

2018 Gubernatorial Election Cycle

Voter Services Summary Report

2018 Primary Election

Registering and Updating Voters – This activity is driven directly by voter requests. A Voter Notification Card is generated and sent when the voter is registered, or a change is made to an existing registration record. While address changes are the most common updates, party changes increase in frequency leading up to a Primary Election.

Nursing Home and Assisted Living Program – Nursing homes and assisted living facilities with 50 or more licensed beds are invited to participate in the Nursing Home and Assisted Living Program. Under the program, bipartisan teams of election judges are trained and dispatched to participating facilities to deliver absentee ballots and assist the residents of the facility in voting their ballot.

UOCAVA Processing – Beginning in 2014, SBE instituted a pilot program that centralized the registration and absentee balloting for Military and Overseas registrants. Under this program, all Federal Postcard Applications (FPCA) used by military and overseas citizens to request ballots were forwarded to SBE staff for processing and all returned absentee ballots were also received by SBE before being forwarded to the local board to be canvassed. SBE received a grant from the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) to conduct the pilot program. This program ended after the 2016 Presidential Election. As a result, all UOCAVA requests were transitioned back to the local boards for processing.

Provisional Processing – Voter Registration staff researched provisional ballots, made allowed updates, manually inputted relevant information into the MDVOTERS provisional module and recommended ballot dispositions. After the ballots were canvassed, staff scanned and attached the provisional applications into MDVOTERS. After registration reopened, staff made all remaining changes to the voter's record. On average, due to SBE regulations, each provisional ballot is touched three separate times in order to complete all necessary steps.

Recounts and Petitions

Legislative District 16 and County Executive Recounts – After the primary election was certified, candidates in two different races requested a recount due to the close margin of the results. Unlike canvass, Election Judges cannot be utilized to conduct recounts. In order to prepare for the recount, ballots had to be separated by party, sorted into stacks of 10 and batched in to groups of 50, without being separated from the original ballot bin. Those batched groups had to be placed into folders and labeled and everything had to be staged.

A recount cannot be requested until the results are certified, but once requested, it must be conducted within 48 hours. Fortunately, both candidates provided advance notice of their intent to request a recount, which provided much needed time to prepare the ballots for the recounts. Because the final scope of the recount request was not known for the County Executive race, every ballot cast in the Primary Election underwent some degree of handling and preparation. Additionally, many of the ballots involved in the Legislative District 16 Recount underwent a second preparation process in order to be included in the County Executive Recount.

Petitions – Many types of petitions are received by the board of elections. Petitions can be statewide or county only. When a petition is statewide, only the portion of the petition that contains Montgomery County voters is processed by our office. Petition processing begins with batching petition pages into groups of 25 pages. After the pages are grouped, the petition must be “preprocessed” in MDVOTERS. This means an electronic template is created in the system that mirrors the actual petition. To do this, every page of the petition must be examined and each line number that contains a signature on each page of the petition must be entered into the system.

Once preprocessing is complete, Voter Services staff access the electronic petition pages that correspond with the paper petition pages. Each petition signer must be looked up, linked to the electronic petition page, and the signature must be examined to determine if it meets the verification standard. A code indicating if the signature is accepted or rejected is recorded on both the paper petition as well as the electronic reproduction. Finally, any registration updates must be performed and the petition page that documents the change must be scanned to the record. Three petitions were received and processed prior to the General Election. A statewide nominating petition for US Senate; a petition for a new statewide political party and a nominating petition for Montgomery County Executive.

2018 General Election

List Maintenance – Activities, such as cancellations, address changes and other updates are performed to keep the voter registration database accurate and voter information current. List maintenance is performed in compliance with NVRA, HAVA, State Code and State regulations. Sources other than direct voter requests drive this activity. Sources include returned mail, NCOA updates, Jury Commission, ERIC, DHMH and AOC Reports. Undeliverable/returned sample ballots are the largest driver of list maintenance activities at the end of each election cycle.

New Web Delivery Requirements – On July 1, 2018 a revision to the absentee voting law was enacted that requires voters who request an absentee ballot via web delivery to provide a Maryland Driver's License Number (or ID number), the date it was issued and the last four digits of the applicant's social security number. UOCAVA and disabled voters only had to provide a social security number. Because these changes were passed and enacted so quickly, a revised absentee application had not yet been approved by the State Board. The application was subsequently revised two more times to ensure compliance with the new regulations.

The changes resulted in a situation where most voters submitted an application that did not contain all the necessary information to receive a web delivery ballot. In other situations, the voter did not possess the required documentation, despite utilizing the web delivery method in the past. In order to ensure every voter received an absentee ballot, non-compliant applications were separated out and each voter received an email explaining the required steps or alternatives for their specific situations. If the voter did not response or submit a subsequent request, the voter was contacted by phone to ensure they understood their available options.