



Election Division Dispatch

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NEWS & UPDATES

Filing Deadlines & Office Closure Reminders

With the recent winter weather that closed the IED office and some county offices in late January, several counties reached out to ask how that would affect candidate filing. Candidate filing is NOT extended for the days the offices are closed for any reason. However, if the closure happens on the filing deadline, then state law pushes the filing deadline to noon, the next day the office is open. For example, if a county office is closed on the statewide filing deadline for the primary election—February 6, 2026—then only in that county is the filing deadline moved to noon, Monday, February 9, 2026. But, if the office was closed on February 5, but open on February 6, then the deadline remains noon, February 6, 2026. Note: This law only applies to the filing of documents. It does not impact deadlines where a county party would need to act to hold a caucus to fill an elected office vacancy, for example, or to send out absentee ballots by the MOVE Act deadline of 45-days from Election Day.

Friday the 13th...

...isn't just an "unlucky day" to start a project, but it also happens to be an important deadline in the primary election calendar:

- **Deadline for the D or R member of the CEB to file a written request for uncontested PCs and delegates to appear on the ballot.** Without this request, only contested candidates for party offices will appear on the ballot.
- **Deadline for candidate to withdraw from the primary election ballot for any reason, using the CAN-10 form.** In most cases, if a candidate is nominated in May to appear on the November election, then they can withdraw from the general election ballot by noon, July 15, 2026, for any reason. After this deadline, the options to withdraw become limited.
- **Deadline for a voter in the election district (or a county chair within the election district) to file a CAN-1 challenge to dispute a candidate's qualifications to run for an elected or party office.** In most cases, this is the only opportunity for a candidate to be challenged where the CEB is involved. If a candidate challenge is not filed and it's determined by the CEB that the person is not qualified, then it becomes a matter for the courts to decide and a person with standing would file a lawsuit.
- **Deadline for a candidate running for an office paying \$5000 or more to open their candidate's committee (CFA-1).** See "Questions of the Month" feature for more details.

CALENDAR

- **Feb. 2, 2026:** Deadline for county sheriff and local health officer to provide quarterly reports related to imprisonment following conviction or death, respectively
- **Feb. 4, 2026:** Deadline to complete VLM work before freeze period begins on Feb. 5, 2026
- **Feb. 5, 2026:** VLM "freeze" period begins; counties cannot send a SAMC or move a voter's status to inactive now through election day, May 5, 2026
- **Feb. 6, 2026 (NOON):** Candidate filing for primary closes
- **Feb. 13, 2026 (NOON):** Deadline for candidate to withdraw from the primary election
- **Feb. 13, 2026 (NOON):** Deadline for a voter in the election district or county chair to file a CAN-1 challenge against a candidate who filed for the May primary election
- **Feb. 13, 2026 (NOON):** Deadline for D or R appointed CEB member to file a request that uncontested candidates for party offices (PC, delegate) must appear on the ballot
- **Feb. 13, 2026 (NOON):** Deadline for a candidate seeking an office paying more than \$5000 in a calendar year to open a candidate's committee (CFA-1) unless they've already done so
- **Feb. 17, 2026:** Deadline for VR official to file VRG-21 with IED to confirm completion of VLM tasks
- **Feb. 20, 2026:** Deadline for CEB to notify candidate committees or PACs that did not file or filed late their 2025 annual report (see related entry on Mar. 2)
- **Feb. 20, 2026:** Deadline for VSTOP to provide random list of voting systems to use at their public test
- **Feb. 20, 2026:** Deadline for IED to send the certified list of federal, state legislative, and judicial candidates to CEB (see related entry on Feb. 26)
- **Feb. 26, 2026:** Deadline for CEB (or IEC) to determine the outcome of a CAN-1 candidate challenge
- **Feb. 27, 2026:** Deadline for CEB to share a draft ballot with the D/R county party chairs for their review
- **Mar. 2, 2026 (NOON):** Deadline for party committees to file their 2025 annual report
- **Mar. 6, 2026:** Deadline for CEB to estimate the number of absentee & provisional ballots needed for the May primary election
- **Mar. 6, 2026:** Deadline for chairs to provide feedback on the ballots; if no feedback received, CEB may proceed with ballot printing
- **Mar. 16, 2026:** Deadline for CEB to receive ABS print order/blank stock/ electronic media to print ABS ballots for May primary election
- **Mar. 16, 2026:** Deadline for CEB to request ABS boards from D/R county party chairs
- **Mar. 20, 2026 (NOON):** Deadline for D/R county party chairs to nominate individuals to nominate, in writing, the names of their ABS board members
- **Mar. 21, 2026:** Deadline for CEB to send ABS ballots out to voters with approved ABS applications, including the FPCA

FEBRUARY 2026 WEB TRAINING

Feb. 3 & 5 | Processing VR Records Overview

Feb. 10 & 12 | Reports Overview

Feb. 17 & 19 | ABS-VPD Overview

Feb. 24 & 26 | Absentee FPCA Overview

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

IN FOCUS: Ballot Printing Orders for May Primary Election

Absentee & Provisional Ballot Orders

Each county must estimate the number of provisional and absentee ballots need by voters in your county not later than Mar. 6, 2026. There is no specific rule of thumb to make the determination, though your 2022 and 2024 primary election numbers might be a reasonable gauge.

Your ballot printer must deliver your order of absentee ballots not later than Mar. 16, 2026. (If your county uses a ballot-on-demand printer, then the CD or equivalent with the ballot files must be delivered by this date.) This includes the absentees needed for mail, travel board, and in-person absentee or early voting. If a county uses a ballot marking device (BMD) with their opScan system, then your vendor must deliver the estimated blank card stock by this deadline date.

Election Day Ballot Orders

Counties using optical scan paper ballot cards or traditional hand-counted paper ballots must order Election Day ballots. There is no deadline to receive the ballot, other than the print order should arrive on time for your county to organize the ballots for pick-up by Inspectors the Saturday or Sunday before the election.

To order Election Day ballots for the May primary election, a county needs to review its precinct election results from the 2024 November election and identify which D candidate was the top vote getter in each precinct, and which R candidate was the top vote getter in each precinct to set forth the minimum ballot order.

Figure 1 is an example of how many ballots and of which party type should be ordered for each precinct on Election Day. (No, state law does not permit counties to back out any ABS voters; you must follow this law for ordering primary ballots.)

Some counties use a voting system where a blank ballot card is inserted into a ballot marking device, the voter makes their selections, and a completed ballot card is printed for the voter to insert into the opScan tabulator. You would still follow the ballot ordering rules, though you would be ordering blank ballot stock at this minimum threshold.

If you are a vote center county using printed ballot cards or blank ballot card stock, then you'll want to go through this same exercise and sum the minimum precinct order to reach a total minimum to deliver to each vote center. Using the example below, each vote center would be supplied with at least 237 D ballots (125+112) and 215 R ballots (101+114).

NOTE: the ballot printing rules are different in the Nov. 2026 election.

Special Ballot Styles

State law was updated recently and no longer permits the "common" type of public questions to be placed on the May primary ballot. Howev-

er, there are a few "rare" types of questions, such as expanding the size of a town council, that can appear on the May ballot. If your CEB must place a public question on the May ballot, then you will need to create a special "17-year old" ballot that eliminates the public question from the ballot. "Underage" voters can register and vote in the May primary election, as long as they turn 18 on or before the Nov. 3, 2026, general election. While they can nominate candidates for the Nov. ballot in May, they cannot participate in an election that is "final," like a public question.

Certified List of Candidates from IED

Candidates for US House, state legislative offices, and judicial offices, including prosecuting attorney, file their candidacy paperwork with the state; NOT the county. Do NOT rely on the candidate lists found on the state's website OR any courtesy filings.

The official list of federal and state candidates will come from IED not later than Feb. 20, 2026. This certification may change depending on the outcome of any challenge hearings, but the initial list will be shared to the IED Postings section of the INSVRS County Portal.

Primary Election Ballot Layout Reminders

Don't forget that primary election ballot cards should have the name of each party printed near the top of the ballot. It's also permissible to include color coding to allow for better visual identification for poll workers to pull the proper party's ballot requested by the voter. This applies to opScan ballot cards and DRE or BMD screens.

All ballot cards must be printed with their precinct designation. (IC 3-10-1 -13(b)) Further, a line must appear on the ballot to allow for the absentee voter board members or poll clerks to affix their initials.

All candidates within a specific office must appear in the same column on the ballot card or screen of a DRE or BMD. There is an exception for party offices. PC and delegate names can spill over into a new column or screen, if it is not feasible to group them under the same column or screen.

Ballot Proof Review by Third Parties

The CEB must notify the D and R county chairs (AND, if applicable, school superintendents) aware that a ballot proof is ready for their review. The deadline to notify these individuals is Feb. 27, 2026. If feedback is not received by Mar. 6, 2026, then the CEB can move forward with their ballot printing.

If an error is discovered after the ballots are printed, there are procedures in statute to cure the problem. See the *2026 Election Admin Manual* at in.gov/sos/elections for details.

Precinct	Office	D Candidate Votes Cast	R Candidate Votes Cast
Perry 1	Dogcatcher	85	92
Perry 1	Sheriff	125	50
Perry 1	Auditor	73	101
Perry 2	Dogcatcher	112	68
Perry 2	Sheriff	65	114
Perry 2	Auditor	89	92

VR CORNER: Statewide VLM Project Mitigation Plan

Last month counties received on or around Jan. 23, 2026, the final shipment from The Jackson Group for the 2025 Statewide VLM postcard mailing. This packet not only included undeliverable first and second card mailings (FMUs & SMUs) and returned voter response cards (VRCs), but also a separated stack of SAMCs dated December 19, 2025.

An email was sent to counties around the same time, which included a memo providing guidance to county voter registration officials on how to manage the cards in this packet. Generally speaking, counties will treat the FMUs/SMUs/VRCs the same as they have been since mid-September 2025. The SAMCs, however, were sent by the state to the group of voters whose second mailing was returned torn or misaddressed. To make sure an attempt was made to deliver a second card as required by federal and state law, the state opted to send a SAMC to this universe of voters.

Counties must take action on the state-sent SAMCs (hint: the print date on the SAMCs in this grouping are all dated Dec. 19, 2025) to move voters to inactive status if the SAMC was returned as undeliverable (or not returned by the deadline). Civix is prepared to help counties to move voters in batch, since the freeze period starts on Feb. 5. If you do NOT want Civix to move the voter statuses, you must email the Civix Help Desk by NOON, Feb. 3, 2026. Otherwise, Civix will move forward with updating the impacted voters' statuses to "inactive." (A list of impacted voters was uploaded to the County Portal, if the county VR official wishes to review it.) Please read the mitigation plan email for more details on these next steps. If you can't find it, email elections@iec.in.gov.

QUESTIONS OF THE MONTH

Q. What's the difference between a principal and exploratory campaign finance committee?

A. The distinction boils down to the candidate's intent. If they are not sure what office they want to run for but know they want to run for an elected office, then exploratory may be the best option for them. However, a person in this situation may wish to open their committee as a principal committee and disclose the office they are likely to pick. In the end, the committee can always amend the CFA-1 to switch it back to exploratory or vice versa. The best rule of thumb is that when the person files their declaration of candidacy (CAN-2), a candidate's consent, or even the CEB selection form to fill an elected office vacancy, that their CFA-1 be amended to reflect a "principal" committee for the office they are holding or seeking to be elected.

Q. Do elected officials need to keep two committees open if they decide to run for another elected office?

A. No, it's not necessary but the committee can certainly choose to do so if they want to manage two separate bank accounts and file campaign finance reports for two different committees. The change in state law explicitly requires an elected official to have an open and active committee while holding an elected office. If the official decides to run for another office, then the official can amend the CFA-1 to reflect that new office to avoid creating two distinct committees (unless that's what they want to do). As noted above, the best time to amend the CFA-1 to reflect the new office sought is when they file the declaration of candidacy, but could certainly do so before. Lastly, if a person holds a local office and wants to run for a state or statewide office, the official can choose to keep two separate committees (one with IED, one with the CEB) or "close" their local committee to open their state committee. This is largely done on paper to show the transfer from the committee on file with the CEB to the state committee and then close the local office committee by filing a "final/disbands" report showing a \$0 balance with no debts owed to or by the committee with the CEB. **Ultimately, the elected official needs to have an open and active committee while holding their current office or pursuing a new office.** There is no need to have two separate committees, but the CFA-1 should be updated as needed to reflect the committee's current thinking.

Q. If a candidate running for an office paying \$5000 or more in a calendar year does NOT open a campaign finance committee by noon, Feb. 13, 2026, what do we do?

A. In these cases, the CEB will need to administratively open a committee for the candidate using the CFA-1, making the candidate the chair and treasurer of their committee and using their CAN-2 to

complete the contact information on the CFA-1. The committee would need to comply with all CFA-4 reporting deadlines; if not, then the CEB would assess a fine against the committee for their delinquent reports at \$50 per calendar day, up to \$1000. However, if a candidate files for an office paying less than \$5000, then there is no action for the CEB to take. The candidate in this scenario is required to open a committee not later than noon, ten days after raising or spending more than \$500 (that is, \$500.01 or more) toward running for office.

Q. Can relatives run for and hold elected office in the same unit of government? For example, a husband serving on the township board and the wife serves as the township trustee?

A. There is no statute that prohibits individuals who are related from serving elected office at the same time. The "nepotism" conflict arises when a relative is an employee or is directly supervised by a family member. In this case, both individuals are elected officials and not an employee of one another.

Q. There is an election district for a local office split between two counties. Where should the candidate file?

A. Candidates file their declarations of candidacy with the county containing the largest population of the jurisdiction according to the 2020 Census. The "larger" county would certify the names to the "smaller" county so that both counties can build their ballot and hold their election. After the election, the "smaller" county sends their certified results to the "larger" county, who certifies the final vote totals to determine the winner.

Q. Am I required to hold a primary election for one or both parties if there are no contested offices on the party's ballot?

A. In 2026, yes, because there is a contested D or R primary election in the state, counties must hold a primary election, even if locally there are no contested races for local office. (IC 3-10-1-5) However, in 2027, it is possible a primary election will not be held if there are no contested races on the ballot because there are no state level offices on the ballot in a municipal election year. The county would only look at who filed locally to make the determination. More on that process next year.

Q. Do I reject a candidate filing if a candidate fails to mark their political party on the CAN-2 (or any other candidate declaration or consent)?

A. No. However, there is no way to enter the candidate's information into SVRS or assign them to the proper party to appear on a ballot. The candidate has until noon, Feb. 6, 2026, to perfect their filing for the May primary. But, if they do not, a voter of the election district or a county chair within the election district can file a CAN-1 challenge to officially reject the filing due to the alleged defect.