



THE LIFE OF A **Ballot***

***Maryland Edition**



How a Ballot becomes a Vote*

*in Maryland

Action taken by:

- Voter
- Election Official

As an election approaches...

Ballots are prepared

Voters choose how they will vote

Military and overseas Citizens

Mail-In Voting

Early Voting

Election Day

UOCAVA

Voters apply for a mail-in ballot

Mail-in ballots are issued in the manner chosen by the voter

Voters complete and return mail-in ballots

If needed, voters cure their ballot

Mail-in ballots are processed

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If needed, voters cure their provisional ballot

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Voters make sure their registration reflects their UOCAVA status

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Voters complete and return their ballot

If needed, voters cure their ballot

UOCAVA ballots are processed

Votes are Counted!



Mail in Voting

Voters apply for a mail in ballot

- Any registered Maryland voter may request a mail-in ballot with no reason required. There are three ways to apply:
 - A voter may go to their local board of elections and receive a mail-in ballot in person
 - Voters that have a Maryland driver's license or MVA-issued ID card may request a ballot online
 - A voter can complete and sign a mail-in ballot application that can be returned via mail, fax, email, or in person with an attached image of their signed request to their local board
- These requests may take about a week to process. Voters may also sign up for the permanent mail-in ballot list. In future elections they are eligible to vote in, they will automatically receive a mail-in ballot without needing to submit a new request each time.

Mail in ballots are issued in the manner chosen by the voter

- Once a voter's application for a ballot is processed, the ballot is issued by the method the voter chose to receive it (web delivery, fax or by mail).
- Voters who received the ballot by mail or fax will fill the oval to the left of their choice on the ballot with black pen. Those who downloaded their ballots from SBE's website can print the blank ballot and mark it by hand.
- It is important for voters to make sure not to sign their names or make any other identifying marks on the ballot.

Voters complete and return mail-in ballots

- Voters who received a by mail ballot are provided with a prepaid postage return envelope for their voted ballot.
- Voters who received a fax or web delivered ballot should use the envelope template provided in their ballot materials for their return envelope.
- We recommend that voters return their ballots as soon as they have voted. There are three ways to return a mail in ballot:
 1. Mail a ballot which must be postmarked on or before election day.
 2. Use a ballot dropbox in which a ballot must be in a dropbox by 8pm on Election Day

3. Hand deliver a ballot to a local board of elections or voting location in which you must deliver your ballot by 8pm on Election Day.
- Voters cannot email or fax their voted mail-in ballot.

If needed, voters cure their ballot

- This occurs when a ballot is missing a signature on the return envelope oath. Before the votes are counted, the board checks envelopes for the voter's signature, and if no signature is found the board will reach out to the voter to request a signed oath.
- Voters may then submit a signed oath back to the board of elections by 10 a.m. on the last day of canvass. If the voter does not provide a signed oath by the deadline, their ballot will not be counted.
- In Maryland, there is a Text2Cure program that allows voters to receive a text message prompting them to cure their ballot. Voters then click a link, sign electronically and submit their oath via their phone.

Mail-in ballots are processed

- Processing mail-in ballots is known as “canvassing.” Bipartisan members of local boards of elections meet as the board of canvassers and members of the public may attend.
- Canvassing begins 8 days before early voting starts. There are additional canvassing days after Election Day, but Canvass will not be held on Election Day.
- Teams of two people from different political parties review ballots, verifying that they were returned on time and that the voter signed the oath. If both conditions are met, the envelope is opened to ensure it can be read by the scanner. Should a ballot not be clear, the ballot is given to the local board where they will follow the regulations to define the validity of a vote.
- If a ballot cannot be scanned, a team creates an identical duplicate ballot that the scanner can read, with team members verifying each other's work.
- Examples of why ballots must be rejected include if they are not timely received, the voter failed to sign the oath or submit a signed oath on time, or a voter returned multiple ballots in the same envelope.

Early Voting

Voters cast a ballot at an early voting center

- Any person that is registered or eligible to register can vote during early voting.
- For both primary and general elections, voters may cast their ballot at any early voting center in the county that they live in.
- The process for early voting is the same as voting on election day. When a voter gets to the early voting center, they will check in to vote and cast their ballot.

If needed, voters cast a provisional ballot

- A provisional ballot is issued when there is a question about a voter's eligibility at the time they try to vote. Some common reasons for this include not being registered to vote, moving and not updating an address, claiming a different party affiliation and not providing an ID when asked.
- Provisional ballots are not counted immediately. Election officials start counting these ballots on the second Wednesday after each election. They will count as long as a voter is registered, eligible to vote by provisional ballot, and meet any other applicable requirements.

Early Voting ballots are processed

- Regular ballots that are cast during early voting are scanned and counted as part of the standard vote-counting process.
- Early Voting results will be included in the first batch of election results on Election Night.
- Provisional ballots from early voting are counted separately.

Election Day

Voters cast a ballot at a polling place

- On Election Day, voters must go to their assigned polling place between 7 a.m. and 8 p.m. If a voter is in line before 8, they may stay in line until they cast their vote.
- Those who are voting may bring children under 18 and any printed material, including a marked specimen ballot, to help them vote.
- Voters may not use cell phones, pagers, cameras, or computer equipment except to use as a translation device, proof of residency or ID, or review election information, and to record a digital image of their ballot prior to casting for personal use.

If needed, voters cast a provisional ballot

- On Election Day, a voter may need to cast a provisional ballot if their eligibility cannot be confirmed at the polling place. This may be due to a variety of reasons such as their name not appearing on voter rolls, moving and not updating registration, claiming a different party affiliation or if they had a mail-in ballot on record.
- Provisional ballots from Election Day are returned to the local board of elections with election judge materials on Election Night.

Election Day ballots are processed

- After polls close on Election Day, election workers secure all ballots and equipment at the polling place.
- Regular ballots that were cast on Election Day are counted by the scanner at the polling place as they are submitted throughout the day.
- Ballots and all materials are returned to the local board of elections after the polls close so unofficial election results can be generated for the public.

UOCAVA

Voters make sure their registration reflects their UOCAVA status

- A Uniformed Services voter is a U.S. citizen who is a member of (or the spouse or dependent of a member of) the:
 - Uniformed Services (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard);
 - Merchant marine;
 - Commissioned corps of the Public Health Service; and
 - National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- An overseas voter is a citizen who resides outside of the United States and its territories and but for residence, would be otherwise qualified to vote in Maryland.
- UOCAVA voters should verify their voter registration is current and reflects their UOCAVA status before each election. Voters can check their registration status through the Maryland Voter Lookup tool.
- Maryland residents who are serving in the Uniformed Services or residing outside of the United States, but still wish to register and vote in Maryland may do so.

UOCAVA ballots are issued

- Ballots are mailed, faxed, or can be downloaded from the State's website.
- We recommend submitting UOCAVA ballot requests as early as possible.
- Federal law requires that Maryland send ballots to UOCAVA voters at least 45 days prior to a federal election.

Voters complete and return their ballots

- The way a UOCAVA voter requests their mail-in ballot determines how they return them. If a voter downloaded their ballot from the State's website, they can print the blank ballot and mark it by hand. If they received the ballot by mail or fax, they will write with black pen, filling in the oval to the left of their choice.
- To return a ballot, UOCAVA voters must mail or hand deliver their ballot to their local board of elections, a ballot drop off box, an early voting center, or an election day polling place in the county where they live. The process is similar to the regular mail-in voting process, with no submissions of voted ballots online or returned by email or fax.
- If a voter is mailing their ballot via a foreign mail system, they must make sure that the return envelope has the proper postage included.

UOCAVA ballots are processed

- UOCAVA ballots go through the same process as other mail-in ballots, where local election officials verify that the ballot was received in time and that the voter signed their oath, then opens and scans the ballot.
- UOCAVA ballots that arrive after Election Day may still be counted as long as they are postmarked by Election Day and received within the timeframe set.
- Voters can visit the voter look-up website to verify the status of their UOCAVA ballot.