

Checks and Balances in Georgia: Important Dates for the 2026 November Election and Potential December Runoff

Georgia'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 Georgia. 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](#) - Counties must complete mailing absentee ballots to military and overseas (UOCAVA) voters with accepted applications. The earliest such ballots can be sent is **Tuesday, September 15**.
- [Monday, Oct. 5](#) - Counties must begin mailing absentee ballots to voters (other than UOCAVA voters) with accepted applications.
- [As ballots are received](#), voter information on ballot envelopes is verified. Voters whose ballot envelopes have been flagged as defective are notified and allowed to cure the defect.
- [Friday, Oct. 23](#) - Deadline for voters to request an absentee by mail ballot. Applications must be *received* by the appropriate board of registrars or absentee voting clerk by this date to be accepted.
- [Tuesday, Nov. 3 \(Election Day\)](#) - Absentee ballots must be received by the close of polls at 7 p.m.
- [Friday, Nov. 6](#) - Deadline for voters to cure rejected absentee ballots.¹

¹ "Curing" is the process by which a voter: 1) receives notice from election officials of a discrepancy on the mail ballot carrier envelope; and 2) has an opportunity to correct the issue and have the ballot counted. In Georgia, a voter may have an opportunity to cure a carrier envelope if the voter failed to sign the ballot envelope or provide an ID number.

In-Person Voting (Advanced Voting & Election Day)

- [Monday, Oct. 5](#) - Voter registration deadline. All online and in-person applications must be completed and returned, and all mail applications postmarked, by this date.
- [Tuesday, Oct. 13](#) - Advanced voting begins in all counties.
- [Friday, Oct. 30](#) - Last day of the advanced voting period. End times will vary by county between 5 p.m. and 7 p.m.
- [Tuesday, Nov. 3](#) - **Election Day.**
 - [7 a.m.](#) - Polling locations open.
 - [5 p.m.](#) - Voters may begin casting provisional ballots at an incorrect precinct within their county if they complete a sworn statement attesting to their inability to get to the proper precinct to vote by the close of polls.
 - [7 p.m.](#) - Polling locations close in municipalities with populations under 300,000. All [voters still in line](#) must be allowed to vote. Voters returning mail ballots to their clerk's office must do so by this time.
 - [8 p.m.](#) - Polling locations close in cities with populations over 300,000.
- [Friday, Nov. 6](#) - Deadline for verification of provisional ballots.

Counting, Canvassing, & Certification

- [Tuesday, Nov. 3](#) - **Election Day**
 - [7 a.m.](#) - Tabulation of absentee ballots may begin at the discretion of the county election superintendent with notice to the Secretary of State.
 - [11:59 p.m.](#) - Deadline for the election superintendent to report the total number of ballots cast on Election Day and during Advance voting and the total number of absentee ballots received.
- [Monday, Nov. 9](#) - The election superintendent must certify² county results by 5 p.m. and transfer returns to the secretary of state.
- [Friday, Nov. 20](#) - Secretary of state must certify returns by 5 p.m.

Recounts & Election Contests

- [Thursday, Nov. 11 \(or two business days after county certification\)](#) - Deadline for a candidate to request a recount of a race.
- [Thursday and Friday, Nov. 19 and 20](#) - Local election superintendents must conduct a risk-limiting audit on one federal or statewide contest as selected by the secretary

² "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.

of state.

- [Wednesday, Nov. 25 \(or five days after certification\)](#) - Deadline for a candidate or voter to contest results.

Timeline for Potential Runoff (December 1, 2026)

- [Monday, Nov. 2](#) - Voter registration deadline to register to vote for runoff elections.
- [Monday, Nov. 23](#) - Advanced voting to begin.
- [Wednesday, Nov. 25](#) - Last day of advanced voting for December runoff election.
- [Tuesday, Dec. 1](#) - **Election Day**
- [Monday, Dec. 4](#) - The election superintendent must report the total number of ballots cast by 5 p.m.
- [Wednesday, Dec. 7](#) - Last day for a candidate to request a recount for the December 1 run-off.
- [Wednesday, Dec. 14](#) - Local election superintendents must conduct a risk-limiting audit on one federal or statewide contest as selected by the Secretary of State.
- [Friday, Dec. 18](#) - Last day for the secretary of state to certify votes cast for statewide and federal elections.
- [Monday, Jan. 11, 2027](#) - The secretary of state must issue certificates of election for General Assembly seats.

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