

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

Maine'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 Maine. 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 absentee ballots to military and overseas (UOCAVA) voters.
- [**Sunday, Oct. 4**](#) - Municipal clerks may begin sending absentee ballots to voters on the permanent absentee voting list and to voters who have requested them. Ballots may be sent sooner if clerks receive them earlier from the secretary of state.
- [**Upon Receipt**](#) - Verification of absentee ballots may begin.
- [**Within One Business Day of Verification**](#) - Deadline for municipal clerks to notify voters of an absentee ballot issue requiring cure.
- [**Thursday, Oct. 29**](#) - Deadline to request an absentee ballot in the municipal clerk's office by 7 p.m., unless the voter qualifies for an emergency ballot.
- [**Tuesday, Nov. 3 \(Election Day\)**](#) - Absentee ballots must be *received* by 8 p.m.
- [**Tuesday, Nov. 3 \(Election Day\)**](#) - Deadline for municipal clerks to notify voters of an absentee ballot issue requiring cure if the issue was discovered within 24 hours of or on Election Day. Deadline for voters to cure any missing or mismatched information on their absentee ballots by the close of polls at 8 p.m.¹

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

In-Person Voting (In-Person Absentee & Election Day)

- [Sunday, Oct. 4](#) - Municipal clerks may begin providing in-person absentee voting to all voters at their offices. In-person absentee voting may be available sooner if clerks receive ballots earlier from the secretary of state.
- [Tuesday, Oct. 13](#) - Deadline to register to vote by mail or online to be eligible to vote on Election Day. After this date, voters can register in person during in-person absentee voting and on Election Day to cast a regular ballot for Election Day.
- [Thursday, Oct. 29](#) - Last day for in-person absentee voting at a municipal clerk's office by 7 p.m., unless the voter qualifies for an emergency ballot.
- [Tuesday, Nov. 3 \(Election Day\)](#) - Deadline to register to vote for the November election by close of polls at a polling location.
- [Tuesday, Nov. 3 \(Election Day\)](#)
 - **6 a.m. to 8 a.m.** - Polling locations open. Municipalities with populations of fewer than 500 must open by 10 a.m.
 - **8 p.m.** - Polling locations close. All voters still in line must be allowed to vote. Municipalities with populations of fewer than 100 may close the polls once all registered voters have cast their ballots.

Counting, Canvassing, & Certification

- [Tuesday, Nov. 3 \(Election Day\)](#) - Municipalities may begin processing absentee ballots before polls close on Election Day if notice has been provided at least seven days before Election Day. Otherwise, processing cannot begin until after the polls close at 8 p.m. Ballots may not be counted, and results may not be released until after the polls close at 8 p.m.
- [Thursday, Nov. 5](#) - Deadline for municipal clerks to canvass and certify the election results by 5 p.m.²
- [Monday, Nov. 23](#) - Deadline for the secretary of state to canvass the election results and submit them to the governor. The governor must [certify](#) the election results "within a reasonable time after an 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 Maine, the local canvass is typically conducted by the municipal 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 local canvass, certification will occur after the local canvass. For federal and races that must be determined by the state canvass, certification will generally occur immediately following the completion of the state canvass.

Recounts & Election Contests³

- [Tuesday, Nov.10](#) - Deadline for an apparent losing candidate to request a recount. Recounts must be completed “as soon as reasonably possible.”⁴

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³ Maine does not have a statutory or administrative process for managing election contests.

⁴ The secretary of state must also order an automatic recount in the event of a [tie vote](#) for any race, but statute does not specify a timeline.