that were open after 8 pm on November 3, the State Board posted on its website results for local offices and the local boards were authorized to release the same results and linked to the State Board's results webpage. Results for federal and State offices, however, were held until all voters were inside a voting room. Because of the lines at some vote centers, federal and State results were posted about 10:41 pm.

Unofficial results from election day voting in five jurisdictions - Baltimore City and Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Montgomery and Prince George's Counties - were not available for release on election night. When uploading results from a scanner to the central results database, the database software scans the data to look for ballots from each precinct in the jurisdiction. If a precinct does not have ballots on the thumb drive, the database notifies the election official transferring results that there are no ballots from a specific precinct. The election official must confirm that, for each precinct without ballots, it is acceptable to proceed and the results can be transferred.

This alert occasionally appears during early voting, but because there are eight days of early voting, the number of precincts without ballots is generally less. There is also more time to upload early voting results, and therefore there is not a delay in reporting those results. However, the move to voting centers for one day of voting (election day) meant that there would be more precincts without ballots on each thumb drive, more alerts for election officials to acknowledge, and more time to transfer the results from the thumb drive to the central database. The process of responding to the alert and transferring results was taking around eight to ten minutes per stick, instead of the normal two to three minutes. For some of the larger jurisdictions, this was a significant delay.

Upon learning of the delay and cause, SBE contacted the vendor who shared a work around to reduce the time to respond to the alert and transfer the results. Using the workaround, the local boards in Anne Arundel and Montgomery Counties finished transferring unofficial election day results on November 4, and the Baltimore City Board of Elections and the local boards in Baltimore and Prince George's Counties finished on November 5. This issue did not delay reporting of unofficial results from early voting, results from mail-in voting, and election day results for the other 19 local jurisdictions.



The 2020 General Election was the first election where precinct-level results were provided for ballots cast during early voting, mail-in ballots, and provisional ballots. While the results were not immediately available⁵⁷, they were posted on SBE's website the first week of December.

Post-Election Audits

There are three types of post-election audits performed after each general election - (1) a comprehensive audit of critical election processes and equipment; (2) an independent automated tabulation audit; and (3) a manual tabulation audit that both verify that the voting system counted the ballots properly.

Comprehensive Audit

The goal of the comprehensive audit is to verify that an election is fair and accessible for all voters and the integrity of the election process can be established and is accomplished by ensuring that the local boards are adequately performing tasks as required by State law and regulations.


After each election, SBE conducts the comprehensive audit and sends to each local board an audit report. Findings from inquiries will determine the local boards' compliance with election laws and regulations prior to and following elections. The audits are conducted by reviewing data and information in State databases or documents submitted by the local boards. In addition, SBE may inspect records, observe office operations, observe voting equipment testing, and attend and evaluate election judges' training.

The comprehensive audit has three main topics – voting system, polling place operations, and canvassing and post-election audits and reconciliation – with areas of inquiry for each topic. The status of several critical audits are below.

1. Compare the number of ballots received by a local board against the number of ballots presented for counting.

This audit is performed by comparing the number of ballots received by a local board against the number of ballots the local board of canvassers counted during the canvassing process. The “received” data is exported from the database used to manage the mail-in ballot process, and the number of ballots presented for canvassing is obtained from the local boards' canvassing minutes.

⁵⁷ Precinct-level results cannot be provided publicly until the vendor performing the automated ballot tabulation audit has completed its tabulation of the ballot images. See pages 26-28 of this report for more information about this audit.



The local boards are in the process of approving their canvassing minutes and once approved, will submit them to SBE. This audit cannot be completed until the canvassing minutes are approved by the local boards and submitted to SBE for comparison against the number of ballots received.

2. Compare the number of ballots presented each day for counting against the number of ballots that were accepted and rejected that day

When ballots are presented to the local board of canvassers, the local board follows the requirements of State law and regulations when deciding to either accept or reject ballots. The number of accepted ballots and rejected ballots, as well as the reasons for rejections, are recorded in both the canvassing minutes and the database used to manage the mail-in ballot process. As part of the comprehensive audit, the number of ballots presented for counting as recorded in the minutes is compared against the number of ballots accepted and rejected in the database.

This audit cannot be completed until canvassing minutes are approved by the local boards and submitted to SBE for comparison against the data in the database.

3. Compare the number of ballots and election results by scanner against the number of ballots and results in the attributable to that scanner in the voting system's central database

Called the vote system verification audit, this audit demonstrates that results in the voting system's central database and results printed by the scanners are the same. After each election, the local boards verify the voting system's vote-counting capabilities by auditing the aggregated number of ballots scanned and results from all scanners used on election day and a randomly selected day of the canvass against the results for the same scanners as reported by the voting system's central database. Any discrepancies between the scanners and the central database must be investigated.

For the November 3 election, no discrepancies between the voting system and the results printed by the scanners have been identified.



Independent Ballot Tabulation Audit

Following the November 3 election, SBE conducted automated ballot tabulation audits in each jurisdiction to verify the accuracy of the voting system's results.⁵⁸ A post-election tabulation audit is not a canvass or a recount; it is used to verify that the voting system accurately tallied votes and that the winners of each contest were called correctly. For this election, SBE contracted with The Clear Ballot Group, a Boston-based elections technology company.

The post-election tabulation audit is conducted using ballot images. Using ballot images allows election officials to maximize the technological functions of the voting system while minimizing human error and eliminating chain of custody issues by using securely stored ballot images, rather than voted paper ballots. The use of ballot images removes the need for election officials to physically handle or count voted ballots unless a petition for a recount or other judicial challenge is granted.

To conduct this audit, the local boards transmit all of the ballot images to Clear Ballot, and Clear Ballot retabulates them. Clear Ballot then compares their results against the results generated by the voting system and identifies any differences. SBE previously established that an unexplained discrepancy greater than 0.5% between the two sets of results for any given contest would trigger additional auditing before the local board could certify the election.⁵⁹

With this audit, State and local election officials and other interested individuals can sort contests, ballot, and precinct reports, review images of contests and ballots, and provide detailed information about how each ballot image was adjudicated.

Audit Process


The local boards first sent Clear Ballot the images of mail-in ballots that were counted prior to election day, all early voting ballots, and all ballots cast and counted at vote centers on November 3. This was Phase 1. When Clear Ballot received the ballot images, Clear Ballot:

- Transferred the ballot images into an audit database for that jurisdiction;
- Tabulated the ballot images from Phase 1;
- Resolved unreadable ballots;
- Performed an audit database review; and
- Sent to the State Board a Preliminary Statement of Votes Cast.

Once the Preliminary Statement of Votes Cast was received, SBE provided Clear Ballot with election results from mail-in ballots that were counted prior to election day, all early voting

⁵⁸ This audit is required by Election Law Article, §11-309 after each statewide primary and general election.

⁵⁹ See Regulation 33.08.05.08C of the Code of Maryland Regulations.



ballots, and all ballots cast and counted at vote centers on November 3. The delay in sending the Phase 1 results is intentional. It creates a “blind” audit, which means that Clear Ballot provides its results without knowing the results from the voting system. Clear Ballot uses the results from Phase 1 to create various reports comparing the two sets of results.

After the remaining mail-in ballots and provisional ballots were counted, the local boards sent Clear Ballot images of all ballots. This is Phase 2 of the audit. Clear Ballot tabulated these ballot images, resolved unreadable ballots, and generated a Comparison of Votes Cast for all ballots cast in the election.

Reports Produced by Clear Ballot

Clear Ballot produces for each county four audit reports.

- **Comparison of Cards Cast for by Counter Group:** This report compares the number of ballots counted on election day, mail-in ballots, and provisional ballots against the number of ballots tabulated by Clear Ballot. This ensures that the same number of ballots was tabulated by both systems.
- **Comparison of Ballots Cast by Precinct:** This report compares the number of ballots cast in each precinct⁶⁰ against the number of ballots tabulated during the audit. This is another way to ensure that the same number of ballots are tabulated by both systems.
- **Comparison of Votes Cast:** This report compares for each contest the results from the voting system against the audit results and identifies possible discrepancies by candidate.
- **Contest Vote Discrepancy Threshold Report:** This report shows – by contest – the number of vote differences between the two systems and the vote difference as a percentage.

Results of Independent, Automated Tabulation Audit


The completed audits show there are no variances greater than 0.5% between the voting system results and the audit results.⁶¹

Manual Audit

Section 11-309 of the Election Law Article requires a manual audit of voted ballots after each general election. The manual audit must be completed within 120 days of the election. For this election, the manual audits must be complete by March 3, 2020.

⁶⁰ Although voting did not occur at precincts for the November 3 election, precinct-level results were still tabulated. Each voters’ precinct was identified by a ballot style number, which the voting system identified.

⁶¹ Results from the post-election ballot tabulation audit are available at https://elections.maryland.gov/voting_system/ballot_audit_plan_automated.html



For this election, the audited contest is President and Vice-President, the only statewide contest in this election, and the audit includes ballots from election day, early voting, mail-in voting, and provisional voting. The local boards will manually count votes for President and Vice-President on the ballots selected for the manual audit.

Ballots Cast During Early Voting

The number of ballots to audit is based on 1% of the statewide total of early voting from the 2016 General Election, including at least a minimum number of early votes in each county. While the members of the State Board randomly select the early voting centers to audit, it delegated this duty to staff due to the pandemic. On October 23, staff randomly selected an early voting center for each county with more than one early voting center.⁶² The actual number of ballots audited will be the number of ballots scanned on one or two scanners in the selected early voting center at the end of Day 1 of early voting.

Ballots Cast During Election Day

The statute requires that ballots from at least 2% of election day vote centers be audited, with a minimum number of at least one election day vote center per local jurisdiction. On November 13, the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and staff met to randomly select one election day vote center in each county to audit. The ballots cast at that election day vote center will be manually audited.

Mail-in Ballots

The number of mail-in ballots to audit is based on 1% of the mail-in ballots cast in the 2016 General Election.⁶³ Each local board randomly selected the ballots to be audited from different precincts. On the first day of each local board's mail-in ballot canvass, the local boards scanned the ballots selected for the audit and printed the results. The results and selected ballots are then securely stored until the local board prepares for the audit.


Provisional Ballots

The number of provisional ballots to audit is based on 1% of the provisional ballots cast in the 2016 General Election.⁶⁴ The local boards randomly selected the provisional ballots to be audited. The selected provisional ballot applications must be from at least three precincts, have a staff recommendation of "accept in full," and not be a provisional ballot application generated by the same day registration or address change process.

⁶² If a county only had one early voting, that early voting center was selected.

⁶³ If 1% of the mail-in (or absentee) ballots cast in the 2016 General Election is less than 15 ballots, the local board must manually audit 15 mail-in ballots from the 2020 General Election.

⁶⁴ If 1% of the provisional ballots cast in the 2020 General Election is less than 15 ballots, the local boards must manually audit 15 provisional ballots.



During each local board's provisional canvass, the ballots selected for the audit were scanned and results were printed. The results and selected ballots are then securely stored until the local board prepares for the audit.

Performing the Audit

The local boards must complete the manual audit within 120 days of the general election and provide ten day notice to the State Administrator, the chairs of the local political parties, and the public of the date on which the audit will be conducted.

Report

Within 14 days of the completion of the manual audits, SBE will publish a report of its findings. This report will be posted on the [Ballot Audit Plan page](#) of SBE's website.⁶⁵

Considerations for Future Elections

State and local election officials will continue to release results from local contests when all voters in that jurisdiction are inside the voting locations but withhold results from federal and state contests until all voters in the State are inside the voting locations.

Looking to 2022 and Future Elections

Throughout this report, there are considerations for future elections. Some of these considerations can be undertaken by State and local election officials, while others require action by the Maryland General Assembly. As election officials are preparing for the 2022 elections, these considerations will be incorporated into the planning and decision-making process.

⁶⁵ This page is available at https://elections.maryland.gov/voting_system/ballot_audit_plan_automated.html

Appendices

Appendix 1: Turnout Information

Official Turnout (By Party and County)

Election: 2020 Presidential General Election

Election Date: November 03, 2020

* Due to Maryland's first use of precinct level ballots for all voting methods (early voting, election day, mail-in, and provisional voting), there may be some variances in the data.

Statewide

LBE	Election Day	Early Voting	Vote By Mail	Provisional	Eligible Voters	TURNOUT
Allegany	11,746	9,336	9,010	818	43,736	70.67%
Anne Arundel	39,909	112,351	149,208	10,902	405,616	77.01%
Baltimore City	29,561	59,663	138,217	15,128	399,685	60.69%
Baltimore County	57,970	133,407	212,962	15,110	566,408	74.05%
Calvert	13,427	14,324	21,113	583	67,984	72.73%
Caroline	4,461	7,333	3,656	465	21,177	75.15%
Carroll	27,681	35,414	36,117	1,868	125,361	80.63%
Cecil	16,511	15,950	14,213	1,122	68,819	69.45%
Charles	11,152	35,695	40,544	3,326	118,302	76.68%
Dorchester	3,700	7,308	4,941	214	22,187	72.85%
Frederick	26,729	52,957	63,066	3,864	186,356	78.68%
Garrett	2,319	9,364	3,665	370	20,183	77.88%
Harford	26,853	69,434	49,525	4,024	187,092	80.09%
Howard	18,400	61,175	99,820	5,282	226,634	81.49%
Kent	2,080	4,504	3,947	375	13,495	80.82%
Montgomery	40,628	128,684	348,744	19,879	673,198	79.91%
Prince George's	37,970	128,727	240,429	21,028	606,439	70.60%
Queen Anne's	4,692	16,046	8,839	911	37,678	80.92%
Saint Mary's	12,738	20,358	21,871	1,155	73,833	76.01%
Somerset	2,446	4,802	2,380	644	13,637	75.32%
Talbot	2,888	10,407	9,094	424	27,994	81.49%
Washington	26,957	17,722	21,882	1,741	99,046	68.96%
Wicomico	10,612	19,230	15,115	1,764	64,237	72.73%
Worcester	7,664	13,182	9,958	1,165	40,665	78.62%
TOTAL	439,094	987,373	1,528,316	112,162	4,109,762	74.63%

Appendix 2: Timeline of Key Dates

- June 2, 2020: Primary Election Day
- June 3, 2020: In a press conference, Governor Hogan requests that the State Administrator "...prepare a full and complete report to [Governor Hogan], the Board of Public Works, the Secretary of State, the presiding officers of the Maryland General Assembly, and to the public, no later than July 3."⁶⁶
- June 30, 2020: In an emergency meeting, the members of the State Board voted on possible options for conducting the November 3 election, but did not come to a unanimous decision. The members directed staff to update the draft report on the June 2 election to reflect the members' preferences.
- July 3, 2020: The State Board submitted to the Governor a comprehensive report of the June 2 election.
- July 8, 2020: Governor Hogan released a letter⁶⁷ stating that the November 3 election would be conducted as a traditional election - that is, with in-person voting at early voting centers and election day voting at neighborhood polling places and mail-in voting for voters who needed or preferred to vote a mail-in ballot. Additionally, he requested that SBE send to all eligible voters the application to request a mail-in ballot and make every effort to promote early voting, voting by mail, and voting at off-peak times. Governor Hogan also committed to encouraging State employees to serve as election judges and provide personal protective equipment for election officials and election judges.
- July 23, 2020: At the monthly meeting of the State Board, David Garreis, President of the Maryland Association of Election Officials (MAEO) President and Deputy Director for the Anne Arundel County Board of Elections, addressed the Board regarding the shortage of election judges. He urged the members to support MAEO and appeal to the Governor to amend his Order of July 8 and allow for the use of county-wide vote centers on election day, in lieu of polling places. Mr. Cogan accepted Mr. Garreis' offer to provide weekly numbers of election judges and vacancies.

⁶⁶

<https://governor.maryland.gov/2020/06/03/governor-hogan-addresses-peaceful-protests-in-baltimore-city-calls-for-full-and-complete-review-of-primary-election/>

⁶⁷ This and other letters referenced in this section are included in Appendix 5.

- August 3, 2020: In a letter, Governor Hogan requested an update on the application mailing to eligible voters and a plan to conduct the November 3 election.
- August 4, 2020: In response to the Governor's letter dated August 3, 2020, SBE outlined in a letter all of the steps necessary to mail applications to almost 4 million voters, election officials' efforts to establish a data processing center to process the large number of applications expected, and State Board members' consideration of requests from the local boards to consolidate voting locations.
- August 5, 2020: At this meeting of the State Board, Mr. Garreis, on behalf of MAEO, made the following requests: (1) the use of election day vote centers; (2) a centralized vote by mail application processing center; (3) permission for the local boards to begin canvassing vote by mail ballots 30 days before election day; and (4) moving forward by one week the deadline to request a mail-in ballot.

Mr. Garreis stated MAEO was unanimous in its support of these requests. In response and under the authority granted to the Board in the Governor's Proclamation dated June 19, 2020, the members approved changing the deadline to request a mail in mail from October 27 to October 20.

- August 6, 2020: Governor Hogan sent a letter restating his direction to send to all eligible voters a form to request a mail-in ballot, recruit and train election judges, and open early voting centers and offer "robust" election day voting options.
- August 7, 2020: At this meeting, the State Board voted to send to the Governor a request to exercise his authority to establish election day vote centers equal to or greater than the number of public high schools and early voting centers.
- August 9, 2020: The Chairman of the State Board sent to the Governor a letter stating the members' unanimous approval of the use of vote centers on election day and preference to place the election day vote centers in facilities used as existing early voting centers and public high schools in each jurisdiction. The letter requested that the Governor authorize the use of vote centers on election day, extend to election day vote centers laws applicable to polling places, and suspend certain provisions that only apply to polling place based voting.
- August 10, 2020: Governor Hogan issued a proclamation⁶⁸ granting the Board the authority to create election day vote centers. The proclamation also required compliance with public health guidance and maximum notice to voters about the

⁶⁸ This proclamation is in Appendix 5 immediately following the Governor's letter dated August 10.

use of election day vote centers and other voting locations, systems, and procedures.

- August 12, 2020: At this meeting, under the authority granted to the Board in the Governor's August 10 Proclamation, the members voted to establish October 26 through November 2 as the dates for early voting. The Board also voted to direct SBE staff to work with the local boards to develop a list of proposed vote centers for approval by the State Board, and determine dates for canvassing.

The Board also voted to adopt emergency regulations to: (1) allow for the remote training of election judges; (2) suspend the requirement that the members of the local boards be present at all times during the multi-day canvass; (3) amend the requirement that all mail-in ballots be date stamped upon receipt at the local board; (4) allow for mail-in ballots to be returned at designated ballot drop off boxes and specified that ballots returned to drop boxes are timely if they are returned by 8 p.m. on election day; and (5) remove the requirement that local board staff be physically present to open or close a vote center but instead be available remotely as needed.


- August 19, 2020: At this meeting, the State Board voted to: (1) direct the local boards to provide numbers for election judges required and election judge slots filled for early voting and election day for each category of election judge; and (2) direct SBE staff to submit a budget appropriation to DBM for the State to pay for the local boards' share of postage for the mail-in ballot applications. Additionally, under the authority granted to the State Board in the Governor's June 19 Proclamation, the Board voted to allow local boards to begin canvassing ballots no earlier than October 1, 2020. Finally, the Board voted to approve a new location for the early voting center in Worcester County, and approved election day vote centers in Allegany and Dorchester Counties.
- August 28, 2020: At this meeting, under the authority granted to the State Board in the Governor's June 19 Executive Order, the Board voted to approve emergency regulations to allow a local board to change the location of or establish a new early voting center if: (1) a previously approved center is no longer available; (2) a local board determines that there is a more suitable location; and (3) a local board approves an early voting center authorized under Election Law Article, §10-301.1(b)(7). Additionally, the Board voted to approve new early voting centers, election day vote centers, and additional ballot marking devices for the following local boards:
 - Early Voting Centers: Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Charles, Howard, Prince George's, Saint Mary's, and Somerset Counties.

- Election Day Vote Centers: Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Caroline, Charles, Garrett, Harford, Howard, Kent, Montgomery, Prince George's, Saint Mary's, Somerset, Talbot, Washington, and Wicomico Counties.
- Additional Ballot Marking Devices: Allegany, Caroline, Cecil, Dorchester, Frederick, Montgomery, Queen Anne's, Somerset, Talbot, Washington, and Worcester Counties.

Finally, the Board voted to extend SBE Policy 2020-01 – Electronic Signature Acceptance for petitions through January 13, 2021.

- September 3, 2020: SBE authorized ballot printers to start printing ballots.
- September 4, 2020: At this meeting, the Board approved emergency regulations that: (1) defined when a local board can use a single individual to verify the timeliness of a mail-in ballot, the presence of a signed oath, opening the return envelope, and determining whether the ballot can be scanned; (2) aligned the start of canvassing to the action the State Board took at its August 19, 2020 meeting allowing local boards to start canvassing ballots no earlier than 8 am on October 1, 2020; and (3) required the local board to reject a provisional ballot from a voter who also returned a mail-in ballot. Additionally, the Board voted to approve new early voting centers, election day vote centers, and additional ballot marking devices for the following local boards:
 - Early Voting Centers: Frederick and Queen Anne's Counties.
 - Election Day Vote Centers: Calvert, Cecil, Frederick, and Queen Anne's Counties.
 - Additional Ballot Marking Devices: Anne Arundel, Carroll, Howard, and Prince George's Counties.
- September 11, 2020: At this meeting, the Board voted to approve emergency amendments to regulations that amended the definition of precinct to include election day vote centers for the purposes of post election audits and amended the requirement for how many election day vote centers to would be included in the verification and audit of an election day vote center. Additionally, the Board voted to approve new early voting centers, election day vote centers, and additional ballot marking devices for the following local boards:
 - Early Voting Centers: Baltimore City and Prince George's and Saint Mary's Counties.
 - Election Day Vote Centers: Anne Arundel County, Baltimore City, Charles County, and Saint Mary's County.

- Additional Ballot Marking Devices: Baltimore City.
- September 19, 2020: This is the deadline under federal law to transmit ballots to requesting military and overseas voters for the November 3 election. Ballots to requesting military and overseas voters were sent on September 18.
- September 21, 2020 - October 20, 2020 (Monday - Saturday): State and local election officials open a data processing center at the Motor Vehicle Administration's facility in Glen Burnie where 25 individuals process requests for mail-in ballots received by the local boards.
- September 24, 2020: At this meeting, the State Board voted to approve additional election day vote centers and ballot marking devices for Wicomico County. The first set of ballot packets were shipped on this day.
- September 28 - 30, 2020: 135 ballot drop off boxes are delivered and installed.
- October 1, 2020: Local boards are permitted to begin canvassing mail-in ballots.
- October 8, 2020: At this meeting, the Board voted to approve emergency amendments to regulations that: (1) clarified that counsel does not need to be present at pre-election canvasses but must be present at post-election canvasses if the ballots being canvassed could decide the outcome of a contest or question; and (2) removed the prohibition of receiving a mail-in ballot at an early voting center to align with amendments to regulations made at a previous meeting. Additionally, the Board voted to approve *SBE Policy 2020 - 03: Contingency Plans for the 2020 Elections* to ensure that voting during early voting and on election day continues without interruption if all or some combination of the equipment fails, is inoperable, or is unavailable. Finally, the Board voted to approve specified election observation visitors and reaffirmed the delegation of the Board's authority to designate future requests for challengers and watchers to the State Administrator.
- October 13, 2020: Deadline to register to vote.
- October 14 - 15, 2020: 100 more ballot drop boxes were delivered and installed.
- October 20, 2020: Deadline to request a mail in ballot.
- October 22 - 24, 2020: 42 more ballot drop off boxes were delivered and installed.
- October 26 - November 2, 2020: Early voting centers were open from 7 am to 8 pm each day.
- November 3, 2020: Election day vote centers were open from 7 am to 8 pm.
- November 5, 2020: Local boards resume canvassing of mail-in ballots.

- 
- November 12, 2020: Local boards of election begin canvassing provisional ballots.
 - November 14, 2020: Local boards of election begin to certify the election results.
 - December 2, 2020: Montgomery County certifies its election, completing the certification of election results by all local boards.
 - December 4, 2020: The State Board of Canvassers certifies the election results.
 - December 12, 2020: Maryland Electors cast their votes for President and Vice President.

Appendix 3: Voter Education Campaign - Sample Graphics





The infographic features a background with a light beige and tan color palette, accented with a blue banner at the top containing white stars and a red banner at the bottom containing white stars. A yellow banner at the bottom center contains the text "MD VOTES". The content is organized into four main sections, each with a white background and a yellow bullet point:

- ARE YOU REGISTERED TO VOTE?** Accompanied by a yellow checkmark icon inside a blue-bordered square.
- REQUEST A BALLOT AND VOTE BY MAIL** Accompanied by an illustration of a blue and white "DROP BOX" with a yellow envelope and a yellow ballot box.
- VOTE EARLY** Accompanied by a calendar icon showing the dates "OCT 26- NOV 2" and the time "7AM-8PM".
- OR VOTE ON ELECTION DAY** Accompanied by a calendar icon showing the date "NOV 3" and the time "7AM-8PM".

The logo for "THE MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS" (SBE) is located in the top right corner. The logo is circular with a sun and a map of Maryland, and the text "SBE" is prominently displayed in the center.

The graphic features a dark blue banner at the top with the text "ELECTION DAY IS ALMOST HERE" in white, flanked by two white stars. In the top left corner is the logo for the Maryland State Board of Elections (SBE), which includes a sun and a map of Maryland. Below the banner are four white callout boxes, each with a yellow dot bullet point. The first box says "UPDATE YOUR INFO" and is accompanied by a circular arrow icon with a yellow checkmark and an American flag motif. The second box says "VOTE BY MAIL" and is accompanied by an illustration of a blue and white "DROP BOX" with a yellow mailbox and a white envelope. The third box says "VOTE EARLY" and is accompanied by a calendar icon showing the dates "OCT 26- NOV 2" and "7AM-8PM". The fourth box says "OR VOTE ON ELECTION DAY" and is accompanied by a calendar icon showing the date "NOV 3" and "7AM-8PM". At the bottom, a yellow banner with the text "MD VOTES" is set against a red background with white stars. The entire graphic is set against a background of radiating lines in shades of blue, red, and grey.

ELECTION DAY IS ALMOST HERE

UPDATE YOUR INFO

VOTE BY MAIL

VOTE EARLY
OCT 26- NOV 2
7AM-8PM

OR VOTE ON ELECTION DAY
NOV 3
7AM-8PM

MD VOTES



HOW WILL YOU VOTE?

**VOTE
EARLY**

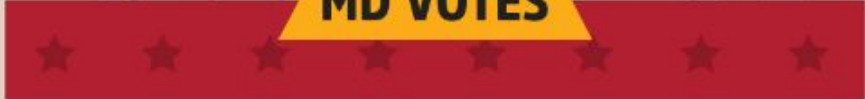


OR

**VOTE ON
ELECTION DAY**



MD VOTES



Voter Registration



Request a ballot



Drop box



Drop box and mail-in



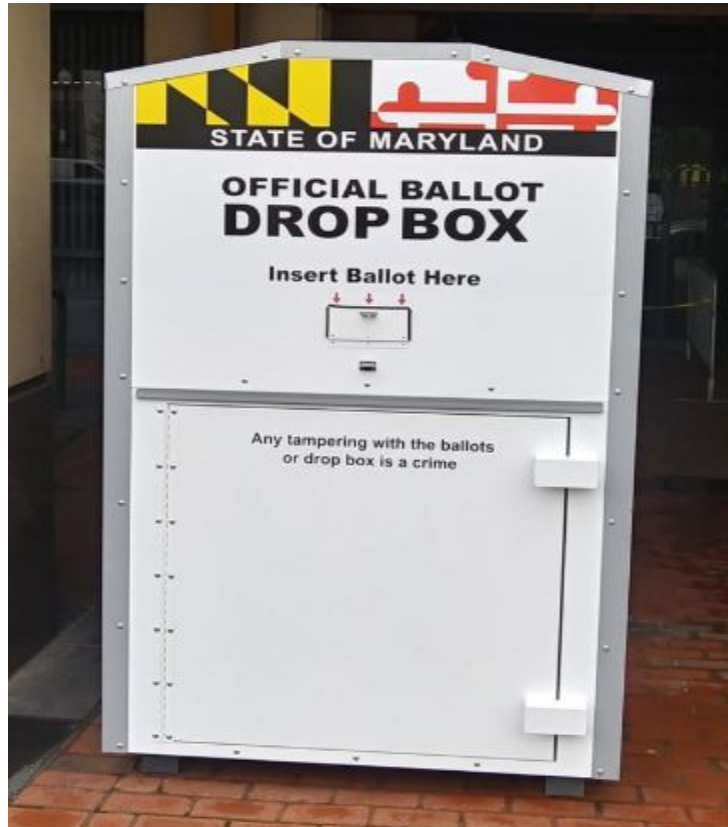
Vote on Election Day



Vote during Early Voting



Appendix 4: Ballot Drop Off Boxes



Appendix 5: Referenced Correspondence & Proclamation



LARRY HOGAN
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MARYLAND OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

RECEIVED

JUL 13 2020

STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS

July 8, 2020

Michael R. Cogan
Chairman
State Board of Elections
151 West Street, Suite 200
Annapolis, MD 21401

Chairman Cogan:

After reviewing your *Report on June 2 Election & Recommendations for November 3 Election*, I remain concerned about the series of failures that—while not intended—potentially resulted in disenfranchisement and suppression of primary voters. Thousands of Marylanders either did not receive their ballots or received erroneous or late ballots, and thousands more stood in lines for many hours on primary day. This was and remains completely unacceptable.

The fundamental responsibility of the State Board of Elections (SBE) is to conduct free and fair elections in a manner that facilitates maximum voter participation. To that end, the general election will take place, as scheduled, on November 3, 2020, with expanded voting options:

- Every early voting center should be open and every polling location should be open on Election Day to accommodate anyone who wishes to cast their ballot safely and in person.
- To ensure that every Marylander who wants to vote by mail can vote by mail, SBE should promptly send out an absentee ballot request application to every eligible Maryland voter.
- Every effort should be made to promote early voting, absentee voting by mail, and voting at off-peak times as safe and efficient options.

This approach—which is already fully authorized by existing state law—will maximize participation in the November election by offering voters more options while minimizing confusion and risk during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The state will encourage state employees to help supplement election staffing needs, and to provide necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) for staff and volunteers. Polling places should follow CDC guidelines and public health protocols, and stress the importance of proper sanitization, physical distancing, and face coverings.

While I know you have been inundated with suggestions from political leaders in both parties and special interest groups to change the electoral process, this discussion should not be subject to undue partisanship or political influence. Providing citizens with accessible, accountable, and transparent ways to cast their ballot is an essential component of our democratic republic and your primary responsibility. We expect SBE to live up to that commitment.

Sincerely,

Larry Hogan
Governor

cc: Linda H. Lamone, State Administrator, Maryland State Board of Elections

STATE HOUSE, ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401
(410) 974-3901 1-800-811-8336
TTY USERS CALL VIA MD RELAY



LARRY HOGAN
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MARYLAND
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

August 3, 2020

Linda H. Lamone
State Administrator
State Board of Elections
151 West Street, Suite 200
Annapolis, MD 21401

Administrator Lamone:

With Election Day fast approaching, I am very concerned that the State Board of Elections (SBE) appears to be on a path to repeating the massive failures of the June 2 primary election. As you will no doubt recall, tens of thousands of Marylanders received their ballot late or not at all, received incorrect ballots, or were forced to endure hours-long crowded lines at the handful of open polling places—it was an unmitigated disaster. State leaders in both parties were outraged by the failures and demanded answers. A number of them even called for your immediate resignation.

Sixty-one days ago, I directed you to give a full and complete report detailing the failures of the June primary and your plans to correct them to me, the Board of Public Works, the Secretary of State, the presiding officers of the Maryland General Assembly, and the public. Thirty days later, SBE sent a report which deflected blame for the mistakes of the primary election and failed to reach a consensus on any recommendation for a plan to move forward.

As you know, existing state law requires polling places to be open on Election Day. It also requires eight days of early voting and opportunities for voters to request applications for absentee mail-in ballots. Under existing law, and to save voters the extra step of having to request an application for an absentee ballot, I directed you to promptly mail applications to every single Maryland registered voter. It has now been 26 days, and you have failed to take this action.

I am now giving SBE 48 hours to report to me, the Board of Public Works, the Secretary of State, the presiding officers of the Maryland General Assembly, and the public explaining why those applications have not been mailed to Marylanders. In addition, we expect you to provide your plan for how to conduct the election under existing law, including the minimum number of polling places that you will be able to open in each county.

While SBE has the sole responsibility and authority to conduct the election, as governor I am committed to ensuring that every eligible voter in Maryland is given the ability to cast their vote, whether by mail, early voting, or by voting in person on Election Day. Let me be clear—this is not ‘my plan,’ it is what Maryland law requires you to do.

Our administration and the entire state government is going to great lengths in an effort to help you fulfill your responsibility. We have already begun an outreach campaign to encourage all Marylanders to vote by mail. We are actively encouraging state employees and students at Maryland universities and colleges to assist you by serving as poll workers. State officials are working in coordination with SBE to assist local boards of election in procuring PPE, and budget officials are working closely with you to ensure that you have the resources needed

STATE HOUSE, ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401
(410) 974-3901 1-800-811-8336
TTY USERS CALL VIA MD RELAY

to conduct the election.

Under existing state law, local boards do have the authority to make decisions regarding the consolidation of polling places in the case of an emergency. However, merging two polling places into one is very different than closing 90% of all of the polling places in a county. We are very concerned about recent attempts to deny Marylanders the right to vote. Local leaders have suggested massive closures of polling places, particularly in some of our minority communities. This would likely result in voter suppression and disenfranchisement on a significant scale, disparately impacting Marylanders of color. Last week, we received a letter from Prince George's County—one of the nation's most predominant African American counties with a total of 900,000 residents—saying that they want to close 229 precincts and only open 15. Imagine 244 polling places all trying to jam into 15 locations while trying to distance and keep people safe.

“Even as we sit here,” President Obama said in his eulogy last week for Congressman John Lewis, “there are those in power who are doing their darndest to discourage people from voting by closing polling locations, and targeting minorities and students with restrictive ID laws, and attacking our voting rights with surgical precision...” A new report from the Associated Press details how African Americans are skeptical about mail-in ballots and remain concerned about institutional obstacles to casting their ballots. In the report, a community organizer notes that many people either didn't receive a ballot or simply wanted to vote in a way that felt familiar to them.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 explicitly prohibits “deny[ing] or abridg[ing] the right of any citizen of the United States to vote on account of race or color.” Section 1983 prohibits depriving any person “of any rights, privileges, or immunities secured by the Constitution and laws.” Any attempt to close 90% of our minority precincts would likely result in the filing of a civil rights violation with the U.S. Department of Justice. At the very least, it would justifiably result in allegations of voter suppression, and it would be unconscionable.

More than two months have passed, and you still have not provided a plan for how you are going to conduct an election. This is your sole responsibility and your only job. Instead, we have seen two months of delay and deflection about why polls can't be opened, and why applications for ballots can't be mailed. There are media reports indicating that those who attempt to volunteer to staff the polls are being told that there is uncertainty about if there is any need and that they should call back at a later time.

The November election is just 92 days away. As I said 26 days ago, the applications should be mailed immediately. Further attempts to suppress the vote by massive closures of polls must be stopped or there will be serious consequences. Without your immediate action to fix these issues, it is very likely that you will again have massive failures of the June primary repeated in November. We await your report no later than Wednesday, August 5.

Sincerely,



Larry Hogan
Governor

cc: The Honorable Robert K. Hur, United States Attorney, District of Maryland
The Honorable Adrienne Jones, Speaker, Maryland House of Delegates
The Honorable Bill Ferguson, President, Maryland Senate
The Honorable Michael R. Cogan, Chairman, Maryland State Board of Elections
Board of Public Works

MARYLAND

STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS

P.O. BOX 6486, ANNAPOLIS, MD 21401-0486 PHONE (410) 269-2840

Michael R. Cogan, Chairman
 Patrick J. Hogan, Vice Chairman
 Malcolm L. Funn
 Kelley Howells
 William G. Voelp



Linda H. Lamone
 Administrator
 Nikki Charlson
 Deputy Administrator

August 4, 2020

Via Electronic Mail Only

The Honorable Larry Hogan
 Governor of Maryland
 State House
 Annapolis MD 21401

Dear Governor Hogan,

Since we received your letter dated July 8, 2020, defining how the November 3 election will be held, we have been working closely and diligently with the local boards of elections to plan for an election as defined by the Election Law Article.

Before responding to your specific requests, I would like to thank you for offering 16 hours of administrative leave to State employees who agree to serve as election judges in the upcoming election. Since your offer was emailed to State employees, we have received over 2,500 online submissions from individuals wanting to serve.

This work includes preparing for a statewide mailing to over 4 million eligible voters. The timeline below outlines the steps to plan and execute this large mailing.

- On July 9, we held a conference call with the local boards of elections to discuss your letter, including the request to mail an application to all eligible voters. We discussed whether the mailer should be pre-populated with voter's information and other ways to streamline the processing of completed forms and the proposed timeline for mailing these applications.
- On July 10, we asked a usability expert at the University of Baltimore to review the existing application for mail-in ballot and make recommendations to improve the usability of the form.
- On July 13, we asked the Maryland Correctional Enterprises (MCE), a preferred provider for State agencies, if they would be able to print and mail applications for a mail-in ballot to over 4 million voters. MCE informed us on July 14 that they were not able to complete this job.
- On July 15, we asked the Department of General Services (DGS) if we could amend an existing contract to include the printing and mailing of these applications.
- On July 16, we held another conference call with the local boards of elections. After conducting a survey, the local boards recommended mailing the applications in mid-to-late August.
- On July 21, the State Board of Elections approved sending with the application mailer an envelope with prepaid postage.
- On July 22, we received from the University of Baltimore's usability expert a revised application mailer. On the same day, DGS approved our request to amend an existing contract to include the printing and mailing of these applications.

Letter to Governor Hogan

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August 4, 2020

- On July 29, DGS and the vendor fully executed the contract modification.
- On August 5, the application mailing will be presented to the State Board of Elections for approval.
- Once the application mailing is approved by the State Board of Elections, we will send it to the State's vendor for Spanish translation. The Spanish version is expected within 5 days.
- No later than August 6, we must provide the vendor with the application, instructions, and envelope artwork.
- No later than August 7, we must approve the vendor's envelope artwork proofs. Producing the 4 million envelopes will take 14 business days.
- From August 7 and 9, we must provide the vendor with the data files.
- On August 10 or 11, the vendor will provide application and instruction proofs. Printing will begin after we approve the proofs.
- Inserting the application and instructions into the envelopes will begin on August 21.
- The first mailing will occur on August 24. Mailings will continue until all applications have been mailed. The final mailing is expected to be August 28 but no later than August 31.

Concurrent with these tasks, we are seeking a data center to help with the processing of completed forms. Since neither SBE nor the local boards of elections have the capacity to process the significant number of forms we expect to receive, we need another resource to help with this effort or voters will not receive their mail-in ballots in time to vote and return them.

Several local boards of elections have submitted requests to consolidate voting locations, and these requests will be considered at the August 5 State Board meeting. I am confident that the State Board will carefully consider these requests, receive advice from the Office of the Attorney General, and take appropriate action. Until the local boards of elections submit their requests and the State Board takes action on these requests, I am not able to provide you with the requested minimum number of polling places that will be open.

Lastly, I would like to thank the Department of Budget and Management, the Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), and DGS for their assistance. We are fortunate that MEMA and DGS were able to provide some quantities of protective supplies, and budget officials are working to find funding for the unexpected expenses for this election.

Sincerely,



Linda H. Lamone
State Administrator

cc: The Honorable Robert K. Hur, United States Attorney, District of Maryland
The Honorable Adrienne Jones, Speaker, Maryland House of Delegates
The Honorable Bill Ferguson, President, Senate of Maryland
The Honorable Michael R. Cogan, Chairman, Maryland State Board of Elections
Members, Board of Public Works



LARRY HOGAN
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MARYLAND
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

August 6, 2020

Linda H. Lamone
State Administrator
State Board of Elections
151 West Street, Suite 200
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Administrator Lamone:

Ahead of the State Board of Elections' meeting tomorrow, I am writing to reiterate that I have no intention of interfering in your duty to conduct the upcoming general election. However, the Board must act with much greater urgency to fulfill its responsibility to conduct the election under state law:

- **Immediately mail out applications for voting by mail.** It is now more than four weeks since I directed the Board to promptly mail out ballot applications, and it still has not been done.
- **Immediately begin recruiting and training election judges.** As you know, my administration is actively recruiting election judges from within the ranks of state government. We are also encouraging college students to consider serving as judges as well. Local boards need to move aggressively to recruit and train judges to staff the polls, where state and CDC public health protocols will be in place.
- **Open early voting centers and offer robust Election Day voting options.** While existing law gives you the legal authority to make decisions regarding the consolidation of polling places in the case of an emergency, voters must have a sufficient number of polling places open in each jurisdiction during early voting and on Election Day. Proposals to close roughly 90% of polling places—particularly in minority communities—would result in voter suppression and risk violating the Voting Rights Act. You would also be increasing the potential for crowds of voters at the few open polling places, resulting in hours-long lines.

To reiterate: I have no plans to interfere in your conduct of the November election. Under existing state law, you have the authority and responsibility to manage and run a free and fair election. While you have emergency powers at your disposal to consolidate precincts and modify deadlines, I strongly advise against wholesale closures of polling places that could disenfranchise Marylanders.

The Board's continued delays and deflections are absolutely unacceptable. These are your decisions to make, and this is your responsibility to uphold. We cannot risk a repeat of the failures of the June primary.

Sincerely,

Larry Hogan
Governor

cc: The Honorable Michael R. Cogan, Chairman, Maryland State Board of Elections

STATE HOUSE, ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401
(410) 974-3901 1-800-811-8336
TTY USERS CALL VIA MD RELAY

MARYLAND

STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS

P.O. BOX 6486, ANNAPOLIS, MD 21401-0486 PHONE (410) 269-2840

Michael R. Cogan, Chairman
 Patrick J. Hogan, Vice Chairman
 Malcolm L. Funn
 Kelley Howells
 William G. Voelp



Linda H. Lamone
 Administrator

 Nikki Charlson
 Deputy Administrator

August 9, 2020

Via Electronic Mail Only

The Honorable Larry Hogan
 Governor of Maryland
 State House
 Annapolis MD 21401

Dear Governor Hogan,

As you know, preparations for the upcoming election are on-going, but are challenged by the availability of election judges and facilities in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The local boards of elections have continuously shared their concerns about these challenges and, in response, the State Board of Elections (Board) has been diligently working to find a solution that addresses these concerns while conducting an election that is safe, secure, and fair for voters, candidates, and election judges.

On August 7, 2020, the Board met and unanimously approved the use of vote centers on election day. The Board's action included the location of these election day vote centers - that is, the facilities of current early voting centers and the public high schools in each jurisdiction. This proposal results in approximately 360 vote centers on election day. With vote centers, voters can vote at any vote center in the jurisdiction where they reside, rather than at an assigned location.

The proposed locations for the election day vote centers are well known in their communities. The facilities used during early voting are located where the majority of voters live, are generally accessible by public transportation and have adequate parking, and provide a secure environment to conduct an election. Public high schools - many of which already serve as polling places on election day - also have the same benefits. The local boards of elections' ability to staff 360 vote centers on election day is greater than their ability to staff over 1,600 polling places on election day, and the larger facilities make it easier to follow guidelines for social distancing and provide a safe voting experience.

To implement this proposal, we believe that there are several necessary actions. These actions are:

1. Under the authority granted to you under Election Law Article, §8-103(a)(2), specify alternate voting locations for election day. These locations would be the facilities currently used for early voting and the 282 public high schools in the State, subject to any necessary changes by the local boards of election due to availability or suitability of the facility, or the inclusion of any additional sites as may be deemed appropriate by the local boards of election, in both cases subject to the approval of the Board.

Letter to Governor Hogan

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August 9, 2020

2. Order that, except as provided in the requested order, all laws applicable to polling places shall apply to election day vote centers.
3. Suspend the effect of:
 - a. Election Law Article, §1-101(x), which would enable the Board to subsequently define "election register" to mean the "list of voters eligible to vote: (1) in a county early voting center during early voting; or (2) in a county vote center on election day," thereby allowing all eligible voters to vote regular (and not provisional) ballots regardless of which vote center they use to vote. Use of provisional ballots would substantially slow the flow of voters through the election sites.
 - b. Election Law Article, §10-101(a)(2)(ii) and (a)(2)(iv), which currently define some of the criteria for polling places on election day that would not be workable under a vote center model; and
 - c. Election Law Article, §10-306(a)(i), which requires the posting of specimen ballots at polling places, which is less practical at a vote center where every ballot style in the county would be available.

If you agree to these requested actions, the Board, under the authority granted by your Order of June 19, 2020, amending and restating the Order of March 12, 2020, Extending Certain Licenses, Permits, Registrations, and other Governmental Authorizations, and Authorizing Suspension of Legal Time Requirements, intends to change the dates of early voting and require early voting from the Thursday before election day through the day before election day. The intended early voting period would be Thursday, October 29 through Monday, November 2, with voting at election day vote centers on Tuesday, November 3.

The Board strongly believes that encouraging voters to vote by mail, expanding the number of locations for voters to drop off voted ballots, using vote centers on election day, and creating a continuous, six-day voting period maximizes the opportunities for voters to participate in the election while recognizing the reality of a shortage of election judges and facilities. I hope that you will support the Board's unanimous decision and issue the requested order. As you know, the election is quickly approaching, and we ask that you provide your decision on this request as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,

Michael R. Cogan

Michael R. Cogan
Chairman

cc: Members, State Board of Elections
Linda H. Lamone, State Administrator



LARRY HOGAN
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MARYLAND
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

August 10, 2020

Michael R. Cogan
Chairman
State Board of Elections
151 West Street, Suite 200
Annapolis, MD 21401

Chairman Cogan:

After months of delay and indecision, the State Board of Elections has now reversed its position of July 2 and reached a consensus on the November general election. As I have previously stated, I do not intend to interfere in the Board's sole responsibility to conduct the election under the law.

As requested, I have issued a proclamation granting the State Board of Elections the authority it is seeking to create voting centers for use during early voting and on Election Day, at the sole discretion of the Board.

My only direction to you, under existing law, was to expand and encourage voting by mail by immediately mailing absentee ballot requests to every voter. The Board's recent decisions make this more important than ever.

I remain very concerned that the Board's decision to close nearly 80% of the polls will have the potential of creating long lines and unsafe conditions, with crowds of people being forced into too few polling places.

Expediently mailing the ballot applications, encouraging voting by mail, and protecting early voting options will be critically important steps needed to lessen the problems caused by your decision to close the vast majority of the polls.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Larry Hogan".

Larry Hogan
Governor

cc: Linda H. Lamone, Administrator of Elections, Maryland State Board of Elections

STATE OF MARYLAND



Proclamation

Renewal of Declaration of State of Emergency and
Existence of Catastrophic Health Emergency — COVID-19

- WHEREAS, on March 5, 2020, a state of emergency and catastrophic health emergency was, pursuant to the Maryland Constitution and Laws of Maryland, including but not limited to Title 14 of the Public Safety Article, and in an effort to control and prevent the spread of COVID-19, proclaimed within the entire State of Maryland;
- WHEREAS, COVID-19 is a highly infectious respiratory disease that spreads easily from person to person, physically contaminates property by attaching to surfaces for prolonged periods of time, and may result in serious illness or death;
- WHEREAS, COVID-19 is a public health catastrophe and has been confirmed in all Maryland counties;
- WHEREAS, rates of COVID-19 infection continue to rise in more than 30 states and the risk of further spread back to Maryland remains high;
- WHEREAS, COVID-19 infection outbreaks continue to occur in Maryland through community transmission and because of travelers returning from out-of-state;
- WHEREAS, since the declaration of a state of emergency and existence of a catastrophic health emergency on March 5, 2020, there have been nearly 96,000 laboratory-confirmed positive COVID-19 cases and more than 3,000 related deaths in Maryland, with increases in new confirmed cases daily;
- WHEREAS, the proclamation declaring the emergencies was renewed on March 17, 2020, April 10, 2020, May 6, 2020, June 3, 2020, July 1, 2020, and July 30, 2020;
- WHEREAS, the spread of COVID-19 in the state continues to pose an immediate threat to all Marylanders of extensive loss of life or serious disability;

- WHEREAS, the emergency conditions, state of emergency, and catastrophic health emergency continue to exist;
- WHEREAS, all levels of government in Maryland must deploy resources to protect public health and safety;
- WHEREAS, continued emergency response by the State is needed to maintain and further progress through the Maryland Strong: Roadmap for Recovery, including expanding COVID-19 testing capacity, maintaining adequate patient surge capacity, supplying sufficient personal protective equipment, and executing a robust contact-tracing operation;
- WHEREAS, to reduce the spread of COVID-19, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Maryland Department of Health recommend the use of face coverings in public settings to the extent possible, continued social distancing, and avoiding large gatherings;
- WHEREAS, although the State's elections would ordinarily be conducted mainly at polling locations, the State Board of Elections reports that the state of emergency and catastrophic health emergency have impacted the availability of election judges and facilities;
- WHEREAS, elections must be accessible, secure, safe, and fair; and
- WHEREAS, the State Board of Elections maintains that COVID-19, the state of emergency and the catastrophic health emergency, and the State's emergency actions in response have interfered with the electoral process and impaired the Board's ability to conduct the general election of November 3, 2020, in accordance with the existing statutory and legal voting systems, locations, and procedures;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, LAWRENCE J. HOGAN, JR., GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF MARYLAND, BY VIRTUE OF THE AUTHORITY VESTED IN ME BY THE MARYLAND CONSTITUTION AND THE LAWS OF MARYLAND, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO TITLE 14 OF THE PUBLIC SAFETY ARTICLE AND TITLE 8 OF THE ELECTION LAW ARTICLE, AND IN AN EFFORT TO CONTROL AND PREVENT THE SPREAD OF COVID-19 WITHIN THE STATE, HEREBY DECLARE THAT A STATE OF EMERGENCY AND CATASTROPHIC HEALTH EMERGENCY CONTINUES TO EXIST WITHIN THE ENTIRE STATE OF MARYLAND, RENEW THE MARCH 5, 2020, PROCLAMATION, AND FURTHER PROVIDE AND ORDER, EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY:

A. General Election of November 3, 2020

- a. The State Board of Elections (the "State Board") may establish, as alternate voting locations or systems, voting centers for the use of any eligible voter who chooses to cast a ballot in person in the general election of November 3, 2020 (the "General Election").

- b. Any eligible voter may vote at a voting center in the voter's county of residence.
 - c. In preparation for and execution of the General Election, the applicable COVID-19 guidance published by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Maryland Department of Health, and any other applicable orders, shall be complied with to the maximum extent practicable.
 - d. The State Board shall provide maximum notice as possible to voters about use of voting centers in the General Election, as well as other appropriate education regarding alternate voting locations, systems, and procedures established.
 - e. The effect of any statute, rule, or regulation of an agency of the State or a political subdivision inconsistent with the State Board's establishment of voting centers for use in the General Election, or otherwise inconsistent with this Order, is hereby suspended.
- B. Health care providers who act in good faith under this catastrophic health emergency proclamation, including orders issued under the proclamation by the Governor and by other State officials acting at the direction of or under delegated authority from the Governor, have the immunity provided by § 14-3A-06 of the Public Safety Article of the Maryland Code.

Given Under My Hand and the Great Seal of the State of Maryland in the City of Annapolis, this 10th day of August, 2020.



Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr.
Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr.
Governor

ATTEST:

John C. Wobensmith
John C. Wobensmith
Secretary of State