



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth
Elections Division

Election Advisory #22-07

Reporting State Primary Election Results

September 1, 2022

The purpose of this Advisory is to provide recommendations to election officials on the reporting of unofficial vote totals on Election Night. This Advisory will also provide reminders about the legal requirements for reporting official election results.

Completing Election Night Tallies & Certification

Under state law, **ALL** State Primary ballots must be counted and securely sealed on the night of the election. Tally sheets containing all votes, including write-in votes and votes on hand-counted ballots, must be completed for each precinct on Election Night. Election officials cannot discontinue the count and resume at a later time. Election Night is not over until all ballots have all been tabulated, sealed, and secured.

The only ballots that may be counted after the day of the State Primary are provisional ballots. Local election officials will have 3 days to resolve any provisional ballots for the State Primary and add the votes from eligible provisional ballots to the final tally. Final election results must be certified and submitted to the Elections Division no later than 4 calendar days after the Primary.

Announcing Unofficial Results

After polls have closed, the presiding officer in each precinct where electronic tabulators are used must read aloud the unofficial results from the tape printed from the tabulator.

If early and absentee ballots for that precinct have been tabulated elsewhere, the presiding officer should announce that the unofficial results being announced do not include all ballots for that precinct.

After precinct tallies have been returned to the local election office, the local election official may compile citywide or townwide totals. Please note that this is not required, but it may be helpful for those seeking unofficial results.

If publishing precinct-level vote totals or reporting them to a media outlet, such as the Associated Press, local election officials should report a combined total for each precinct that includes:

- In-person Election Day votes from the polling place; and
- Any ballots counted for that precinct at a central tabulation facility; and
- Any ballots advance deposited for that precinct.

These totals should be combined into a single precinct total and reported together, to avoid confusion about what has been reported and what is still outstanding.

Ballots Received on Election Day

Vote by mail ballots that arrive on Election Day, either by mail, via a drop box or hand-delivered, must be counted in the appropriate polling place or in the office of the local election official, but only after voting lists have been returned from the polling places.

Election officials should make every effort to send late-arriving ballots to the polling places throughout the day, to avoid unnecessary delays in the counting of ballots on Election Night. To do so, it will be necessary to coordinate with the local post office to ensure ballots are picked up or delivered in a timely manner, and to check drop boxes frequently.

In the event that the counting of late-arriving ballots will significantly delay the reporting of unofficial results, it is recommended that all available results for the precinct be provided while those late-arriving ballots are being cross-referenced to voter lists and counted.

If reporting partial results for a precinct, election officials should include an estimate of the number of ballots left to be counted. The partial results should include a notation that additional results from those outstanding ballots will be provided later in the night.

Questions?

Contact the Elections Division at 617-727-2828 or elections@sec.state.ma.us.