

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

Ohio'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 Ohio. 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 Absentee by Mail

- [**Friday, Sept. 18**](#) - Counties must begin sending absentee mail ballots to military and overseas (UOCAVA) voters with accepted applications.
- [**Monday, Oct. 5**](#) - Voter registration deadline for the November 3 general election. All in-person registration applications must be submitted and all mail applications postmarked by this date.
- [**Tuesday, Oct. 6**](#) - Counties begin mailing printed absentee ballots to voters (other than military and overseas voters) with accepted applications, and may also begin processing and verifying — but not counting — absentee ballots.
- [**Tuesday, Oct. 27**](#) - Deadline for applications for absentee ballots to be mailed. Applications must be received by the appropriate board of elections by close of business (7 days before the general election).
- [**Tuesday, Nov. 3 \(Election Day\)**](#) - Voters returning absentee ballots in person must deliver them to the county board of elections by the close of polls at 7:30 p.m. Ballots sent by mail must be received by the close of polls on Election Day.
- [**Saturday, Nov. 7**](#) - Return deadline for UOCAVA ballots.

- This is also the [identification envelope cure deadline](#).¹ All voters notified by the board of elections of a defect with their ballot's identification envelope must provide the necessary information to the board of elections by this date for their ballot to be processed and counted.

In-Person Voting (Early & Election Day)

- **[Monday, Oct. 5](#)** - Voter registration deadline for the November 3 general election. All in-person registration applications must be submitted, and all mail applications must be postmarked by this date.
- **[Tuesday, Oct. 6](#)** - Early in-person absentee voting begins in all counties. For the first two weeks, boards must be open for in-person absentee voting from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. each weekday.
- **[Monday, Oct. 21](#)** - Boards expand early in-person absentee voting hours the third week of voting, extending weekday hours to 6 p.m. and also begin offering weekend voting from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday.
- **[Monday, Oct. 28](#)** - Boards increase early in-person absentee voting hours for the fourth week of voting, according to the days and times below:
 - Monday - 7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.
 - Tuesday - 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.
 - Wednesday through Friday - 7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.
 - Saturday - 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.
 - Sunday - 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.
- **[Sunday, Nov. 1](#)** - Last day of early in-person absentee voting. Voting ends at 5 p.m.
- **[Tuesday, Nov. 5](#) - Election Day**
 - **6:30 a.m.** - Polling locations open.
 - **7:30 p.m.** - Polling locations close. All voters still in line must be allowed to vote. Voters returning mail ballots to their board must do so by this time.

Counting, Canvassing, & Certification

- **[Friday, Oct. 23](#)** - Deadline for eligible parties or groups of candidates to file notice of appointing observers with the board of elections.
- **[Tuesday, Nov. 3](#) - Election Day**
 - **Before polls close** - In counties that will process and count absentee ballots in the precinct, the board must deliver the identification envelopes containing

¹"Curing" is the process by which a voter: 1) receives notice from election officials of a discrepancy or incomplete information on the absentee by mail ballot identification envelope; and 2) has an opportunity to correct the issue and have the ballot counted. In Ohio, a voter may have an opportunity to [cure an identification envelope](#) if: 1) the voter failed to provide proof of identification or provided information that did not match their registration; 2) the voter failed to sign the envelope, or election officials are unsure the voter's signature on the envelope matches the voter's registration record; or 3) the voter did not print their name or printed a name that does not match their registration record.

absentee ballots for that precinct before the close of polls.

- **After polls close** - Polling and central counting locations must count ballots continuously until the count is complete.
- **[Wednesday, Nov. 4](#)** - The county boards may begin examining pollbooks, poll lists, and tally sheets to compare the results in any polling place with the summary statement received from the polling locations as prepared by the precinct election official. The board also begins processing and verifying provisional ballots.
- **[Sunday, Nov. 8](#)** - County boards of elections *may* begin the canvassing² process.
- **[Wednesday, Nov. 18](#)** - County boards must begin the canvass process if they have not already done so.
- **[Tuesday, Nov. 24](#)** - Deadline for county boards to complete their official canvass and certify the results. A majority of the board members must sign board declarations, bear the date upon which the declaration is made, and a copy must be posted in a conspicuous place in the board's office for [at least five days](#). The board must email the official results to the secretary of state's office and also send to the president of the senate a copy of the board's official results for governor, Lt. governor, attorney general, auditor, secretary of state, treasurer, and justices of the Supreme Court.
- **[Monday, Nov. 30](#) (or five days after completion of the county canvass)** - Applications requesting recounts of election results for local, county, and district offices determined by a county canvass - or canvasses from multiple counties but not statewide - must be filed by 5 p.m. Local or district races for which the canvass shows a winning margin of [less than 0.5%](#) will be recounted automatically.³
- **[Friday, Dec. 4](#)** - Deadline for the secretary of state to complete the official state canvass and declare the results. For federal and non-executive state offices, the secretary of state shall conduct the state canvass of official county abstracts no later than ten days after receiving the county-level results.

Recounts

- **[Wednesday, Dec. 9](#) (or five days after official state canvass results)** - Deadline for filing an application requesting a recount with the secretary of state. For races determined by the state canvass, eligible parties must file the recount application with the secretary within five days after the Secretary declares the official results.
- **[Wednesday, Dec. 9](#)** - Deadline for recounts in presidential elections. Recounts for

² "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 Ohio, the county canvass is typically conducted by the county board of elections. The state canvass is conducted by the Secretary of State.

³ The statutory deadline to request a recount falls on Sunday, Nov. 29. Ohio law extends deadlines falling on Sunday to the day that isn't a legal holiday. Ohio Rev. Code § 1.14

presidential electors must be completed no later than six days before the meeting of electors, which is the first Tuesday after the second Wednesday in December according to [federal law](#).

- **[Thursday, Dec. 10](#) (or 10 days after recount request)** - Latest possible deadline for beginning a recount of a local/district race. Recounts must begin no later than 10 days after a recount request is filed or a recount is ordered.
- **[Tuesday, Dec. 15](#) (or 21 days after official results declared)** - Deadline for county boards of elections to complete audit of election results. In the case of a recount, boards must begin the audit immediately after certifying the recount results and must complete the audit by the 14th day after certifying the recount results.
- **[Saturday, Dec. 19](#)** - Latest possible deadline for beginning a recount of a race determined by the state canvass. Recounts must begin no later than 10 days after a recount request is filed or a recount is ordered.
- **[Saturday, Dec. 19](#) (or 15 days after official results declared)** - Latest possible deadline a losing candidate, or a group of at least twenty-five voters who voted against the winning candidate, may sign and file a petition in the appropriate court to contest the election of an individual to a state or local public office. Parties must file the petition within 15 days after the official results are announced, or within 10 days of announcing official results following a recount.⁴ The range of timelines for the earliest and latest dates by which parties could file a challenge petition depends on the circumstances.

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⁴ Ohio [law](#) expressly prohibits subjecting federal elections, including presidential elections, to election contest rules under state law. Federal elections are subject to applicable provisions of federal law.