

August 10, 2022 Board of Elections  
Response to Public Comment

1. Our precinct was issued an incorrect list to post of voters who had received mail-in ballots. It was actually a list of voters who had received mail-in ballot applications. These should not be confused, and we need strong quality control to ensure that this error does not happen in the general election.

The Division is required to make the application list available at the polls for public inspection. There appeared to be general confusion about the difference between the supplemental Poll Book and the list that is to be posted. We will endeavor to make their use clearer.

For each polling place, there is a Poll Book, a supplemental Poll Book and a list of every voter that applied for an absentee or mail-in ballot. The local boards are to use the poll book and supplemental poll book to check in voters and to determine who may vote and how. The application list includes the names of permanent absentee and mail-in voters that are registered Independent or no affiliation. These voters were not mailed a ballot but are approved because applications come in on a rolling basis, including before Elections knows whether there will be any referendums or ballot questions for which they are eligible to vote. Again, this list is not to be used for processing voters and we will revisit our processes.

2. There should be absolutely no mail in votes unless you're military.

Mail-in voting was authorized by the state legislature and remains part of the Election Code.

3. Consider advertising for part-time workers. Not everyone is available or willing to work the shifts that full-time poll workers are required to work.

The Election Code does not contemplate part-time poll workers.

4. Consider splitting the registration book into two section where there are sufficient poll workers.

Registration books are currently split when there are more than 250 pages in a book. Because we don't always know if there is going to be a shortage at a polling place, it would be difficult to make that change in advance.

5. Allow for ballot drop off at a place or places where there is better parking where it is easy for disabled people in wheelchairs or using other mobility aids to turn in a ballot.

Allegheny County permits and historically has permitted ballots to be returned in person to the Elections Division office where we offer curbside parking in the week (or more) leading up to the election. The building is handicapped accessible. Individuals who are disabled may also have their ballot returned by another person if accompanied by the appropriate signed form.

Our focus is on ensuring the integrity of the vote and the security of those ballots which is why all the ballot return offered in the last few elections are manned locations with ballots returned to locked ballot boxes. All voters are asked if that ballot they are tendering is theirs and whether the signature on the ballot is theirs.

6. Ensure that poll locations are wheelchair accessible.

All polling places in the county are deemed to be handicapped accessible in accordance with Act PL 98-435.

7. Please put a mic in the center of the table or room for streamed meetings of the Board of Elections.

Following the receipt of similar concerns, the Board of Elections' meeting has been moved to the Gold Room which has mics and a sound system to allow viewers to better hear participants.

8. We received too few ballots and nearly ran out by the end of the day. What caused these issues and what steps are being taken to avoid them in the November election?

There were shortages of both Democrat and Republican ballots because of higher-than-expected turnout. While it's not an excuse, the county is continuing to work through and determine how mail-in and absentee voting impacts turnout. In this case, even though we met the state threshold of ballots required at each polling place, we underestimated turnout and should have increased the number at each location. Once we became aware of the issue(s), local boards were instructed to permit voters to use the Express Vote machine. Once extra printed ballots were used, additional ballots were printed on demand and delivered by county personnel and even a member of the Board of Elections.

In July, an amendment to the Election Code changed the provisions related to the formula to determine the number of ballots at polling places. Now it requires that ballots be printed/provided equal to the number of registered voters at that precinct minus the number of voters who have applied for a mail-in or absentee ballot. This issue will not be repeated.

9. Is it your function to inform voters of how, where and when to vote? About timelines for registering to vote? And about the ways to vote, such as mail-in ballots, eligibility for mail-in ballots and how to obtain and use mail-in ballots? How will you communicate this information? Will you differentiate between absentee ballots and mail-in ballots? If there is no difference, can you stop using one or the other so to limit confusion?

The administration of the election is the function of the Elections Division. Information is shared by the department in a variety of ways – on its website ([alleghenyvotes.com](http://alleghenyvotes.com)), social media, Allegheny Alerts and its e-news, as well as through traditional media with the use of press releases and other announcements. Board of Elections meetings are streamed on the county's

Facebook page and members of the public can also call and email the division for additional detail or questions.

All voters are qualified to vote by mail-in ballot. To qualify for an absentee ballot, the voter must be out of their municipality on election day or unable to get to their polling place due to illness or disability. The issuance of ballots, deadlines to return them, detail on how to complete them, and other information is the same which is why reference is typically made to both mail-in and absentee ballots, together.