

2020 Presidential Primary Election Task Force

July 9, 2020



Nellie M. Gorbea
Secretary of State



Mission

The mission of the 2020 Presidential Primary Elections Task Force is to ensure that voters can vote safely and securely in 2020. We will accomplish this by reviewing the data and processes utilized in the Presidential Primary to better prepare Rhode Island for its upcoming September and November elections.



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Agenda

- I. Welcome and recap of July 1 meeting
- II. Approval of July 1 meeting minutes
- III. Discussion of draft Task Force recommendations
- IV. Public comment

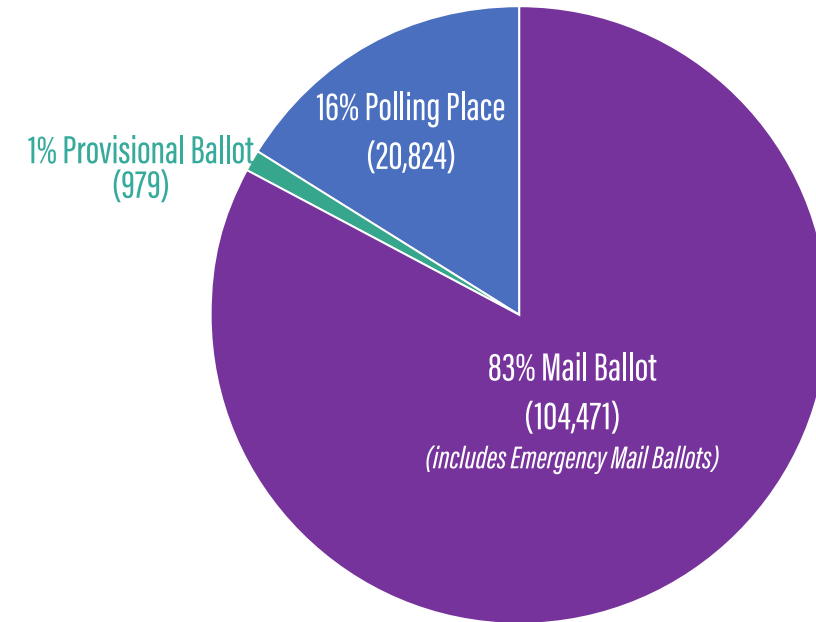


Recap 2020 Presidential Primary

What Worked Well

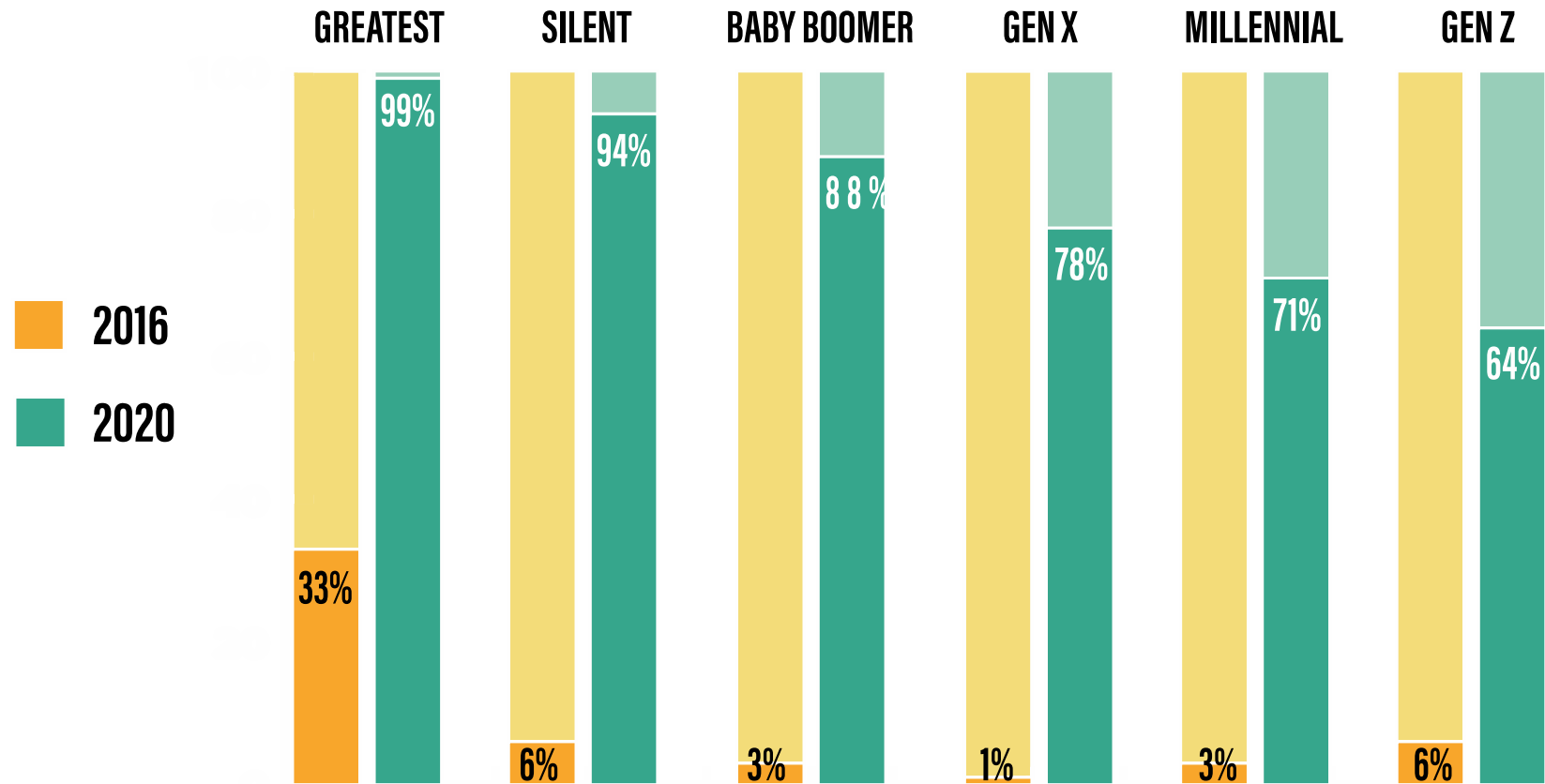
- Overwhelming number of Rhode Islanders chose to safely vote from home
 - Applications sent to all registered voters reduced technology barriers, helped voter list maintenance
 - Removing the two witness/notary signature requirement on ballots made it easier for older Rhode Islanders and those living alone
- Successfully flattened the curve of in-person voting
 - Polling place operations were smooth
 - Decreased number of in-person voters allowed for social distancing best practices
- Drop boxes offered safe and convenient option for returning mail ballots

2020 Presidential Primary
Voting Methods



Recap 2020 Presidential Primary

Mail ballot processes protected our most vulnerable populations



PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY MAIL BALLOT USAGE



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Recap 2020 Presidential Primary

What Needs Attention

- Capacity for locals to process high volume of mail ballot applications
- Timeframe for sending out mail ballots to voters
- More detailed ballot tracking
- Emergency mail ballot processing
- Polling place operations
- Voter education



PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

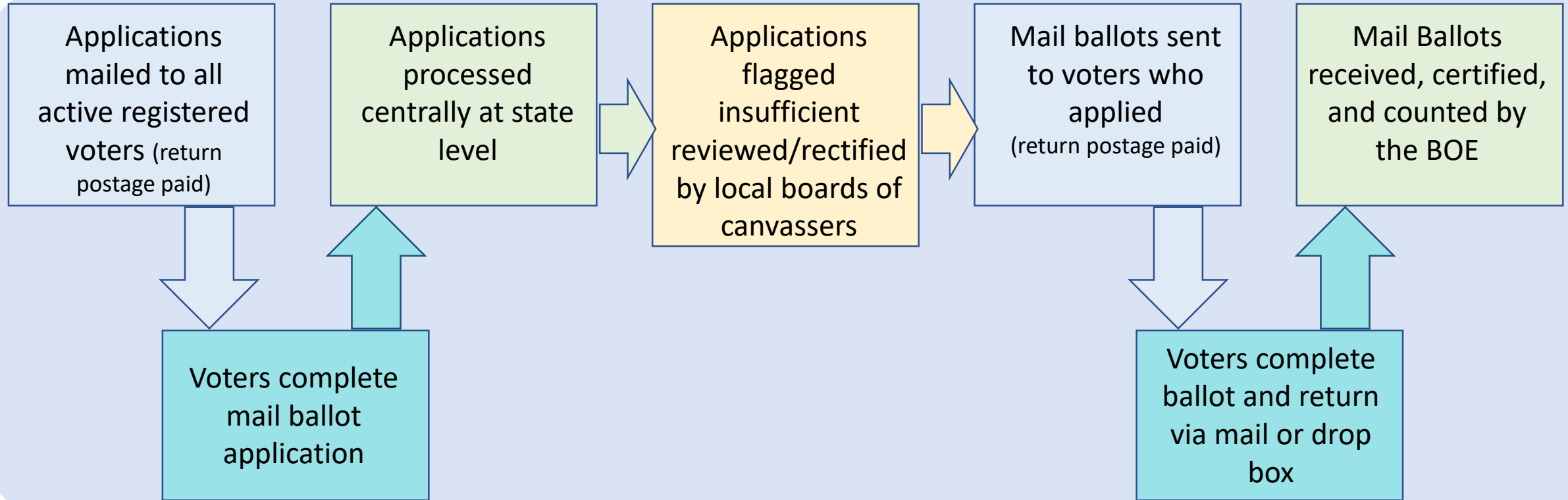


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PROPOSAL:

Centralize the processing of mail ballot applications



PROPOSAL:

Send mail ballot applications/postcards to registered voters

- Send mail ballot applications to active registered voters for the **November General Election**
 - Inactive voters can still apply for a mail ballot
 - *They should contact their city or town for details*
 - Include postage pre-paid envelopes
- Send postcard with mail ballot application instructions to active registered voters for the **September statewide primary**
 - Reserves bulk of funding for November election costs
 - Some Rhode Islanders will not have a primary election



PROPOSAL:

Eliminate witness signature requirement for mail ballots

Process for Presidential Primary worked

- Majority of states do not have a witness or notary requirement
- Most states use signature matching to confirm voter identification for mail ballots
- Ensures voters who live alone or with one other person do not have to rely on someone else in order to cast a ballot
- Postage prepaid envelopes allow all voters to return ballots without needing someone to assist

Requires legislative action by July 24 to modify mail ballot materials for the November General Election.



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PROPOSAL:

Implement 20 days of early voting

- Streamlines the voting process for voters and election workers
- Increases voter confidence in the process when voters insert their ballots into a voting machine
- Casting ballots in a voting machine ensures voters can correct ballot errors in real-time
- Fewer mail ballots to certify and count on Election Day
- Expands a safe alternative for voters to cast ballots in advance of Election Day

Requires legislative action



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PROPOSAL:

Purchase secure drop boxes for cities/towns

- Ensure 24-7 access for voters to drop mail ballots in secure locations around the state
- Provide drop boxes at every polling place on Election Day
- Board of Elections expected to vote regarding rule changes required to count drop boxes as "in possession of BOE"



PROPOSAL:

Allow mail ballots post marked on Election Day

- Mail ballots post marked on Election Day or received one day after the election will be counted
 - Post Office can post mark elections related postage paid return envelopes

Requires legislative action



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PROPOSAL:

Improve Disability Access to Mail Ballots

- Enable voters with disabilities to independently and privately mark a ballot with more accessible technology
- Enhance disability access of the mail ballot application
- Develop voter education specific to voters with disabilities



PROPOSAL:

Consolidate polling places

- BOE staff proposal to establish multiple precincts within the same physical location in each city/town, if existing locations are unavailable
- Each precinct would feature distinct voter check-in stations and issuance of the ballot to voters only for that precinct
- Precincts could potentially utilize the same voting booths, multiple DS200s, and AutoMARKs if this would not impact the mandated post-election risk-limiting audit
- Facilities would need to be large enough to accommodate the number of potential voters, including for social distancing, access for voters with disabilities, parking, etc.



PROPOSAL:

Expand poll worker recruitment

- Work with Department of Labor and Training to broadcast as paid opportunity
- Create online “portal” for people to sign up. BOE has worked with the Fair Elections Center to compile RI Pollworker information and signup opportunities at <https://www.workelections.com>
- Actively work with the Secretary of State to contact youth civic oriented groups to recruit younger poll workers
- Coordinate with Department of Administration to recruit state employees to work at the polls via e-mail or newsletters
- Coordinate with local colleges and universities to recruit students



PROPOSAL:

Implement signature verification equipment

- Board of Elections has purchased with HAVA funding a high-speed mail ballot envelope sorter and signature verifier
- Equipment can sort, scan, and verify up to 20,000 envelopes per hour
- Each envelope is imaged and date stamped
- BOE has the option to certify voter signatures manually by BOE pairs at computer workstations or using Automated Signature Verification software
- CVRS will be updated with BOE receipt of ballot within 24 hours receipt by the BOE, and voters will be notified of any deficiency by mail



PROPOSAL:

Improve voter education materials

- Immediately convene diverse group of stakeholders to identify gaps in voter education
- Redesign application envelopes to indicate how to return as undeliverable if necessary
- Improve tracking of application and mail ballots on vote.ri.gov
- Consult with Center for Civic Design on application instructions and mail ballot instructions
- Establish bilingual voter information hotline



PUBLIC COMMENTS

Email comments to elections@sos.ri.gov

Comment on Facebook Live



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