The 2020 Ohio Primary

June 25, 2020

Despite Ohio's 15 years of experience with no-excuse absentee voting, converting a presidential primary to predominantly vote-by-mail on a tight timeline proved challenging. The March 17 primary date was pushed back only a few hours before the polls were set to open, and election officials worked diligently to scale up mail-balloting by the new date of April 28. However, a time-consuming mail-ballot process, inconsistent information, mail delays, and limited in-person voting led to significant voter confusion across the state. Ohio voter turnout in this election was lower than in most recent presidential-election years, but this effect may be due to a noncompetitive presidential field rather than the conditions of the primary. Nonetheless, if the issues encountered this spring are left unaddressed, Ohio voters may expect similar confusion and delays in November.

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Summary

Ohio is not new to vote-by-mail: the state has offered no-excuse absentee voting to any voter since 2005. However, Ohio had to scale up a vote-by-mail operation that comprised 8.6% of the vote in 2016, to this year representing 85% of the total vote. Even with fifteen years of experience, expanding vote-by-mail on this order of magnitude did not come without its challenges.

At 10:12 p.m. on March 17, 2020, the night before polls were set to open, Ohio Health Director Dr. Amy Acton **closed all polling locations** for the primary election to help stop the spread of COVID-19. Ohio switched to an election system primarily run through the mail and extended the time to vote through Tuesday, April 28th. Limited in-person voting took place on the delayed primary day and was available at only 88 polling places, compared to more than 4,000 in the 2016 and 2018 general elections. Only voters with disabilities and those without a home address were permitted to vote in person. All other voters were required to vote by mail. In addition, voters who had not received their absentee ballots in time could vote provisionally in-person, as long as they had successfully applied for a ballot.

A time-consuming mail-ballot application process, inconsistent information, and delayed mail led to significant voter confusion across the state. Some voters who applied for ballots but never received them donned masks and gloves to vote in person at their county board of elections (BOE). BOE staff worked overtime to ensure that ballots were mailed to voters on time and counted on election night. Lines at Ohio's 88 polling places were shorter than many feared, and in-person voting was conducted in compliance with CDC social distancing and sanitation guidelines. However, the mail-ballot delays are a potential sign of challenges .

This year's turnout of 22.65% of registered voters is significantly lower than the 2016 primary—which drew in 43.66% of registered voters—but it is comparable to turnout in 2012, when ballots were cast by 25.52% of registered voters. It is unclear how much of this effect is due to a noncompetitive presidential field rather than the conditions of the primary. Nonetheless, politicians

on both sides of the aisle agree that significant changes need to be made in Ohio to prepare for November.

This analysis highlights five key obstacles from Ohio's experience:

1. **Confusion and operational burdens regarding mail ballot applications:** Ohio law prohibits sending ballots or even ballot applications directly to voters. Voters must apply to vote absentee, even though no excuse is needed. This extra step created confusion and significant operational burdens for county BOEs.

2. **Multiple trips through the mail:** Ohio conducted a multi-step ballot application process through the Postal Service, which involved up to five trips through the mail. This system, coupled with USPS delays, led to voters not receiving their ballots in time to vote before Ohio's deadline.

3. **Confusion as to the date of the primary:** Many voters thought the primary was delayed until June 2nd, as originally announced, and not April 28th, per the bill passed by the Ohio General Assembly. In addition, many county BOEs delivered inconsistent information on their websites about voting in person.

4. **Resource constraints:** Limited local resources and staff at the Boards of Elections led to delays.

5. **Limited in-person voting:** Only 88 locations across the state allowed in-person voting, and only for a small group of individuals. Ohioans who showed up to vote in-person but had not applied for a ballot later had their votes discarded.

Key Resources:

- [VoteOhio.gov](#): Ohio Secretary of State's voter page
- [Ohio 2020 Elections Calendar](#) (including COVID-19 delays)
- [Vote.org Ohio Election Center](#): information and deadlines for absentee voting, early voting, and election day
- [WOSU Voting Guide](#): ballot information and deadlines

Relevant Ohio Election Laws Summary ([Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights](#))

Citation in Ohio Rev. Code	Law

§ 3503.19	*Voter Registration Deadline*: 30 days before Election Day (in person, by mail, or online)
§ 3509.02	*Qualifying for Mail-In / Absentee Ballot*: No excuse needed
§ 3509.03.	*Absentee Application Deadline*: 3 days prior to Election Day
§ 3509.05	*Absentee Ballot Submission By Mail Deadline*: Postmarked 1 day before Election Day and received 10 days after Election Day.
§ 3509.05	*Method for Returning Ballots*: By mail or in-person to the county board of elections. A family member of the absentee elector may deliver the ballot.
§ 3509.03 § 3509.04 § 3509.06	*Mail-in Verification*: Voters must complete an affidavit on the absentee ballot envelope which requires submission of the voter's driver's license number or last four digits of the voter's social security number. Election authorities compare the voter's signature on the absentee ballot envelope to the voter's signature on his or her registration form, to verify the voter's identity. Additionally, the envelope will be deemed incomplete if it does not include the voter's name, address, date of birth, the voter's signature, and a driver's license number, last four digits of a social security number, or a copy of a valid photo or non-photo ID.

I.   Background to Ohio's April 28 Primary Election

A. Elections in Play

Ohio held a primary election on April 28th for President, U.S. Congress, state judiciary, and Ohio general assembly. [The election results are here](). The primary ballots in Ohio were finalized on January 7th, so ballots included names of candidates no longer running in the presidential primary. Ballots also included primaries for Ohio's sixteen Congressional seats and two Ohio Supreme Court seats. Although the Democratic primaries in OH-01 and OH-03 were [competitive](), the statewide elections were not. Finally, ballots included many local races, including several prominent school levies. For example: [Hamilton Co. Local Results]().

B. Ohio Government's Response to COVID-19

Ohio's response to the coronavirus pandemic set the stage for the vacillating government planning around the primary election. On March 22nd, Amy Acton MD, MPH, Director of the Ohio Department of Health, issued a strict, statewide [stay-at-home order](). The order immediately stopped non-essential business in the state and mandated that all citizens shelter-in-place. Exceptions to the stay-at-home order included essential work, grocery store trips, and exercise while maintaining social distancing. At the time of the order, there were about 2,500 confirmed cases in the state, and 12 people had died.

On April 30th, Dr. Acton [extended]() the same guidelines in the original stay-at-home order to May 30th. The state also started the [Responsible RestartOhio]() campaign. The campaign permits [certain businesses]() to reopen if employees meet state requirements, including wearing masks, staying six feet apart, sanitizing their workplaces, and doing daily symptom checks. It also contains extensive public health information, including contact tracing, responsible mask protocols, and even mental health resources.

Ohio's primary election was set to be held on March 17th. At the time, there were about 1,350 confirmed cases and 1 death. On the date of the delayed primary, April 28th, there were about [19,300 confirmed cases and 1,100 deaths]().

C. Delaying the Primary

Once the health dangers to voters became apparent, Ohio delayed the date of its primary. However, disagreements among the relevant Ohio officials were only resolved the day before the scheduled primary.

The statutory power to move a primary election in Ohio lies with the state legislature. However, on March 16th, the day before the scheduled primary, the legislature had not taken any action to reschedule the election. [At the request]() of **Governor Mike DeWine**, a group of private citizens [filed suit]() in the **Franklin County Court of Common Pleas** on behalf of elderly and immunocompromised voters. Just after 7:00 PM on March 16th, **Judge Richard Frye** [rejected a request]() for a temporary restraining order that would have delayed the primary until June 2nd, citing the "[terrible precedent]()" it would set and lack of medical evidence that health conditions would permit the primary to take place on June 2nd.

Despite Judge Frye's ruling, the Governor [pushed ahead]() for the delay. Shortly after 10:00 PM on March 16th, Governor DeWine [announced]() that **Department of Health Director Dr. Amy**

Acton would issue an order that polls would be closed the next day. The [order](#) cites the state of health emergency in Ohio. In response to this announcement, **Corey Speweik**, a candidate for judicial office in Wood County, filed a [complaint](#) in the state Supreme Court, alleging the delay of the primary violated Ohio election laws and separation of powers. By 4:00 AM on March 17th, the **Ohio Supreme Court** had [rejected](#) the challenge, [allowing Dr. Acton's order to stand](#). Some confused voters still [showed up to the polls](#) later that morning.

Following up on Dr. Acton's order, Secretary of State Frank LaRose instructed election officials that the primary would be [postponed until June 2nd](#). Gov. DeWine had also invoked this June 2nd primary date. The **Ohio Democratic Party** [filed suit](#) against LaRose for perceived executive overreach (later [dismissed](#) as moot). Politicians on both sides of the aisle [expressed frustration](#) after the primary was postponed.

The relevant branches in the Ohio government initially disagreed over the logistics of a mail-in primary. The Legislature [rejected calls from Governor DeWine and Secretary LaRose for a June 2nd primary](#) and likewise rejected [Secretary LaRose's proposal to send every eligible voter a ballot](#). The calls for a mail-in primary drew [heavy criticism](#) from President Trump and some Republican Party leaders in Ohio. Eventually, however, the Legislature, Governor, and Secretary of State reached a consensus on the logistics of a mail-only election.

Instead of June 2, the **Ohio Legislature** [extended the primary](#) to April 28th in a bipartisan, unanimous vote. Education groups had [pushed for an earlier date](#), citing pending school levies and other local tax issues. On March 27, 2020, **Governor Mike DeWine** signed [HB 197](#) into law. Under this legislation, the voter registration deadline, originally February 18, 2020, remained unchanged. Votes already cast, either by mail or in-person, prior to March 17, 2020, would be counted as valid. [Ballotpedia.](#) The bill discusses revised election procedures in [Section 32](#) (pgs. 342-45). The bill had a few key changes from **Secretary of State Frank LaRose's proposal**:

- Instead of June 2, the bill extended absentee voting to April 27, 2020, and set the final date for in-person voting, restricted to individuals with disabilities and those without home mailing addresses, to April 28, 2020.
- Under the legislation, every eligible voter was set to receive a postcard describing the process for obtaining an absentee ballot application. LaRose had [originally proposed](#) mailing postage-paid absentee ballot applications to every registered voter who hadn't yet cast an early vote for the primary.

After passage of the bill, LaRose sent the postcard concerning absentee voting to more than 8,000,000 registered voters in Ohio. In Franklin County alone, over [851,000 registered voters](#) were

notified by postcard to call their local boards of elections, who subsequently experienced notable wait times in phone queues. Governor DeWine and Secretary LaRose also produced a [video](#) PSA promoting vote-by-mail.

II. Preparations for the Primary

A. Vote by Mail

Ohio instituted a mail-only primary, with limited exceptions for in-person voting. [The rules for voting by mail](#) were as follows:

- The deadline to register for the 2020 primary election was February 18, 2020.
- Voters could apply for ballots until Saturday, April 25th at 12 PM.
- **There were three options for applying to vote absentee:**
  - (1) Print and mail in [absentee ballot request form](#) from VoteOhio.gov.
  - (2) Call the county Board of Elections and ask them to send an application form.
  - (3) [Make your own](#): Voters who could not print their own form could write their information on a blank sheet of paper, sign it, and send it into their Board of Elections.
- Ohio law requires voters to present a form of [acceptable identification](#) to receive an absentee ballot. Ballot requests had to include an Ohio driver's license number, the last four digits of a Social Security number, or a copy of an acceptable form of ID, such as a driver's license or utility bill.
- All absentee ballots had to be postmarked by Monday, April 27th, the day before the election. Ballots could be received up to 10 days after the election to be counted (May 8).
- Voters had to attach their own postage.
- If a voter was unable or did not want to mail their forms, many county BOEs also had secure drop boxes at or near their offices for turning in ballots and ballot requests.

Check out our new Ballot Drop Box!

Our after-hours ballot drop box is conveniently located at the south side entrance of the Ashland County Office Building, at the corner of West Main and Cottage Street. Just pull around the drive, insert your ballot or any correspondence for the Board of Elections, and you can be on your way! This will save you time and postage!

Overall, 1.56 million absentee ballots were cast by mail in this year's primary, which comprised 85% of the total vote (and most other votes were absentee ballots cast in person). By comparison, in

Ohio's 2016 presidential primary, only 285,000 absentee ballots were cast by mail—8.6% of that year's turnout. Scaling vote-by-mail on this order of magnitude did not come without its challenges.

B. Polling Place Voting

The governor's stay-at-home order allowed for limited in-person voting on the day of the primary. In-person voting was only available at the 88 county board of elections (BOE) locations. None of the planned precinct polling locations were used for in-person voting. The locations of all Ohio BOEs are listed here by the Ohio Secretary of State.

- **Limited in-person voting** was restricted to voters with disabilities and voters without a permanent home address (including homeless individuals).
- **Provisional voting:** Those who requested an absentee ballot but did not receive one in time were able to cast a provisional ballot in person at the Board of Elections on April 28.
  - On April 17, the Secretary of State advised election officials to allow voters who did not receive their absentee ballots to cast in-person provisional ballots. However, most county websites did not state that this was an option, and other counties made **no mention of in-person voting** occurring at their BOE location.
- **Voting Location:** Despite in-person voting being limited to BOE locations, numerous county websites provided links to prior precinct polling locations which made it unclear where in-person voting was offered.
  - Information is not clearly stated on the Ohio Polling Place Locator. For example, the Franklin County (which includes Columbus) page listed several polling locations which were no longer open.
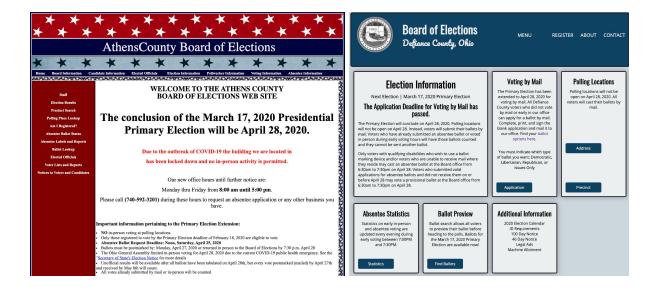
COVID Preparations: BOE staff were prepared to conduct in-person voting in compliance with social distancing guidelines. At the state's guidance, BOEs took uniform precautions, such as providing hand sanitizer for voters and masks and gloves for workers, sanitizing voting equipment after each ballot was cast, limiting the number of people allowed in the building at a single time, and enforcing social distancing guidelines. The state also promised to reimburse counties for hand sanitizer, personal protective equipment, and cleaning supplies and to provide county BOEs with masks for election workers.

Some counties went beyond the directions from the State. For example, Cuyahoga County planned to conduct health screenings on people entering the building. The board partnered with MetroHealth to take voters' temperatures. Anyone with a temperature of 100.4 degrees or more was

directed to outdoor voting equipment set up under a tent in the parking lot. The county health department also created plexiglass shields for election workers to put at the check-in desks.

C. Primary Preparations By County

Counties adopted somewhat different procedures to comply with the state's directions Complete results of the counties' procedures are presented in the Appendix below.

In-Person Voting:
- About half of Ohio's 88 counties either **did not mention in-person voting on their BOE website, or stated in-person voting would not occur**. Some counties stated "no regular in-person voting" would occur on April 28th, without stating whether or not there would be in-person voting for those who qualified. Others stated that in-person voting was an option only for people who (1) have a disability, or (2) have no home address. Very few specified that in-person voting would occur only at the BOE location, and not at the precinct polling locations. "Where to vote" instructions frequently led voters to their normal precinct polling location. Individuals may have been unaware that in-person voting would only occur at the BOE location in each county under the Governor's stay-at-home order.
- Some counties stated on their websites that **no in-person voting would occur** at the BOE location (e.g. Greene County, Morgan County, Muskingum County). No further explanation was given. Contrary to this information, our team confirmed with **Aaron Ockerman** (Ohio Association of Election Officials) that all BOE offices had an in-person voting option on Election Day, and BOE officials confirmed on the phone. Many made no mention whether or not in-person voting was an option.

- Hardly any BOE websites mentioned **provisional in-person voting** available for those who applied but did not receive their ballots on time. This may reflect the later date that provisional voting allowances were announced, April 17th, whereas HB 197 became law three weeks earlier on March 27th.
- The disparities across websites, present up until the new primary date, indicate that Ohio voters were receiving inconsistent information around in-person voting, which could have contributed to confusion before the election.

Applying for an Absentee Ballot:
- County BOEs took various approaches to ensure voters could receive an absentee ballot before the election deadline. Many BOEs required that absentee ballot applications be **returned by mail** and made no mention of the statewide policies of calling the BOE or sending in a handwritten application with a voter's information. On the other hand, some advertised a monitored drop box available 24/7 for dropping off applications and/or ballots.
- Some BOEs went out of their way to **make applications accessible to voters** without access to a printer. For example, some counties allowed voters to email the BOE to request a mailed application (e.g. Adams County). Others made applications available in the lobby of the BOE or partnered with local groceries to have ballot applications on hand.

County Innovations:
- **Hamilton County** had a user-friendly, informative website and YouTube videos explaining how to vote by mail. Absentee ballot applications could be picked up at 15 area Kroger stores.
- In addition to partnering with 37 Kroger stores across the county, the **Franklin County** Board of Elections created a self-serve station in the vestibule of their office to complete absentee ballot request applications. They also added staff to handle increased call volume and streamlined their automated phone capability to make it easier to get a ballot application. On April 7 alone, the Board's webpage and automated phone system produced over [2,200 absentee applications](#).
- A few BOE websites linked to **ballot trackers** through which voters could track their ballots and application requests (e.g. Cuyahoga, Franklin, and Delaware Counties). Ballot tracking technologies ranged from third-party providers ([BallotTrax](#)) to county-specific solutions.

County Concerns:
- Some BOE websites gave incorrect deadlines for absentee voting (e.g. Henry County, Crawford County).
- At least one county (Fairfield) revealed voters' personal information in a downloadable [Absentee Voter ballot tracker](#).

III.   Challenges Faced in Transitioning to Vote-by-Mail

A. Legal Challenges

In 2014, Ohio passed Senate Bill 205, which prohibits the state from sending **unsolicited absentee ballot applications** to voters except in general elections and unless the assembly appropriates funds for the Secretary of State to conduct that specific mailing. For this primary election, **mailing every registered voter an absentee ballot therefore would have been unlawful.**

On March 30, 2020, the **League of Women Voters of Ohio** (LWV), the A. Philip Randolph Institute (an organization for African-American trade unionists), and four voters filed a federal lawsuit in the U.S. District Court of the Southern District of Ohio. Plaintiffs sought to extend the primary election's voter registration deadline, to require boards of elections to mail postage-paid primary ballots to all registered voters who had not already voted, and to schedule a new end date for the primary election. The court refused to grant the requested temporary restraining order, rejecting the plaintiffs' arguments that the new law violated the National Voter Registration Act and the constitutional prohibition on poll taxes.

B. Logistical Challenges

Ohio voting rights activists criticized the state government for its failure to make the primary fully accessible. First, the state instituted its mail-in system just four weeks prior to the primary, short of the typical eight to ten weeks in primarily vote-by-mail states. Beyond this, the state's choice to require ballot applications overwhelmed the postal system. Secretary LaRose warned that first-class mail was taking as many as seven to nine days to arrive instead of one to three, due to limited operational capacities. In the Cleveland area, postal officials estimated that some ballots sent out on Saturday, April 25th would not reach voters by Monday the 27th, the day before the election and the deadline to return ballots by mail.

Voters without access to transportation and ESL voters were especially disadvantaged due to the election's public health precautions. According to Ohio's League of Women Voters Chair, **Jen Miller**, primarily vote-by-mail states have "drop boxes and vote centers throughout counties." Most Ohio Boards of Elections had a single drop box outside of their office, inaccessible to voters without access to a car and outside of walking distance to their county Board of Elections. The cancellation of

in-person voting also deprived ESL voters of translators. In the 3rd District, where 11% of voters are foreign-born, candidate **Morgan White** [emphasized](#) that the voting process would be difficult without translators: "it's not clear whether [ESL voters are] going to be able to get through this process on their own."

Ohio does not allow voters to apply for an absentee ballot online—an option available in [only 14 states and the District of Columbia](#). The state then had to deal with the issues endemic to conducting a multi-step ballot application process strictly through the Postal Service. From requesting a ballot application, to receiving the application, to sending in the application, to receiving and finally returning a completed ballot, voters experienced up to five trips through the mail for their vote to count (with each step taking 3-5 days). Leading up to the election, the Secretary of State's office attempted to make ballot applications more available for voters without access to a printer and to increase voters' use of the mail-in system. In addition to allowing ballot applications to be submitted on a blank piece of paper, LaRose worked with newspapers across the state to [print absentee ballot applications](#), which voters can "cut out of the newspaper, fill[] in and mail[]."

Secretary LaRose announced partnerships with dozens of public and private companies, including the AFL-CIO, and Cox Inc., to promote absentee voting. LaRose partnered with the **Ohio Grocers' Association** to make ballot applications [available in most member grocery stores](#). **Kristin Mullins**, President/CEO of the Ohio Grocers Association, explained that many of their retailers (from over 500 members) participated in the voluntary program. "In some cases, local Board of Election offices' delivered copies of the application to stores which made it easier for my retailers to simply have them available. Others took it upon themselves to print out the application forms for those customers who asked for them."

In addition, several advocacy and partisan groups took it upon themselves to deliver ballot applications—an activity the state encouraged. See Ohio's [2020 Primary FAQ](#): *"I'm a candidate, campaign or committee. Can I send vote-by-mail ballot requests to my supporters?"* For example, **Cleveland Votes**, a voting advocacy group, [delivered ballot request forms](#) to voters and placed them in restaurants offering takeout and other locations where voters could find them.

Other groups disseminated voter information about the date of the primary and how to receive a ballot, as many voters "still [thought] that Election Day [was] on June 2, others [thought] they [would] be able to go vote in person," Jen Miller told *[The Intercept.](#)* **Ms. Turcer of Common Cause Ohio** reported that volunteers working with the Ohio Voter Rights Coalition had helped contact 220,000 voters, and **Aaron Ockerman, director of the Ohio Association of Election Officials**, cited a 40-person phone bank in Franklin County.

IV.   Primary Results Post-Mortem

A. Summary

The suboptimal conditions that led to Ohio's delayed, virtually all-mail primary election revealed significant shortcomings that can be addressed before the November general election. On the one hand, Ohio is not new to vote-by-mail. Unlike the seventeen states that still require voters to provide an excuse when requesting an absentee ballot, Ohio has offered absentee voting to any voter since 2005. However, even fifteen years of experience did not prepare Ohio's voting system for an all-mail election, despite lower turnout associated with a non-competitive primary. A complex mail-voting process allowed some voters to slip through the cracks, while restricted in-person voting options offered little recourse. County Board of Elections offices were overwhelmed, and voters were sometimes confused about the process.

B. Absentee Ballot Process

More than 1.9 million Ohioans applied for absentee ballots, a 421% increase from absentee turnout in the 2016 primary, overwhelming county boards of elections. Many hired temporary staff and worked 24/7 to process all the applications.

The USPS warned there was a "strong likelihood" that ballots mailed out on Saturday, April 25th might not give voters enough time to receive the ballot and return it by the deadline on Monday, April 27th. County data show that more than 37,000 absentee ballots were sent to voters on Saturday, April 25th. Ohio's Secretary of State told county election officials to let voters who didn't receive their absentee ballots cast in-person provisional ballots, which were evaluated by officials before being counted. But there were only 88 places to vote in-person in Ohio on Election Day. By contrast, Ohio had more than 4,000 polling places in the 2016 and 2018 general elections, according to the U.S. Election Assistance Commission. In total, according to Official 2020 Primary Results, 135,223 outstanding absentee ballots were mailed to voters but never cast.

C. Voter Turnout

Although Ohio voter turnout in this election was lower than in most recent presidential-election years, **this effect may be due to a noncompetitive presidential field rather than the conditions of the primary.** According to the Ohio Secretary of State's Office, **1.76 million ballots were cast** in the 2020 primary from Ohio's 7.77 million registered voters—which is

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22.65% of Ohio's registered voters. By contrast, while Ohio turnout in 2020 was significantly lower than in the 2016 primary, which drew in 43.66% of registered voters, it is comparable to turnout in 2012, when **1.97 million ballots were cast** by 25.52% of Ohio's then-registered voters. For reference, Ohio voter turnout in the primary elections of 2008, 2004, and 2000 were 46.04%, 32.84%, and 34.90%, respectively. Ohio turnout figures are available for even-year primary elections on the Secretary of State website.

D. Mail Voting Experience

The last minute change of the primary date and the subsequent rapid shift to vote by mail caused problems for voters. Several voters went on social media to express the challenges they faced. Some were confused about the date of the primary: When Ohio's Governor and Secretary of State announced the June 2nd date on the original primary day, that date stuck with many voters, despite voter outreach efforts to the contrary. Several voters reiterated this concern on Twitter in response to a sympathetic Betsy Rader (D), state senate candidate in Cuyahoga County.

Other voters did not receive their ballots in time, requiring them to vote provisionally. On Election Day, Secretary of State LaRose reported on Twitter that "A lot of voters are dropping off their ballots at the county boards today, and that's fantastic news. It means our push for expedited mail delivery from the @USPS worked!" Cincinnati voter **Joseph Dalton** replied, "No, it didn't work. Everyone I talked to didn't get their ballots in the mail. We sent ours 7 days ago. Most of these people are in the same boat. The line now wraps around this building and down an entire block. What a mess." Joseph had put his application in the BOE dropbox on Tuesday, April 21 to make sure it arrived without issue. By Election Day, it still hadn't arrived. While it took him 30 minutes to vote, the line was even longer when he left, wrapping all the way around the Hamilton County Board of Elections. (photo)

Ohio voters were determined to make the system work. Canfield resident **Jimmy Dahman** drove 300 miles from D.C. to the Mahoning County Board of Elections to make sure his ballot was cast. He initially sent in his Absentee Ballot Application on March 9 before the primary was postponed. The BOE said he did not need to send another application for the delayed primary. The Board of Elections Officials "were super friendly and responsive,

but you could tell they were just totally underwater." Jimmy received another application from the BOE on 4/20/20. He filled it out again and sent it back immediately. His ballot arrived late on 4/27—the day absentee ballots were to be postmarked. So he hopped in his car and drove five hours one-way to drop off his ballot in person. Original tweet.

E. In-Person Voting Experience

In-person voting was conducted in accordance with CDC guidelines for social distancing, which was aided by relatively low turnout at BOE locations. According to an interview with **Aaron Ockerman,** the director of the **Ohio Association of Election Officials**, the Board of Elections vote centers in Hamilton and Montgomery counties sustained some lines for voters at opening, and Stark County had a small line at some point in the day. He added that most vote centers were not overwhelmed by in-person voters—only 45,000 ballots had been cast in person statewide, as opposed to well over a million in a typical primary. Likewise, the *Columbus Dispatch* reported that the Franklin County Board of Elections had manageable in-person turnout, citing orderly lines and poll workers wearing masks. Some Franklin County voters corroborated that they thought the process went smoothly and safely, calling it "efficient" and recognizing the steps taken by the BOE to ensure a safe voting experience.

F. Election Count Issues

BOEs were flooded with thousands of mail ballots on Election Day, causing delayed results across the state. In Franklin County alone, 20,532 mail ballots arrived on April 28, more than double any other day except one, which delayed counts due by 10:00 PM to past 3:00 AM in at least one county. In Cincinnati, more than 10,000 votes were cast Tuesday at the Hamilton County Board of Elections in-person and by-mail, which delayed results until after midnight. Roughly 80 BOE employees were working to tally votes—a time-consuming process that requires opening envelopes and matching signatures to voter registration records. While Ohio was able to publish unofficial results on April 29th, ballots postmarked on or before April 27 were counted as late as May 8th, leading to an expected delay in official results.

Some ballots arrived too late to be counted. On Monday, May 11th, Butler County Board of Elections received 318 ballots, postmarked on or before April 27th, from the U.S. Postal Service. That was four days past the May 8th deadline to count votes. Significantly, several tax levies across the county were decided by fewer than 300 votes. Secretary LaRose asked the postal service to conduct an investigation into why the Butler County ballots were delayed, what protocols weren't followed and how securely the ballots were kept while in USPS' possession.

Counting provisional ballots proved controversial. On May 1, [Secretary LaRose directed BOEs *not* to count in-person ballots](#) unless the voter had a disability, lacked a permanent address, or properly requested an absentee ballot. In a directive issued to county boards of election, he [ruled](#), "The provisional ballot is not eligible for counting if the voter was not eligible to vote in-person absentee under H.B. 197 and the voter did not apply for an absentee ballot by noon on April 25, 2020." There were [44,368 provisional ballots](#) cast during the primary; some portion of these will not be counted per this order. Before the election, LaRose had not made clear how the ballots of other voters would be counted, and his decision to "throw out votes" led three democratic lawmakers to suggest that lawsuits may follow. LaRose contends that he is bound by the parameters set in House Bill 197. According to Ohio's [Official Primary Results](#), 24,788 provisional ballots cast in-person were counted, while 10,160 ballots were rejected.

G. Next Steps

In response to confusion and delayed counts in the April 28 primary, support for expanding vote by mail [increased among both Democrats and Republicans](#). House Speaker Larry Householder joined Democrats and voting rights advocates in saying the state needed to prepare now in case COVID-19 derailed a traditional in-person general election this fall. Gov. Mike DeWine and Senate President Larry Obhof wanted to wait for more information before writing off an in-person election.

State Rep. Niraj Antani (R-Miamisburg), [tweeting](#) from the Montgomery Co. Board of Elections.

Ohio Secretary of State Frank LaRose has [proposed that several changes are needed](#) to prepare for a future election conducted mostly by mail, because "it should never be that difficult again." **LaRose's proposals include:**

1) Allow online requests for a vote-by-mail ballot;

> *"It just does not meet expectations in the year 2020 to require people to print a form and to put a wet ink signature on a dead tree piece of paper to fold it up, root through their junk drawer to find a stamp and mail it to their board of elections," [LaRose told the Columbus Dispatch](#). "That is from the last century and needs to be replaced with a modern, online absentee request system."*

2) Absentee ballot requests with postage-paid envelopes, and postage-paid envelopes for ballots;

> *"The legislature unnecessarily added an extra step to the vote-by-mail process by requiring the mailing of an informational postcard to every registered Ohioan instead of an absentee ballot request form with a postage-paid envelope as we recommended. Going forward, registered voters should be directly sent a ballot request form and a postage-paid envelope to return it. When it's time to return your voted ballot, that should be in a postage-paid envelope as well." –* [LaRose](#)

3) A realistic timeline for ballots to be delivered to Ohioans;

> *Instead of setting the deadline for requesting ballots three days before Election Day, "I have recommended that the deadline be set one week before Election Day. This change must happen if we want to give voters a fair shot at casting their ballots, abide by the logistical realities of the mail system, and not create unrealistic time expectations that encourage procrastination." –* [LaRose](#)

4) Enhanced election infrastructure and accommodations for in-person voting.

> *"I am committed to providing in person voting this fall, but to do so will require a consolidation of polling locations and a significant poll worker recruitment effort, while also following the necessary health and safety accommodations." –* [LaRose](#)

Democrats would go further than LaRose's proposals. They suggest sending an actual ballot to every Ohio voter, following practices in mail-only states such as Washington and Colorado. On April 29th, **State Reps. Michele Lepore-Hagan (D) and Dr. Beth Liston (D)** [called for action](#) on their bill for **universal vote-by-mail** (UVBM), [HB 560](#), cosponsored by 16 other Democrats. The bill would require ballots to be mailed to all registered voters with prepaid return postage and without having to apply for a ballot first. The bill also includes preservation of safe in-person voting opportunities. HB 560 has been pending approval from the House State and Local Government Committee [since May 5th](#), gathering minor [amendments](#).

HB 560 also proposes launching a **blockchain voting pilot** for overseas military voters registered in Ohio. The bill [proposes](#) that members of the military would transmit their ballots to election officials via "encrypted blockchain technology" that "protects the security and integrity of the process and protects the voter's privacy." The receiving BOE would then print out that ballot "for counting purposes." Notably, approaches like this have been roundly [rejected by the scientific community](#) as unsafe for elections in 2020, and [recent guidance by multiple government agencies](#) warns of grave risk associated with employing online voting technology without proper safeguards (blockchain itself does not address the security vulnerabilities inherent in online voting).

On May 27, the Ohio Senate [approved amendments](#) to an unrelated House bill ([HB 272](#)) that would stop any state official from changing the time, place or manner of the election, preventing a repeat of the March primary election delay. The amendments would also ensure in-person voting remains an option in the state. According to **Senate President Larry Obhof**, "The Senate amendments to House Bill 272 will protect the in-person election this fall. This bill reaffirms that the time, place and manner of holding an election are set by the legislature in the Ohio Revised Code, and that only the legislature can change an election date." The amendments must next be approved by the House.

Meanwhile, on June 4, 2020, [House Bill 680](#) passed the House. This bill, authored by **Rep. Cindy Abrams (R)**, [aims](#) to safeguard future elections and make it easier for voters to access the ballot. However, it proposes several changes to Ohio law that may cause longer lines on Election Day, [according to](#) LaRose spokeswoman Maggie Sheehan. These [changes](#) [include](#) shortening the timeframe to apply for absentee ballots by mail from three to seven days before Election Day, eliminating the ability of the Secretary of State to prepay return postage for ballot applications, and prohibiting any public official from altering the time, place, and manner of elections currently outlined in state law. It would make this year's presidential election the [first since 2008](#) in which the state would not mail an unsolicited absentee ballot application to all registered voters. [HB 680](#) also would eliminate in-person early voting on the Saturday, Sunday and Monday before the election, which has been offered since 2015 [under a legal settlement between the state, the ACLU and the NAACP](#). The proposal runs counter to the [plan by Secretary of State LaRose](#), who has sought to expand early voting for the November election. The **Ohio Association of Elections Officials** [said](#) barring ballot application mailings would lead to longer lines on Election Day, calling it "imperative" to remove those provisions, and advised that in-person early voting should be offered through the Sunday before Election Day. As of June 25, the bill awaits Ohio Senate approval.

In response, Democratic legislators **Rep. Paula Hicks-Hudson** (D) and **Rep. Bride Rose Sweeney** (D) introduced **[House Bill 687](#)** on June 1, 2020. This bill [aims to expand voting access](#) by mailing a ballot to every voter with return postage paid (eliminating the application step), counting

ballots postmarked by Election Day, protecting safe and accessible in-person voting opportunities, and offering greater access to voter registration. Unlike HB 680, it maintains the last three days of early voting and the mailing of applications to all voters. The bill is pending in committee.

Other proposals have come from outside the legislature. Instead of consolidating polling locations, **Ohio Democratic Party Chair David Pepper** suggested that the state could offer limited in-person voting in a safe yet accessible way by spreading it out among more early voting locations, instead of forcing long lines at BOEs.

In a recent talk at Ohio State University, Sec. of State LaRose also emphasized the need to **prevent the spread of online disinformation about elections and voting**, especially campaigns by foreign entities. LaRose hopes to address this issue with voter education efforts and working with leaders of minority communities, who may be specifically targeted.

The Brennan Center has advised that Ohio needs **much greater funding:** a total of $70 to $82.2 million to run safe and secure elections in 2020. The federal grant in the CARES Act provided only $12.8 million, on top of a $7 million grant from the state legislature for costs associated with extending the primary. Most of the estimated costs fall on local election authorities, who are responsible for covering the majority of coronavirus-related election administrative cost increases.

Additional News Articles & Reports

<u>**Before Election Day**</u>
- [Coronavirus: Ohio voter advocates worry about lines for in-person voting Tuesday](#) - Columbus Dispatch
- [Analysis | The Trailer: How the pandemic is affecting a primary challenge in Ohio](#) - Washington Post
- [Is Ohio Doing Enough to Make Its Mail-in Election Equitable?](#) - The Intercept
- ['More time would have been helpful': Ohio election officials face ballot issues due to postal service delays](#) - ABC News
- [Election night(ish) in Ohio](#) - Politico
- [Poll: Most Ohioans don't want mail-only election in November](#) - Cleveland.com

<u>**After Election Day**</u>
- [Ohio elections chief pushes for changes before fall vote](#) - AP News [LaRose's proposals]
- [Small changes can bring big improvements for Ohio elections in November](#) - Secretary LaRose Op-Ed
- [Ensuring Safe Elections](#) - Brennan Center [includes section on Ohio]
- [After a problem-plagued primary, Ohio leaders disagree about November election plan](#) - Columbus Dispatch
- [Ohio's mail-in ballot brouhaha: a sign of coming trouble?](#) - Center for Public Integrity
- [Coronavirus-spurred changes to Ohio's primary raise concerns about November](#) - Reuters
- [Ohio lawmakers, secretary of state at odds over provisional ballot counts](#) - Toledo Blade
- [How the storyline of Ohio's primary election changed drastically in just six weeks](#) - Columbus Dispatch
- [Ohio Lawmakers Propose Military Voter Blockchain Voting Pilot](#) - CoinDesk
- [Joe Biden wins Ohio primary, a test of mail-in voting](#) - CBS News
- [What Went Down In Ohio's Primary](#) - FiveThirtyEight

Appendix: Review of Procedures Listed on County Election Websites

Information from Ohio's Board of Election (BOE) websites was gathered in the days leading up to the April 28 primary election. Information on websites was not always indicative of policies followed; some website information may have been inaccurate or outdated.

County	County Seat	Population	BOE Website / Other URLs	Election Procedures + Analysis
Adams County	West Union	28,550	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/adams/	Follows state procedures. Includes no information about in-person voting. Note slightly different procedures for requesting an application (including calling): 1. Voters can find applications for Absentee Ballot Application on our website. Download and print off an Absentee Ballot Application and mail to the Board of Election's office. 2. Email a request for Absentee Application, include your name, mailing address, contact information and number of applications needed to adams@OhioSoS.gov 3 If you do not have access to print off the application below or email, please call us and leave a detailed message to request an application be mailed to you.
Allen County	Lima	106,331	https://www.allen.boe.ohio.gov/	No mention of printer-less ways to request a ballot. You must print and mail in the form on their site. No mention of in-person provisional voting. Website states: "If you do NOT belong to one of the two categories of voters described above, or if you did not properly request an absentee ballot by the April 25 deadline, then Ohio law does NOT permit you to vote in-person here today. Please do not enter the Board of Elections Tuesday. / However, if you have already properly requested an absentee ballot by the April 25, 2020 deadline and you did not receive your ballot prior to today you may enter the Board of Elections for assistance." "If you received a notice that your absentee ballot ID envelope needed additional information, you have until Tuesday at 5:00 PM to cure the deficiency."
Ashland County	Ashland	53,139	https://www.ashlandvotes.us/	State procedures. Must mail in application form. Secure ballot dropbox monitored by 24-hour surveillance, "no postage required."

Ashtabula County	Jefferson	101,497	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/jefferson/	Website states: "Voters are urged to use the drop box located at our Market Street entrance when returning voted ballots or bring them in to our office. Voters with the following circumstances may receive a ballot at the Board of Elections Office on Tuesday, April 28th: A voter with a disability who requires the use of a handicapped accessible voting unit. A voter who is unable to receive mail. A voter who was mailed a ballot but did not receive it." There is no mention that ballots will be provisional for category (3) voters, but fairly inclusive overall.
Athens County	Athens	64,757	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/athens/	Websites states: "Due to the outbreak of COVID-19 the building we are located in has been locked down and no in-person activity is permitted." "You may also access absentee applications by clicking here --> ABSENTEE BALLOT APPLICATION or if you don't have a printer click here --> TO MAKE YOUR OWN FORM or in the lobby of the annex building." "You may mail your application...or drop the application in the ballot drop box at the rear entrance of our building." Confusing website. No mention of how in-person voting works given the other warnings on the site; just a link to the state guidelines. Good news: applying for a ballot had lots of alternatives for those without stamps & printers.
Auglaize County	Wapakoneta	45,949	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/auglaize/	No mention of in-person voting at all. Website states: "If you would like an absentee application, please call our office during office hours at (419) 739-6720 or print one from VoteOhio.gov and mail it to...or use the drop box on the west side of the parking lot. Your request must be received in our office on or before noon on April 25, 2020."
Belmont County	St. Clairsville	70,400	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/belmont/	Seems to follow state procedures, although includes very little guidance overall. No information beyond: "Any voters who did not already vote may request a mail-in absentee ballot by calling 740-526-0188 or visiting VoteOhio.gov"
Brown County	Georgetown	44,846	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/brown/	Same guidance as Adams County (above) — slightly different procedures for requesting an application include emailing and calling the BOE. No information about in-person voting.
Butler County	Hamilton	368,130	https://elections.bcohio.us/ https://elections.bcohio.us/News_Releases/2020/NowWhatUpdate.pdf	State procedures. One polling location at Butler County Board of Elections. Stresses that "If a voter does NOT belong to one of the two categories of voters [disabled or unable to receive mail], or did not properly request an absentee ballot by the April 25, 2020, deadline, then Ohio law does NOT permit the voter to vote in-person on Tuesday, April 28, 2020. Please do not enter the polling location." Novelty: Partnership with Kroger. "Voters who are visiting Kroger stores in Butler County for essential supplies can visit the customer service desk to pick up an application."

Carroll County	Carrollton	28,836	https://www.carrollcountyohioelections.gov/	Follows state procedures. Prominent instructions for creating your own application ("no printer required!"). 24-hour application drop-off box located next to county courthouse. No information about in-person voting.
Champaign County	Urbana	40,097	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/champaign/	Follows state procedures. However, includes no information about in-person voting or creating your own absentee ballot application, and no information about dropping off completed ballots. Website states: "The Champaign County Board of Elections is currently closed to the public. A monitored drop box is available 24/7 on the south side of the County Administration Building for Absentee Ballot Applications, or you may mail them to…"
Clark County	Springfield	138,333	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/clark/	Follows state procedures. No mention of provisional voting option. Website states: "The deadline to submit an application for an absentee ballot was noon on Saturday, April 25th. All ballots returned by mail must be postmarked by Monday, April 27th. To return your ballot in person, please place it in our drop box no later than 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 28th. Limited in-person voting will be allowed ONLY for people with a qualifying disability who require the use of a ballot marking device and people who do not have a home address. All other voters were required to vote by mail."
Clermont County	Batavia	197,363	https://boe.clermontcountyohio.gov/	Follows state procedures. "If you are a resident of Clermont County, you can access the absentee voter application at the Clermont County Board of Elections offices at 76 S. Riverside Dr., in Batavia or online at https://boe.clermontcountyohio.gov/absentee-voting/." https://www.clermontsun.com/2020/03/18/coronavirus-delays-ohios-primary-election-county-board-of-election-assures-integrity-of-vote/
Clinton County	Wilmington	42,040	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/clinton/	Same as Adams & Brown Counties (includes emailing + calling to request an application to be mailed to you). No mention of in-person voting.
Columbiana County	Lisbon	107,841	https://www.columbiana.boe.ohio.gov/	BOE was closed to public: "The Columbiana County Board of Elections lobby will be closed to the public until further notice. . . . Columbiana County residents are able to drop off absentee ballot requests in the main office doorway to be received by staff throughout the day. Voters wishing to obtain an absentee ballot request from our office can also find those forms in our main doorway." No mention of in-person voting.
Coshocton County	Coshocton	36,901	https://www.coshocton.boe.ohio.gov/	Follows state procedures. No information on requesting a ballot or in-person voting.

Crawford County	Bucyrus	43,784	https://crawfordcountyohioboe.gov/ https://sites.google.com/site/crawfordboe/home	Inaccurate information on website — wrong deadline for absentee voting, wrong info on in-person voting. Website states: "Crawford County Board of Elections is not open to the public until further notice. April 28, 2020 is the final day of the 2020 Primary Election. Mail-In Absentee voting ended at noon, April 25, 2020. In-person voting for Tuesday, April 28, 2020 at the Board of Elections is limited to: 1) Voters who have a disability and who wish to use a marking device that is accessible for voters with disabilities, including nonvisual accessibility for the blind and visually impaired, in a manner that provides the same opportunity for access and participation, including privacy and independence, as for other voters; or 2) Persons who are unable to receive mail at the place where the elector resides or at another location. No In-person voting will be conducted at the Polling locations."
Cuyahoga County	Cleveland	1,249,352	https://boe.cuyahogacounty.us/	In line with state procedures. 24-hour secure drop box for ballots (deadline 7:30 PM on Election Day). Track Your Ballot (and application request) just like a package, updated daily. In the populous Cleveland area metro, there is only one physical polling location — at the Board of Elections, 2925 Euclid Ave, Cleveland. "Cuyahoga County Board of Elections Director Tony Perlatti said his office will also be doing health screenings on people entering the building. The board is partnering with MetroHealth to take voters' temperatures. Anyone with a temperature of 100.4 degrees or more will be directed to outdoor voting equipment set up under a tent in the parking lot...The county health department is also assisting with creating plexiglass shields for election workers to put at the check-in desks, Perlatti said." https://www.cleveland.com/open/2020/04/what-to-do-if-your-ballot-for-tuesdays-ohio-primary-doesnt-arrive-in-time.html
Darke County	Greenville	52,959	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/darke/	Follows state procedures. No mention of provisional voting for people who did not receive their ballots in the mail. No info on requesting a ballot.
Defiance County	Defiance	39,037	https://www.defiance.boe.ohio.gov/	Great site! Includes all the right information following state procedures.
Delaware County	Delaware	174,214	https://boardofelections.co.delaware.oh.us/	Prominent ballot tracking. Appears to follow state procedures. No guidance on application or in-person voting.
Erie County	Sandusky	77,079	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/erie/	Follows state procedures. Potential issue: no info on deadline for postmarked ballots. Website states, "Absentee voting by mail has been extended for the March 17, 2020 Primary Election until 7:30 pm, April 28, 2020," which could be misleading given the April 25 postmark deadline. Additional ballot application accommodations: "Absentee Ballot Applications are still available for pick up at 2900 Columbus Avenue, Sandusky, OH 44870. There is a drop box in the foyer of The Erie County Service Center at 2900 Columbus Ave., Sandusky, for your convenience."

Fairfield County	Lancaster	146,156	https://www.fairfieldelections.com/	Issues with this website. Could not find any clear information about COVID and extended election procedures, but there was a downloadable list of voters who have requested an absentee ballot for this election, as well as the mail status of that ballot... https://www.fairfieldelections.com/upload/content/files/pdf/AV_Update/av_update.pdf
Fayette County	Washington Court House	29,030	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/fayette/	State procedures. Minimal additional information — mostly links to state website. No mention of in-person voting if didn't receive ballot in time.
Franklin County	Columbus	1,264,518	https://vote.franklincountyohio.gov/	State procedures: Completed absentee ballots can be returned in person at 1700 Morse Road, Columbus, no later than 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 28th. Completed ballots can be mailed as long as they are postmarked by Monday, April 27th. Ballots postmarked on April 27th or before can be received up until May 8th. No mention of in-person voting if didn't receive ballot in time. New information is not stated prominently on websites; buried in inaccessible PDFs of press releases you have to individually download. Novelties: - Kroger is partnering with the Franklin County Board of Elections allowing absentee ballot applications to be placed at all 37 Franklin County Kroger locations. - The FCBOE has created a self-serve station at its office to complete absentee ballot request applications along with voter registration forms in our front door vestibule. - After info postcard sent to all registered voters in late March, Franklin County phone lines were jammed: "when over 851,000 registered voters are notified by postcard to call their local board of elections during a statewide stay-at-home order, there are bound to be some wait times in the phone queues and so patience is appreciated." - Bizarre that this long list of polling places is still live. Pretty sure in person voting is only happening at BOE office https://vote.franklincountyohio.gov/Voters/Polling-Locations

Fulton County	Wauseon	42,698	https://www.fultoncountyoh.com/1058/Board-of-Elections	State procedures. No number to call to request having an absentee ballot application mailed to you. No mention of in-person voting if didn't receive ballot in time. Update on website dated March 26: "This election will be conducted by mail, with no in-person voting occurring. This new date means that all absentee applications must be received by noon on April 25th in order for a ballot to be mailed. All absentee ballots must be deposited in our drop box by 7:30pm on April 28th or postmarked by April 27th and received by mail by May 8th." Then on April 21, website posts a correction that there are some cases where in person voting is allowed (the two original cases outlined: disabilities and no access to mail). Website includes a surprisingly upfront disclaimer that some timely ballot requests may not be responded to in time: "For ballots by mail, requests must be received by noon on Saturday, April 25th. However, it is important to send requests as soon as possible, as there is no guarantee that ballots mailed on Saturday will be received in time to return the ballot in a timely manner."
Gallia County	Gallipolis	30,934	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/gallia/	State procedures. Difficult to navigate website. Does not provide info about "making your own absentee ballot application" if you don't have printer. No indication from the website that there is any in-person voting option.
Geauga County	Chardon	93,389	https://boelections.co.geauga.oh.us/	State procedures. Website includes pages on Absentee Voting Information and Polling Locations that are outdated. No indication from the website that there is any in-person voting option.
Greene County	Xenia	161,573	https://www.co.greene.oh.us/128/Board-of-Elections	Information about updated procedures not stated prominently on website; buried in PDF press release that you have to download individually, linked at the bottom of the website. Alarming statement about in person voting: "There will be no in-person voting at the polls for this election. Please note: The Greene County Board of Elections is closed to the public as of Wednesday March 18, 2020 at 4:30 PM until further notice."
Guernsey County	Cambridge	40,087	https://boe.guernseycounty.gov/	State procedures. No information about make your own procedure for absentee ballot request. No mention of in-person voting if didn't receive ballot in time.
Hamilton County	Cincinnati	802,374	https://votehamiltoncountyohio.gov/	State procedures. An impressive website that is user-friendly and informative, accompanies by Youtube videos explaining how to vote by mail. However, no mention of in-person provisional voting if didn't receive ballot in time. Absentee ballot applications can be picked up at 15 area Kroger stores. Ballots and ballot applications can be dropped off at secure 24-hr drive-up dropbox located at BOE Office.

Hancock County	Findlay	74,782	https://hancockcountyohioelections.gov	State procedures. No information about an in-person voting option. Very accomodating provision if you're hospitalized on Election Day: "In hospital on Election Day: regardless of where you are hospitalized, you must submit a properly completed and signed request to the Hancock County Board of Elections by 3 p.m. on Election Day. To be eligible under this provision, you must be confined in a hospital because of an unforeseeable medical emergency. Your application must specify where, why and when you came to be hospitalized. If you are hospitalized in the same county where you are registered to vote, two representatives of the Board of Elections can deliver the ballot to you and return it to the Board Office."
Hardin County	Kenton	32,058	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/hardin/	State procedures. No information about in person voting is included.
Harrison County	Cadiz	15,864	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/harrison/	Thorough execution of state procedures explained on website. Lists two primary reasons for in person voting (disabilities and no access to mail) but not the special exception if you didn't receive your ballot in time. Also doesn't list that you can create your own absentee ballot application on its list of 3 ways of acquiring absentee ballot.
Henry County	Napoleon	28,215	https://henrycountyohio.gov/boe/	Alarming statement that apparently contradicts state procedures: "There will be NO in person voting in the office or at polling locations." Also, no information about requesting absentee ballot via calling BOE (and having them mail one to you) or by creating your own (and mailing to them, if you don't have printer). Information is not listed clearly or comprehensively on the website. Another misleading statement: "The deadline for receiving an application is Saturday, April 25, 2020 at noon. Ballots must be returned by April 28, 2020!!" Meanwhile, state procedures are that the deadline to **submit** a ballot application is April 25, and ballots must be **postmarked** by April 27.
Highland County	Hillsboro	43,589	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/highland/	State procedures. No information about in person voting.
Hocking County	Logan	29,380	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/hocking/	State procedures. No information about in person voting.
Holmes County	Millersburg	42,366	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/holmes/	Good info on absentee voting. No info about in person voting.
Huron County	Norwalk	59,626	https://www.huron.boe.ohio.gov/	Difficult to navigate website. Unclear/no info about creating your own absentee ballot application or calling their office to request an application. In person voting does not look promising: "The Board of Elections is closed to the public effective close of business on March 20, 2020 until further notice."
Jackson County	Jackson	33,225	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/jackson/	Very little information provided on BOE website—none about in person voting, deadlines/instructions for absentee voting—mostly links to State website. Unclear how many of the state procedures were being followed.
Jefferson County	Steubenville	69,709	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/jefferson/	Thorough execution of state procedures explained on the website. Does mention in person voting option if didn't receive ballot in time.

Knox County	Mount Vernon	60,921	https://www.co.knox.oh.us/boe/	Thorough execution of state procedures, all clearly stated on home page. Does mention in person voting if didn't receive ballot in time.
Lake County	Painesville	230,041	https://www.lakecountyohio.gov/lakeelections/	Details very clearly who is eligible for in person voting and key dates for absentee voting. No information about creating your own absentee ballot application or about in-person voting option if didn't receive ballot in time.
Lawrence County	Ironton	62,450	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/lawrence/	State procedures. Does include information about in-person voting.
Licking County	Newark	166,492	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/licking/ https://lookup.boe.ohio.gov/vtrapp/licking/precandpoll.aspx	State proceudres: Can request absentee ballot via mail or phone. If already voted, no need to request new ballot. A ballot will be mailed and it must be returned to the board of elections, either postmarked by mail on April 27 or hand-delivered by 7:30 p.m. April 28. Need to have registered by Feb 18, 2020 to vote. Provides outdated polling location info on website.
Logan County	Bellefontaine	45,858	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/logan/	State procedures. Does inclue information about in-person voting.
Lorain County	Elyria	301,356	https://www.loraincountyelections.us/	Website states that there will be no in person voting: "Absentee ballots dropped off in person can be placed in the Drop Box (south end of the parking lot) anytime before 7:30pm on Tuesday, April 28th. For the purpose of completing your ballot's Identification Envelope, the Primary Election date is March 17, 2020 even though absentee voting has been extended to April 28th. There will be no regular in person voting. No Polling Locations will be open on April 28th."
Lucas County	Toledo	441,815	https://www.co.lucas.oh.us/74/Board-of-Elections	Follows state procedures. Website explains: "In person voting for eligible voters is today from 6:30 am until 7:30 PM at: Board of Elections Early Vote Center 1301 Monroe Street Toledo, Ohio 43604 Absentee Ballots can still be dropped off until 7:30 pm today at: One Government Center 640 Jackson (Corner of Jackson and Erie), Toledo Ohio 43604"
Madison County	London	43,435	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/madison/	Website confusingly explains in person voting options: "There will be no polling locations open on Election Day, April 28, 2020. All voters wishing to vote in the Primary Election must vote by absentee ballot. There will be no in-person voting allowed at the Madison County Board of Elections on April 28th except for the following two categories: have a disability or no home address."
Mahoning County	Youngstown	238,823	https://vote.mahoningcountyoh.gov/149/Voter-Information	State procedures. Mentions absentee ballot drop box at BOE office.

Marion County	Marion	66,501	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/marion/	State procedures. Website states: "All ballots must be postmarked by April 27, 2020 or dropped off in the drop box at 222 West Center Street, Marion OH 43302 by 7:30PM April 28, 2020 to be counted." No mention of in-person voting.
Medina County	Medina	176,395	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/medina/	State procedures. Mentions absentee ballot drop box at BOE office. Mentions in-person voting option.
Meigs County	Pomeroy	23,770	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/meigs/	State procedures. Does inclue information about in-person voting.
Mercer County	Celina	40,814	https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Government-Building/Mercer-County-Board-of-Elections-745513515550487/	State procedures. Had their drop box for absentee ballots located on the north side of the Courthouse.
Miami County	Troy	102,506	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/miami/ https://lookup.boe.ohio.gov/vtrapp/miami/precandpoll.aspx	Website states: "All ballots must be postmarked no later than April 27, 2020 or placed in our dropbox not later than 7:30 p.m. on April 28, 2020 to be counted." Indicates, misleadingly, multiple polling locations.
Monroe County	Woodsfield	14,642	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/monroe/	State procedures.
Montgomery County	Dayton	535,153	https://www.montgomery.boe.ohio.gov/	"In-person voting for individuals with disabilities and those who do not have a home mailing address will only occur on April 28 and only at boards of elections early vote centers, not at precinct polling locations. The remote ballot marking system allows a qualifying voter to mark their ballot privately and independently. Need to contact county board of elections or fill out the Form 11-G online form. Only qualifying disabled and visually-impaired voters may also vote at the board of elections early vote center on April 28, 2020." Six polling places have been moved in Montgomery County: https://www.daytondailynews.com/news/local/coronavirus-concerns-cause-local-voting-locations-move/nWgQMa9ae6zSYZfdbNrZnL/
Morgan County	McConnelsville	15,054	https://www.morgancounty-oh.gov/boe.html	Election procedures align with state's. Explicitly says no in-person voting without any explanation for those with need. Voters can call 740-962-3116 to request an application. No instructions on where to mail-in/return ballot.
Morrow County	Mount Gilead	34,827	https://morrowcountyohio.gov/index.php/2013-01-11-19-24-05/board-of-elections	Election procedures align with state's. Mail completed ballot to: Morrow County Board of Elections, 619 W. Marion Road, Suite 146, Mount Gilead, OH 43338. The phone number is 419-946-4026.

Muskingum County	Zanesville	86,074	https://www.muskingumcountyoh.gov/Agencies/Board-Of-Elections/	Election procedures align with state's. Explicitly says no in-person voting without any explanation for those with need. Ballots must be mailed to or dropped off at 627 Market Street, Zanesville, Ohio 43701. Voters can check the status of their ballot at muskingumcountyoh.gov/BOE under the Absentee Ballot Links tab.
Noble County	Caldwell	14,645	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/noble/	Election procedures align with state's. No information on in-person voting. Ballots can be mailed to or dropped off at 140 Courthouse, Caldwell, OH 43724. Those without a printer can call the office and have an application mailed to them.
Ottawa County	Port Clinton	41,428	https://www.co.ottawa.oh.us/index.php/board-of-elections/	Election procedures align with state's. BOE website isn't updated at all. Voters can pick up mail-in ballot applications at local grocery stores. Ballots can be mailed/dropped off to 8444 W. SR 163, Oak Harbor, Ohio 43449. No information on in-person voting.
Paulding County	Paulding	19,614	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/paulding	Election procedures align with state's. Voters allowed to vote in the Paulding County Board of Elections office on Tuesday, April 28th: Disabled voters, Homeless (voter unable to receive mail at the place where you reside), Voters that have requested an absentee ballot by an application received by Saturday, April 25th by 12:00 Noon that haven't received their ballot. Ballots can be dropped off or mailed to 105 East Perry Street, Paulding, Ohio 45879.
Perry County	New Lexington	36,058	http://www.perrycountyohio.net/agencies-and-offices/perry-county-board-of-elections	Election procedures align with state's. No information on in-person voting. Ballots can be mailed to or dropped off at 200 S. Jackson Street, New Lexington, OH 43764.
Pickaway County	Circleville	55,698	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/pickaway/	Election procedures align with state's. Limited in-person voting at the BoE. Ballots can be dropped off/mailed in to Pickaway County Board of Elections, 141 West Main Street, Suite 800, Circleville, Ohio 43113.
Pike County	Waverly	28,709	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/pike/	Election procedures align with state's. Absentee ballot, voter registration information on county website links directly to secretary of state's website. Absentee ballot application can be downloaded from website, but doesn't indicate mailing address for where to send it
Portage County	Ravenna	161,419	https://www.co.portage.oh.us/board-elections	Election procedures align with state's. Absentee ballots must be postmarked by April 27, 2020 and mailed to Board of Elections office. "On April 28, 2020, there will be limited in person voting at the Board of Elections office only (449 S. Meridian, Ravenna, OH 44266) for those voters who have a qualifying disability or who cannot receive mail. In addition, voters who have been sent an absentee ballot, but have not received the ballot, may vote a provisional ballot."
Preble County	Eaton	42,270	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/preble/	Election procedures align with state's. Board of Elections drop box (for absentee ballots) is located at 101 E. Main Street Eaton, OH 45320
Putnam County	Ottawa	34,499	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/putnam/	Election procedures align with state's. Absentee ballots must be requested by April 25th and can be returned to 575 Ottawa-Glandorf Road Suite 2 Ottawa, Ohio 45875. There is an additional option to request a ballot by

				sending an email including your name, mailing address, contact information and number of applications needed to putnam@OhioSoS.gov
Richland County	Mansfield	124,475	https://www.richlandcountyoh.gov/departments/public_administration/board_of_elections/index.php	Election procedures align with state's. Absentee ballots must be requested by April 25th and can be returned to 1495 West Longview Avenue, Suite 101, Mansfield, Ohio 44906. Elections are mail-in only unless you have a documented disability or cannot receive mail at your residence, in which case there is very limited in-person voting at Election Board address above.
Ross County	Chillicothe	78,064	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/ross/	Election procedures align with state's. Absentee ballots must be requested by April 25th and can be returned to Ross County Board of Elections 475 Western Ave., Suite D – PO Box 1663, Chillicothe OH 45601
Sandusky County	Fremont	60,944	https://www.sandusky-county.com/index.php?page=board-of-elections	Election procedures align with state's. Absentee ballots can be requested by calling the "board's office at 419-334-6180 and election officials will send them a request form. Request forms also are available outside the board's office in a box."
Scioto County	Portsmouth	79,499	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/scioto/	Election procedures align with state's. Absentee ballots must be requested by April 25th and can be returned to Scioto County Board of Elections 602 7th Street Room 105, Portsmouth, Ohio 45662. Absentee ballot can be found on our website. Download and print off an Absentee Ballot Application and mail to the Board of Election's office. Or email a request for Absentee Application, include your name, mailing address, contact information and number of applications needed to scioto@OhioSoS.gov
Seneca County	Tiffin	56,745	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/seneca/	Election procedures align with state's. Absentee ballots must be requested by April 25th and can be returned to Scioto County Board of Elections 71 S. Washington St. Suite 1101 Tiffin, OH 44883. Absentee ballot can be found on our website. Download and print off an Absentee Ballot Application and mail to the Board of Election's office. Or email a request for Absentee Application, include your name, mailing address, contact information and number of applications needed to seneca@OhioSoS.gov
Shelby County	Sidney	49,423	https://co.shelby.oh.us/board-of-elections/	Election procedures align with state's. Instructions for absentee voting link to Secretary of State website. Mail absentee ballots to board of elections 230 E. Court St. Sidney, OH 45365. All polling locations closed and strict voter ID laws prominent on board of elections website.
Stark County	Canton	375,586	https://www.starkcountyohio.gov/board-of-elections	Election procedures align with state's. All absentee ballot instructions link to Secretary of State's website. Mail-in to board of elections 3525 Regent Ave N.E Canton, OH 44705
Summit County	Akron	541,781	https://www.summitcountyboe.gov/	Election procedures align with state's. All absentee ballot instructions link to Secretary of State's website. Mail-in to board of elections 24 Hour Drop Box located at 470 Grant Street, Akron, OH 44311
Trumbull County	Warren	210,312	https://www.warrencountyboe.us/	Election procedures align with state's. Indicates that all in-person voting closed. 520 Justice Drive, Lebanon, Ohio.

Tuscarawas County	New Philadelphia	92,582	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/tuscarawas/	Election procedures align with state's. Drop-box on Ashwood Ln
Union County	Marysville	52,300	https://www.co.union.oh.us/board-of-elections/	Election procedures align with state's. Mail-in or drop-box on 835 East Fifth Street, Suite A, Marysville, Ohio 43040. Instructions on making your own ballot on website. No information on in-person voting.
Van Wert County	Van Wert	28,744	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/vanwert/	Election procedures align with state's. Mail-in 1362 E. Ervin Road Van Wert, Ohio 45891
Vinton County	McArthur	13,435	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/vinton/	Election procedures align with state's. Absentee Ballots must be requested by April 25th. Ballots must be dropped off by April 28th at 7:30 pm or postmarked on April 27th. Ballots can be mailed-in or dropped off at Vinton County Board of Elections P.O. Box 314, McArthur, Oh 45651. No information on in-person voting.
Warren County	Lebanon	212,693	https://www.warrencountyboe.us/	Election procedures align with state's. Limited in-person voting is available for those with qualifying disabilities or without access to mail. Those without printers can pick up applications at Warren County Kroger stores. Ballots can be mailed-in or dropped off to the Warren County Board of Elections at 520 Justice Drive, Lebanon, Ohio 45036.
Washington County	Marietta	61,778	https://www.boe.ohio.gov/washington/	Election procedures align with state's. Ballots can be returned to 204 Davis Avenue, Suite B, Marietta, OH 45750. Links to the Secretary of State's website.
Wayne County	Wooster	114,520	https://www.waynecountyoh.gov/	Election procedures align with state's. Limited in-person voting. All ballots must be postmarked by the 27th or returned to the secure drop box by the 28th at 7:30 pm at 200 Vanover St, Wooster, OH 44691.
Williams County	Bryan	37,642	http://www.co.williams.oh.us/150/Board-of-Elections	Election procedures align with state's. Doesn't have the link to an absentee ballot application on its website. Voters can obtain the application by calling the board office at 419-636-1854, or by going to the Secretary of State website. Ballots can be dropped off or mailed in to 1425 E. High St. Bryan, Ohio 43506.
Wood County	Bowling Green	125,488	https://www.co.wood.oh.us/BOE/	Election procedures align with state's. Landing page only gives information about the primary's election results. Presumably, Ballots can be mailed to 1 Courthouse Sq.; Bowling Green, OH 43402-2427.
Wyandot County	Upper Sandusky	22,615	https://wyandotboardofelectionsohio.gov/	Election procedures align with state's. Ballots can be mailed-in or dropped off at 350 N. Warpole Street, Upper Sandusky 43351. No information on in-person voting.