



# Election Division Dispatch

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## NEWS & UPDATES

### ABS Voter Board & Central Count Team Requests

The CEB must ask the D and R chairs to nominate qualified persons to serve on pre-Election Day ABS voter boards for ABS-Mail processing, ABS-Travel Board teams, and for early voting, as well as persons to serve on Election Day central count teams and, if applicable, as ABS list couriers to polling places.

The deadline for the CEB to provide the number of ABS voter boards and central count teams and make the request of party chairs is noon, March 16, 2026. The county chairs have until noon, March 20, to nominate persons to those positions. After this deadline the CEB is to fill these vacancies. The qualifications for ABS voter boards and to serve on central count teams are found in IC 3-11.5-4-22.

State law does permit a 16- or 17-year old to be nominated and fill ABS voter board positions, except for travel board positions. (IC 3-11.5-4-23(d)) "Students" can also serve on central count teams under IC 3-11.5-4-23(d). The deadline to nominate Election Day poll workers comes later in April.

### SVRS Candidate Set Up Reminders

As part of your prep work for May, counties will need to make sure their candidate list is correct. When determining which status to select from the candidate module, please keep the following definitions in mind:

- **Filed:** Candidate filed paperwork to run for office
- **Disqualified:** Candidate was removed from ballot due to CEB (or IEC) challenge hearing or court order
- **Withdrawn:** Candidate has withdrawn from the election
- **Deceased:** Candidate has passed away

The fifth status is one that is commonly used in the primary election for party offices (PC or delegate): **No Election Held**. This status is used when a county has candidates that filed to run for office, but the office is NOT on the ballot and all candidates will "win". For example, an uncontested PC race is not printed on the ballot (barring the party request, of course). Their candidate status in SVRS should be changed to "No Election Held" to ensure that their name only appears on certification paperwork. Please do not use any other status for this scenario! Doing so will complicate your certification to the state. The Election Office Candidate & Referendum Setup step by step on the INSVRS county portal has more detailed information.

### IEC-6 & "old" ePollbooks Used for Sample Ballot

Several counties have refreshed their ePollbook equipment in the last year and are working to dispose of those units properly by submitting an IEC-6 to IED for review and approval. A reminder that if you intend to "recycle" the ePollbooks for use as a device to display sample ballots at your voting location that you must file the IEC-6 to document this reuse. Counties will also need to wipe those models clean of all previous software before loading any sample ballot images to the device.

## CALENDAR

- **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. 6, 2026:** Beginning of the period where any local ordinance limiting the placement of a yard sign is suspended until the fifth day after Election Day (see In Focus section for more information)
- **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
- **Mar. 21, 2026:** Indiana Libertarian Party State Convention
- **Apr. 3, 2026:** Good Friday (IED Closed)
- **Apr. 5, 2026:** Beginning of the period where any homeowner's association rule is suspended until the fifth day after Election Day (see In Focus section for more information)
- **Apr. 6, 2026:** Deadline to conduct public test of voting systems
- **Apr. 6, 2026:** Statewide Voter Registration Deadline
- **April 7, 2026:** Early voting (in-person ABS voting) begins
- **Apr. 10, 2026:** Pre-Primary Reporting Period Ends
- **Apr. 11, 2026:** First day for candidate committees to file CFA-11, if applicable
- **Apr. 13, 2026:** Deadline to file IEC-9 or IEC-10 (or both for MicroVote counties) with IED to confirm public test was performed
- **Apr. 14, 2026 (NOON):** Deadline for D/R chairs to file Election Day poll worker nominations with CEB
- **Apr. 14, 2026:** Deadline for CEB to publish CAN-9 & list of Election Day voting locations in the newspaper
- **Apr. 16, 2026:** Travel board begins
- **Apr. 17, 2026 (NOON):** Deadline for candidate committees, regular party committees & PACs to file pre-primary report
- **Apr. 18, 2026:** First of TWO Saturdays early voting must be offered at the clerk's office designated by the clerk or satellite office (All vote center counties must also have one additional vote center used on Election Day open for early voting)
- **Apr. 23, 2026 (11:59P):** Deadline for voter to file ABS-Mail, or ABS-VPD or FPCA who want ballot mailed to them (rather than sent by email or fax)
- **Apr. 27, 2026 (11:59PM):** Deadline for M/O voter to file an FPCA to register to vote (or update a registration) for the primary election. Note: their only voting option would be by email or fax; mail deadline has passed

## MARCH 2026 WEB TRAINING

- **Mar. 3 & 5 |** ePollbook Overview
- **Mar. 10 & 12 |** Preparing for the 2026 Primary
- **Mar. 17 & 19 |** ABS & Cure Process Overview
- **Mar. 24 & 26 |** Election Results Mapping
- **Mar. 31 & Apr. 2 |** March Build Placeholder

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

# IN FOCUS: Campaign Yard Signs

Every election cycle state and county officials are asked questions about yard signs and when/where/what time can they be placed. To help, IED publishes a Disclaimer brochure with more detailed information that is available on our website. Here are some FAQs:

**1/ Is there a state law that dictates when yard signs can be put out before an election?** No, state law doesn't specifically address when campaign yard signs can go out in people's yards. This decision is left to local ordinance or homeowner association policies.

However, there is a state law that states IF there is a local ordinance prohibiting yard signs, then the ordinance is not enforceable for 60-days before an election through 5-days after. (IC 36-1-3-11) For the May 5, 2026, primary election, this period begins March 6, 2026, or 60-days from the primary election, through May 11, 2026. (IC 36-1-3-11)

Additionally, a homeowner's association policy prohibiting yard signs cannot be enforced 30-days before an election through 5-days afterward. (IC 32-21-13-4) For the May 5, 2026, primary election, this period begins April 5, 2026, and ends on May 10, 2026. (IC 32-21-13-4)

**2/ Can yard signs be placed in the right of way?** No. However, the county election board does NOT enforce placement of yard signs. Instead, your county or city highway department, planning dept., or equivalent would enforce this rule.

**3/ Are disclaimers required on yard signs?** In most cases, yes. A disclaimer in at least 7 size font with who paid for the sign is required to be included on the sign in indelible ink that contrasts with the background. (IC 3-9-3-2.5) However, signs supporting or opposing a referendum do not require the use of a disclaimer. (IC 3-9-3-2.5) The county election board would address complaints about yard signs that appear to not be compliant with state's disclaimer law.

**4/ A non-incumbent printed on their yard sign "Sam Smith Dog-catcher." This implies they are the incumbent. Is this allowable?** Yes. In 2024, state law was updated to codify an advisory opinion from the Indiana Election Commission. See IC 3-9-3-5 or the *2026 Campaign Finance Manual* for more information.

**5/ A person calls to ask if she can remove a yard sign placed in the highway right-of-way without permission. What do I tell her?** Only those with legal authority over the property can remove the yard sign from the county right-of-way. Any other person without such authority may be liable for criminal conversion. She should file a complaint with the proper authorities to make them aware of the yard sign's placement. If the sign is located on the owner's property outside of any right-of-way, then the owner may remove it.

## Primary Election Reminders

The primary election has a few unique features for voters and election officials that don't apply in the Nov. general election, specifically outwardly expressing your party affiliation at the voting booth.

While Indiana voters do not register to vote with a party affiliation, the party ballot choice selected by the voter in the primary is recorded as part of the voter's vote history found on their registration record. This vote history grows over time, showing a primary election as a D, R, NP (non-partisan), and sometimes UNK (unknown) when paper poll lists were used. For Nov, vote history is an "X" to show participation. Which candidates selected by the voter are not known or recorded in SVRS.

When voting in the primary, a person is affirming under state law that they either voted for a majority of those candidates in the last Nov. election or did not vote in the Nov. election and intend to vote for a majority of those candidates in the upcoming election. For this reason, state law allows a voter of the county to challenge another voter, if the challenger believes the challenged voter is not a member of the challenger's political party and should not be permitted to nominate candidates to appear on the fall ballot.

Counties must have the PRE-6 form available at Election Day locations for this purpose. The challenger completes their side of the affidavit, and then the challenged voter has to affirm, under penalties of perjury, that they affiliate with the party using the standards noted above. If the challenged voter completes the form, then poll workers must issue a regular ballot to the voter for their selected party.

## VR CORNER

### Military & Overseas Voters VR Deadline

Military & overseas voters using the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) have an extended voter registration deadline before each election. Rather than the standard 29-day statewide cut-off, individuals eligible to use the FPCA may use this form to register to vote until eight days before the election, or 11:59PM, April 27, 2026, for the May 2026 primary election. Additionally, there are special procedures if a member of the military is discharged between this date and election day. Please see the 2026 Military & Overseas handbook for more information. Finally, the FPCA can be emailed or faxed, so it is not necessary for a military or overseas voter using the FPCA to be held to the same "wet" or original signature standard on a VR form as a civilian voter submitting the state or federal voter registration form.

### Independent Candidates

A few of you have reached out to confirm calculations for the threshold signature amount for Independent candidates running in an election district smaller than the entire county. (Countywide calculations are already done and found in the back of the 2026 Candidate's Guide.) You will need to figure out which precincts make up the election district, and pull your precinct level results from 2022. Add up the total votes cast for all SOS candidates in those select precincts and then multiply by 2%. (We were asked if the straight party selections parsed out on your reports should be included; they should not. Those numbers are already part of the candidate's totals.) If the number has a fraction like 10.76, you round down and the person needs to gather 10 signatures.

## ABSENTEE BALLOT REMINDERS

- ABS-Mail ballots must be delivered to the county by their vendor not later than March 16, 2026, for the primary election.
- State law and the federal MOVE Act require counties to send absentee ballots to voters with approved ABS and FPCA applications not later than 45-days before each election, or March 21, 2026.
- March 21, 2026, is the default “ballot ready” date in SVRS. Counties can request the deadline to be moved up to an earlier date by submitting a county authorization form in INSVRS.
- Expect IED to follow-up on the March 21, 2026, deadline as each state is required to report back to the U.S. Department of Justice on compliance with this important federal law.
- Once counties begin sending absentee ballots out on or around March 21, 2026, state law requires an absentee ballot be sent on the same day the application is approved. (IC 3-11-4-18)
- Voters must include on all ABS applications, including FPCA, their voter ID number (IN DLN, SSN4, SVRS ID) OR a copy of an ID that complies with our voter ID law.
- ABS-Mail, ABS-VPD, and FPCA applications for a mailed ballot must be received not later than 11:59PM, April 23, 2026.
- FPCA applications for emailed/faxed ABS ballot must be received by noon, May 4, 2026.
- Absentee and FPCA forms can be mailed, hand-delivered, faxed, or emailed.
- Please review the *2026 Election Administrator’s Manual* for details on what to include in the absentee balloting packet, including the ABS voter bill of rights or the MOVE Act information sheet!

## Public Test of Voting Systems

All counties must perform a public test of their voting systems not later than the state of early voting. Each CEB must follow the Open Door law and post notice of the meeting at least 48-hours before the test begins. Keep in mind that you cannot “count” holidays or weekends in that 48-hour period. Meaning, notice for a public test held on Mon. April 6, 2026, the last day to do so, must be posted by Wed. April 1, 2026, since April 3 is a holiday and Sat/Sun don’t count.

Additionally, the public test is the ONLY CEB meeting you will need to publish notice in the newspaper. This notice must also be published at least 48-hours before the test begins. But, you do not have to consider holidays or weekends. Using the same example above for an April 6, 2026, test, newspaper notice can be posted as late as April 4, 2026.

You should be working closely with your vendors to perform logic & accuracy testing to get the machines ready for the primary election. VSTOP also is required to provide the order of DRE & OpScan units to test, until such a time the CEB tests at least 5% of all units used in the election. Members of the public can request additional testing, up to another 5%.

MicroVote counties must file the IEC-9 (DRE) & IEC-10 (opScan) forms, since both voting methods are part of their system. Please do not forget to test the OpScan unit of the MicroVote system! OpScan counties only need to file the IEC-10 but tabulators and any ballot marking device units must be tested. Those forms must be filed with IED not later than seven days after performing the public test.

## QUESTIONS OF THE MONTH

**Q. My voting system vendor was asking about the watermark used on our absentee ballots as a security feature. Is this the same as our seal/signature or something different?**

A. Something different. Back in 2023, the legislature passed a measure that requires all absentee ballot paper to have a security feature to determine if a person tampered with it. The law went into effect after Dec. 31, 2024, so this is the first full election cycle with this new requirement. Voting system vendors confirmed during their recertification process that their absentee ballots can meet this new requirement. This means not only does your absentee ballot need to have a security feature (it can be a watermark, but also could be a feature already built into the paper) but it also needs to have the clerk’s seal and signature (or the IED-issued generic seal and no signature if the clerk is on the ballot for any office besides PC or delegate). Any form of absentee voting (in-person or early voting, mail, and travel board) using a ballot card must have this security feature. Please talk with your vendor to ensure compliance with this law. (IC 3-11-4-14)

**Q. Do I need to change a candidate’s name on their voter registration record if their ballot name on their declaration of candidacy doesn’t match their voter registration name?**

A. Yes. State law requires county VR officials to update a candidate’s registration match the candidate’s ballot name on their CAN-2. This statute is noted on the form, and candidates give permission to make this change. (IC 3-5-7-6)

**Q. What’s a federal only absentee ballot?**

A. A federal only absentee ballot is ONLY used for an overseas voter who marks on the FPCA that they are an overseas voter and their return to the U.S. is uncertain. These voters must be registered to vote at the address of the county voter registration office, even if they provide a residence address within Indiana. (IC 3-11-4-8).

Under federal law, these voters can vote only for federal offices in even-numbered general election years. Every Indiana county must have a federal only Democratic and Republican ballot with U.S House only on the May 2026 primary election. No other persons are eligible to use this ballot and it should not be included with Election Day materials used by poll workers.

**Q. Can we accept a federal voter registration form, the form that’s available on the US Election Assistance website?**

A. Yes! Voters can file a paper federal or state voter registration form by mail or hand-delivery. The federal form has to reflect the rules of 50 states, so there may be some questions, like ethnicity or political party, our state law does not require. The EAC website (eac.gov) has state-specific instructions and is translated in a variety of languages.

**Q. Is there a state form to use to publish notice of Election Day voting locations in the newspaper?**

A. No. The CAN-9 is used to share the name of candidates, their party affiliation, and office sought along with early voting (in-person absentee) sites and any public questions. It does not include a listing for Election Day sites. The CEB should compile a list of sites along with their addresses and publish it in the newspaper by the same deadline as the CAN-9 notice of primary election.

**Q. Who selects the voter’s party choice on the ePB: the ABS board members and Election Day poll workers or the voter?**

A. State law now requires the voter to mark their party selection. Once this selection is made, the voter cannot change their mind to spoil their ballot and then pick the opposite party.