



Election Division Dispatch

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

NEWS & UPDATES

Nominations Open for Conference Awards

Do you have a co-worker or another county colleague that you believe should be recognized at our December conference? If so, nominations are now open for a variety of awards, such as Lifetime Achievement and CEB member of the year. More details, including the link to submit nominations, is in the body of the email with this month's newsletter.

Don't forget to register for the 2027 Election Administrators' Conference being held from Dec. 7 to 9, 2026, at the Wyndham Hotel at the Indianapolis Airport. The registration fee is \$400 per person, unless you register after Nov. 6, 2026, where a \$50 per person late fee will be charged.

ABS Ballot Delivery Deadline

All voters with a reviewed and approved ABS-Mail or ABS-VPD app or Federal Post Card Application (FPCA, which is used for military and overseas voters) must have their ballot sent to them **not later than Sept. 19, 2026**, pursuant to federal and state law. This is the 45-day deadline to send ballots to comply with the Military & Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act.

Please note that the default ballot ready date in SVRS is Sept. 19. If you plan to send your ballots out earlier, please submit a CAF in SVRS to request a new ballot ready date. This allows your county to do its prep work for pushing out the first round of absentee ballots over several days, but the ballot ready date in the system is uniformly applied to this initial mailing.

Please be certain your county is adhering to this deadline.

The US Department of Justice asks our agency to track ballot sent dates to ensure compliance with federal law. If ballots are sent late, you may be contacted by their office. A reminder that after you make your initial push to send ABS ballots, state law requires you to send an absentee ballot to a voter on the same date the app is reviewed and approved.

Don't forget! Your absentee ballots must be printed on security paper and include a feature that can be used to authenticate the ballot as an official ballot. (IC 3-11-4-14(a)(2))

Early Voting & Election Day Site Updates

Visitors to indianavoters.com rely on information pulled from SVRS as entered by each county. If your county has finalized its plans for early voting or election day sites make sure your county's voting info in SVRS is updated as soon as possible. Later this month and into October, this data will be shared with our partner, Democracy Works, to display on gettothepolls.com and other third party websites. This will increase the reach of our state's voting information, so accurate data concerning voting locations, dates, and times in SVRS is critical.

CALENDAR

- **September 4, 2026 (NOON):** Deadline for IED or CEB to determine the validity of most CAN-1 challenges
- **September 4, 2026:** Ballot for the upcoming election is considered final, even if the party chairs or school superintendents did not provide feedback. However, ballots may still be changed if an error is discovered or a candidate is selected to fill a ballot vacancy, for example.
- **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 for county to receive ABS and provisional ballots (50-days before Election Day)
- **September 14, 2026 (NOON):** Deadline for CEB to provide notice to D/R county chairs regarding the number of ABS board members & Election Day ABS counters
- **September 18, 2026 (NOON):** Deadline for D/R county chair to nominate ABS board members & Election Day ABS counters
- **September 19, 2026:** Deadline to send ABS ballots to voters with approved ABS applications, if ABS ballots were received on day 50 (or Sept. 14, 2026). If the absentee ballots were received before day 50, then the absentee ballots must be sent not later than 5 days after receiving the ballot cards or electronic media to print ballot cards.
- **October 1, 2026:** Last day to post notice of a public test to comply with the Open Door Law, if holding a public test on 10/6/26. Otherwise, the deadline is at least 48-hours beforehand, not including weekends.
- **October 3, 2026:** Last day to publish notice of the public test in the newspaper, if holding a public test on 10/6/26. Otherwise, the deadline is at least 48-hours beforehand, including weekends.
- **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
- **October 6, 2026:** Early voting begins
- **October 9, 2026:** End of pre-election reporting period
- **October 10, 2026:** First day a CFA-11 must be filed not later than 48 hours after receiving and accepting a contribution by a candidate's committee, if the contribution is \$1000 or more, in lump sum or aggregate from the same source
- **October 12, 2026:** Columbus Day (IED Closed)
- **October 13, 2026 (NOON):** Deadline for county chair to nominate Election Day poll workers
- **October 13, 2026 (NOON):** Deadline for CEB to file IEC-9 and/or IEC-10 with IED to certify the outcome of their public test
- **October 13, 2026:** Deadline to publish the CAN-39 legal notice

SEPTEMBER 2026 WEB TRAINING

- Sept 1 & 11 | ePollbook Overview
- Sept 8 & 10 | Absentee FPCA Overview
- Sept. 15 & 17 | ABS & Cure Process Overview
- Sept. 22 & 24 | Preparing for the 2026 General
- Sept. 29 & Oct. 1 | September Build Placeholder
- Sept. 30 & Oct. 8 | Indianavoters.com Functionality & Inputs

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

IN FOCUS: Electioneering

In Indiana, “electioneering” is defined as expressing support or opposition to any candidate or political party OR expressing approval or disapproval of any public question in any manner that could reasonably be expected to convey that support or opposition to another person.

Electioneering includes wearing clothing, buttons, or displaying signs, etc. stating the name of any political party or includes the name, picture, photo, or other likeness of any candidate or currently elected federal, state, county, or local official in spaces where this political speech is curtailed. (IC 3-14-3-16)

Our state law specifically requires that the candidate be clearly identified for the action to be considered electioneering. Therefore, slogans like “I’m with her” would not be considered electioneering but “Sam Smith for Dogcatcher” would be.

However, the electioneering statute does not prevent a voter from receiving information about

a candidate or public question or bringing in material with information about a candidate or public question to assist them with completing their ballot.

While Election Day poll workers or early voting absentee boards, for example, would be within their rights to ask the voter to remove the clothing or cover it up. The voter may ignore the request and still receive a regular ballot, if otherwise eligible, to vote. BUT, election workers are within their rights to forward the issue of electioneering to the CEB or the county prosecutor for violating state law.

Before Election Day “Electioneering” cannot occur in the space where in-person absentee voting is taking place or the “chute,” which is a 50-foot radius from the entrance to the clerk’s office or satellite location.

Additionally, the county commissioners would control whether yard signs can be posted on the courthouse lawn. This is a First Amendment issue, with an all or none approach. The Com-

missioners should consult their county attorney on whether the body has adopted a time, place or manner restriction on political speech.

No person can “electioneer” to an ABS voter while the voter is completing their vote-by-mail ballot, but there is an exception for the person’s spouse or member of the voter’s household in state law.

On Election Day No electioneering can occur within the “chute” or inside the voting area. The chute is defined in IC 3-5-2-10 as the 50 foot area (radius) leading to the entrance where voting occurs.

Yard signs often are a point of contention leading up to the election. Those can be considered electioneering, if placed or taken inside the chute or voting area. If you need more information about yard signs. Check out the “Disclaimers” brochure found on in.gov/sos/ elections in the Election Administrator’s Portal, under Election Reference Materials.

“Late” Ballot Vacancies

Occasionally there will be instances where a candidate must withdraw at the last minute. For example, they might unexpectedly need to move out of their district to take a new job or is disqualified as a candidate under a court order. If this happens on or after Oct. 4, 2026, the procedures in IC 3-13-2 must be used for the party to fill the ballot vacancy.

The procedures to fill a “late” ballot vacancy are streamlined given the compressed timeline involved. A party chair will fill a late ballot vacancy for local office by direct appointment only. The CAN-35 & CAN-31 must be filed not later than noon, 3 days after the appointment is made or 6AM on Election Day, whichever comes sooner.

Remember, Indiana is still in the “early” ballot vacancy period until Oct., 3, 2026. This means the party must fill the ballot vacancy by a caucus of eligible PCs unless the party organization gave the chair direct appointment authority or there is only one or no eligible PC to vote in the caucus. The same forms (CAN-12, CAN-29, CAN-31, CAN-30, copy of resolution giving chair direct appointment authority) and same deadlines still apply to whichever method is chosen by the county party.

Ballot Re-Printing?

Despite all the hours and eyes on ballot proofs, mistakes happen. We are human, after all! If ballot is identified as being defective due to an error or omission, the CEB can reprint the ballot OR hold a hearing to determine if ballot re-printing is necessary. (IC 3-11-2-16)

Before the hearing, the CEB must notify the party(ies) or candidate(s) who may have an interest in the matter. At the hearing, the CEB must discuss the number of ballots, if any, containing the error or omission that have been issued; the cost of correcting the error; whether the error would cause confusion or mistakes by the voter; and whether any voter objects to using the ballot.

If no voter objects, in writing, to using the defective ballot AND the CEB determines that the error or omission will not cause confusion, then the defective ballots may be used.

If any voter objects, in writing, to using a defective ballot OR the CEB determines the error or omission will create confusion, then new ballots shall be printed.

Alternatively, a candidate may pass away after the ballot is printed. In this scenario, the procedures in IC 3-11-3-29.5 apply. The CEB must re-print ballots unless the political party fills the ballot vacancy within the final five days before the election OR the candidate dies and notice of the death is received after noon, the final seven days before the election. The CEB can also unanimously agree a candidate has died without notice and re-print the ballot.

It is also still possible for candidates to withdraw from the November election, if they have moved out of the election district or been disqualified through a lawsuit, for example. The parties can also fill the ballot vacancy up to 6AM on Election Day, depending on the timing of the withdrawal! The CEB would need to follow IC 3-11-3-29.5 as noted above to reprint the ballot unless the vacancy is filled in the final 5 days before the election.

If an ABS ballot is defective, absentee voters must file an ABS-5 to have their ballot reissued. While there is no requirement for the CEB to proactively send the ABS-5, the CEB could choose to send uniform notice to impacted voters. Another option is to surrender a defective ballot at an early voting or Election Day voting location and a corrected ballot can be issued for the voter to complete on-site. The ABS-5 must be completed during early voting; there is no form to complete on Election Day for this situation. In both cases, the original ballot is marked as defective or spoiled and placed in the spoiled ballot bag to be returned with election materials.

VR CORNER

Forwarding Voter Registrations

A voter may file state and federal voter registration forms or an FPCA in a county where the voter doesn't reside. If that occurs, officials must forward the VR document to the correct county.

The forwarding county may email the document to the correct county, but the hard copy must be sent to the correct county. (IC 3-7-34-9) Additionally, IED can receive voter VR forms from any person, and our office will forward them to the appropriate county.

Timely Voter Registrations

A reminder that any timely voter registration form received by IED will be sent with a "timely" memo as we near the statewide VR deadline. A "timely" VR form is either hand-delivered or mailed and postmarked on or before October 5, 2026 deadline.

Remember, if the postmark is missing or illegible on the envelope then the registration can be processed up to and including Mon., Oct. 13, 2026. An envelope containing a VR form that has an legible postmark date on or before Oct. 5 must be processed for the fall election, if received before Election Day.

Scanning Paper VR Forms

Don't Forget! Paper VR forms must be scanned and saved in the voter's registration documents in SVRS. This is in addition to retaining the original paper form in the manner described by law. Some counties print OVR or BMV registrations, which is fine. However, once the electronic registration form is printed, it must be maintained as you would any paper VRG-7, VRG-11, or federal VR form. The *VR Guidebook* has more details on retention and the scanning of the VR forms on pages 97-98.

Auto-Activating VR Records Before Election Day

SVRS has a feature to "auto-activate" pending registrations, in batch, ahead of an election. This is not the same as manually auto-activating a registration when the voter brings in their voter acknowledgement card within the 7-day period, however.

To move forward with auto-activating pending registrations, you must first complete the auto-activate request document found on the INSVRS County Portal and attach it to your County Authorization Request (CAF) filed through INSVRS. Signing this document acknowledges your county understands the state's policy relating to activating registrations in a batch setting. Once approved, county users may move forward with the batch processing.

That said, since every county now has ePollbooks, processing a batch to auto-activate pending registrations is less necessary than when counties printed paper poll lists. Before the auto-activate process allowed the counties to get as much voter information into the poll list file as possible, since it had to be sent to the printer at least 10 days out from the election. This resulted in producing fewer certificate of error forms that would be included in the back of the paper poll list, which could easily be lost.

Remember, you cannot manually auto-activate any individual voter registration record unless the voter acknowledgement card has been mailed to the voter and the voter brings the card into the VR office before the 7-day pending period expires. Do not auto activate someone who just dropped off a registration with you! The mailing of the card serves a purpose. If it is returned as undeliverable during the 7-day period, then the registration must be rejected. If it arrives undeliverable after the 7-days, a SAMC can be sent when not in a freeze period.

QUESTIONS OF THE MONTH

Q. Do I include candidate names and address on the CAN-39 legal notice of election?

A. No. The CAN-39 notice only needs the names of the offices and public questions in addition to early voting dates, times, and locations. Counties can generate the CAN-39 in SVRS or create their own using the paper form. **DO NOT INCLUDE ANY CANDIDATE ADDRESSES** on any public notice of election, as this is now prohibited by law. A reminder: the CAN-39 must be published at least 21-days before the election, or October 13, 2026. The CAN-39 must also be discussed at a CEB meeting for purposes of recording it in the meeting minutes, so please be sure it is included on a future agenda. (IC 3-10-2-2)

Q. Can a printer modify an ABS-Mail app to remove the section with the primary party selection box for use in the general election?

A. Yes. The IED forms order includes a note that an ABS-Mail form can be modified to remove the "party choice" section on the application and renumber the form sections. Counties may see the modified forms that exclude section 3 and go from mailing address in section 2 to the reasons box in #4. Additionally, the forms order permits the ABS-Mail app to be printed in portrait or landscape.

Q. Do the voter fail-safes apply to absentee voters?

A. Yes. However, the voter must complete the VRG-4/12 and include it with their absentee application or, if this is discovered during early voting, the voter should complete the VRG-4/12 provided by the ABS board team. The *VR Guidebook* has a helpful flowchart in the Appendix to explain the "when and where" did the voter move analysis to determine if a voter is eligible to vote one last time in their precinct.

Essentially, if a voter moves on or before Oct. 4, 2026, but does not update their registration, then they may only vote in their old precinct if they moved within the same county AND Congressional District. If the voter moved on or after October 5, 2026, then the voter can move anywhere within Indiana and still vote one last time in their old precinct.

Please note: Counties with a school corporation-related public question cannot permit a voter who moved out of the school corporation in the final 30 days before the election to vote on the public question. A separate ballot style excluding any public question that involves a school corporation asking for a tax levy or capitol improvement project must be created.

Q. Are there write-in candidates at the federal or state level? I didn't see a list on the portal.

A. The write-in candidate list is separate from the list of candidates, because write-in candidates are not printed on the ballot. Instead, a blank line must be added if there is a declared write-in candidate who filed for an office. At the state level, all counties will have a write-in line for Secretary of State and for U.S. House. However, there are only declared write-in candidates for US House in Districts 1, 3, 4, and 9. Counties in the other Congressional Districts still need to include a write-in line, even though there are no declared write-in candidates.

Q. Can we accept a FWAB (Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot) from a military and overseas voter if they do NOT have an FPCA (Federal Post Card Application) on file with us this year?

A. No. In Indiana, a military or overseas voters must first file an FPCA so that an absentee ballot can be sent to the voter. The FWAB serves as the voter's back-up ballot in case their first absentee ballot did not arrive to the CEB on time to be counted. Counties are encouraged to contact the military or overseas voter that submits a FWAB before the FPCA. If the deadlines have not passed to use the FPCA, then the voter should submit the FPCA and then they county can send the ballot to the voter and file the FWAB as a security measure.