



Election Division Dispatch

Joe McLain & Angie Nussmeyer, Co-Directors | August 2026

NEWS & UPDATES

2027 IED Conference Registration Open!

Attached to the newsletter email is the official invite to the 2027 Election Administrators' Conference held from Dec. 7 to 9, 2026, at the Wyndham Hotel at the Indianapolis Airport. The room block for the hotel is open! Please use the link found in the invitation or call the reservation line to secure your room. The hotel prefers to have your tax exempt forms on file before the conference. The hotel contact and email address to send the information is on the second page of the invitation. A reminder the room rate is \$119 per night and the hotel has free surface parking.

Additionally, the invite has a link to submit your conference registration. The cost is \$400 per person, and a separate invoice will be sent to the point of contact as submitted by the county or individual on the form. It may be a few days after the survey is submitted for our staff to turn around the invoice. Any follow-up questions about the invoice should be sent to Kimmy Hollowell-Williams. Payment is expected on or before the first day of the conference. The clerk, clerk-elect, staff, and election board members are all permitted to attend this 'called' meeting, which means the county would cover the cost to attend.

Nov. 2026 Ballot Certification

IED will certify the official list of candidates, judicial retention questions, two state constitutional amendment questions, and the straight party devices (that is, the image used on the ballot in Nov. for straight party voting) to counties not later than Aug. 21, 2026. Please do not rely on spellings that you might find on websites—even our candidate list posted to the IED website! The certification documents are the ballot names provided by the candidates and reviewed by staff.

VSTOP Public Test Lists & Reminders

By August 21, 2026, VSTOP must provide counties with a list of voting systems to pull for the public test of voting systems.

Please be certain your equipment list is up to date in the VSTOP database! If you need assistance updating the database, please contact vstop@bsu.edu.

Counties will receive one VSTOP list for opScan systems and, in MicroVote counties, one list for DRE systems. For each list, the county will need to test at least 5% of the machines on the list, starting at the top and skipping those machines that might be in the database but not pulled for this election.

Public tests must be completed by October 5, 2026, at a public meeting of the CEB. Counties must also publish notice of the public test in the newspaper in accordance with IC 5-3-1 not later than 48-hours before the meeting is to begin. Don't forget to file your IEC-9 and/or IEC-10 with our office by October 13.

CALENDAR

- August 3, 2026 (NOON):** Deadline for L candidates running for a "small" town office to file candidacy paperwork (CAN-16, CAN-12)
- August 3, 2026 (NOON):** Deadline for local public question to be certified to CEB
- August 5, 2026:** First day to file as a write-in for school board (CAN-26)
- August 5, 2026:** Deadline to complete VLM work
- August 18, 2026 (NOON):** Deadline to file VRG-21 with IED
- August 21, 2026 (NOON):** Deadline to file to be a write-in candidate for school board
- August 21, 2026 (NOON):** Deadline to file a challenge against almost all "summer filer" except for write-in candidates (school board or otherwise). See page 58 of the *2026 Calendar Guidebook* for details
- August 21, 2026 (NOON):** Deadline for IED to certify a list of federal, state, and state legislative candidates to counties
- August 21, 2026 (NOON):** Deadline for VSTOP to provide a CEB with a randomized list of voting systems to use at public test
- August 28, 2026 (NOON):** Deadline for CEB to send written notice to county D/R chairs and school board superintendent to provide an opportunity to inspect ballot proofs
- August 28, 2026 (NOON):** Deadline for L party in a "small town" to file a CAN-18 for each candidate nominated at their small town convention, if such a convention was required by law to be held
- August 28, 2026 (NOON):** Deadline to file a CAN-1 challenge against a WRITE-IN school board candidate
- September 4, 2026 (NOON):** Deadline for IED or CEB to determine the validity of most CAN-1 challenges
- September 7, 2026:** Labor Day (IED Closed)
- September 10, 2026 (NOON):** Deadline to determine validity of a CAN-1 challenge against a WRITE-IN school board candidate
- September 14, 2026:** Deadline to receive ABS and provisional ballots (50-days before Election Day)
- September 14, 2026:** Deadline for CEB to provide notice to D/R county chairs regarding the number of ABS voter board members & Election Day ABS counters
- September 18, 2026 (NOON):** Deadline for D/R county chair to nominate ABS voter board members & Election Day ABS counters
- September 19, 2026:** Deadline to send ABS ballots to voters with approved ABS applications
- October 4, 2026:** "Late" ballot vacancy procedures under IC 3-13-2 begin (CAN-35, CAN-31)
- October 5, 2026:** Statewide VR Deadline
- October 5, 2026:** Deadline to conduct public test of voting systems

AUGUST 2026 WEB TRAINING

- Aug 4 & 6 |** Voter Clean-up
- Aug 11 |** GIS GeoCode: Reprecincting Uses
- Aug. 18 & 20 |** Reports Overview
- Aug 24 & 26 |** August Build
- Aug 25 & 27 |** ABS-VPD Overview

2026 Calendar is posted to the INSVRS County Portal and subject to change.

IN FOCUS: ABS Boards & ABS Ballot Printing Deadlines

With the election just around the corner, county election officials are ramping up their absentee operations. Critical to its success are absentee voter boards.

Each county election board must notify the D/R county chair of the number of absentee voter boards needed to support absentee operations—mail, travel board, and in-person voting—not later than 50-days before the election, or September 14, 2026. (IC 3-11.5-4-23)

The D/R county chairs have until noon, 46-days before the election (Sept. 18) to file, in writing, their nominations for those absentee voter board positions. Of course, CEBs can request ABS voter boards more than 50-days out and county chairs can file nominations before their noon deadline, but these dates are the very latest to make the request or nominate board members.

Individuals serving as ABS voter board members must meet the qualifications under IC 3-11.5-4-22. A candidate to be voted for at the election except as an unopposed candidate for a city office, town office, township office or school board office may NOT be an ABS voter board member, unless the opposed candidate is assigned to work on absentee ballots in precincts where their name does not appear on the ballot.

Family members (as defined in the statute) of an opposed candidate may not be an absentee voter board member, but as above, can perform absentee work in precincts where the candidate's name does not appear on the ballot.

State law requires the CEB or the ABS voter board to review and approve all ABS applications. (IC 3-11-4-17.5) The CEB must hold a public meeting to make any final decision, and this includes ABS applications! However, if the ABS boards are reviewing and approving ABS apps, then no public meeting is necessary.

The clerk's office is responsible for entering ABS apps into the SVRS. When it's time to begin sending absentees out (not later than 45-days before the election or Sept. 19, 2026), the D/R appointed members of the CEB or the ABS voter board must affix their initials to the back of the ABS ballot. (IC 3-11-4-19)

The ABS packet mailed to the voter must include the ballot, a postage pre-paid ballot security return envelope, the ABS Voter Bill of Rights, and, if it's going to a military or overseas voter, the MOVE Information Sheet.

When the ABS ballot is returned (even if it's by travel board, early voting, or by mail/VPD/FPCA), the ABS voter board OR the CEB also perform the first absentee signature review, comparing the signature on the voter's ABS application (or ePollbook) against the ABS ballot security envelope.

This work must be performed before Election Day and then the apps/ballots (sealed in the ballot envelope) are filed by precinct in a cabinet/office/receptacle with a bi-partisan lock. The D/R CEB member or their designee is to maintain custody of their key at all times and must make arrangements to be present to unlock the door/receptacle each day.

Early voting or in-person absentee voting is voting that occurs **before an absentee voter board**, much like traveling board. ABS voter boards are to be present during in-person absentee voting at the clerk's office or other satellite locations to perform work like approving applications (that is, handling the ePB process), checking a voter's ID, or assisting voters with the voting equipment or ballot.

Additionally, the absentee voter board must also print their name and sign the ABS-7 security envelope in the space provided after the voter seals their optical scan ballot card inside and

signs their affidavit found on the ABS-7. **State law DOES NOT PERMIT an absentee voter to scan their absentee ballot on a tabulator during early voting - even IF the opScan voting system has an approved ballot retraction method.**

Traveling board is a specific function of the ABS voter board, where a bipartisan team travels to a confined voter, caregiver for the confined voter, or a voter with disabilities who believes their polling place is inaccessible to them to assist them with completing a ballot or to bring a DRE or ballot marking device unit to allow the voter to vote privately and independently. (The DRE or BMD resolution has to be approved by the CEB first; see IC 3-11-10-26.2)

ABS Ballot Printing Reminders. Not later than 60-days before the election (or Sept. 4, 2026), the clerk or the board of elections & registration in Lake, Porter, and Tippecanoe counties must estimate the number of absentee ballots needed for the election.

Absentee ballots (or the data file to print ABS on demand) must be delivered not later than 50-days before the election (or Sept. 14, 2026). Not later than 5-days after receiving the printed ballots, counties must begin mailing ABS ballots to those voters with approved applications.

Using 50-days as the rule of thumb, counties receiving their ABS ballots on day 50 have until Sat., Sept 19, 2026 (or 45-days before the election) to begin mailing ABS ballots. However, if your county receives ballots on day 55, then the deadline to begin mailing ballots is day 50 to comply with the "5-day" rule. (IC 3-11-4-18(c)).

Lastly, don't forget to file a CAF to update your ballot ready date, IF you are sending your first batch of ABS before Sept. 19, 2026. More info can be found in the *Election Administrator's Manual*.

UNCONTESTED RACES ON THE NOV. BALLOT & HOLDOVERS

UNCONTESTED RACES. Unlike the odd-numbered municipal election years, **ALL candidates appear on the November general election ballot, even if only one person filed.** Counties may use "No Candidate Filed" on the ballot for races where no person filed to run OR for those parties that did not find a candidate to run for a specific office.

HOLDOVERS. On occasion, no one files to run for an office on the November ballot. In these cases, the current officeholder "holds-over" for a new term of office pursuant to Article 15, Section 3 of the Indiana Constitution. For example, County Clerk is on the ballot in November 2026. Mia is the currently elected county clerk, who is serving her first four-year term. No one—not even Mia—filed for the office. Therefore, Mia will continue serving as the county clerk for another four-year term. Because she is a "holdover" under state law, Mia does not file a new oath of office and will not receive a Commission from the Governor.

Counties often ask what happens if Mia didn't file because she doesn't want to continue serving? The simplest way to handle this situation is for the holdover to resign after their new term in office is to begin. In the above example, Mia resigns as Clerk by filing a written resignation with the Governor (as she is a constitutional office holder), and the elected office vacancy would be filed according to statute. (IC 3-13-3 to IC 3-13-11, generally) The individual selected is a "pro-tem" appointment for the remainder of the term.

VR CORNER

VRG-21 & VLM Work

As noted in the July Dispatch, the VLM freeze period begins on Aug. 6, 2026, meaning counties cannot send a SAMC or move a voter to “inactive” status on or after this date. All VLM work must be wrapped up by Aug. 5, 2026. Any SAMC returns received after this deadline must be held for processing until vote history from the Nov election is posted unless the voter responds with one of the following:

- 1/ move a voter from inactive status to active status if the voter confirms their residence address & signs the SAMC;
- 2/ update the voter’s registration address, if the voter indicates a move within the precinct and also answers the age/citizenship questions and signs the SAMC. The VR deadline would apply to make this update, unless it’s a move within the precinct.
- 3/ cancel the voter’s Indiana registration, if the voter requests cancellation and signs the SAMC.

State law requires counties to complete the VRG-21 to confirm your county completed VLM work to the best of your ability by the Aug. 5 deadline. This form is due to IED by Aug. 18, 2026.

DECLARED WRITE-IN CANDIDATES

As part of the candidate certification IED will send to each county not later than noon, Aug. 21, 2026, a list of declared write-in candidates for federal, statewide, state legislative, and judicial offices, including prosecuting attorney.

Write-in candidates are NEVER printed on the ballot! Instead, the CEB must include a “write-in” space on the ballot for each office where a person has filed a CAN-3 form. The one exception is that a write-in line **MUST** be included for all federal offices (US House), even if no declared write-in candidate filed.

A list of write-in candidates, which is to include those certified by IED to counties and those write-in candidates filed with the county, are to be provided to Election Day poll workers to assist with tallying write-in votes. However, the list of write-in candidates should **NOT** be posted inside the polling location.

As part of canvassing after the polls close, ballots or DRE vote total tapes are reviewed to determine if a write-in candidate’s vote is to be counted. IC 3-12-4-4 and IC 3-12-1-1.7 explains the procedures, which includes determining a voter’s intent and counting “write-in” votes for candidates printed on the ballot. For example, John Smith is a D candidate for dogcatcher and printed on the ballot. A voter writes in John Smith on the write-in line. The write-in vote would be added to Mr. Smith’s vote total.

QUESTIONS OF THE MONTH

Q. What is the deadline to challenge candidates who filled a ballot vacancy or filed to run for school board?

A. A voter of the election district or a county chair has until noon, Aug. 21, 2026, to file a CAN-1 challenge against those filling a ballot vacancy or filing a CAN-34 to run for school board.

It is possible to have a write-in candidate for school board. The CAN-1 challenge deadline for these candidates using the CAN-26 form is noon, Aug. 28, 2026. If you had a small town that followed a convention model to nominate Libertarian candidates, the CAN-1 challenge deadline is noon, September 4, 2026.

Note: Local candidates who won the primary election can no longer be challenged. Instead, individuals should consult with their attorney on filing a lawsuit or, after the Nov. election, a contest action (another type of lawsuit).

Q. What about the deadline to file a CAN-1 challenge against a candidate who used the petition process to be on the ballot?

A. Same as above—noon, Aug. 21, 2026, for a voter or county chair in the election district to file a CAN-1 challenge. The CEB (and IED) has until noon, Sept. 4, 2026, to determine its validity.

Q. If a school board candidate opened a campaign finance committee, when is their first campaign finance report due?

A. Unlike the other “summer filers”, school board candidates with an open committee will sync up to the pre-election reporting period, ending Oct. 9, 2026, and the CFA-4 report due by noon, Oct. 16, 2026. This is different from candidates filling a ballot vacancy for an office paying \$5000 or more in a calendar year, where a CFA-1 was due by noon, July 13, and a vacancy report was due by noon, July 27, 2026, for a reporting period ending July 20.

Q. What about those individuals who filled a ballot vacancy or sought ballot access through petition (CAN-19, CAN-21) ?

A. These do have a “special” vacancy CFA-4 report this summer. To keep things simple, let’s assume the ballot vacancy candidates all filed by noon, July 6, 2026. The CFA-1 filing deadline, if the candidate did not have an open committee already or is running for an office paying \$5000 or more in a calendar year, is noon, July 13, 2026, or seven days after the filing deadline. The CFA-4 vacancy report is due by noon, July 27, 2026, with a reporting period ending July 20, 2026. These deadlines also apply to write-in candidates except a write-in candidate for school board.

If a candidate went through the petition process (or was nominated by the L party at convention), their filing deadline was noon, July 15, 2026. This means the CFA-1, if applicable, is due by noon, July 22, 2026, and a report due by noon, Aug. 5, 2026, with a reporting period ending July 29, 2026.

Q. Will we have to include other parties besides D/R/L as a straight party option on the ballot in November?

A. The state will certify all straight party devices to counties by the noon, Aug. 21, 2026, deadline. There are a few minor parties that were successful in achieving ballot access, so there will be more straight party options as a result for November.