

The 2020 Nevada Primary

July 10, 2020

Nevada responded to the COVID-19 pandemic decisively by declaring that its June 9, 2020 primary election would be a vote-by-mail election. This decision was announced on March 24, 2020, relatively early in the process. In turn, this led to what may have been a record voter turnout for a primary election. Nevada, however, still faced many challenges to implementing widespread use of the vote-by-mail system. Over 10,000 ballots were rejected due to defects such as incorrect signatures, multiple ballots in a single return envelope, and ballots being postmarked after the deadline. Further, the corresponding reduction in the number of polling locations led to long lines for those choosing to vote in person. The results from the primary election show that Nevada still has many challenges to overcome in order to ensure that its citizens have ready access to the voting process, despite being amenable to a vote-by-mail election.

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Summary

Nevada embraced the vote-by-mail option for its primary election, mailing out 1.8 million ballots. It made a decision that was unprecedented in its history by declaring its June 9, 2020 primary a mail-in election. Nevada made this decision relatively early in the process, announcing the decision via a press release from the Secretary of State on March 24, 2020. It was later announced that voters should receive ballots in the mail during the first half of May. Further, Nevada pursued a campaign to inform voters about the vote-by-mail process. Despite these safeguards, however, expanding vote-by-mail on this order of magnitude faced several familiar challenges, such as voters not receiving ballots or ballots being sent to incorrect addresses or deceased voters.

The expansion to mail voting also came at the cost of access to in-person voting. The decision to transition to a vote-by-mail election was initially a response to the rising threat of COVID-19, and part of an effort to reduce the gathering of people. To meet the goal of reducing large gatherings, Nevada reduced the number of in-person voting locations. Legal challenges were subsequently filed against these reductions. Although the legal hurdles did not prevent the primary election from proceeding on time, other consequences of the reduction of in-person voting locations came to light on the day of the election. Most of Nevada's counties only had one polling location for the entire county, and thousands of voters chose to use in-person voting despite the increased access to mail voting. This led to long lines at the polling locations and delayed reporting of election results.

There was also some confusion about the mail voting process. Over 10,000 ballots were rejected because of defects. The most common reason for rejecting a ballot was because the signature was missing or did not match the signature that Nevada had on file. Other issues included return envelopes that contained multiple ballots, return envelopes that contained no ballot, and ballots that were postmarked after the deadline. Nevada made an effort to prevent the rejection of ballots by having counties contact individuals to confirm their ballot and also by providing online tracking for ballots. In the end, however, a total of 10,799 ballots (over two percent of the total) were rejected in an election with a voter turnout of 480,885.

Analysis of Nevada’s June 9, 2020 primary election is an ongoing process, because the election happened so recently. This analysis, however, highlights three key obstacles observed from Nevada’s primary election:

1. **Access to in-person voting is a necessary backstop to a vote-by-mail election.** Despite Nevada’s announcement of an all vote-by-mail election, thousands of people chose to vote in person instead. The long lines at polling locations illustrates the need to have an in-person voting infrastructure in place regardless of the widespread availability of mail-in ballots.
2. **The general public may need to be educated on the vote-by-mail process.** The thousands of rejected ballots from Nevada’s primary election underscore a lack of familiarity with the mail voting process. Resources must be devoted to help the public understand how to properly cast a vote by mail.
3. **Finding a way to accurately contact mail voters is important.** Nevada mailed out ballots to all active registered voters, but had thousands of ballots marked as undeliverable and returned. At the same time, other voters never received a mail ballot and voted in person or failed to vote. Making sure that mail ballots reach the voters is a difficult and costly administrative task.

Key Resources:

- <https://www.nvsos.gov/SOSVoterServices/Registration/Step0-a.aspx> - Citizens of Nevada with a valid driver’s license or identification card issued by the Nevada Department of Motor vehicles may register to vote here. Citizens of Nevada without such ID must mail their county clerk’s office to register. Addresses for the county clerks can be found in Appendix B.
- <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/NRS/NRS-293.html#NRS293Sec800> - Nevada’s election laws.
- <https://www.clarkcountynv.gov/election/Documents/2020/New-2020.pdf> - four page summary of updates and amendments to Nevada voting law from 2019, including deadline changes.
- <https://www.nvsos.gov/sos/home/showdocument?id=8644> - List of statewide locations for drop-off, in-person early voting, and in-person voting on election day for the Nevada 2020 primary, by county.

Relevant Nevada Election Laws Summary*

Citation in Nevada Revised Statutes	Law
NRS 293.560; NRS 293.5847	<i>Voter Registration Deadline:</i> 28 days prior to Election Day (Mail-in Registration). Same-day registration is permitted during early voting and on

	Election Day.
NRS 293.309	<i>Qualifying for Mail-In / Absentee Ballot:</i> No excuse needed.
NRS 293.313(1)	<i>Absentee Application Deadline:</i> 14 days prior to Election Day.
NRS 293.317(1); NRS 293.333(2)	<i>Absentee Ballot Submission By Mail Deadline:</i> Postmarked by Election Day, and received not more than 7 days after Election Day.
NRS 293.353	<i>Method for Returning Ballots:</i> By mail using a postage-prepaid envelope or by dropping it off in person at a designated county location. Per Nevada law, early voting sites and Election Day Vote Centers cannot accept a voted mail/absentee ballot. Only the voter, or, at the request of the voter, a family member, can deliver an absentee ballot.
NRS 293.325	<i>Mail-in Verification:</i> The county clerk checks the voter's signature on the return envelope against all signatures of the voter available in the records of the county clerk. If there is a reasonable question of fact as to whether the signature on the absentee ballot matches the signature of the voter, the county clerk shall contact the voter and ask him or her to confirm the signature.

*From a useful website that summarizes voting laws for all 50 states that can be found [here](#).

I. Background to Nevada's June 9 Primary Election

A. Elections in Play

Nevada held a primary election on June 9th for U.S. Congress, state legislature, state judiciary, and several county and local positions. The election was held almost entirely by mail and achieved [near-record participation](#) for a primary with [491,654 votes](#). Nearly 30 percent of all registered voters cast a ballot. [The election results are here](#). Ballots included primaries for Nevada's four Congressional seats, two Nevada Supreme Court seats, three state senate seats, and 23 state assembly seats. Ballots also included many local races, including county commissioners, state board of education seats, and city councilmembers. For example: [Clark County Commissioner Results](#).

B. Nevada's Response to COVID-19 & the Vote-by-Mail Announcement

Nevada's election officials responded decisively to the coronavirus pandemic. On March 17th, Governor Steve Sisolak [ordered the closure of non-essential businesses](#) in the state with [78 cases and 1 death reported](#). A week later, on March 24th, Secretary of State Barbara Cegavske announced that the

June 9th primary election would be conducted almost exclusively by mail. Cegavske [announced](#) this change to the voting process, citing “the many uncertainties surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the immediate need to begin preparations for the 2020 primary election.” Cegavske made the decision with the [unanimous support](#) of election officials in each of Nevada’s 17 counties. At the time of the announcement, the state had reported [321 cases and 13 deaths](#).

On April 1st, with 1,458 cases and 45 deaths reported, Governor Sisolak [issued an official statewide stay-at-home order](#). [Exceptions to the stay-at-home order](#) included essential work or obtaining essential goods and services such as groceries and healthcare. On April 29th, Governor Sisolak [extended the stay-at-home order](#) to mid-May, but eased restrictions on outdoor recreational activities. The following day, the state [announced the Roadmap to Recovery for Nevada](#), including a phased process to re-open the state’s economy on May 15th or sooner, if the state could meet criteria showing a downward trajectory in COVID-19 cases and hospitalization, as well as an increase in testing.

On May 9th, [Governor Sisolak announced](#) that the state would begin to transition from the stay-at-home order into [Phase One](#) of the roadmap. Phase One first allowed retailers, restaurants, churches, liquor stores, marijuana dispensaries, barber shops and other businesses to reopen under strict conditions. Employers would have to require employees to wear masks, sanitize their workplaces, and limit gatherings to fewer than 10 people. Restaurants and retail were subject to additional constraints.

On May 15th, the state reported a [20-day downward trajectory](#) in the percentage of Nevadans testing positive, [hospitalizations](#), and an [increase in testing](#). The state had reported [6,709 cases and 366 deaths](#). [Phase Two](#) of the reopening plan began on May 29th, extending the reopening to bars, gyms, spas, tattoo parlors, and other businesses, [subject to similar restrictions](#) as in Phase One. On June 4th, casinos were allowed to reopen in a limited capacity.

Nevada’s primary election officially took place on June 9th almost entirely by mail. At the time, there were [10,164 coronavirus cases and 473 deaths](#).

The coronavirus pandemic has since worsened in Nevada, with increases in both cases and hospitalizations [accelerating since June 5th](#). After [first extending Phase Two](#) through the end of the June, Governor Sisolak announced on June 29th that Nevada would [remain in Phase Two](#) at least through the end of July. Since the start of Phase Two, the seven-day moving average for the percentage of tests reporting a positive result more than [quintupled](#) from 2.9 percent on May 30th to 16.8 percent on June 30th.

As of this writing, the state has reported [19,101 cases and 510 deaths](#).

II. Preparations for the Primary

A. Vote-by-Mail

Under normal circumstances, a voter in Nevada would [need to register](#) for an absentee ballot in order to vote by mail; “[a]ny registered voter may request to vote by mail.” The voters simply need to fill out a form and submit to the county in which they are registered to vote. The voter also has the option of requesting a permanent absentee ballot.

For the June 9th primary election, however, Nevada instituted a mail-only primary with limited exceptions for in-person voting. [The rules for voting by mail](#) in the June 9th primary were as follows:

- The deadline to register for the 2020 primary election in order to receive a mail-in ballot was May 21, 2020.
- All active registered voters were automatically sent a mail-in ballot for the primary election, including an official ballot return envelope. [In Clark County](#), all active and inactive registered voters received ballots.
- Mail-in ballots were required to be submitted in the official ballot return envelope.
- Each ballot was barcoded to an individual voter and could not be replaced if lost.
- Official ballot return envelopes included prepaid postage.
- Voters had to sign the official ballot return envelope for their signatures to be verified against signatures on file. In the event of a discrepancy, a voter was contacted by mail and given the opportunity to [“cure” their signature](#) by June 16th to have their vote counted.
- Mail-in ballots had to be postmarked by Tuesday, June 9th, the day of the election. Ballots could be received up to [7 days after the election](#) (June 16th) to be counted.
- If a voter was unable or did not want to mail their forms, there were dedicated [physical locations](#) for turning in ballots. [In Clark County](#), mail-in ballots could also be picked up at voters’ homes by trained “field registrars of voters.”

Overall, 483,788 ballots were [cast by mail in this year’s primary](#), which comprised 98.4% of the total vote (all other votes were ballots cast in person). By comparison, in Nevada’s [2018 primary](#), only 26,054 ballots were cast by mail, making up 7.9% of that year’s turnout.

B. Polling Place Voting

Despite encouraging all Nevadans to vote by mail, Nevada empowered limited in-person voting prior to and on the day of the primary. In [15 of Nevada's 17 counties](#), only one in-person voting location was available. Clark County, home to 74 percent of the state's population, offered [3 locations](#), down from [172](#) in the 2018 primary and [265](#) in the 2016 primary. Nye County offered only [two locations](#).

- **Limited in-person voting** was recommended only for those who registered online after the May 21 deadline to receive a mail-in ballot, voters who require same-day voter registration, and voters with disabilities.
- **Early Voting** in Nevada allowed voters to vote in person at polling locations in each county between May 23 and June 5. Early voters cast slightly more than 1,000 ballots.
- **Provisional Ballots:** Those who registered to vote after the May 21 deadline or required same-day voter registration were able to cast paper provisional ballots in person on election day at select in-person polling stations in each county. Nearly 7,000 people cast these provisional ballots in person on election day.

C. Primary Preparations by County

On March 24, 2020, all 17 Nevada county election officials together with the Secretary of State [decided unanimously](#) to conduct the primary election by mail ballot as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Each county had at least one drop-off location where ballots could be delivered by hand if voters preferred. Also, there was at least one polling place—usually the County Clerk's office—that served as the same-day registrant and in-person polling station on Election Day. Additionally, every county in Nevada [opted to use paper ballots only](#), with the exception of Washoe County which used electronic voting machines for in-person voters.

Nevada has kept voting processes relatively uniform across county lines for the 2020 election. For example, citizens of Nevada with a valid driver's license or identification card issued by the Nevada Department of Motor vehicles all may register to vote [via the state website](#) without the need to contact their respective County Clerk's office. Additionally, most counties use the same, generic statewide absentee ballot request form, or one with minor formatting or stylistic changes.

Some deviations from the norm do exist. For example, due to political and legal pressure, Clark County [added extra polling locations](#) for Election Day and mailed ballots out to all registered voters, not just those who were deemed to be active. Another difference is the absentee ballot request form, which some counties allow to be delivered by email or fax, while some of the smaller counties with less

developed infrastructure still require registration forms and absentee ballot requests to be mailed. Specific instructions by county can be found in Appendix A.

The Governor of Nevada called a [special legislative session](#) scheduled for July 8th in order to address further county preparations for the 2020 General Election. Further information [should be forthcoming](#) based on the discussions held by the state legislators during this special session.

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

A. Legal Challenges

The Secretary of State, in partnership with all 17 Nevada county election officials, made the decision on March 24, 2020 to [conduct the primary election by mail](#) ballot as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Two major lawsuits were filed in response. One lawsuit tried to increase access by asserting that mail ballots should be sent to a wider class of voters and additional in-person polling locations should be provided. A second lawsuit tried to prevent a vote-by-mail election, favoring the traditional in-person option instead.

Legal Challenge to Expand Voter Access

On April 16, the Nevada State Democratic Party, Democratic National Committee, Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, and Priorities USA [filed a lawsuit](#) in the Eighth Judicial District Court of Clark County, Nevada on behalf of four voters (the Plaintiffs). The Plaintiffs sought to expand voter access by mailing ballots to all registered voters in Clark County (expanded from registered “active” voters) and increase the number of polling stations in the county. Additionally, the Plaintiffs alleged that the vote-by-mail primary election would exacerbate voter disenfranchisement caused by two state statutes. The first statute prohibits “ballot harvesting” and requires voters to return their ballots themselves; the second allows election officials to reject ballots in which the signatures do not match signatures on record.

On May 5th, the Plaintiffs [dropped the suit](#) after Clark County election officials agreed to change certain voting procedures. They agreed to expand in-person voting from one site to three; require mismatched signatures to be reviewed by two officials prior to disqualifying them; give voters the opportunity to “cure” the signature before disqualifying the ballot; and train 20 “field registrars of voters” to collect sealed ballots from voters at their homes.

Legal Challenge of Switch to All-Mail Election

On April 21, True the Vote, a conservative voting rights group, filed a lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the District of Nevada on behalf of three voters (the Plaintiffs). The Plaintiffs sought a preliminary injunction to prohibit the state's plan for an all-mail primary election. The suit alleges that an election by mail increases risk of voter fraud and, as a result, violates the Plaintiffs' right to vote due to "vote dilution." On April 30th, the court [rejected their request for a preliminary injunction](#) for lack of a particularized injury sufficient to give the Plaintiffs standing. The court noted that even if the Plaintiffs could show standing, the state's interests in protecting voters' health and participation in the election during a pandemic "outweigh any burden on Plaintiffs' right to vote, particularly when that burden is premised on a speculative claim of voter fraud resulting in dilution of votes." Additionally, the court held that the Secretary of State had the legal authority to implement the all-mail election.

In mid-May, the Plaintiffs [filed an amended complaint](#). In addition to restating the same claims, the Plaintiffs alleged that Clark County's agreement to expand voting in response to the Democrats' lawsuit violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Constitution. Once again, the court described the harm from voter disenfranchisement as "speculative" and rejected the preliminary injunction for lack of standing. Additionally, the court invoked the "Purcell principle," which provides that court orders made shortly before elections diminish the right to vote because they sow confusion about the voting process. On the merits, the court said that because Clark County's increased access to voting did not affect the voting rights of voters in other counties, it did not violate the Equal Protection Clause.

On June 2nd, the court [granted a request](#) by the group to extend its deadline until July 3rd to argue why it should not dismiss the case. If the case is not dismissed, the court's eventual ruling could affect how Nevada administers the general election in November.

B. Logistical Challenges

The decision to conduct the 2020 Primary as a vote-by-mail election in Nevada created logistical challenges unique to the mail voting process.

Sending Out Mail Ballots

All active registered voters in Nevada automatically received a ballot in the mail. In an effort to increase voter participation further, Clark County sent a ballot to [all registered voters in the county](#), including those deemed ‘inactive.’ Organizing this effort was a costly and time-consuming endeavor. Nevada’s Secretary of State initially alerted the United States Postal Service that he was expecting to have about [1.8 million ballots](#) that needed to be delivered to voters. He also noted that additional machines had to be acquired to process all of the mail-in ballots that were expected to come in. Further, a large amount of the mail ballots sent to inactive registrants were returned as undeliverable upon discovery that the address on record was no longer valid, or that the voter had moved or passed away. The public raised [concern over the safety of the election](#), and fears that these extra ballots would provide an opportunity for voter fraud.

Preventing Voter Fraud

The [procedure used to prevent voter fraud](#) for mail-in ballots requires that two officials be present to process each ballot. If the signature on the mail-in ballot does not match the signature on record from the voter’s registration, it moves to the counting board where signatures are reviewed again. If the signature does not match, it must go through a [signature curing process](#), which includes mailing instructions back to the voter’s address on record to verify their vote. Voters have until 5:00 PM seven days after Election Day to cure their signature. Each of these steps requires trained poll workers to process the ballots.

Because of this extensive process and the nine-fold increase in the amount of ballots printed and mailed this election, [more time was required](#) to finalize results.

IV. Primary Results Post-Mortem

A. Summary

Nevada's decision to make the June 9, 2020 primary a vote-by-mail election led to an increase in voter turnout, but the election was not without its problems. The primary provides insight into several key areas where improvements are needed. Over 10,000 ballots were rejected because voters did not understand the correct procedure for mailing in a ballot. These procedural errors included signature defects, mailing multiple ballots in one return envelope, and postmarking the ballot after the deadline. The increase in mail voting also came at the cost of reduced access to in-person voting. Most of the counties only provided one voting location for in-person voting. This led to hours of waiting in line for some voters and a subsequent delay in the reporting of election results. Further, calling the primary a mail-in election may have confused some voters. For example, some voters reported that they never received a ballot in the mail, and simply assumed that they could not vote because they were not aware of the in-person voting option. Efforts are needed to further educate the voters about the mail voting process and to address these issues.

B. Voter Turnout

Nevada's decision to switch to an all-mail election further spurred an ongoing trend of increased voter turnout. According to the Nevada Secretary of State's Office, total voter turnout for the June 9th primary was [480,885](#) as of June 23, 2020. This was 29.49% of registered voters. This far exceeded the Nevada Secretary of State's [estimate that 420,000](#) ballots would be cast in this primary. Further, this was a larger turnout than in Nevada's previous two primaries, both in terms of total voter turnout and the percentage of registered voters that participated. Only [329,863](#) people participated in Nevada's 2018 primary, 22.87% of registered voters. An even smaller number of people, [240,181](#), participated in Nevada's 2016 primary, 18.51% of registered voters.

Nearly all of Nevada's 2020 primary voters also decided to take advantage of the entirely vote-by-mail primary. [483,788](#) ballots were cast by mail in the 2020 primary, comprising 98.4% of the total vote (with all other ballots being cast in person). Unfortunately, however, about [6,700](#) of the mail in ballots were rejected due to defects in the signature and [several thousand more](#) ballots were rejected for other reasons. Even accounting for the rejected ballots, this was a huge increase in vote-by-mail participation for Nevada. For example, only [26,054](#) ballots were cast by mail in Nevada's 2018 primary, which was 7.9% of that year's turnout.

C. Mail Voting Experience

Nevada made a concerted effort to make an early decision on whether to go to vote-by-mail, and then to communicate the process to voters. The state of Nevada started a website named www.mailitinnevada.com to inform voters about the mail voting process. The website is no longer active, but an archived version of it can be found [here](#). The Nevada Secretary of State conducted a [public information campaign](#) to inform voters about the website. Further, the ballots were mailed out early to help avoid any postal service delays. The ballots were mailed out to voters in the beginning of May, and voters had to return them by June 9th. [Ballot drop off locations](#) were also provided for voters who preferred to drop them off by hand. Once the ballots were cast, Nevada also provided [online tracking for the ballots](#) so that voters could check to see if their ballots were counted.

News outlets remarked that the “primary election of 2020 will likely be the [most convenient voting experience](#) in memory for some . . .” It seems, however, that at least a few voters never received their ballots in the mail. One voter complained that he [never received his ballot](#) in the mail and that he had to pick up his voting forms in person. Another voter that never received a ballot did not know that there was an in-person option, and he [did not vote at all](#).

D. In-Person Voting Experience

The relatively smooth experience of voting by mail for many people was counterbalanced by a more inconvenient experience for those voting in person. Part of the reason for switching Nevada’s June 9, 2020 primary to an all-mail election was to reduce the number of in-person voting sites in an [effort to mitigate](#) the potential spread of COVID-19. On Election Day, 15 of Nevada’s 17 counties offered only a single in-person voting location. Clark County, which comprises 73 percent of Nevada’s population, only had [three locations](#) available for in-person voting. In comparison, Clark County had [172 locations](#) available in the 2018 primary and [265 locations](#) available during the 2016 primary.

Despite this reduction in the number of in-person voting locations, voters still chose the in-person option for a myriad of different reasons. As expected, some voters simply [never received a ballot](#) in the mail and chose to vote in person instead. Some voters were worried about people [stealing their mail](#). Other voters had [concerns about fraud](#). Regardless of their reasons, a total of [7,866 people](#) decided to vote in person for Nevada’s June 9, 2020 primary.

Of those who voted in person, slightly more than a thousand voters took advantage of [Nevada’s early voting laws](#), which allow in-person voting at select polling places in the weeks prior to Election Day. Because of COVID-19, early voting was “[extremely limited](#)” in 2020, contributing to an

estimated 15 percent of in-person votes being cast early, compared to 52 percent of in-person voters in the 2018 primary.

On Election Day, the number of individuals voting in person combined with the reduction in polling locations led to long lines for some voters. For example, Steve Connolly, who bills himself as the longest running Elvis impersonator in Las Vegas, says he arrived to vote at 6:45 PM, and then had to [wait in line until 3:09 AM](#) in order to cast his vote. This was approximately [eight hours](#) after the polls were scheduled to close. Similarly, NBC News Las Vegas also reported that voters were waiting in line for [three hours](#) to vote. Voters were also posting on social media about the unusually long lines, with one voter sarcastically asking if this was [punishment](#) for choosing to vote in person.

Finally, the in-person voting process was made more difficult by people who refused to follow precautions for COVID-19 or needed special exceptions. In Washoe County, the staff had to accommodate voters who refused to wear a mask or have their temperature taken. In response, the staff at the polling location [cleared the area several times](#) throughout the day to accommodate these voters.



E. Election Count Issues

Changing to a vote by mail process [resulted in delays](#) to the election count process. The results for in-person voting were [delayed for hours](#), because of the long lines that resulted from reducing the number of polling locations. Further, defective ballots are given an [additional week](#) to cure the defect, and this curing period delayed the election count process even more. This delay in reporting led to a few surprises in the voting results. Most notably, Ellen Speigel appeared to be leading against Roberta Lange, the head of Nevada's State Democratic Party. After the delayed results came in, however, [Roberta Lange came away with a close victory](#). The final update on the election count came in on [June 23rd](#), which was two weeks after the June 9th primary.

Beyond the delays, switching to the mail voting process may have led to a substantial number of ballots not being counted. [12,366 ballots](#) were initially rejected because they were missing signatures or because the signature did not match the one that Nevada had on file. Even after being given a grace period to cure the defect, [6,749 ballots](#) were still rejected for failing to meet the signature requirement. Another [4,050 ballots](#) were rejected for reasons such as return envelopes containing multiple ballots,

return envelopes containing no ballot, and ballots being postmarked after the June 9th deadline. Overall, [10,799 ballots](#) were rejected statewide. This number represents more than 2% of the total votes cast.

F. Next Steps

In the days after the June 9th Primary, Nevada had [no plans to repeat the all-mail election](#) process for the general election in November. County officials, however, have [recommended automatically sending mail-in ballots to registered voters again](#), but postponed a decision until after a [special session of the state legislature](#) that will focus on budget cuts in response to the state's spending on its COVID-19 response.

On June 19th, the Clark County Registrar of Voters [recommended](#) the first proposed changes for the general election:

- **Automatically send mail-in ballots to all active registered voters.** In contrast to the primary, the registrar suggested limiting the mail-in ballots to active registered voters instead of all registered voters due to cost constraints.
- **Increase the number of in-person voting sites from three to 35.** By primarily hosting these sites at government facilities, the commission said it believes it can better control procedures to keep voters healthy, such as social distancing.

Ultimately, the Commission did not vote on the recommendation, choosing to wait for guidance from a [special session](#) of the state legislature scheduled to begin on July 8th. Expanding access to in-person voting seems to have support from other analysts as well, however, because experts “say what happened in Nevada underscores that, even when absentee ballots are sent directly to voters, [there is still demand for in-person voting](#).”

Beyond these proposed changes, there is also a need to educate the general public about voting procedures. The number of ballots rejected during the primary election underscores a lack of understanding of how to properly use the mail in ballots. “Moving forward, the state must dedicate time and resources to [educating voters](#) about the vote-by-mail system, so fewer errors are made and more legitimate votes are counted.” Voters also need to be educated about all of the voting options available to them. There were reports of some people [failing to vote](#) when they did not receive a mail ballot because they were not aware that an in-person option was available.

The Nevada primary election was unique in the fact that it was held so late in 2020. One of the consequences of this is that there has been less time to analyze and report on what happened during the primary. Determining the next steps for increasing access to voting in Nevada is an ongoing process. These issues are expected to be further discussed by the state legislature during this summer's special session.

Additional News Articles & Reports

Before Election Day

- [Indy Explains: What happens to my ballot after I mail it in?](#) – The Nevada Independent
- [What you need to know about Nevada’s vote-by-mail primary election](#) – Nevada Current
- [Nevada democrats withdraw legal challenge on primary election voting process](#) – NBC News:
Reno

After Election Day

- [Indy Analysis: What led to thousands of uncounted ballots in Nevada’s 2020 primary election?](#) – The Nevada Independent
- [In Las Vegas, long lines bring seven-hour wait to vote in primary](#) – The Las Vegas Sun
- [Final election results are in: Ballots from Nevada’s first mostly mail-in primary are counted](#) –
The Reno Gazette Journal

Appendix A: Review of Procedures Listed on County Election Websites

The Secretary of State, in partnership with all 17 Nevada county election officials, made the decision on March 24, 2020 to conduct the primary election [by mail ballot](#) as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Only Washoe County used voting machines for the Primary elections; all other counties required in-person voters to write on a paper ballot.

County	County Seat	Population	Website / Other URLs	Election Procedures + Analysis
Carson City	[indep. city]	55,916	https://www.carson.org/government/departments-a-f/clerk-recorder/elections-department	<p>Website implies absentee ballot may be requested after the 14-day deadline for emergencies. Absentee ballots must be received 14 days prior to the election. They may be submitted by mail, email, or fax, but must include a hand signature. For 2020 Primary, only one polling location open for same-day registrants or ballot drop-offs.</p> <p>Absent ballot request form: https://www.carson.org/home/showdocument?id=68944</p>
Churchill County	Fallon	24,909	https://www.churchillcounty.org/115/Elections	<p>Voters are encouraged to return mail ballots in the postage paid envelope provided. Completed forms can be mailed, emailed or faxed to the Churchill County Clerk/Treasurer's Office.</p> <p>Absentee ballot request form: https://www.churchillcounty.org/DocumentCenter/View/11019/Absent-Ballot-Request_2020</p>
Clark County	Las Vegas	2,266,715	https://www.clarkcountynv.gov/election/services/Pages/ElectionsandVoting.aspx	<p>Clark County opted to mail ballots to all registered voters, regardless of whether or not they were deemed active or inactive. It also opted to open more polling locations than other counties to increase voter participation..</p> <p>You can become a field registrar by completing the requirements here: https://www.clarkcountynv.gov/election/Pages/FieldReg.aspx</p> <p>If you request a mail/absentee ballot and do not receive it at least 10 days before Election Day, IMMEDIATELY call (702) 455-6552.</p>

				You must login to registered voter services in order to request an absentee ballot. https://www.clarkcountynv.gov/election/Pages/VoterServices.aspx
Douglas County	Minden	48,905	https://cltr.douglasnv.us/elections/	Absentee ballot request form: https://cltr.douglasnv.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/2020-Mail-in-Ballot-Request.pdf May be returned to the Clerk's office by mail, fax or email.
Elko County	Elko	52,778	https://www.elkocountynv.net/departments/clerk/elections.php	This county uses a general, statewide absentee request form: https://www.elkocountynv.net/departments/clerk/2019/Absentee%20Ballot%20Request%202017%20fillable.pdf Fax option for absentee ballot request: https://www.elkocountynv.net/ABSENTEE_BALLOT_BY_FAX_instructions.pdf There is no email option for this county.
Esmeralda County	Goldfield	873	https://www.accessesmeralda.com/elections/index.php	Website still not updated from 2018 elections. Voters may use the general statewide absentee ballot request form: https://www.accessesmeralda.com/county_offices/docs/absent%20ballot%20request.pdf Voters can mail this to the Esmeralda County Clerk's office at the address listed in Appendix B.
Eureka County	Eureka	2,029	http://www.co.eureka.nv.us/clerk/elect00.htm	Eureka County uses the general statewide absentee ballot request form: http://www.co.eureka.nv.us/clerk/election/EL315%20AbsentBallotRequest%20Form%20010920%20(003).pdf There does not appear to be an email or fax option.
Humboldt County	Winnemucca	16,831	https://www.hcnv.us/317/Elections	This website is not up to date. Use the general statewide absentee ballot request form: http://www.nyecounty.net/DocumentCenter/View/24072/EL315-Absentee-Ballot-Request No fax or email option appears to be available.
Lander County	Battle Mountain	5,532	http://www.landercountynv.org/government/clerk/election_information.php	Use the general statewide absentee ballot request form: http://www.landercountynv.org/document_center/Clerk/ElectionInformation/Absent%20Ballot%20Request%20%20Form.pdf No fax or email option appears to be available.

Lincoln County	Pioche	5,183	https://lincolncountynv.org/	This website is not up to date. Voters may use the general statewide absentee ballot request form and mail it to the Clerk's office address in Appendix B. http://www.nyecounty.net/DocumentCenter/View/24072/EL315-Absentee-Ballot-Request
Lyon County	Yerington	57,510	https://www.lyon-county.org/801/Elections	Lyon County is divided into various precincts. You may vote at any of the early voting polling locations during the early voting period, but you must vote in the polling location designated for your precinct on Election Day. No additional information is given about absentee ballot requests, so use the general statewide absentee ballot request form and mail it to the Clerk's office address in Appendix B: http://www.nyecounty.net/DocumentCenter/View/24072/EL315-Absentee-Ballot-Request
Mineral County	Hawthorne	4,505	http://mineral.nv.gov/government/voter_registration.php	No information regarding absentee ballot request. Follow state procedure, and mail the general statewide absentee ballot request form to your Clerk's office address in Appendix B. http://www.nyecounty.net/DocumentCenter/View/24072/EL315-Absentee-Ballot-Request
Nye County	Tonopah	46,523	https://www.nyecounty.net/236/Elections	Use the general statewide absentee ballot request form and mail it to the Clerk's office address found in Appendix B: http://www.nyecounty.net/DocumentCenter/View/24072/EL315-Absentee-Ballot-Request In addition, Nye County already has listed 5 General Election polling places found on their website.
Pershing County	Lovelock	6,725	http://www.pershingcounty.net/government/clerk-treasurer/elections.php	Use the general statewide absentee ballot request form and mail it to the Clerk's office address found in Appendix B: https://www.nyecounty.net/DocumentCenter/View/24072/EL315-Absentee-Ballot-Request
Storey County	Virginia City	4,123	https://www.storeycounty.org/208/Election-Information	Use the general statewide absentee ballot request form and mail it to the Clerk's office address found in Appendix B: https://www.storeycounty.org/DocumentCenter/View/17019/EL315-Absent-Ballot-Request
Washoe County	Reno	471,519	https://www.washoecounty.us/	Notices of modified processes and responses to COVID-19 are on the website. This is the only county in Nevada that used voting machines for the 2020 Primary.

			voters/elections/index.php	Absentee ballot request form: https://www.washoecounty.us/voters/files/officeforms/20_ab_request_form_rev.10.28.19_Non_Fillable.pdf Fax, email, and mail options are all available.
White Pine County	Ely	9,580	https://www.whiptepinecounty.net/162/Elections	Uses the general, statewide absentee ballot request form. Complete and mail to the Clerk's office address found in Appendix B: https://www.nvsos.gov/sos/home/showdocument?id=8262

Appendix B: Clerk Office Addresses by County

Carson City Clerk
(775) 887-2087
885 East Musser Street, Suite 1025, Carson City, NV 89701

Churchill County Clerk
(775) 423-6028
155 North Taylor Street, Suite 110, Fallon, NV 89406

Clark County Registrar
(702) 455-8683
965 Trade Drive, Suite A, North Las Vegas, NV 89030
P.O. Box 3909, Las Vegas, NV 89127

Douglas County Clerk
(775) 782-9014
1616 8th Street, 2nd Floor, Minden, NV 89423
P.O. Box 218, Minden, NV 89423

Elko County Clerk
(775) 753-4600
550 Court Street, 3rd Floor, Elko, NV 89801

Esmeralda County Clerk
(775) 485-6309
233 Crook Avenue, Goldfield, NV 89013
P.O. Box 547, Goldfield, NV 89013

Eureka County Clerk
(775) 237-5262

10 South Main Street, Eureka, NV 89316
P.O. Box 694, Eureka, NV 89316

Humboldt County Clerk
(775) 623-6343
50 West 5th Street, #207, Winnemucca, NV 89445

Lander County Clerk
(775) 635-5738
50 State Route 305, Battle Mountain, NV 89820

Lincoln County Clerk
(775) 962-8077
181 North Main Street, Suite 201, Pioche, NV 89043

Lyon County Clerk
(775) 463-6501
27 South Main Street, Yerington, NV 89447

Mineral County Clerk
(775) 945-2446
105 South A Street, Suite 1, Hawthorne, NV 89415
P.O. Box 1450, Hawthorne, NV 89415

Nye County Clerk
(775) 482-8127
101 Radar Road, Tonopah, NV 89049
P.O. Box 1031, Tonopah, NV 89049

Pershing County Clerk
(775) 273-2208
398 Main Street, Lovelock, NV 89419
P.O. Box 820, Lovelock, NV 89419

Storey County Clerk
(775) 847-0969
26 South B Street, Drawer D, Virginia City, NV 89440

Washoe County Registrar
(775) 328-3670
1001 East Ninth Street, Bldg A, Rm 135A, Reno, NV 89512

White Pine Clerk
(775) 293-6509

801 Clark Street, Suite 4, Ely, NV 89301