

THE ELECTION PROCESS IN LANCASTER COUNTY

A primer on how elections are conducted in Lancaster County with integrity, veracity and transparency

Creation of Ballots for an Election

- Once the Department of State provides the final list of certified candidates the following steps are taken at the County Board of Elections, which can take up to a total 2 to 3 weeks, depending on the type of election (based on size of the ballot and number of ballots needed):
 - 1) Development and proofing the ballot for each precinct, including quality control measures that have various people review the ballot for accuracy.
 - 2) Testing each precinct ballot with the County's printing vendor to ensure that they are correct and will scan properly on Election Day (this includes logic and accuracy testing as described further in this document).
 - 3) Pulling ballot files from our system onto a secure drive to provide to the printer vendor for printing and mailing to those who requested mail ballots, this includes a unique barcode for every ballot. The number of ballots is in the tens of thousands in Lancaster County and given the size of the ballot and number of ballots, the County's system can only pull so many at a time to send.
 - 4) Sending the final first batch to the printer, who then prints and mails to voters
- The date by which counties receive the final certified list of candidates from the state varies each election and is dependent on the legal process by which candidates are given approval to be placed on or removed from the ballot.
- Private organizations send out mail ballot applications each election cycle, with some individuals receiving multiple applications. These are not ballots.

Mail Ballot Process in Lancaster County

- Voters may request a mail ballot via online or paper application. This includes annual requestors who wish to automatically receive mail ballots for the Primary and General Elections during the year.
- The County receives the request and validates that the applicant is a registered voter and checks to see if they have already requested a mail ballot during the year. If they are a registered voter and they have not already requested a mail ballot during the year, the request is then processed.
- When mail ballots are ready for printing and sending, the County's mail ballot vendor prints and mails the ballots to those that have been requested and processed. This happens on a regular, if not daily basis, as mail ballot requests are processed by the County.
- Mail ballot voters return their ballots via mail or by stopping into the Board of Elections office. Per State Election Code, mail ballots may only be turned into the Board of Elections by the voter, or in case of emergency, by someone else with a designated agent form. Returning mail ballots other than the voter's own ballot is a violation of state law which can result in legal action.
- Mail ballots received at the Board of Elections are scanned to identify that they have been received by the Board of Elections and are date stamped. That information is also

uploaded into the State Registry so the voter can see that their ballot was received (by visiting <https://www.pavoterservices.pa.gov/pages/ballottracking.aspx?os=vb.&ref=app>). Mail ballots are then sorted and secured in the County's ballot secured area for safe keeping until Election Day.

- Returned mail ballots with voter declarations on the outer return envelope that do not meet the requirements of the Election Code regarding required signature and date are also scanned into the State Registry. Voters who provided their email address and/or phone number will be notified by the State Registry System that their ballot was rejected. Voters are highly encouraged to read and follow the instructions included with their mail ballot as it will have the latest information regarding the requirements.
- On Election Day, mail ballots are opened and processed for scanning and tallying. Those that do not meet Election Code requirements, for example, do not have a secrecy envelope or contain identifying marks, are not counted. After the election the State Registry is updated, and voters who provided contact information are notified. These ballots are then bundled and stored separately.
- Ballots that are damaged or are not able to be read by the scanners, will be remarked for proper scanning, by a team within view of poll watchers.

Security of ballots

- All ballots for the current election, including mail ballots, are stored in a secured area with multiple levels and types of security to which a limited number of individuals from the Board of Elections staff have access. Prior year election ballots are stored in another secure location.
- A chain of custody that identifies handling of ballots is maintained so that we know where ballots are located at any given time and who has access.
- When a mail ballot is dropped in the mail by a voter it is the responsibility of the U.S. Postal Service to safeguard and deliver mail ballots to the Board of Elections.
- Mail ballots are picked up at the Post Office and brought to the Board of Elections office by County Elections staff under security of County Sheriff's Deputies.
- On Election Day, mail ballots are transferred by County Elections staff from the secured area to the processing area for opening and scanning. Security is provided by Sheriff's Deputies and access is only permitted to credentialed individuals. Per the Election Code, credentials are only provided to Elections staff/officials and authorized poll watchers. For greater transparency purposes, credentialed media is permitted in an identified, nonobtrusive location in the processing area.
- After the close of polls, all Judges of Elections are required to securely seal their voted ballots. After they have reconciled their election materials, they transport the sealed ballot bag and the encrypted election results drive to the election warehouse. They turn in these materials to election staff under the security of County Sheriff's Deputies.

Security and validation of election equipment used for scanning voted ballots

- Equipment is stored in a secure location with multiple layers of security.

- Equipment is not connected to the internet or Bluetooth, nor do they have the ability to connect.
- Equipment is routinely maintained and updated by the vendor and County Elections staff. Passwords for equipment are only known by select Elections Department staff.
- Equipment goes through a required logic and accuracy (L&A) testing regimen to ensure that the equipment is accurately reading the approved ballot with test data (selections). This is completed for every machine prior to being sent to polls or for mail ballot scanning. L&A testing can be viewed by individuals in accordance with the Election Code. Results of L&A testing will be published on the County website.
- On Election Day, prior to the polls opening, Poll Workers at each poll ensure that the equipment is zeroed out, meaning that the machines are all starting at zero votes.
- Once programmed for the election, the programming is locked and unable to be changed.

Transparency (polling places, mail ballots, equipment testing, and ballot adjudication)

- The Board of Elections goes above and beyond to ensure transparency of elections in Lancaster County in the following ways:
- Polling Places & Mail Ballot Processing Area - On Election Day, poll watchers are permitted in each poll and in the mail ballot processing area to observe the election process.
- Equipment Logic & Accuracy Testing – Prior to Election Day, L&A testing is completed (described above) and can be viewed by individuals in accordance with the Election Code.
- Ballot Adjudication – Marked (voted) ballots that could not be scanned or are flagged by scanners as having ballot errors (over votes, undervotes, ambiguous marks, etc.), are set aside by Board of Elections staff to determine the problem. In accordance with the Election Code, these ballots will be reviewed, and if the voter’s intent is clear, the votes are counted. Also, ballots that are damaged and not able to be scanned will have the voter selections remarked by elections staff on a new ballot for processing. The entire adjudication process involves both major Political Parties and is open to viewing by poll watchers.

Tallying of vote totals

- Vote totals from polling places and mail ballot processing are secured on encrypted and password secured drives. The totals are uploaded to the County and Department of State elections result websites by County Election staff. That data is stored in multiple ways, with encryption and other security measures. Further, there are paper copies of vote totals that are used to verify information posted to the state and county election results websites.
- Write-in votes are adjudicated and tallied after election day on a single secure system which permits only one person access at a time. Length of time for the process is dependent on the number of write-in votes in any given election.
- After all votes are totaled post-election and before results are certified, an audit is performed. In accordance with the Election Code, the votes from randomly selected

precincts are recounted. The number of precincts selected is based on the total number of votes cast in all precincts and must account for at least 2% or up to 2,000 of the votes cast in the election. The recount is to be done on scanners that are different than the scanners used to read the ballots during the election. As an additional audit measure, we also will randomly select a precinct to perform a hand count of all ballots voted.

- In addition to the recount process, the Commonwealth also performs a Risk Limiting Audit (RLA). Precincts are randomly selected from around the Commonwealth to participate in the RLA. According to the Commonwealth Department of State, “RLAs are scientifically designed procedures that use statistical methods to confirm election outcomes. RLAs examine a random sample of paper ballots, comparing the votes on paper to the totals reported by the vote-counting machines to ensure that the reported outcome of the contest being audited is correct. These types of audits can confirm that voting systems tabulated the paper ballots accurately enough that a full hand count would produce the same outcome.”
- After all the above is complete, counties are required to provide the unofficial results to the Commonwealth Department of State by the 7th day after the election, and then a final certification by no later than the 20th day after the election.

Maintenance of voter lists

- All counties must use the state’s Statewide Uniform Registry of Electors (SURE) system and follow federal and state laws in maintaining voter lists within SURE for their county.
- Newspaper obituaries, certified death notices and Department of Health notices are all used on a daily basis to maintain up to date voter records. These three things are all used to remove voters who are deceased.
- County offices across the state perform voter maintenance activities annually. This includes voters who have not voted in 5 years, confirmation through the National Change of Address program and address changes through the national electronic registration information system.
- Verification letters are sent to voters after notification of change through any of the above noted programs. To remain active and be able to vote, a voter must confirm that they live within the County sending the letter (by the deadline date of voter registration to be able to vote in the immediate upcoming election). Voters who do not respond will be marked as inactive.
- After every Federal Election, voter rolls are updated to reflect these changes.
- A voter is required by federal law to remain on the voter rolls for two federal election cycles. They can officially be removed if they do not vote or make changes to their voter registration through that period.
- Voters can check their voter registration status online at:
<https://www.pavoterservices.pa.gov/pages/voterregistrationstatus.aspx>