



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth
Elections Division

Election Advisory #24-04

Tallying & Certifying State Primary Votes

August 29, 2024

This Advisory will provide information about tallying, reporting, and certifying State Primary results.

Tallying State Primary Results at the Polls

All ballots must be counted at the polling place except:

- Early and absentee ballots counted at a Central Tabulation Facility (CTF) or advance processing location
- Early and absentee ballots received too late to be sent to the polling place
- Ballots returned electronically from UOCAVA voters or voters with disabilities.

All ballots must be counted in public view.

Hand-Counted Paper Ballots

Ballots must first be separated by party and then counted by teams. One poll worker must read the name of the office and whom the vote is for, while the other records the votes on the tally sheet. The reader must state “blank” if the voter did not mark a vote for a candidate.

Only red pens or pencils should be used to mark the tally sheet. Once ballots are counted for each precinct, the results must be read aloud, but it should be announced that they are unofficial results.

Scanner Ballots

Election officers must print the tape from the machine and read the tape totals after stating the totals are unofficial results only. If ballots were counted elsewhere, such as a CTF, the poll worker should state that the results do not include all results for the precinct. A copy of the tape should be posted outside the guardrail for inspection, while another copy is used for tallying.

When emptying the ballot box, ballots must be separated by party. Poll workers must look through all ballots for write-in votes, including those not segregated into a write-in compartment.

Ballots in the auxiliary bin (those not read by the machine) must be fully hand-counted for each office. For ballots that were read by the tabulator and contain write-in votes, only the office(s) with the write-in votes are hand-counted.

Marking the Tally Sheet

Where scanner ballots are used, election officials must record the totals from the results tape on a precinct master tally sheet. The results must include all votes for each candidate, write-ins, and blanks.

Election workers must also tally any ballots in the auxiliary compartment, in the same manner as hand-counted paper ballots are counted (see above). These are marked on a hand-count tally sheet and added to the totals on the master tally sheet.

- All write-in votes must be tallied in the polling places on Election Night and then sealed. They cannot be counted the next day.

After poll workers have completed their tally, they must seal the tally sheets and return them to your office. Tally sheets must be sealed separately from the cast ballots.

Tallying Write-In Results

When reporting results, you will have results for:

- Each candidate
- Write-ins
- All Others
- Blanks

Write-in votes should be reported separately from “All Others.” Any known write-in candidates should be listed on the tally sheet for use at the precinct.

- Votes for fictional people, deceased persons, or phrases should be tallied as **Blanks**.
- Votes for candidates already printed on the ballot for that office should be tallied as **Blanks**.

Write-in votes for “Mickey Mouse,” “Abraham Lincoln,” “Ceasefire,” or other similar characters, deceased people, or phrases should be tallied as blanks.

A write-in vote on a primary ballot is a vote for that candidate to receive the party’s nomination. It is not combined with write-in votes for the same candidate on a different party’s ballot.

- For example, if a voter writes in Elizabeth Warren’s name on the Republican ballot, it must be recorded as a vote for Elizabeth Warren to be the Republican nominee for US Senate.

Write-in votes are only for candidates *who are NOT printed on the ballot* for that office. If someone writes in the name of a candidate already printed on the same ballot for that office, it must be tallied as a blank.

- For instance, a write-in vote for US Senate for Elizabeth Warren on the Democratic ballot should be counted as a blank.

As always, write-in votes for a candidate should be counted if you can determine the voter’s intent. Count a write-in vote even if:

- The name is misspelled
- The voter didn’t include an address
- The voter didn’t fill in the vote indicator next to the write-in space (for scanned ballots)

If you cannot determine the voter’s intent, you must tally the vote as a blank.

For scanned ballots, poll workers must go through all of the ballots to find write-in votes, even if the ballot box has a diverter to sort write-ins into a separate compartment. Ballots will not be segregated into a write-in compartment if the voter did not fill in the oval next to the write-in space, but these votes should still be counted.

If the voter did not fill in the oval next to the write-in space, the tabulator will count it as a blank even if the voter wrote in the name of a candidate. After the poll workers add the write-in vote to the tally sheet, they will also need to subtract a vote from the blanks.

Enrollment requirements do not apply to write-in candidates. In a primary election, a candidate must receive at least the number of votes equal to the number of signatures needed to have their name printed on the ballot, plus more votes than any other candidate for that office.

- For example, a successful state representative write-in candidate must receive at least 150 votes as well as receive the most votes for that party and office.

Successful write-in candidates are required to sign a written acceptance and file a receipt from the State Ethics Commission showing they have submitted a Statement of Financial Interest with that agency. The deadline to file that paperwork with the Secretary of the Commonwealth's Elections Division is 5 pm on Thursday, September 5, 2024.

Known Write-In Candidates

This office is aware of the following write-in candidates:

- Sheila H. Dibb (D) – Worcester & Hampshire Senate District
- Steven David Fruzzetti (R) – Norfolk, Plymouth & Bristol Senate District
- Jerry O'Connell (R) – 1st Barnstable Representative District
- Mark Tashjian (R) – 2nd Essex Representative District
- Christopher Thrasher (R) – 8th Bristol Representative District

The above names are not necessarily inclusive. Some candidates may notify you directly.

The names of any known write-ins should be included on the precinct tally sheets to make it easier for poll workers. Poll workers should be specifically trained on how to count write-ins; the standard used is the intent of the voter.

- For example, if the known write-in candidate's name is Robert Kraft and the voter writes "Bob Kraft," it should still be attributed to the known write-in.

Certifying Results

The deadline to complete certification of results for the September 3, 2024 State Primaries is **Saturday, September 7, 2024**. Results must be entered into VRIS and the certified Returns of Votes mailed to:

Elections Division
Secretary of the Commonwealth
One Ashburton Place, Room 1705
Boston, MA 02108

- **Note:** 3 separate Returns of Votes will need to be signed and mailed – one for each party.