

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

New Jersey'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 New Jersey. 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**](#) - County clerks begin sending mail-in ballots to military and overseas (UOCAVA) voters with approved applications, voters with approved mail-in ballot applications, and voters on the Active Vote-by-Mail List.
- [**Upon Receipt of Each Mail-In Ballot**](#) - County boards must promptly verify each mail-in ballot by comparing the voter's signature and registration information before the ballot may be accepted for counting.
- [**Tuesday, Oct. 27**](#) - Deadline to apply for a Mail-In Ballot by Mail for the General Election. Applications to receive a mail-in ballot by mail must be received by the county clerk no later than 5 p.m.
- [**Tuesday, Nov. 3 \(Election Day\)**](#) - Mail-in ballots returned in person to the county board of elections or deposited in an authorized secure ballot drop box must be received by 8 p.m. Ballots returned by mail must be *postmarked* on or before Election Day.
- [**Thursday, Nov. 5**](#) - A mail-in ballot without a postmark is valid if the county board receives it within 48 hours after the close of the polls and otherwise satisfies statutory requirements.
- [**Monday, Nov. 9**](#) - Deadline for mail-in ballots postmarked on or before Election Day to be received.
- [**Saturday, Nov. 14**](#) - Deadline for voters to cure a provisional ballot, unsigned ballot,

or signature discrepancy for the General Election.¹

In-Person Voting (Early & Election Day)

- [Tuesday, Oct. 13](#) - Voter registration deadline. County Commissioners of Registration must provide mandated evening registration hours from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. (Municipal clerks may also provide these hours.)
- [Wednesday, Oct. 21](#) - County clerks must mail sample ballots on or before noon.
- [Saturday, Oct. 24](#) - In-person early voting begins. Early voting locations must be open from at least 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Mondays through Saturdays.
- [Sunday, Nov. 1](#) - Last day of the in-person early voting period. Early voting locations must be open from at least 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Sundays.
- [Tuesday, Nov. 3](#) - **Election Day**
 - **6 a.m.** - Polling locations open.
 - **8 p.m.** - Polling locations close. All voters still in line must be allowed to vote.

Counting, Canvassing, & Certification

- [Before Election Day](#) – County boards of elections may begin opening the inner envelopes of verified mail-in ballots and comparing signatures, canvassing the ballots before Election Day. ²Ballots may also begin to be tabulated at this time, but vote totals must remain confidential until after the polls close.
- [Tuesday, Nov. 3 \(Election Day\)](#) – County boards continue verifying timely received mail-in ballots received by Election Day. After the close of polls, unofficial election results, including previously tabulated mail-in ballots and Election Day precinct returns, are reported.
- [Wednesday, Nov. 18](#) – The county board of canvassers meets at 12 p.m. to canvass and certify the county election results. On the same day, each county board of elections must complete its emergency ballot and provisional ballot reports.
- [Monday, Nov. 23](#) – Deadline for county clerks to transmit certified election results to the secretary of state.
- [Thursday, Dec. 3](#) – The board of state canvassers meets to canvass the certified county returns, determine the statewide vote totals, declare the winners of statewide and multi-county offices, and certify the General Election results.

Recounts & Election Contests

¹ “Curing” is the process by which a voter: 1) receives notice from election officials that a mail-in ballot has been identified as having a signature deficiency; and 2) is provided an opportunity to correct the deficiency so that an otherwise valid ballot may be counted. In New Jersey, a voter may have an opportunity to cure a mail-in ballot if: 1) the voter failed to sign the certificate on the ballot envelope; or 2) the county board of elections determines that the signature on the ballot envelope does not match the signature contained in the voter's registration record. N.J.S.A. 19:63-17(b)-(c).

² “Canvassing” is the process by which the appropriate election authority reviews the official election returns to verify that the results have been compiled and reported in accordance with applicable law. Following this review, the authority determines the official vote totals for each contest and certifies the election results.

- [**Saturday, Nov. 21**](#) – Deadline for a candidate who believes an error occurred in counting the votes to apply to a judge of the Superior Court and request a recount. Ten voters may similarly request a recount of a public question.³
- [**Thursday, Dec. 3**](#) – Deadline to file a petition contesting the election of a candidate to public office or the approval or disapproval of a public question. If a recount is conducted, the petition may instead be filed within 12 days after the recount results are determined or announced.
- [**Within 15 to 30 days after the election contest petition is filed**](#), the Superior Court judge must schedule the election contest hearing not less than 15 days nor more than 30 days after the petition is filed. Notice of the hearing must be served at least 10 days before the hearing.

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.

³ New Jersey law does not provide for automatic recounts based on the margin of victory.