



STATE OF MICHIGAN
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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
LANSING

Michigan's 2020 Presidential Primary Media Fact Sheet

Unofficial election results

- **There is a significant possibility that unofficial election results will not be available until much later in the evening than they have been historically, due in part to changes to the Michigan Constitution.**
- Proposal 2018-3 amended Michigan's constitution to, among other things:
 - Allow all eligible voters the right to vote at home using an absent voter ballot (without having to have a reason)
 - Allow all eligible voters to register up through Election Day.
- Both these changes create more activity for election officials on Election Day and require more time before unofficial election results can be reported.
- Election officials' primary responsibility is to administer elections properly, ensure that all eligible voters have the right to participate, and ensure that vote counts are accurate – it is not to rush to get unofficial reports published quickly.
- **If unofficial results are taking longer to report than in the past it does not mean that errors or foul play have occurred. Rather, it is likely evidence that election officials are diligently taking on an increased Election Day workload to provide accurate results.**

After polls close

After the polls close at 8 p.m. the following processes take place:

- Absentee ballots cast that day at clerks' offices are brought to polling places or absent voter counting boards for tabulation. This includes ballots cast by voters in line at 8 p.m. to register and vote on Election Day, so the ballots might not arrive until well after 8 p.m. Once they arrive, they must be tabulated.
- At polling places, all voters in line by 8 p.m. must be allowed to vote.
- Election inspectors run tabulator totals, take ballots out of tabulators, and place them into ballot boxes/secure containers.
- Election inspectors must close down the polling place properly to ensure votes have been tabulated and recorded properly and to ensure records are preserved for the post-election canvass.
- Once election workers confirm the tabulator ballot count agrees with the pollbook ballot count, precincts report **unofficial** results to counties.
 - County websites will have results first. The Secretary of State elections website, [Michigan.gov/Elections](https://www.michigan.gov/Elections), is updated only when counties submit their results to the state and will not have the most up-to-date election results.
- All results reported on Election Night are **unofficial**. In the two weeks following the election, a county canvass determines the official result for each county, and a week after that the state canvass makes results official statewide.

Resources

- At the Michigan Voter Information Center, [Michigan.gov/Vote](https://www.michigan.gov/Vote), residents can check their voter registration status, find out how to register and be able to vote in the March 10 election, see election FAQs, get a sample ballot for their jurisdiction, locate their local clerk's office, find a map to their polling place and get other helpful information.
- **Voter problems can be reported to the Michigan Bureau of Elections at 517-335-3234 and/or the nonpartisan Election Protection Hotline - 866-OUR-VOTE.** The hotline also has partner-numbers for non-English speakers, including Spanish (888-VE-Y-VOTA), Arabic (844-YALLA-US) and Asian languages (888-API-VOTE).

Candidates on the presidential primary ballot

- Michigan's presidential primary ballots will contain the names of candidates who have suspended or ended their campaigns because the list of candidates on ballots was set in December as required by law. Candidates who wished to withdraw or have their name added to the ballot must have submitted their request by 4 p.m. Dec. 13, 2019. Candidates who failed to meet the withdrawal deadline will still have their name on the ballot. Votes cast for candidates who have suspended their campaigns will be counted and it is possible under party rules that they could pick up delegates. The political parties can provide additional details.

Spoiling an absentee ballot

- Voters who have cast an absentee ballot and wish to change their vote (for example, because the candidate voted for has dropped out of the race) may do so by "spoiling" their ballot and requesting a new one. A voter can submit a written request to spoil a ballot to the local clerk **by mail** if it is **received by 2 p.m. on the Saturday before the election**.
- An absentee ballot may be spoiled **in person** at the clerk's office **until 4 p.m. on the Monday prior to the election**. The voter can obtain a new absentee ballot there.
- Voters can't spoil their absentee ballot on Election Day, but if they haven't turned it in yet they can "surrender" it at the polling place or sign an affidavit saying it was lost or destroyed, and vote there.

Voter registration

- If you register within 14 days of an election through any method *other than* in-person with a city or township (not county) clerk, the registration is not effective until after the next election. If you register to vote by mail or online within 14 days of Election Day, you will be notified that if you want to vote March 10, you must either go to your city or township clerk's office to re-register with proof of residency or, if you're changing your address, you may return to your old polling place one last time to vote.
- When you register to vote in your city or township clerk's office, you can then vote an absentee ballot there or vote in your polling place on Election Day.
- Sometimes people who arrive at polling places are told by election workers that they're not registered to vote. There could be several different explanations for this – for example, there could be an issue with the spelling of the name, or the voter could be registered in another precinct. Election workers are instructed to contact the local clerk if they cannot determine the reason the name is missing. If a voter does not appear on the pollbook because the voter registered within the 14-day window by mail or online, the voter must go to the city or township clerk's office to re-register with proof of residency. They can then vote at the clerk's office or return to the polling place to vote.

Polling places

- Michigan voters do not register by party. However, in the presidential primary elections, voters will be asked which party's primary they want to vote in, or if they'd like a ballot with no presidential candidates on it (in local jurisdictions that are voting on local millages, etc.)
- Campaigning is not allowed within 100 feet of a polling place or a clerk's office on Election Day.
- Political party or candidate clothing/paraphernalia is not allowed in the polling place or within 100 feet of the polling place. You must cover up the item when you vote. Election inspectors will then allow you to vote as long as you are not disruptive.
- On Election Day, a voter who is already registered must vote in the polling place. Voting at the clerk's office is only available to new registrants or those changing addresses. Registered voters can't go to vote in a clerk's office just to avoid long lines in a polling place.
- You can take a picture of your ballot in the booth, marked or unmarked, but you can't take a picture of yourself or anything else in the voting area. Selfies are only allowed OUTSIDE the voting area.
- Polling places and clerks' offices will be open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Anyone in line at 8 p.m. will be allowed to vote.
- Precinct or election inspectors are the workers at the polls and are from both parties.

- “Election challengers” and “poll watchers” are permitted to monitor the process to ensure the election law is being enforced properly.
 - Challengers, appointed by political parties/qualified groups, have the right to:
 - Observe the election process in voting precincts and absent voter counting boards.
 - Challenge a person’s right to vote if challenger has good reason to believe that the person is not eligible to vote in the precinct.
 - Challenge the actions of election inspectors if the challenger believes election law is not being followed.
 - Stand behind the table.
 - Any interested person may be a poll watcher and may observe the election process from the public area at a polling place. They have no challenge authority.

Ballots at the polling place

- In the presidential primary election only, you choose one party’s ballot or choose a local ballot without the presidential race by writing your preference on the application to vote slip when you enter the polling place. This is different from the August primary, where ballots list both parties and you choose which primary to vote in on the ballot.
- In some cases, election workers “duplicate” some ballots—transferring the votes from one ballot to a replacement ballot. This is a normal procedure that is followed on Election Day if a ballot is damaged by the tabulator or doesn’t scan properly. This ballot is replaced by another ballot with the same votes, and only the replacement ballot is counted. This ensures that a voter’s ballot will count. Election workers are advised to duplicate ballots after the polls close in the precinct, or at any time while at AV counting boards.
- If someone gets the wrong ballot in the presidential primary, (R vs D vs local only), they should inform the precinct inspector and the correct ballot will be given to them.
- If tabulators go down, voting does not stop. Ballots are placed in the auxiliary bins and scanned when the tabulators are working again.
- The number of ballots on each tabulator tape must match the e-pollbook number. If they don’t balance, the precinct workers must determine where the problem lies and correct it so that the numbers are reconciled. This ensures recounts can be conducted properly if needed. If there is an issue matching the e-pollbook, a recount can still occur if the number of ballots in a tabulator matches the number in on the tabulator tape.
- Precincts should never run out of ballots if the local jurisdictions have ordered a sufficient number. If a precinct does run out of ballots, voters can use the Voter Assist Terminals (VATs), which print a paper ballot that can be scanned through tabulators. Precinct workers can also take a blank ballot and make copies or use extra AV ballots.

Provisional and challenged ballots

- Provisional ballots are issued in some cases when a voter’s name is not on the pollbook. Challenged ballots are issued in some cases when residency can’t be confirmed.
- Challenged ballots are issued in other cases – for example when there is a question about a voter’s registration status or how an absentee ballot was filled out.
- Challenged ballots are marked and run through tabulators. Provisional ballots are either run through tabulators or placed in envelopes for review after the election depending on the situation.