

2020 Presidential General Toolkit

A 2020 communications plan to support the November 3rd Election

Social Media & Communications Toolkit

Social Media & Communications for Maryland 2020 Presidential General

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Toolkit Images Available for Download

The images in this toolkit (high resolution (300dpi) and lower resolution for social media) can be downloaded at the following link. <https://bit.ly/2FTR0eP>

Introduction

This document provides resources to communicate with Maryland’s electorate and those eligible to become registered voters. These resources will uniformly guide voter information across channels of communication in accordance with the election calendar of events. In addition to this plan, please incorporate voter communications tailored to your unique voting populaces. Clear, ongoing, and effective voter communication and education is proven to optimize voter registration records, enhance voter preparation, help prevent long lines, boost election judge recruitment, promote the efficient and effective functioning of voting locations and encourage vote by mail procedures.

Tagline

Amid the current COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 is a presidential election year in which voters will need to be prepared to successfully and independently exercise their voting rights and participate in Maryland elections with minimal contact. Voting by mail will be critical to the successful operation of our elections during early voting and election days. Uniformly communicating how #MDvotes under safe circumstances—*vote safe, vote by mail—and what steps Marylanders need to take to request and return their ballot is critically important.*

Website and Social Media Accounts

An organization’s online presence sets the tone for its brand and offers the most significant opportunity to shape public perception, inform and engage customers, maintain relevancy, and enhance confidence. Digital communications are among the most powerful channels for informing the electorate and gaining voter confidence. Online platforms provide optimal visibility to cost-effectively reach maximal people compared to traditional communications methods. Therefore, curating these web-based platforms is an ongoing public communications and voter education priority.

- Social media accounts typically have slow organic growth and need to be consistently curated with content followers perceive as valuable.
- Cross-promote social accounts by asking Twitter followers for Facebook page likes and asking Facebook fans to be Twitter followers to gain a larger audience.
- Use Facebook’s “Invite friends to like this Page” feature to ask your friends to like the page to gain more likes and follows.

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- Updates including images and/or video perform significantly better than those that do not, so use relevant media whenever possible to share online. Forums, newsworthy developments, election information and voter outreach events are all opportunities to take and share images and videos. Otherwise, relevant graphics, memes or gifs may be culturally appropriate to incorporate into posts. There is no limit to how visually compelling imagery or graphics may be creatively utilized to attract attention and to engage followers.
 - Image sizes matter when posting online, and social media sites are always adjusting layouts and dimensions, which affects how images display. Make sure to stay up to date with the social media platform’s recommendations concerning image sizes and dimensions.
 - Incorporate calls to action instructing your audience to act now, usually using an imperative verb or call-to-action such as “register now”, “learn more”, “vote early today”, etc.
 - For best results, monitor the performance of each update and adjust for continuous improvement while following the rules and best practices of all social accounts utilized. Generally, lunch breaks and peak commuting hours are good times of day for users to see your updates. Use each platform’s insights and analytics to see when your fans or followers are typically online. Scheduling posts in advance utilizing a social aggregator is a convenient way for your account to deploy timely updates on schedule throughout the busy election cycle.
 - Social media platforms and website functionality are ever evolving with current digital communications and social trends. New applications and trends are constantly emerging, while existing top social media application providers are continuously updating their services and algorithms resulting in numerous noteworthy changes for social media users each year. Sites like [Social Media Today](#) help you stay current with breaking social trends and updates.

Getting Started

Both Twitter and Facebook have comprehensive help centers with all the information you need to get started with social media:

Twitter: <https://support.twitter.com>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/help>

Hashtag

The official Maryland election hashtag is-- **#MDvotes** – feel free to utilize it throughout social media posts. Hashtags are used to identify messages on a specific topic, which helps to enter

larger conversations beyond account followers to garner greater visibility. The hashtag is short and concise, and intended to inclusively inform voters on all election related matters.

Fielding Questions

It is important to monitor comments regularly on social platforms to make sure that there isn't a reoccurring question or misunderstanding that needs to be addressed. Engaging in answering questions is valuable, but it is not advisable to engage in arguments or negative comments unless there is a neutral, fact-based response. For direct messages, link to resources or pre-package responses for frequently asked questions.

Website Resources

The SBE website is a great resource for upcoming election news and dates. You can utilize specific links that include Voter Services where an individual can verify registration, register to vote, and check polling locations. You can also locate the 2020 election calendar and a list of filed candidates, absentee voting information with access to the absentee ballot application and UOCAVA information.

For reference, the SBE election information website is:

<http://www.elections.maryland.gov/2020>

Facebook

Use Facebook to engage users by making them aware of resources and activities leading up to election day milestones. Facebook allows page administrators to share text, pictures, videos, live streams, website links, events, live coverage and other content.

Page Optimization

Optimal times to post on Facebook:

- Early afternoon to get the most shares
- Mid-afternoon to get the most clicks
- Peak days are Thursday and Friday
- Anytime between 9 a.m. and 7 p.m. is considered a decent time to post for engagement purposes

Monitor your page's insights to track the performance of your posts and adjust to enhance performance.

The first step in engaging with us is to "like" SBE's and follow LBEs' Facebook pages. The SBE Facebook page is:

<http://www.facebook.com/MarylandStateBoardofElections>

Twitter

With over 48 million monthly active users, Twitter is one of the social media networks that will most often be used to discuss a brand. Tweets can contain images, gifs, live streams, and polls. Twitter is the birthplace of hashtags, which are now used throughout most prominent social networks. The registered Maryland election hashtag, **#MDvotes**, engages the public in conversations about election information, thereby promoting increased social media activity to educate Marylanders.

Images

For gaining more engagement, clicks, retweets, and replies, Twitter images work. You can include up to 4 images per tweet. Uploaded photos will appear in your followers' streams and the streams of their followers (if retweeted). Note that Twitter may collapse your image into a smaller version to fit in a user's stream. Make sure Twitter displays the portion of the image you want followers to see by setting the width of your image to fit minimum requirements. Also, horizontally center your content to avoid cropping. Recommended dimensions for tweeted images are 440 x 220 pixels minimum.

Character Limit

Media attachments (images, GIFs, videos, polls, etc.) and quoted tweets do not count toward the 280-character limit. The extra room for text gives users more flexibility in composing messages.

When sharing links, you can utilize short URLs (Uniform Resource Locators: the unique address for each webpage) created through a url shortener such as bitly <https://bitly.com/> – to keep tweets within the 280-character Twitter limit.

Scheduling Tweets

A free option for scheduling tweets is <https://tweetdeck.twitter.com/>. To schedule tweets via TweetDeck, sign in with your Twitter account and click the new tweet button in the upper left-hand corner. (TweetDeck will not allow you to schedule tweets with more than 1 image added.)

Timing Considerations

- Early morning is when tweets generally receive the most clicks
- Evenings and late at night are the times when tweets receive the most favorites and retweets, on average
- The most convenient and popular times to tweet during the day are not necessarily the best times to tweet for engagement
- Twitter engagement is generally higher on weekends

It's helpful to monitor tweet activity and to experiment to find the times of peak engagement with your followers. Check the account analytics for performance insights.

Follow SBE's and LBEs' Twitter accounts. The SBE Twitter handle is:

@md_sbe

http://www.twitter.com/md_sbe

YouTube

SBE has a YouTube account to host videos; the channel can be accessed [here](#).

If use YouTube, we encourage you to subscribe to SBE's account to stay up to date.

Instagram, Snapchat, Tumblr, Google+, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Flickr, and Vine

SBE does not maintain accounts on Instagram, Snapchat, Tumblr, Google+, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Flickr, or Vine. However, if you do utilize these platforms, we encourage you to share photo/video content with SBE so they can also be promoted through SBE website and social accounts for wider reach. We also encourage you to incorporate **#MDvotes**.

Timeline

This timeline primarily features sample tweets, which can also serve as Facebook posts. Please note that while tweets often make suitable Facebook posts, not all Facebook posts make good tweets given Twitter's 280-character space limitation. Unless labeled as Facebook posts, the following suggested social media updates are crafted as tweets and can be posted on almost any social platform.

- The updates contain full URLs, but are designed so you can insert a shortened URL that leads to the same webpage as the original URL.
- Image ideas are interspersed throughout this social timeline to inspire visually appealing, engaging content. To enlarge for better visibility, select an image and drag a corner.
- You can use your own shortened urls or use the following to insert into your social media posts. Remember to always check the link for accuracy before posting.
 - **Online Voter Registration (OLVR):** <https://bit.ly/1qxkgbT>
 - **Mail-in Ballot Request:** <https://bit.ly/31c37vL>
 - **Voter Lookup:** <http://bit.ly/2JRPQQH>
 - **2020 Election Information:** <http://bit.ly/2vOW7r9>
 - **Early Voting Center Locations:** <https://bit.ly/32zynW8>
 - **Election Day Vote Center Locations:** <https://bit.ly/3myTvDG>
 - **Ballot Drop off Locations:** <https://bit.ly/3iMcZme>

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- **Contact List of local election offices:** <http://bit.ly/2LJofSK>
 - **State Board of Elections (SBE) Home page:** <http://bit.ly/2WJ41yg>
 - **Rumor Control:** <https://bit.ly/3mELEJV>

If you don't want to use the shortened urls, here is a list of the original URLs below.

Online Voter Registration and Mail-in Ballot request (OLVR):

<https://voterservices.elections.maryland.gov/OnlineVoterRegistration/InstructionsStep1>

Mail-in Ballot Request (for those already registered to vote in MD):

<https://voterservices.elections.maryland.gov/onlinemailinrequest/InstructionsStep1>

Voter Lookup:

<https://voterservices.elections.maryland.gov/VoterSearch>

2020 Election Information:

<https://www.elections.maryland.gov/elections/2020/index.html>

Early Voting Center Locations :

<https://elections.maryland.gov/elections/2020/2020%20Early%20Voting%20Centers.pdf>

Election Day Vote Center Locations:

https://elections.maryland.gov/elections/2020/PG20_List%20of%20Election%20Day%20Vote%20Centers.pdf

Ballot Drop off Locations:

https://elections.maryland.gov/elections/2020/PG20_Drop%20Box%20Locations.pdf

Contact List of local election offices:

https://elections.maryland.gov/about/county_boards.html

State Board of Elections (SBE) Home page:

elections.maryland.gov

Rumor Control page:

https://elections.maryland.gov/press_room/rumor_control.html

Upcoming 2020 Timeline

It's time to start preparing Marylanders for the general election, including promoting voter registration and highlighting the vote-by-mail preference. Suggested updates to inform the public about key dates and holidays of the election calendar in 2020 are as follows, along with inspiration for included images.

Key 2020 Election Dates and Holidays

Social media updates will serve to intensify voter engagement programs by disseminating information about voter registration and vote-by-mail activities. A few suggestions:

- Continue intensive voter participation efforts through key election milestones and registration deadlines.
- Create awareness and understanding of voting by mail.
- Patriotic holidays are relevant opportunities to post updates about celebrating our collective right to vote.
- Include voter education activities increasingly as election day approaches.
- Inform the voting public they can view MDCRIS to review campaign contributions and expenditures.
- Review, debrief, and evaluate voter engagement efforts for continuous improvement.

Suggested updates pertaining to key dates and holidays on the 2020 election calendar are as follows:

2020 Key Election Dates Sample Messages: October – November

Presidential General Election: For the Presidential General Election held on November 3, 2020, all registered voters that have not already requested a mail-in ballot will be sent a mail-in ballot application with a postage pre-paid envelope to return their application. Vote centers will be available during early voting and on election day. Voters also have the option of dropping off their ballot at an official drop off location. It is important to encourage voters to apply online now if possible, to help reduce the amount of paper applications that will have to be processed.

Toolkit Images Available for Download

As a quick reminder, the images in this toolkit (high resolution (300dpi) and lower resolution for social media) can be downloaded at the following link. <https://bit.ly/2FTR0eP>

Registering to Vote

The deadline to register to vote for the 2020 Presidential General Election is Tuesday, October 13.

- Are you registered to vote? You can register or update your registration information today using the online voter registration system: <https://bit.ly/1qxkgbT> #MDvotes



- Have you moved? If you have, don't forget to update your voter registration information. It's quick and easy using the online system: <https://bit.ly/1qxkgbT>



- Have you checked your voter registration info lately? It's important to make sure it's up to date! Check your info here: <http://bit.ly/2JRPQQH> and if it needs to be updated, update it here: <https://bit.ly/1qxkgbT>



- Have you checked your registration info? You'll be sent a mail-in ballot request applications to the address that is on file. Make sure your info is up to date, check it here: <http://bit.ly/2JRPQQH> and if it needs to be updated, update it here: <https://bit.ly/1qxkgbT> #MDvotes
- Do you need to register to vote, update your voter registration information or request a mail-in ballot? Text VBM to 77788 or apply online here: <https://bit.ly/1qxkgbT> #MDvotes
- #DYK the 2020 Presidential General Election will take place on Tues, November 3rd. Is your voter registration information up to date? Check it here <http://bit.ly/2JRPQQH> and if not, update it here <https://bit.ly/1qxkgbT> #MDvotes
- Tues, 10/13 is the deadline to register to vote or update your registration info online or by paper application for the 2020 Presidential General Election. You can register online or update your info here: <https://bit.ly/1qxkgbT> #MDvotes
- Tomorrow, Tues 10/13 is the deadline to register to vote or update your info online or by paper application. You can register to vote online or update your info here: <https://bit.ly/1qxkgbT> #MDvotes
- TODAY 10/13 is the deadline to register or update your registration info online or by paper application. You can register to vote online or update your info here: <https://bit.ly/1qxkgbT> #MDvotes
- Did you miss the deadline to register to vote? You can register to vote at your local early voting center during early voting or at a vote center on election day. Find the links to the lists of vote centers here: <http://bit.ly/2vOW7r9> #MDvotes

Requesting A Mail-in Ballot:

*The deadline to request a mail-in ballot is Tuesday, October 20th. The application must be **received** by October 20th. It is important to encourage voters to send their application before then and if possible, request their ballot online to help reduce the number of paper applications that will need to be processed.*

- Want to vote from home? You can request to receive a mail-in ballot with this online application <https://bit.ly/31c37vL> Or if you prefer, you can download an application here: <https://bit.ly/2OpRZnw> #MDvotes

REQUEST YOUR MAIL-IN BALLOT!



- Do you want to receive a mail-in ballot for the November 3rd general election? It's not too early to apply! You can apply online today here: <https://bit.ly/31c37vL> #MDvotes
- Want to vote by mail for the November 3rd election? You'll need to apply to receive a ballot. It's safe and secure. Apply online to receive your mail-in ballot today here: <https://bit.ly/31c37vL> or download an application here: <https://bit.ly/2OpRZnw> #MDvotes



- Want to vote safe and receive a mail-in ballot for the November election? You'll need to submit an application in order to receive a mail-in ballot. Apply here: <https://bit.ly/31c37vL> #MDvotes
- Avoid waiting in line! You can vote safely from home by requesting a mail-in ballot. Apply online today here <https://bit.ly/31c37vL> or you can download an application here <https://bit.ly/2OpRZnw> #MDvotes
- Did you know you can request to receive your ballot by mail, fax, or internet delivery for the November election? You can apply online here <https://bit.ly/31c37vL> or download an application here: <https://bit.ly/2OpRZnw> #MDvotes

- Want to stay safe and vote by mail for the November election? Don't forget to request your ballot! You can submit an application to request a ballot online here: <https://bit.ly/31c37vL> #MDvotes #TrustedInfo2020
- Did you know you can receive a ballot electronically and that it features an online ballot marking tool? Apply online here <https://bit.ly/31c37vL> to receive it when ballots are ready. Note: The ballot still must be printed & mailed or dropped off. #MDvotes
- Social distancing? Vote safe and receive a mail-in ballot for the November election. You'll need to submit an application to request a ballot. Request your ballot online here: <https://bit.ly/31c37vL> #MDvotes
- If you want to vote by mail and have submitted your application, you can check to see if it was received at our Voter Lookup site here: <http://bit.ly/2JRPQQH>. Enter your info and select, 'Status of my Mail-in or Provisional Ballot'. #MDvotes
- What's the difference between a mail-in ballot and an absentee ballot? There's no difference! A recent change in the law requires that SBE & local election offices refer to absentee ballots as "mail-in ballots" & absentee voting as "mail-in voting."

“ABSENTEE BALLOT” = “MAIL-IN BALLOT”



- Did your local election office receive your mail-in ballot request? You can check! Go to <http://bit.ly/2JRPQQH>. Enter your info and select 'Status of My Mail-in or Provisional Ballot'. A status of 'Application Received' means it has been processed. #MDvotes
- Don't want to wait in line at a vote center? You can request to receive a mail-in ballot instead. Apply online here: <https://bit.ly/31c37vL>. Your request must be received by 10/20. #MDvotes

- The deadline to request a mail-in ballot is coming up! If you want a mail-in ballot, your request must be received by Tues, Oct 20th. Vote safe! You can request a mail-in ballot online here: <https://bit.ly/31c37vL> #MDvotes
- Heads up! If you want a mail-in ballot sent to you then TOMORROW 10/20 is the deadline to request one. Your request must be RECEIVED by 10/20. Voters are encouraged to vote safe and vote a mail-in ballot. You can apply online here: <https://bit.ly/31c37vL> #MDvotes
- TODAY 10/20 is the deadline to request a mail-in ballot. If you want a mail-in ballot sent to you, your request must be received today. You can submit your request online here: <https://bit.ly/31c37vL> or download and return the application here: <https://bit.ly/2OpRZnw> #MDvotes
- You can vote in person for the November election—but there might be lines. Want to avoid waiting? Request your mail-in ballot today. You can apply online here: <https://bit.ly/31c37vL> #MDvotes
- Would you like a mail-in ballot for the November 3rd election? We strongly encourage that you complete the application sent to you, or you can apply online here: <https://bit.ly/31c37vL> #MDvotes

Returning a Mail-in Ballot:

- Ready to return your mail-in ballot? Don't forget to sign the oath before you return your ballot! #MDvotes



- If you requested a mail-in ballot, remember that ballot can only be returned by mail or dropped off at an official drop-off location. If you return your ballot by email or fax, it will not count! Find a drop off location here: <https://bit.ly/3iMcZme> #MDvotes



- Ready to return your mail-in ballot? Don't forget to sign the oath! If you don't sign the oath, your ballot won't count. Your ballot must be postmarked or dropped off before 8 p.m. on 11/3. #MDvotes
- Plan to mail your voted ballot? It must be postmarked on or before 11/3 to be timely. Putting your ballot in the mail on 11/3 does NOT guarantee it will be postmarked on the same day. Once you get your ballot, we recommend you mail your ballot as soon as you can. #MDvotes

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- Heads up! If you plan to mail your ballot, it must be postmarked on or before 11/3 to be timely. DYK depending on mail pick-up times, a ballot might not be postmarked the same day it's put in the mail. #MDvotes
 - If you plan to return your ballot by mail, we recommend you mail it as soon as you can. Your ballot must be postmarked on or before 11/3 to be considered timely. Note: Putting a ballot in the mail on one day does not guarantee it will be postmarked on that same day. #MDvotes
 - Has your ballot arrived at your local election office? Check here <http://bit.ly/2JRPQQH>, enter your info and select 'Status of My Mail-in or Provisional Ballot.' #MDvotes
 - If you're returning a mail-in ballot, did you know you can drop it off? Ballot drop off locations are available until 8 p.m. on 11/3. Just drop and go. You can find a list of drop off locations here: <https://bit.ly/3iMcZme> #MDvotes
 - There's another way to return your ballot— just drop it off! As a reminder, your mail-in ballot must be postmarked or dropped off by 8 p.m. election day (11/3). Find a drop off location here: <https://bit.ly/3iMcZme> #MDvotes

Early Voting

- Today is the first day of early voting for the 2020 Presidential General Election. Early voting runs from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m., Mon, October 26th to Mon, November 2nd, Saturday and Sunday too! Find a local early voting center here: <https://bit.ly/32zynW8> #MDvotes



- Early voting runs from Mon, October 26th through Mon November 2nd from 7 a.m. until 8 p.m.—Sat. & Sun. too! Find a local early voting center here: <https://bit.ly/32zynW8> #MDvotes



- Don't want to wait in line? Try early voting! Early voting is from Mon, 10/26 to Mon 11/2, 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.— there is weekend voting as well! <https://bit.ly/32zynW8> #MDvotes
- Planning to exercise your right to vote? Take some time during the weekend and vote early! Early voting centers are open from Mon 10/26 to Mon 11/2, 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. You can find a local early voting center here: <https://bit.ly/32zynW8> #MDvotes
- Not registered? No problem? You can register and vote at a local early voting center from Mon 10/26 to Mon 11/2, 7 a.m. – 8 p.m. Just bring a document proving where you live, like an MVA-issued driver's license or ID. #MDvotes
- There's still time to vote early, but tomorrow, 11/2, is the last day. Find a local early voting center here. <https://bit.ly/32zynW8> #MDvotes
- No need to wait to vote on election day! Avoid lines by voting early. You can vote at a local early voting center from Mon 10/26 to Mon 11/2, 7 a.m. – 8 p.m. Find an early voting center here: <https://bit.ly/32zynW8> #MDvotes

November 2nd and November 3rd (Election Day)

- Tomorrow, 11/3 is election day! Are you ready? Vote centers will be open from 7 a.m. until 8 p.m. Find a vote center near you here: <https://bit.ly/3myTvDG> #MDvotes



- Have you returned your mail-in ballot? Ballots must be postmarked or dropped off by 8 p.m. tomorrow (11/3). Find a ballot drop off location here: <https://bit.ly/3iMcZme> #MDvotes
- It's election day! Vote centers are open from 7 a.m. until 8 p.m. Don't know where to vote? Find a vote center near you here: <https://bit.ly/3myTvDG> . #MDvotes



- Today is election day and the vote centers are open from 7 a.m.– 8 p.m. Mail-in ballots must be postmarked or dropped off by 8 p.m. today. If you are mailing your ballot, mail it early today before the post office closes! #MDvotes
- Today is election day, do you plan to mail your ballot? Ballots must be postmarked today - 11/3 - but putting it in a mailbox today does NOT guarantee it'll be postmarked today. We recommend you take your ballot to a post office before it closes to have it postmarked. #MDvotes



- If you are going to vote in person, vote centers are open from 7 a.m. – 8 p.m. Help keep yourself and other safe! Please wear a mask & practice social distancing. Have a plan in case there is a line. You can find a vote center here: <https://bit.ly/3myTvDG> #MDvotes
- If you haven't returned your mail-in ballot yet, make sure to get it to the post office before the post offices closes today, or you can drop off your ballot by 8 p.m. at an official drop off location here: <https://bit.ly/3iMcZme> #MDvotes

After Election Day

- Wondering if your mail-in ballot was accepted? You'll be able to check online after the election is certified at the following link. <http://bit.ly/2JRPQQH> #MDvotes
- Over the next few weeks, local election offices will be counting mail-in and provisional ballots. Contact your local election office to view the live video feed of the canvass. <http://bit.ly/2LJofSK> #MDvotes

Holidays:

- September 7 - Labor Day – SBE closed
- October 11 - Columbus Day – SBE closed
- November 26 – Thanksgiving – SBE closed
- November 27 – American Indian Heritage Day – SBE closed
- December 25 – Christmas – SBE closed
- January 1 – New Year's Day – SBE closed

Presidential General Election Day (General)

- Maryland's presidential general election day is on November 3rd! Voters are encouraged to vote primarily by mail. Register or update your voter registration by October 13th! For more information on how Maryland votes and to find your drop box location, visit elections.maryland.gov or call 1-800-222-VOTE.