

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

Nebraska'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 Nebraska. 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 begin sending mail ballots to military and overseas (UOCAVA) voters with accepted applications.
- [**Tuesday, Sept. 29**](#) - Election officials may begin mailing ballots for early voting to registered voters with approved applications.
- [**Friday, Oct. 23**](#) - Deadline for voters to request an early voting ballot to be mailed to them. Applications must be *received* by the appropriate election commissioner or county clerk by 6 p.m. on this date to be accepted.
- [**Friday, Oct. 23**](#) - Counting boards may begin processing and verifying early voting ballots.
- [**Monday, Nov. 2**](#) - Counting boards may begin tabulating early voting ballots 24 hours before polls open on Election Day.
- [**Tuesday, Nov. 3 \(Election Day\)**](#) - Voters must return early voting ballots by the close of polls.

In-Person Voting (Early and Election Day)

- [**Monday, Oct. 5**](#) - In-person early voting begins at county clerk or election commissioner offices. Eligible individuals may register and cast an early voting ballot in person at the same time until the in-person voter registration deadline.
- [**Friday, Oct. 16**](#) - Voter registration applications returned by mail must be *postmarked*

by this date. Voter registration applications completed online or with deputy registrars must also be completed by this date.¹

- [**Friday, Oct. 23**](#) - Deadline for in-person voter registration at election offices.²
- [**Monday, Nov. 2**](#) - Last day of in-person early voting.
- [**Tuesday, Nov. 3 \(Election Day\)**](#)
 - **8 a.m. CT/7 p.m. MT** - Polling locations open.
 - **8 p.m. CT/7 p.m. MT** - Polling locations close. All voters still in line must be allowed to vote. Voters returning early voting ballots to their clerk's office must do so by this time.

Counting, Canvassing, & Certification

- [**Monday, Nov. 2**](#) - Counting boards may begin tabulating early voting ballots 24 hours before polls open on Election Day. State law prohibits the publication of results until after polls close.
- [**Tuesday, Nov. 3 \(Election Day\)**](#)
 - **8 a.m. CT** - Counties tabulating ballots at a centralized location may begin processing ballots once polls open.
 - **8 a.m. CT** - Counties using optical scanners to count ballots at polling locations may begin securely delivering partial returns to the election office once polls open if at least 25 votes have been cast since any prior delivery of partial returns.
- [**Tuesday, Nov. 10**](#) - Deadline for voters who cast a provisional ballot (after failing to present valid ID when voting) to present valid ID to the county clerk or election commissioner.
- [**Wednesday, Nov. 11**](#) - County canvassing board can begin the official canvass no earlier than 24 hours after the completion of early ballot counting and the verification and counting of provisional ballots.³
- [**Monday, Nov. 23**](#) - Deadline for counties to deliver an abstract of votes to the secretary of state in person or via mail, electronic mail, or fax.
- [**Monday, Nov. 30**](#) - The board of state canvassers meets to conduct the state

¹ This is also the deadline to complete registration applications at voter registration agencies like the Departments of Motor Vehicles, Education, or Health and Human Services. Neb. Rev. Stat. §§ 32-308; -310

² If a person becomes a naturalized citizen after the voter registration deadline and is otherwise eligible to vote, then they may complete a registration application and vote in the county clerk or election commissioner's office at any time prior to one hour before the close of polls on Election Day. Neb. Rev. Stat. § 32-942.01

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 Nebraska, the county canvassing board will conduct the county canvass and the Board of State Canvassers will conduct the state canvass.

canvass and certification.⁴

- **[Monday, Dec. 14](#)** - Deadline for the secretary of state to deliver certificates of election to winning candidates determined by the state canvass and county clerks or election commissioners to deliver certificates of election to winning candidates determined by the county canvass.

Recounts and Election Contests

- **[Saturday, Nov. 14](#) (or three days after the completion of county canvass)** - Petitions requesting recounts of offices determined by a county canvass must be filed with the secretary of state by 5 p.m.⁵
- **[Tuesday, Dec. 1](#) (or 20 days after the completion of the county canvass)** - Deadline to file a notice of contest with a person whose election to a political subdivision office is being contested.
- **[Wednesday, Dec. 2](#)** - Recounts for petitions filed with the secretary of state begin at 9 a.m.
- **[Thursday, Dec. 3](#)** - Deadline to serve an election contest petition on the winning candidate for a state office.
- **[Saturday, Dec. 5](#) (or three days after the completion of the state canvass)** - Petitions requesting recounts of offices determined by the state canvass must be filed with the secretary of state by 5 p.m.⁶
- **[Monday, Dec. 14](#)** - Deadline to file an election contest petition for a state office election in the Lancaster County District Court

Secure Democracy Foundation is a nonpartisan, 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization building stronger elections, state by state. Our work is state-focused, informed by election policy insights from a national perspective, and realized by seizing common ground.

⁴ The board of state canvassers consists of the governor, secretary of state, auditor of public accounts, state treasurer, and attorney general. "The duty of the board of state canvassers to canvass the votes is ministerial in nature." Neb. Rev. Stat. § 32-1037

⁵ If the winning margin is 1% or less in a race in which more than 500 total votes were cast or 2% or less in a race in which 500 or fewer total votes were cast, then that race will be recounted automatically.

⁶ If the winning margin is 1% or less in a race in which more than 500 total votes were cast or 2% or less in a race in which 500 or fewer total votes were cast, then that race will be recounted automatically.