

An Early Voting Update: Ohio's Record Voter Registration and Early Turnout

By: Katie Caprez

In just five days, elections officials nationwide will open the polls. It is likely that even before Ohio's 88 county boards of elections open their doors on November 3, half of Ohio's registered voters will have already cast their ballots.

In Ohio, the first Tuesday in November is the exclamation point at the end of weeks and weeks of in-person and absentee voting. This year's early voting period began on Tuesday, October 6. It will continue through close of business on Monday, November 2.

As of writing, [27 percent of Ohio's registered voters had already voted](#). That's more than two million of the 8,080,050 Ohioans who registered to vote in this November's election.

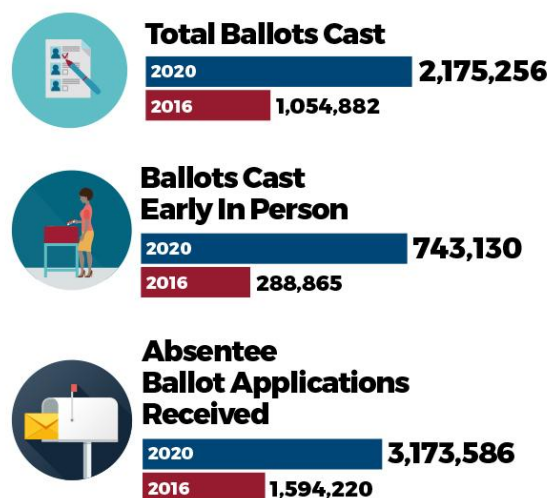
The last time Ohio saw more than eight million Ohioans registered to vote was 2008 – the precedent-breaking, culture-rocking presidential matchup between then-Senator Barack Obama and the late Senator John McCain.

LaRose, Ohio's top election official, took great pains in the months since the pandemic began to educate would-be voters about registration, deadlines, and voting options. Between LaRose's efforts, which included partnering with Ohio breweries, barbershops, and Kroger stores, and the [increased voter enthusiasm which has swept the nation](#), Ohio's Boards of Elections are processing millions more "early votes" than they had last year.

Counties across the state have seen miles-long lines of socially-distanced early voters waiting to cast their vote, and with five days to go, Ohio has passed the 2016 early vote total – that is to say, **more Ohioans have already voted early in the 2020 election as they did in the entire early voting period in 2016.**

With so much activity happening well in advance of November 3, some might wonder whether the day will be of much consequence in the Buckeye State. It certainly will. While a lower volume of Ohio voters will stream in and out of polling places from 6:30 am until 7:30 pm, the day is recognized culturally as the "day of voting". The media, candidates, and general populace can be expected to proceed with the excitement and emotion associated with Election Day.

While Ohio law requires a "[voter verified paper audit trail](#)," meaning that an electric voting machine must also produce a physical paper printout verifying a voter's ballot choices, it isn't uncommon for a certain percentage of machines to fail, reducing capacity.



All Data as of 1 Week from Election Day



Additionally, local officials worry that disruptive activists may show up at the polls. While both presidential campaigns are, as is usual, facilitating [citizen observers](#) through official channels, there are worries that rogue “observers” may arrive on Election Day to intimidate voters.

Conversations are ongoing with election officials and law enforcement to have plans in place to mitigate any disruption of citizens casting their votes. Poll workers are being trained in de-escalation tactics in hopes that volatile situations can be quickly addressed.

When will we know the results?

Ohio law requires that each county’s board of elections report election results twice. They report first when unofficial results are provided to the Secretary of State’s office, and again when the results are certified.

Results for many races in Ohio will be known on Election Day or very soon thereafter. If an election result depends upon provisional ballots, which are not counted on Election Day, or on absentee ballots, which can continue to be received for ten days after Election Day, the final outcome may not be clear, and results may not be certified, until later in the month.

There is some irony in the fact that, in 2020, the final day that county boards of elections can receive absentee ballots is Friday, November 13 (yes – Friday the thirteenth).

While it is likely that the outcome of some state and local races will be unknown on November 3 and even November 4, it is certainly possible that we will know about the highest profile race – the race for President of the United States – before we know the results of all of Ohio’s Statehouse and local government contests.

The Washington Post recently compiled information about [ballot counting in swing states](#) which may be helpful to individuals interested in this information nationwide. Before reading, it is important to note that it is frequently known who has won a race before the election results are officially certified.

To find information about your county’s board of elections, including an address, email address, and link to the website where you can track your mail-in ballot, visit the [County Boards of Elections Directory](#) hosted by the Ohio Secretary of State.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact any of the listed professionals.

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