

Plan for Conducting the April 28, 2020 Presidential Primary Election During the COVID-19 Pandemic

At present, there has been no emergency declaration regarding the conduct of the April 28, 2020 Presidential Primary Election and there is no change in the schedule of duties that the staff of the Board of Elections are required to perform.

Hand sanitizer and Clorox wipes are located throughout the building along with posters reminding staff to wash their hands frequently. Workstations have been rearranged to ensure 3-6 feet of social distancing in all areas of the building.

The Office of Human Resources has directed at-risk employees to self-identify and apply for telework and/or liberal use of leave as needed. All supervisors and senior professional staff have been designated as essential.

All outreach events have been cancelled.

Future Vote training classes are cancelled and will not be available for the Primary Election.

No Board of Elections staff are currently approved for full-time or part-time telework, although the Information Technology Division is testing laptops to allow VPN access into MDVoters, with the expectation that some staff will begin telework this week. Staff is working with SBE to seek the permission to VPN work with the Maryland State Voter Registration database.

Upcoming deadlines include:

- April 7 - voter registration and party affiliation deadline (in 22 days)
- April 9 - deadline to provide notice of election (in 24 days)
- April 13 - deadline to complete logic and accuracy testing (in 28 days)
- April 16 - early voting begins (in 31 days)
- April 28 - Election Day (in 42 days)

On March 15, 2020, the Centers for Disease Control issued guidance recommending that gatherings of 50 or more people be suspended for the next eight weeks (56 days).

The lowest voter turnout in recent memory occurred in the 2012 presidential primary election, when more than 76,000 voters cast ballots on Election Day and another 10,000 voters cast ballots during Early Voting.

Encouraging Vote by Mail

The Board has begun aggressively marketing themes such as “Avoid Crowds-Vote at Home” and linking voters to the Absentee Ballot Request page that updates registration or registers the voter and includes an absentee ballot application.

On February 21, the Board’s public information officer began advertising the option to text “VBM” to 77788 to request an absentee ballot. This option was included in a variety of materials developed to advertise the three choices for how to vote – also including early and on Election Day – but it has become the primary emphasis of the Board’s social media messaging in the last few days as a means of social distancing and reducing the public health risks of mass gatherings at early voting sites and polling places.

Election Judge Training

All Future Vote Training has been cancelled.

Class sizes have been reduced to no more than 16 Election Judges in the classroom and many hands-on activities have been replaced with trainer demonstration to avoid multiple hands touching equipment and materials. After each class, trainers are wiping down every surface including chairs, tables, voting equipment and the touch screen surfaces of electronic pollbooks.

The confirmation notices that Election Judges receive prior to their training class have been revised to include the following text:

If you become ill for any reason, regardless of whether you were exposed to COVID-19, do not attend your class. Election workers who are exhibiting symptoms will be denied entry.

Follow the instructions to reschedule your class if you:

- *Have traveled outside of the country within the last 14 days*
- *Believe that you may have been exposed to COVID-19*
- *Have flu-like symptoms (such as a runny nose, headache, cough, sore throat or fever)*

Management is reviewing options for the use of online training software to communicate potential last-minute information or supplemental training to Election Judges.

Early Voting and Election Day

Board staff is working with every polling place to ensure that bathrooms are available and well stocked with soap and paper towels. Signage will also be posted at every polling place urging voters to make sure that their hands are clean and dried before entering the voting room, to avoid touching their face prior to washing their hands again, and to make sure that their hands are dry before handling their voter authority card or ballot.