

## **The logistics of running elections in Adams County**

As the Adams County Office of Elections & Voter Registration turns its focus to the 2024 presidential primary and general elections in Spring and Fall, it is worth taking a moment to understand how the office makes secure county elections happen every year.

### **Pennsylvania Elections, Generally**

Pursuant to the Pennsylvania Constitution, the General Assembly is responsible for enacting state voting laws and has done so through the Pennsylvania Election Code. Under the Code, each of the 67 Pennsylvania counties is given the ultimate responsibility for conducting local, state, and federal elections, with guidance from the Secretary of State. Each county has a Board of Elections, which is usually comprised of the county's Board of Commissioners unless one or more Commissioners are candidates in that election cycle in which case an auxiliary board is appointed. The Board of Elections is legally responsible for the conduct of the County's elections and ensuring election integrity in accordance with the Election Code.

Though voters generally only see the efforts of county election staff twice per year on each Election Day, preparing for an election is a year-round effort by the County. In Adams County, the Board of Elections is assisted by the [County's Office of Elections & Voter Registration](#), which handles the day-to-day logistics of running a smooth election, including services relating to voter registration, candidate nomination petitions, ballot preparation and mailings, poll workers, canvass, tabulating results, and everything in between. Angela Crouse has served as Director of the County's Elections Office since 2018, but has worked in that office since 2010. Director Crouse employs 3 full-time staff members to assist her. Both the Board of Elections and Director Crouse work in close consultation with the County Solicitor's Office relating to any legal matters affecting elections, including responding to state and federal election litigation.

### **Primary vs. General Elections in Pennsylvania**

In Primary Elections, only voters who are registered with a political party may vote in that political party's primary. Therefore, only registered Democrats may vote for Democrat primary candidates and only registered Republicans may vote for Republican primary candidates. However, in General Elections, any voter may vote for any candidate, regardless of political affiliation.

## **Voter Registration**

Every Adams County resident who meets the legal qualifications for voting (citizenship, age, residency, etc.) may vote in the Primary and General elections, provided they properly register by the applicable cutoff dates. A qualified resident may register to vote in one of four ways: (1) [online](#); (2) by mailing a completed application form to the Adams County Elections & Voter Registration Office located at 230 Greenamyre Lane, Suite 100, Gettysburg, PA 17325; (3) by appearing at the County Elections Office and completing the application in person; or (4) by completing the application at PennDOT or other state government offices that offer the application. Residents who wish to mail their application or provide the application in person to the County Elections Office may download a copy of the voter registration application [here](#). All registration applications must be received by the Elections Office **no later than 15 days prior** to the primary or general elections in order to vote in that respective election. For the 2024 Primary Election, voter registration applications must be received by the Elections Office no later than April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Voters generally only need to register once to be eligible to vote in subsequent elections, but must update their registration if they have changed their name, address, or political affiliation.

When voting for the **first time** in person at their assigned polling place, voters must either present an [approved form of ID](#) or your voter registration card prior to voting. Voters who have previously voted at the same precinct are *not* required to present ID in subsequent elections.

Voters may check their registration status online by visiting the PA Department of State's [website](#).

## **Mail-in Ballots and Absentee Ballots**

Registered voters who wish to vote by mail may request either an “absentee” ballot or a “mail-in” ballot. Both ballots are counted in the exact same way by the Elections Office, but applying for an absentee ballot requires the voter to first provide an excuse for not appearing in person on Election Day (e.g., illness, absence, etc.), whereas a mail-in ballot does not require any excuse by the voter. Voters who apply for an absentee ballot or mail-in ballot are required to present some form of [approved ID](#) as part of the application process.

Applying for a mail-in ballot may be done [online](#), by sending the completed [application](#) by mail to the Elections Office, or by visiting the Elections Office in person.

Applications for absentee ballots and mail-in ballots must be received by the Elections Office no later than 5pm one week prior to Election Day. For the 2024 Primary Election, absentee ballot and mail-in ballot applications must be received by the Elections Office no later than Tuesday, April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024 at 5pm.

**PLEASE NOTE:** The County does not control the U.S. Postal Service, and so if absentee or mail-in ballot applications are received too close to Election Day, the County cannot guarantee that the ballot will be delivered by mail to the voter in time for Election Day.

Completed absentee and mail-in ballots must be received at the Elections Office or deposited in a designated secure drop box no later than 8pm on Election Day. Absentee ballots and mail-in ballots cannot be returned to the polling places (except to be voided). Voters who apply for an absentee ballot or mail-in ballot but appear at a polling place to vote in person will be given a provisional ballot unless they can produce the absentee or mail-in ballot at the polling place to be voided and attest that they have not voted in that election.

### **Election Day Operations**

Polls are open from 7am - 8pm every Election Day. Each polling place is run by an elected Judge of Elections, two elected Inspectors, and two appointed Clerks, all of whom report to the County Board of Elections. Additionally, poll watchers appointed by the candidates or political parties may be present in the polling places but are not permitted to interact with voters. Voters can find their designated polling place on the PA Department of State's [website](#) or by contacting the Elections Office.

Voters who appear in person at their assigned polling place may vote by privately filling out a physical ballot with a pen or by using an ADA-compliant touch-screen voting machine that prints out a completed physical ballot for a voter to review. Once the ballot is completed, voters feed their own ballot into the secured voting machines to be securely stored and electronically tabulated.

At 8pm, the polling places close and the election staff must secure and deliver all ballots to the Election Office, where they are canvassed by the Board of Elections late into the night. The pre-canvass and canvass is monitored by election staff, legal counsel for candidates, and representatives of both political

parties. Though the canvass process begins on Election Day, it does not end until a week after the election in order to account for military ballots, provisional ballots, write-in votes, and any challenges. Therefore, it is important to note that initial vote estimates published on Election Night by the County, the State, and by the media **are not the final vote count**. In fact, because of state and federal law, it is legally impossible for counties to certify or report final results on Election Night.

Once the final election results are certified by the County Board of Elections, the results are sent to the Department of State, which aggregates every county's results and then certifies the final state results. The County's election results can be found [here](#).

## **Election Security**

The County takes election security very seriously and has spent considerable time and resources fighting misinformation stemming from the 2020 elections about the integrity of our electoral process. The County uses State-certified voting machines that initially undergo rigorous security testing by the State and by County IT staff. All voting machines are kept under lock and key until Election Day and are monitored constantly by video surveillance to prevent tampering. No voting machine is connected to the internet or networked to any other machine in any way and it is therefore impossible to remotely hack or otherwise remotely access any of the machines. Each machine implements multiple hardware and software security measures and the Board of Elections retains every physical ballot for comparison with the tabulation machine results and for audit purposes. Each official physical ballot also has a unique ID scanned by the machines and therefore unofficial ballots cannot be "stuffed" in the machines without the machines rejecting them. The tabulation room is at all times monitored by multiple security cameras, election staff, party representatives, and attorneys to ensure that there is no ballot tampering during the canvass. If there are any discrepancies in the vote count or issues with a machine, ballots are re-tabulated on a different machine or are hand-counted.

Mail-in and absentee ballots are also subject to rigorous security measures by the County. As mentioned, each registered voter applying to vote-by-mail must provide ID as part of the application process. Voter rolls are required to be regularly compared to other government records to ensure continued qualification to vote and to purge deceased voters. Each ballot and ballot envelope is assigned a unique electronic ID which is scanned by County systems

in order to track its progress and its return by the voters. The County's designated drop box in the County Courthouse remains under constant video surveillance and is monitored by County security personnel. Secrecy envelopes containing the mail-in ballots are not opened until Election Day and are only opened in the secured tabulation room in the presence of election staff, political party representatives, and attorneys, all of which is monitored by security cameras.

The final vote count, which is certified by members of *both* political parties, is also subject to multiple audits, which includes a "2% audit" during which the County takes ballots from a random precinct constituting 2% of the total county vote and runs them through different tabulators to ensure that there are no discrepancies in the results or issues with the machines. The State further requires the counties to conduct a random Risk-Limiting Audit (RLA) for the purpose of comparing a sample of the physical ballots with the electronic results to ensure the accuracy of the tabulators at a statewide level. Tabulation machines have been proven to be a far more efficient, accurate, and objective method of counting votes than hand-counting, which results in nearly double the error rate associated with voting machines. Considering the myriad of technical and legal safeguards in place, it would be nearly impossible for a malicious actor to meaningfully "rig" an election on a countywide or statewide basis in Pennsylvania, and there has never been any evidence to suggest otherwise.

If any person attempts to defraud the County, intimidate voters, or otherwise violates state or federal election laws, the Board of Elections immediately refers such complaints to the District Attorney's Office and/or federal law enforcement agencies for further investigation and prosecution.

Simply put, elections in Pennsylvania are more secure now than at any other point in American history, and the Board of Elections remains confident in the integrity of the electoral process and the continued dedication of Director Crouse and her election staff.

### **Further Information**

For further information, please consult the following resources:

Angie Crouse, Director  
Adams County Office of Elections & Voter Registration  
230 Greenamyre Lane, Suite 100  
Gettysburg, PA 17325  
[acrouse@adamscountypa.gov](mailto:acrouse@adamscountypa.gov)

County Website  
717-337-9832

PA Department of State's Voter Website: [vote.pa.gov](http://vote.pa.gov)