

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

Michigan'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 Michigan. 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.

Absentee Voting

- [**Saturday, Sept. 19**](#) - Counties must begin sending absentee ballots to military and overseas (UOCAVA) voters with accepted applications.
- [**Thursday, Sept. 24**](#) - Counties must begin sending absentee ballots to voters (other than military and overseas voters) with accepted applications and voters on a permanent absentee ballot list.
- [**Friday, Oct. 23**](#) - Deadline at 5 p.m. for voters to request to spoil an absentee ballot.
- [**Friday, Oct. 30**](#) - Clerks may not mail a voter an absentee ballot after 5 p.m. on this date. Deadline for electors who have lost their absentee ballot or not yet received their ballot in the mail to submit a written request to spoil their absent voter ballot and receive a new absentee ballot by mail.
- [**Friday, Oct. 30**](#) - Deadline at 4 p.m. for a voter to cure a signature deficiency on their application to receive an absentee ballot.
- [**Monday, Nov. 2**](#) - Voters who have not already returned an absentee ballot may request an absentee ballot in person at their clerk's office until 4 p.m.¹

¹This deadline to request an absentee ballot in person applies to: 1) voters who did not previously request an absentee ballot; 2) voters who requested an absentee ballot but did not receive one; 3) voters who requested

- [**Tuesday, Nov. 3 - Election Day**](#)
 - Absentee ballots must be *received* by the appropriate clerk (via mail/delivery service or in-person return to the clerk's office or authorized drop box) by 8 p.m. to be eligible for counting.
- [**Friday, Nov. 6**](#) - Voters must cure rejected absentee ballots by 5 p.m.²

In-Person Voting (Early & Election Day)

- [**Thursday, Sept. 24**](#) - Voters may begin applying for an absentee ballot and casting the ballot in person at their clerk's office 40 days before the election.
- [**Monday, Oct. 5**](#) - Early in-person voting may begin at the clerk's discretion.
- [**Monday, Oct. 19**](#) - Voter registration deadline for mail and online applications. Mail applications must be *postmarked* by this date for the applicant to be eligible to vote in the November election. Voters may apply for registration in person at the clerk's office through Election Day.
- [**Saturday, Oct. 24**](#) - First mandatory day of in-person early voting.
- [**Sunday, Nov. 1**](#) - Last day of in-person early voting.
- [**Tuesday, Nov. 3**](#) - Election Day.
 - **7 a.m.** - Polling locations open.
 - [**While polls are open**](#), voters may register in person at the clerk's office and subsequently apply for and cast an absentee ballot.
 - **8 p.m.** - Polling locations close. All voters still in line must be allowed to vote. Voters returning absentee ballots to their clerk's office or an authorized drop box must do so by this time.

Counting, Canvassing, & Certification

- [**Monday, Oct. 26**](#) - Cities or townships with a population of at least 5,000 may begin processing and tabulating absentee ballots.
- [**Monday, Nov. 2**](#) - Any city or township may begin processing and tabulating absentee ballots.
- [**Tuesday, Nov. 3 - Election Day**](#)
 - [**After polls close**](#) - Immediately after polls close, the board of inspectors in each precinct will count the precinct's votes. After the count is complete, the board will prepare two statements of returns: one for the county board of

absentee ballots, but the ballots have been lost or damaged; and 4) voters who requested and received an absentee ballot, but wish to [spoil the ballot](#) in their possession and cast a new one.

²"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 Michigan, a voter may have an opportunity to cure an absentee 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.

canvassers and one for the county clerk.

- [Thursday, Nov. 5](#) - Each board of county canvassers must begin meeting to conduct the county canvass.³ The board may adjourn as necessary to await additional results.
- [Tuesday, Nov. 17](#) - Each board of county canvassers must complete the county canvass and certify the county's results by the 14th day after the election. If any county board fails to certify its results by this date, the board must send the county's records to the board of state canvassers for completion of certification.⁴
- [Monday, Nov. 23](#) - Deadline for the state board of canvassers to complete any county canvass referred to it after a failure of the county board of canvassers to certify.
- [Monday, Nov. 23](#) - Deadline for the state board of canvassers to complete the state canvass and certify results.

Recounts

- [Thursday, Nov. 19](#) (or 48 hours after certification of the county canvass) - Deadline to file a petition seeking a recount of a race determined by the county canvass.
- [Saturday, Nov. 21](#) (or 48 hours after the filing of an initial petition seeking a recount) - Deadline for candidates to file a counter petition opposing a recount of a race determined by the county canvass.
- [Wednesday, Nov. 25](#) (or two days after completion of the state canvass) -
 - Deadline for candidates to file a petition seeking a recount of a race determined by the state canvass.
- [Friday, Nov. 27](#) (or 48 hours after the filing of an initial petition seeking a recount) - Deadline for candidates to file a counter petition opposing a recount of a race determined by the state canvass.
- [Saturday, Dec. 19](#) (or 30 days after the deadline for filing counter petitions)- Deadline for completion of a recount requested by a candidate following the county canvass.

³"Canvassing" is the process by which the appropriate authority checks the results from each voting location 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 Michigan, the county canvass is conducted by the [board of county canvassers](#), which consists of two appointees from each of the two major political parties (four total members). The state canvass is conducted by the [board of state canvassers](#), which is also composed of two appointees from each of the two major political parties.

⁴"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. In Michigan, the bodies responsible for the canvass at the county and state level also certify the results.

- [Monday, Dec. 25](#) (or 30 days after the deadline for filing counter petitions) -
Deadline for completion of a recount requested by a candidate following the state canvass.

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