

STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS

P.O. BOX 6486, ANNAPOLIS, MD 21401-0486 PHONE (410) 269-2840

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September 29, 2022

The Honorable Vanessa Atterbeary, Chair
The Honorable Alonzo Washington, Vice Chair
House Ways and Means Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
Annapolis MD 21401

Dear Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and the members of the Ways and Means Committee:

Thank you for the invitation to share information about the 2022 Primary Election. Specifically, you asked that I provide the following information:

1. Permanent mail-in list. How many voters have signed up for permanent mail-in status? How many of those voters voted in the primary?
2. Timing of return of mail-in ballots. What was the overall percentage of mail-in ballots sent out that were returned? Of the mail-in ballots that were returned, please provide a breakdown that shows the percentage that were returned: 1) during each week before election day; 2) during the week that included election day; and 3) during the week after election day.
3. Consolidation of polling places. In each county where the number of polling places decreased compared to 2018, how many of the closures were due to consolidation of polling places located in the same building, and how many closures were due to no longer using an entire building as a polling location?
4. Ballot marking devices. What percentage of in-person voters chose to use the ballot marking devices?

Before providing the requested information, I would like to provide a brief overview of the 2022 Primary Election. As you know, this election returned to our normal election process - that is, voters could vote in person during early voting at one of the 96 early voting centers or on election day voting at over 1,500 neighborhood polling places or vote by mail. Before the election, there was much discussion about whether voters would participate in a mid-July election. When all of the votes were received and counted, over 26% of eligible voters voted - this was the second highest turnout in the last five gubernatorial primary elections.¹

In-person voting continues to be the primary way voters vote, with 65% of participating voters voting in-person. Most voters - 477,357 voters or 47% of all voters that voted - voted on election day, and 172,364 voters (17%) voted during early voting. The percentage of voters voting during early voting is a significant decrease from past years and the lowest percentage since the 2012 Primary Election. Daily turnout trends during early voting mirrored prior elections. The busiest days were the final two days, when over almost 78,000 voters voted, and the slowest days were Saturday and Sunday.

¹ Turnout was: 29.72% in the 2006 Primary Election, 25.35% in the 2010 Primary Election, 21.80% in the 2014 Primary Election, and 24.25% in the 2018 Primary Election.

September 29, 2022

Before the 2020 elections, turnout by mail was around 6-8% of total turnout. About 35% of voters who voted in the 2022 Primary Election voted by mail. Almost 500,000 voters requested to vote by mail with almost two-thirds of these voters also opting to join the new “permanent absentee voting list.” Voters voted and returned almost 70% of packets sent. Although the usage of the ballot drop boxes was less than the inaugural 2020 elections, the boxes were still popular with over 44% of mail-in voters using one of the 287 ballot drop boxes across the State to return their voted ballots.

This election, however, was not without its challenges. A delay in census data resulted in a delay in the decennial redistricting process. In order to accommodate redistricting, the date of the primary election was changed from June 28, 2022, to July 19, 2022. This resulted in local boards of elections implementing redistricting changes while simultaneously addressing challenges associated with the date change, including the availability of voting locations for early voting and election day and confirming the availability of confirmed election judges while recruiting more election judges, and performing the usual pre-election activities and processing a significant increase in mail-in ballot requests. Anticipating that supplies, especially paper-based ones, would be difficult to find due to global supply-chain problems, election officials started procuring supplies months before the election. Election officials still struggled to find what was needed, with shortages of envelopes and “I Voted” stickers for mail-in ballot packets being the most difficult to overcome.

As requested, answers to each of your questions are below.

Permanent mail-in list. How many voters have signed up for permanent mail-in status? How many of those voters voted in the primary?

- As of July 19, 2022, there were 325,520 voters on the permanent mail-in ballot list.
- 221,090 of these voters voted and returned a mail-in ballot.
- 11,318 of these voters voted a provisional ballot instead of voting the mail-in ballot.

Timing of return of mail-in ballots. What was the overall percentage of mail-in ballots sent out that were returned? Of the mail-in ballots that were returned, please provide a breakdown that shows the percentage that were returned: 1) during each week before election day; 2) during the week that included election day; and 3) during the week after election day.

- 67.26% of mail-in ballots sent were received. See Attachment A for the percentage by local jurisdiction.
- The table below shows the percentage of ballots processed² each week.

² When a local board receives a voted ballot, the local board processes the returned ballot - that is, the local board scans the barcode on the outside of the envelope. The scanning process changes the status of the voter's ballot status from “sent” to “received” in the system used to manage the mail-in voting process. Ideally, the “received” date in the system is the same day that the local board took possession of the voted ballot, but in some cases, the processing of the return ballot occurs one or more days after the local board took possession of the voted ballot.

Week	Percent Processed
On or before June 12 ³	0.01%
June 12 - 18	1.22%
June 19 - 25	9.63%
June 26 - July 2	6.50%
July 3 - July 9	23.56%
July 10 - July 16	26.80%
July 17 - July 23	29.73%
July 24 - July 29	2.43%

Consolidation of polling places. In each county where the number of polling places decreased compared to 2018, how many of the closures were due to consolidation of polling places located in the same building, and how many closures were due to no longer using an entire building as a polling location?

The table below shows the counties with less polling places in the 2022 Primary Election than the 2018 Primary Election.

County	Number of Polling Places			Number of Closures due to:	
	2018 Primary	2022 Primary	Difference	Consolidation within Building	Building Change ⁴
Anne Arundel	152	142	-10	0	10
Baltimore City	206	193	-13	9	4
Calvert	23	20	-3	0	3
Carroll	36	24	-12	2	10
Charles	43	30	-13	0	13
Harford	61	60	-1	1	0
Howard	67	49	-18	12	6
Montgomery	236	226	-10	0	10
St. Mary's	28	21	-8	5	3
Somerset	11	6	-5	0	5
Talbot	11	10	-1	0	1
Wicomico	31	29	-2	0	2
Worcester	17	16	-1	0	1

³ Ballot packets for requesting domestic, civilian voters were mailed starting June 9, 2022.

⁴ According to the local boards, some of the building changes were necessary because the facility: (1) serves senior citizens (e.g., senior center, assisted living facility) and was available but would close in response to a COVID-19 outbreak; (2) available for the June 28 election date but not the July 19 election date (e.g., school construction); or (3) was not available for use in 2022.

September 29, 2022

Ballot marking devices. What percentage of in-person voters chose to use the ballot marking devices?

- 33.64% of voters used the ballot marking device to make their selections in the 2022 Primary Election.
- This is an increase from the 2020 General Election when 27.51% of voters used the device.
- The percentage of use varied by local jurisdiction. More than 40% of voters in Allegany, Caroline, Dorchester, Garrett, Kent, Montgomery, Queen Anne's, Talbot, and Wicomico Counties marked their ballots using the device.

As we did for the 2020 elections, we will issue a comprehensive report on the 2022 Primary Election. The report will include the information we shared today and more detailed information about election preparation activities, in person voting, voting by mail, election results, recounts, and audits. The report is undergoing a final review, and I expect that it will be posted to our [online Press Room](#) tomorrow.

Lastly, I would like to recognize election officials across the State for successfully administering this election. It certainly had its challenges with a changed election date, shorter than usual time to implement redistricting plans, and return to a "normal" election with a significant increase in the number of mail-in ballots. All elections require a tremendous amount of work, but this one required even more than normal - and Maryland's election officials did what was necessary to administer this election successfully. I would like to publicly thank them for their service and dedication and their family for supporting their work.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this information.

September 29, 2022

Attachment A: Ballots Sent, Received, Accepted, and Rejected

County	Ballots Sent	Percentage of Ballots Received	Percentage of Ballots Accepted	Percentage of Ballots Rejected
Allegany	4,036	71.78%	99.38%	0.62%
Anne Arundel	46,112	70.28%	99.24%	0.76%
Baltimore City	51,890	66.64%	98.46%	1.54%
Baltimore County	73,281	67.95%	99.26%	0.74%
Calvert	8,845	66.67%	99.39%	0.61%
Caroline	1,204	73.92%	99.55%	0.45%
Carroll	14,298	68.18%	99.31%	0.69%
Cecil	5,862	61.17%	98.72%	1.28%
Charles	12,103	65.11%	99.11%	0.89%
Dorchester	2,026	74.88%	99.21%	0.79%
Frederick	24,001	65.31%	99.04%	0.96%
Garrett	1,684	71.50%	98.75%	1.25%
Harford	17,820	67.88%	99.41%	0.59%
Howard	32,338	63.60%	98.93%	1.07%
Kent	1,758	72.92%	99.53%	0.47%
Montgomery	118,573	63.87%	98.69%	1.31%
Prince George's	65,431	72.13%	99.03%	0.97%
Queen Anne's	3,550	64.25%	99.04%	0.96%
St. Mary's	7,466	66.25%	99.66%	0.34%
Somerset	966	72.67%	99.43%	0.57%
Talbot	3,334	76.24%	99.41%	0.59%
Washington	8,114	72.86%	99.44%	0.56%
Wicomico	5,928	69.55%	99.05%	0.95%
Worcester	3,959	67.29%	99.36%	0.64%
Statewide	514,579	67.26%	99.00%	1.00%

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Nikki Charlson
Deputy Administrator

To: Members of the State Board of Elections

From: Jared DeMarinis
Director of Candidacy and Campaign Finance

Date: October 26, 2022

Re: International Observation Missions

This memorandum serves as notice to the State Board that two international organizations will be conducting election observation missions in Maryland. The international monitors are designated as watchers to enable them to observe polling places during the 2022 General Election. The two organizations are Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Nigerian media under the auspices of the Washington Foreign Press Center, Bureau of Global Public Affairs, U.S. State Department, Media Co-Ops Program, Both organizations have been fully vetted by the U.S. State Department. The designated individuals must follow the same rules and regulations as other challengers and watchers, including those appointed by political parties. Additionally, the individuals must follow all COVID-19 protocols for entry into the United States and observe social distancing at the vote centers.

The delegation of the authority to designate challengers and watchers for future requests to the State Administrator first occurred in October 2016 and was reaffirmed for the 2018 General Election and 2020 General Election. The delegation of the authority is contingent that (1) international observers have the approval of the U.S. Department of State, any governmental agency to which the State Administrator is referred by the U.S. Department of State, and any other appropriate U.S. governmental entity; and (2) the members of the State Board of Elections are provided notice by email of the designation.

Maryland Matters

As democracy report finds Md. is a national leader in voting integrity, a nonpartisan election observer prepares for Nov. 8

By Rosanne Skirble

October 23, 2022

Maryland ranks second in election integrity [according to a report released recently](#) by the Democracy Initiative Education Fund, a coalition of 75 civil rights, environmental and civic organizations dedicated to building democracy. The score card reflects all aspects of the voting process, from registering to vote and casting a ballot, to confidence that the vote would be counted accurately and safely.

This doesn't surprise Barbara Sanders from Silver Spring, who after a career as a reference librarian for the United States Information Agency, tasked with explaining American life abroad, has directed her energy to the Montgomery County non-partisan League of Women Voters. There she has headed efforts to produce the group's popular Election Voters' Guide and chaired the Making Democracy Work Committee.

"I don't like partisan politics," she said. "I like the process side of it better and ensuring that people have the information that they need, and know why it's important to vote."

For over 20 years or 10 voting cycles, as she likes to frame it, during primary, general, and special elections, she has gone to polling places as a volunteer contractor for the Montgomery County Board of Elections. She started in 2002 with a two-page evaluation form, which has grown to eight pages today. Observers like her fan out to 1,500 polling places and early voting centers across Maryland, taking part in the Polling Place Evaluation Program, mandated by state government since 2000.

Over four years, each local board must have evaluated all of their Election Day polling places. For each primary/general election cycle, the local board must evaluate 50% of their polling places. The recommendation is to evaluate 25% of their polling places in a primary election and a different 25% in a general election.

Sanders attends regular training sessions, including one on the current election, and often one for judges, so she knows their jobs too. On this Election Day she will make stops at six polling places, spending about an hour at each to complete the extensive survey.

Systematic, standardized review

Sanders starts outside, checking that the polling place is accessible and that the “No Electioneering” zone is clearly marked with partisan campaigners well outside it. Once inside she checks in with the election judge and methodically fills out the form.

“We have general questions for the chief judge about how things are going, and letting them know if there are any discrepancies on the outside,” she said. After that she follows a voter, staying clear not to interfere with what’s happening.

“It’s any number of very detailed processes, [some] that are totally not seen by voters as they walk through a polling place,” Sanders said. You might not notice the tamper proof tape on voting machines assuring that the equipment is secure, she said, or that the Zero Reports had been posted, showing the count as zero at the beginning when the scanner was turned on.

Sanders says poll workers and the public welcome this oversight. “The judges are generally very receptive, especially if they’ve had any problems. They see us as a resource for working something out,” she said.

So does the State Board of Elections, which oversees federal, state and county elections, and is responsible for monitoring compliance with laws for access, election systems and data, assuring Maryland’s 4 million voters that that the process is secure.

“We’re constantly looking at ways to make sure that we’re implementing it in accordance with federal guidelines, as well as making sure that all of the procedures are appropriate and are maintaining the security and integrity that we want in the system,” said State Board of Elections Deputy Administrator, Nikki Charlson. The Polling Place Evaluation Program evaluations are among the 15 criteria in the comprehensive audit. “The local election officials review them and send them to us and we review them and look for areas of concern,” she said.

Maryland legislature expands access

In 2021, 19 states passed 34 laws to restrict voting rights, according to the Brennan Center for Justice. Charlson says, as those restrictive policies have been enacted, Maryland has improved access. “The legislature is responsible for automatic voter registration, [and] for same day registration. They passed bills that expanded voting in correctional facilities for eligible individuals,” she said.

The state also has extended early voting, allows voters to join a permanent absentee ballot/mail-in ballot list, and offers prepaid postage when they do.

Acknowledging that Maryland is not a battleground state, Charlson says each election has its challenges.

“I think that the mechanics of the election always need to be fine-tuned, but they work,” she said. “I don’t think there is any process in [the] elections that is not at least double or tripled or quadruple checked. And we do that because we want to make sure that it’s right, and voters can trust not just the result, but the process.”

Sanders adds that with each polling place evaluation, she comes away with the same feeling, that the exercise in democracy matters.

“I think it is a way of confirming the dedication, knowledge and intention of everyone within the electoral cycle to make sure that we have free and fair elections,” Sanders said. “And, it makes me confident and allows me to be reassured that our state is running our elections in a way that we should, and are opening it to everyone that is eligible to vote.”