



Fairfield County

BOARD OF ELECTIONS

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RE: Absentee versus mail-in voting

As the Board of Elections, we would like to make some clarifications around the different means of voting available to the public. There seems to be a lot of confusion in the national conversation at present and we, as election professionals, are in a unique position to provide insight and instruction pertaining to the way Ohio elections are conducted.

For background, there has been the ability to vote absentee in Ohio for many decades – there are options available for an individual that wishes to vote but will be “absent from the polls on Election Day”. For at least the last two decades, Ohio has been what is referred to as a “no fault absentee” state which means that a voter does not have to have a particular reason to vote absentee. Absentee voting in Ohio is divided into two categories; in-person which takes place at an early vote center and voting by mail in ballot. A feature for Fairfield County is that when voting absentee in-person at the early vote center, the voter cast their ballot on the Dominion ICX touchscreen voting device – the voting devices that are deployed on Election Day.

The second category of absentee voting in Ohio is mail-in balloting. A voter must complete an absentee ballot application and return it to the Board of Elections in order to receive a ballot via mail. Information provided by the voter is verified by the Board of Elections staff using the voter’s registration documentation. When an application contains the correct information when checked for verification and bares the voter’s valid signature, they are set to receive a ballot. This is the defining feature of Ohio’s mail-in absentee voting process – voter initiated contact with the Board of Elections.

The confusion in the distinctions of absentee and mail-in voting seems to be the difference between a ballot arriving to a voter solicited or unsolicited. The Fairfield County Board of Elections will never send a voter a ballot unless they have completed the absentee ballot request process. This is true for all other 87 counties in the State of Ohio. We have heard via various media outlets that some states are mailing an actual ballot to all their voters. This would be considered an unsolicited ballot mailing and this practice has not and will not take place in Ohio for the 2020 Presidential General Election.

We hope that we were able to provide some clarification and professional insight into this issue. If you have any questions, you can feel free to reach our office by email at boardofelections@fairfieldcountyohio.gov