

Provisional Ballot Resources

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General Sources and National Data

[NCSL Provisional Ballots Page](#)

This page provides general information about how provisional ballots work and an overview of each state's provisional ballot laws and practices. The Help America Vote act of 2002 requires most states to provide provisional ballots, but state laws determine how they are used. This source describes state-specific practices regarding when a provisional ballot is issued, reasons for rejecting/accepting a provisional ballot, and whether a provisional ballot is counted if cast in the wrong precinct.

[EAVS Deep Dive: Provisional Ballots](#)

EAVS collected state by state data on federal elections from 2006 to 2016, and this brief summarizes the main findings regarding provisional ballots. From 2006 to 2016, rates of provisional ballots issued and counted have been largely consistent, with provisional ballots making up 1.1% of ballots cast in midterm elections and 1.8% in general elections. About 79% of provisional ballots are counted in midterm elections and about 69% are counted in general elections. In 2016, 1.8% of all ballots cast were provisional ballots, and 71.1% of the provisional ballots were counted in full or in part. 75% of all provisional ballots issued in 2016 were issued in Arizona, California, New York, and Ohio.

[EAVS 2016 Comprehensive Report](#)

This report presents detailed data that EAVS collected in its survey on voting information in the 2016 general election. Overview Table 3 includes state-by-state data on provisional ballots.

King, Bridgett A. 2019. “[State online voting and registration lookup tools: Participation, confidence, and ballot disposition.](#)” *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 16:3, 219-235

From Abstract: “The analysis evaluates the relationship between state voting and registration online lookup tools and voter turnout, voter confidence, and the disposition of provisional ballots.

Findings suggest that voting and registration lookup tools are related to voter turnout and rejected provisional ballots.” Note: I wasn’t able to access the full article.

Weiser, Wendy R. 2006. “[Are HAVA’s Provisional Ballots Working?](#)” Brennan Center for Justice.

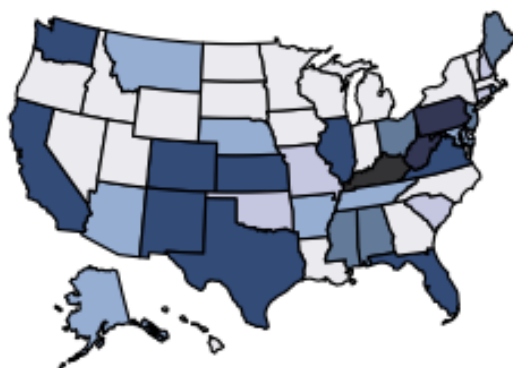
Focusing on data from 2004, Weiser finds provisional ballots do in fact function as a safeguard for voters who would otherwise have been turned away, but that there are still issues with provisional ballots. Over half a million provisional ballots cast in 2004 were rejected despite most being cast by registered voters. The report details some administrative issues that arose as a result of the novelty of provisional ballots to some states as well as administrative issues there already existed and were made more obvious because of the provisional ballot requirements. Finally, the report details reasons that eligible voters’ provisional ballots may have been rejected, including errors in a county’s voter registration list and rules that disqualify provisional ballots cast in the wrong precinct.

“[Can I Vote in Person if I’ve Already Received an Absentee Ballot?](#)” by the National Vote at Home Institute

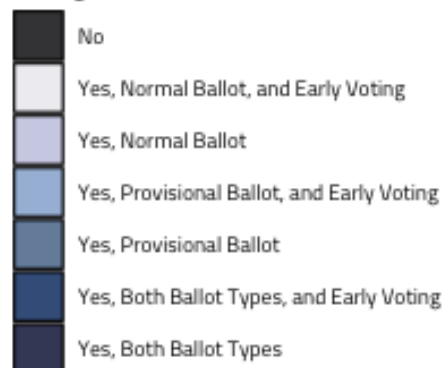
This article establishes that different states have different rules regarding whether a voter must cast a provisional ballot in person if they’ve previously received an absentee ballot. State rules are summarized in the following map.

Voting in Person after Absentee Ballot Request

Can a voter cast a ballot in person after requesting an absentee ballot?



Voting in Person after Absentee Ballot Request



Pennsylvania

Voting rules in [Pennsylvania](#):

- You registered to vote in Pennsylvania and are eligible in the election district, but your name is not in the voter roster and Election Officials cannot determine your registration status.
- You do not have an approved form of identification when you go to vote in an election district for the first time.
- For a primary election, voters who believe they registered for a particular political party, but the roster shows them registered as a member of another political party.
- Someone challenges your eligibility to vote. You may produce a witness to sign an affidavit to affirm your identity and residency. If you produce a witness, you can vote either by paper ballot or on the machines. If you are unable to or choose not to produce a witness, you can vote with a provisional ballot.
- Within 7 days after the election, the County Election Office will decide whether you were eligible to vote at the election district where you voted the provisional ballot. If you were eligible, they will count your provisional ballot.

[EAVS 2016 Comprehensive Report - Overview Table 3](#)

There were 26,451 provisional ballots submitted in Pennsylvania in 2016. 30.22% of them were counted fully, 0% were counted partially, 35.51% were rejected, and 34.27% were classified as “other”.

Michigan

[Within](#) 6 days after an election, for each provisional ballot that was placed in a provisional ballot return envelope, the city or township clerk shall determine whether the individual voting the provisional ballot was eligible to vote a ballot and whether to tabulate the provisional ballot.

[Your](#) ballot won't count if...

- You fail to bring the ID/residency information to your city clerk before the six-day deadline.
- You cast your vote in the wrong precinct.
- You weren't registered to vote or registered after the deadline.

[EAVS 2016 Comprehensive Report - Overview Table 3](#)

There were 1,891 provisional ballots submitted in Michigan in 2016. 17.87% of them were counted fully, 0% were counted partially, and 82.13% were rejected. The rejection rate was above the national average.

Wisconsin

There are two circumstances in which a voter is entitled to receive a [provisional ballot in Wisconsin](#):

1. A qualified elector who has been issued a current and valid Wisconsin driver license or identification card number registers to vote at a polling place on election day, but is unable or unwilling to list the number on the registration.
2. A registered voter is unable or unwilling to provide proof of identification.

[EAVS 2016 Comprehensive Report - Overview Table 3](#)

There were 752 provisional ballots submitted in Wisconsin in 2016. 20.21% of them were counted fully, 0% were counted partially, and 79.79% were rejected. The rejection rate was above the national average.

Florida

A Provisional Ballot may be issued for [one of the following reasons in Florida](#):

- Voter's name does not appear on the precinct register and voter's eligibility is unverified
- Voter refutes the Supervisor of Elections office confirmation that they are not registered or eligible
- There is an indication on the precinct register that the voter has requested a vote by mail ballot and the voter does not have a ballot to submit. Poll workers are unable to verify that the voter has not voted.
- There is an indication on the precinct register that the voter has returned the vote by mail ballot or has voted in the office or at an early site, but the voter maintains that they have not voted, even after a call to the Supervisor of Elections office (Elections Central).
- Voter did not provide picture/signature identification
- There is an indication on the precinct register that the voter has been challenged in this election
- Voter is challenged at the precinct
- Voter's signature does not match signature on record and affidavit refused
- Indication on precinct register that the voter's Florida Driver's License, Florida identification card number or Social Security number is not yet verified by the Department of State in conjunction with Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles

[EAVS 2016 Comprehensive Report - Overview Table 3](#)

There were 24,460 provisional ballots submitted in Florida in 2016. 44.96% of them were counted fully, 0% were counted partially, and 55.03% were rejected. The rejection rate was above the national average.

Merivaki, Thessalia and Daniel A Smith. 2016. “[Casting and Verifying Provisional Ballots in Florida.](#)” *Social Science Quarterly* 97(3):729–747.

From Abstract: “Drawing on a county-level data set spanning three general elections in the battleground state of Florida...Our findings suggest that voter registration maintenance issues in a county affect the number of provisional ballots cast and rejected. Most importantly, we find that counties with greater numbers of voters who register after the registration cutoff date prior to a general election (and who are thus ineligible to vote) tend to have greater numbers of provisional ballots cast and rejected...We find that the partisan leanings of local elections officials play a minimal role in the number of provisional ballots cast and rejected, which we hope will encourage scholars to scrutinize other local factors that might cause disparities in these votes of last resort.”

North Carolina

[NCSL Provisional Ballots Page](#)

- In North Carolina, common reasons for needing a provisional ballot are: the voter’s eligibility cannot be determined, the voter did not present the required ID, and the registration reflects an error in party listing in a primary election.
- If cast in the wrong precinct, the provisional ballot is not counted.
- “Vote counting at the precinct shall occur immediately after the polls close and shall be continuous until completed.”

[North Carolina State Board of Elections Provisional Voting Page](#)

This site describes NC practices regarding provisional ballots. In NC, ballots are partially counted if a provisional voter was not entitled to vote for all contests on the ballot. The site also lists all the reasons a person would be required to cast a provisional ballot. They are: if there’s no record of the voter’s registration, the voter moved without updating their address, their registration was cancelled, they did not present acceptable ID, the address is not recognized, they voted in the wrong precinct, they vote for the incorrect party in a primary election, the voter already voted, there is a jurisdiction dispute, and the voter voted during extended hours.

[EAVS 2016 Comprehensive Report](#) - Overview Table 3

There were 60,643 provisional ballots submitted in North Carolina in 2016. 35.81% of them were counted fully, 8.53% were counted partially, and 55.66% were rejected. The rejection rate was above the national average.

Merivaki, Thessalia, Smith, Daniel A. 2020. “[A Failsafe for Voters? Cast and Rejected Provisional Ballots in North Carolina.](#)” *Political Research Quarterly*, 1 March 2020, 73(1):65-78

Using county data collected by the U.S. Election Assistance Commission’s (EAC) biennial Election Administration and Voting Surveys (EAVS) from 2012 to 2016, and individual records of provisional ballots cast in the 2016 Presidential Election in North Carolina, Merivaki and Smith study why voters are required to cast provisional ballots and why they are rejected. The top three reasons for requiring a provisional ballot were lack of voter registration record, the voter had an unreported move, and the voter showed up at the wrong precinct. Table 2 shows reasons for issuing provisional ballots in 2016, Table 3 shows the demographics of provisional voters in 2016, and Table 4 shows likelihood of casting a provisional ballot in 2016 for various demographic groups. They also found that men and minority voters “were considerably less likely to have their provisional ballots validated.” They conclude that “provisional voting is tied to a county’s voter list maintenance practices...[as] counties with higher rates of inactive registered voters have a greater number of provisional ballots cast across the three election cycles...[and] as the percentage of newly registered voters and rejected voter registrations in a county increases, the number of provisional ballots cast in that county also rises.”

Morris, Kevin. 2020. “[Who Votes After Their Registration is Cancelled? Evidence from North Carolina.](#)” Brennan Center for Justice.

Note: Draft Paper

From Abstract: “By leveraging voter registration and provisional ballot data from North Carolina we identify individuals who were removed from the rolls between 2010 and 2016 despite no apparent change in their eligibility to vote and cast a provisional ballot in the 2016 presidential election. Although we find that minority voters were less likely than white voters to be removed overall, they were significantly more likely to cast a provisional ballot after being removed. Minorities who voted after being removed were also substantially less likely to have their provisional ballots counted than white voters.”

Arizona

[NCSL Provisional Ballots Page](#)

- In Arizona, common reasons for needing a provisional ballot are: the voter's eligibility cannot be determined, the voter's eligibility was challenged by a poll watcher, the voter did not present the required ID, the voter requested an absentee ballot and did not cast it, and an address or name has changed.
- If the provisional ballot is cast in the wrong precinct, the votes will be counted only for races which are shared among the precincts that the voter belongs to and that the ballot was cast in.
- Provisional ballots are counted 10 business days after the general election.

[EAVS 2016 Comprehensive Report - Overview Table 3](#)

There were 102,510 provisional ballots submitted in Arizona in 2016. 76.61% of them were counted fully, .01% were counted partially, and 23.37% were rejected. The rejection rate was below the national average.

[Arizona Secretary of State Website](#)

This site includes information on how to vote in this election, including the following reasons why a voter would have to cast a provisional ballot: 1) They moved without updating their registration information, 2) They voted at the wrong polling place, 3) They requested an early ballot by mail, and 4) Their registration is no longer active or they are not registered

Georgia

[NCSL Provisional Ballots Page](#)

- In Georgia, common reasons for needing a provisional ballot are: the voter's eligibility cannot be determined, the voter's eligibility was challenged by a poll watcher, the voter did not present the required ID, the voter requested an absentee ballot and did not cast it, and an address or name has changed.
- If the provisional ballot is cast in the wrong precinct, the votes will be counted only for races which are shared among the precincts that the voter belongs to and that the ballot was cast in.
- Three days are given for voter to prove identity or for county registrar to verify registration.

[EAVS 2016 Comprehensive Report - Overview Table 3](#)

16,739 provisional ballots were submitted in Georgia in 2016. 45.36% of them were counted fully, none were counted partially, and 54.64% were rejected. The rejection rate was above the national average.

[Georgia Voter Information Guide](#)

The section on provisional ballots outlines the three reasons for provisional ballots: voter is unable to present ID when voting in person, the voter first registered to vote by mail and never presented ID, and if the voter's name doesn't appear on the registration list in their precinct. A voter casting a provisional ballot because they didn't have the appropriate ID has three days after close of polls to present their ID. The registrar has three days to determine whether or not the provisional voter was registered.

Texas

[VoteTexas.Gov FAQ Page](#)

- In Texas, reasons for needing a provisional ballot include, if the polling place cannot verify a voter's registration, if they do not have an acceptable form of photo ID but may be able to get one, if they do have an acceptable form of photo ID but did not bring it with them to the polling place, and if they do not have one of the acceptable forms of photo ID, are not reasonably able to get one, and did not bring a supporting form of ID to the polling place.
- In order for a provisional ballot to be counted, a voter must go to the voter registrar's office within 6 days of the election and show either an acceptable form of photo ID, or if they do not have one, they must complete a Reasonable Impediment Declaration and show a form of supporting ID. If they do not have a supporting ID, they must submit a temporary affidavit if applicable or a permanent disability exemption if they are eligible.

[The Election Administration and Voting Survey, 2016 Comprehensive Report](#)

- Texas does not allow provisional ballots cast in the wrong precinct to be counted and, as a result, has a higher percent of provisional ballots rejected as compared to the national average.
- In 2016, 67,273 provisional ballots were cast in Texas and 81.53% were rejected. 18.29% were counted in full and 0.04% were partially counted.

Ohio

[The Election Administration and Voting Survey, 2016 Comprehensive Report](#)

- In 2016, 154,965 provisional ballots were cast in Ohio and 84.23% were counted in full, .94% were partially counted, and 14.83% were rejected.

[Ohio Secretary of State Website](#)

- States that reasons for casting a provisional ballot are:
 - your name is not on the official poll list for the precinct or an election official says you are not eligible to vote or your eligibility cannot be confirmed, you cannot provide proof of identity via one of the acceptable forms.
 - Acceptable forms include: “Ohio drivers license or state ID, military ID, other current valid photo ID, or bank statements, government check, paycheck or other government document from the last 12 months that shows the voters name and current address.
 - You are listed as having already requested an absentee ballot
 - Your name is marked with a note saying registration mailings have been returned as undeliverable.
 - Your voter registration is in question and or a hearing on a challenge to your eligibility will not occur until after election day or your signature is deemed not to match the signature on your registration form.
- If you cast a provisional ballot due to lacking sufficient identification then you must present an acceptable identification form of identification to the board of election in person within 7 days after election day.

Iowa

[The Election Administration and Voting Survey, 2016 Comprehensive Report](#)

- In 2016, 2,553 provisional ballots were cast in Iowa and 73.29% were counted in full, none were partially counted, and 26.71% were rejected.

[Iowa Secretary of State Website](#)

- In Iowa you can cast provisional ballot if you eligibility to vote is called in to question (ie. your name is not on the list of registered voters), you do not bring adequate Identification to the polls, or you requested an absentee ballot and do not surrender it at the polling place where you cast your ballot.

- If you cast a provisional ballot as a result of lack of identification, you have until the county canvass to show identification (the Monday after the election for primary and general elections).

[NCSL Provisional Ballots Page](#)

- This source also lists reasons for casting a provisional ballot in Iowa which are the same as above except they additionally list a poll watcher calling your eligibility into question as a reason.
- Iowa does not count provisional ballots cast in the wrong precinct
- A provisional ballot in Iowa will be rejected if
 - The voter is required to provide ID and does not do so by the deadline
 - The voter was not registered in the precinct they cast their ballot in
 - The voter submitted an absentee ballot and it was counted
 - The voter is not qualified to vote
 - The voter is inactive/pending and does not provide required ID