

Checks and Balances in Colorado: Important Dates for the November 2026 Election

Colorado's elections are governed by a number of laws and regulations that ensure there are checks and balances throughout the process. Bipartisan teams of election workers at the local, county, and state levels go through a meticulous list of steps to verify the count, check for accuracy, and ensure all rules are followed.

Below, we detail the dates for each step to provide greater transparency into the rigorous efforts underway to deliver a free and fair election in Colorado. Importantly, this is nonpartisan educational research intended for 501(c)(3)-compliant purposes only. It is not to be used for any partisan, political, or electioneering activities by any organization.

Voting by Mail

- [**Saturday, Sept. 19**](#) - Deadline to send mail ballots to military and overseas (UOCAVA) voters.
- [**Friday, Oct. 2**](#) - Counties may begin sending mail ballots to all active eligible voters (other than military and overseas voters).
- [**Friday, Oct. 9**](#) - First day for drop boxes to be available for voters to return mail ballots.
- [**Friday, Oct. 9**](#) - Deadline for counties to send mail ballots to active eligible voters. Counties may continue to send mail ballots as people register to vote.
- [**Upon Receipt**](#) - Verification of mail ballots may begin.
- [**Monday, Oct. 19**](#) - First day for additional drop boxes requested by Tribal Councils on federal reservations to be available for voters to return mail ballots.
- [**Monday, Oct. 26**](#) - Deadline to register to vote and still receive a ballot in the mail for the Nov. election. If counties receive a voter registration application after this date, they must inform the new registrant that they will not receive a mail ballot for the Nov. election and must instead visit a voting location to cast a ballot.
- [**Tuesday, Nov. 3 \(Election Day\)**](#) - Mail ballots must be *received* by 7 p.m.
- [**Thursday, Nov. 5 \(or within three days of receipt of a ballot\)**](#) - Deadline for counties to notify voters of a mail ballot issue requiring cure.
- [**Thursday, Nov. 12**](#) - Deadline for military and overseas ballots, if postmarked or

otherwise sent by 7 p.m. on Election Day, to be received by election officials.

- [Thursday, Nov. 12](#) - Deadline for voters to cure any missing or mismatched information on their mail ballots.¹

In-Person Voting (Early & Election Day)

- [Monday, Oct. 19](#) - First day that voting centers must be open for in-person early voting.
- [Monday, Oct. 19](#) - First day that in-person voting may be held at county jails and detention centers.
- [Sunday, Nov. 1](#) - Last day that in-person voting may be held at county jails and detention centers.
- [Tuesday, Nov. 3 \(Election Day\)](#) - Deadline to register to vote for the Nov. election by close of polls at a voting location.
- [Tuesday, Nov. 3 \(Election Day\)](#)
 - **7 a.m.** - Voting locations open.
 - **7 p.m.** - Voting locations close. All voters still in line must be allowed to vote.

Counting, Canvassing, & Certification

- [Monday, Oct. 19](#) - Counties may begin tabulating verified mail ballots. The count cannot be released until after 7 p.m. on Election Day.
- [Tuesday, Nov. 3 \(Election Day\)](#) - After voting locations close, election officials must return a completed statement of ballots form for each day the location was open to the election office.
- [Friday, Nov. 13](#) - Deadline for counties to finish counting all mail and in-person ballots.
- [Tuesday, Nov. 24](#) - Deadline for counties to complete the risk-limiting audit to confirm the accuracy of the election results.
- [Wednesday, Nov. 25](#) - Deadline for county canvass boards to canvass and certify their counties' results.²
- [Friday, Nov. 27](#) - Deadline for the secretary of state to canvass and certify the

¹ "Curing" is the process by which a voter: 1) receives notice from election officials of a discrepancy on the mail ballot envelope; and 2) has an opportunity to correct the issue and have the ballot counted. In Colorado, a voter may have an opportunity to cure a ballot envelope if: 1) the voter failed to sign the envelope or 2) election officials are unsure if the voter's signature on the envelope matches the information in the voter's registration record.

² "Canvassing" is the process by which the appropriate authority checks the results from each voting and ballot counting location for accuracy and compliance with statutory procedures. After these checks, the results from each location are compiled to create results for each race on the ballot. In Colorado, the county canvass is typically conducted by the county canvass board, which is composed of bipartisan appointees from each party and the county clerk. The state canvass is conducted by the secretary of state. "Certification" is the process by which winners in elections are officially declared following the completion of the canvass. For local races that can be determined following the county canvass, certification will occur after the county canvass. For federal, state, and multicounty races that must be determined by the state canvass, certification will generally occur immediately following the completion of the state canvass.

election results.³

Recounts & Election Contests

- [Friday, Nov. 13](#) - First day that interested parties may file to request a recount at their own expense.
- [Wednesday, Nov. 25](#) - Deadline for interested parties to file a request for a recount at their own expense.
- [Friday, Nov. 27](#) - Deadline for the secretary of state to determine if any races qualify for an automatic recount. Automatic recounts are conducted in races if the certified margin is [0.5% or less](#).
- [Friday, Dec. 4](#) - Deadline to complete any automatic recounts.
- [Monday, Dec. 7](#) - Deadline to contest the election of a state legislator. Statute does not specify a deadline to conclude the contest.
- [Tuesday, Dec. 8](#) - Deadline to complete any recounts requested by interested parties.
- [Friday, Jan. 15, 2027 - Wednesday, Jan. 20, 2027 \(Between the sixth and 10th legislative days of the new legislative session after the election\)](#) - Deadline to contest the election of state officers. Statute does not specify a deadline to conclude the contest.

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³ C.R.S. 1-10-103 says that the secretary of state must canvass and certify results and determine if any race qualifies for a recount by the 27th day after Election Day. C.R.S. 1-10.5-102, however, says that the secretary of state must determine if any race qualifies for a recount by the 24th day after Election Day. The [Nov. 2026 election calendar](#) from the secretary of state's office uses the latter citation, and so do we.