

2020 Presidential Primary Elections Task Force | Preliminary Overview

For Discussion Purposes Only

July 1, 2020

BACKGROUND

The coronavirus pandemic has impacted our daily activities, including how we conduct elections. With these concerns in mind, Secretary of State Nellie Gorbea and the Rhode Island Board of Elections requested that Governor Gina Raimondo issue executive orders that moved our Presidential Preference Primary originally scheduled for April 28th to June 2nd and made it possible to conduct a predominantly mail ballot election for the first time in our state's history. The executive orders signed by Governor Raimondo on March 23 and April 17, 2020, waived several election laws for the Presidential Primary only.

We knew that transitioning from a mainly in-person, polling place election to a predominantly mail ballot election in two months would present its challenges. Dedicated election officials across state and local government rose to the occasion during these unprecedented circumstances. Every election gives us an opportunity to learn about what improvements can be made.

For this reason, Secretary of State Gorbea is co-chairing with the Board of Elections Chairwoman Diane Mederos the 2020 Presidential Primary Elections Task Force comprised of state and local elections officials and members of the public. Specifically this Task Force will be asked to review and consider:

- The mail ballot process
- Processing of applications
- Timing of sending mail ballots
- Voter education
- Providing alternate means to return mail ballots
- Ballot status tracking
- Physical polling places
- Poll worker recruitment

This document includes preliminary data* from the June 2nd Presidential Preference Primary election that will inform the discussion and decision-making for the Task Force.

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.

** The data in this overview represents the Elections Division of the Rhode Island Secretary of State's office preliminary analysis of the mail balloting process for Rhode Island's 2020 Presidential Primary as of 6/24/2020. This information is for discussion purposes only. It should not be considered final and it is not an official final voting tally.*

TASK FORCE MEMBERS

Secretary of State Nellie M. Gorbea
Co-chairwoman

Diane C. Mederos
Chairwoman, Board of Elections
Co-chairwoman

Jennifer L. Johnson
Board of Elections

Dr. Isadore S. Ramos
Board of Elections

Louis P. Cirillo, Town Clerk,
Town of Bristol

Marianne Kelly, Town Clerk,
Town of West Warwick

Erin Liese, Town Clerk,
Town of Jamestown

Nick Lima, Registrar/Director of
Elections,
City of Cranston

Tracy Nelson, Canvassing Clerk,
City of Newport

Kathy Placencia, Administrator of
Elections,
City of Providence

Jacqueline Schulz, Registrar of Voters,
Town of Portsmouth

Carol Wordell, Town Clerk,
Town of Little Compton

Marcela Betancur
Public Member

Bob Cooper
Public Member

Cristin Langworthy
Public Member

David Montenegro
Public Member

Sheri L. Sweitzer
Public Member

Nicole Tingle
Public Member

Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, the Presidential Primary on June 2, 2020 will be a predominantly mail ballot election. This illustration explains the safe and secure mail ballot process in Rhode Island.

1

Fill out and sign your mail ballot application.

2

Return it by using the postage paid envelope.

MAY
19

3

SIGNATURE
VERIFICATION

Elections officials will verify your signature on the mail ballot application with your signature in the voter registration system.

4

Let's Vote!

A ballot will be mailed to you. Cast your vote and place your ballot in the *Voter's Mail Ballot Certificate* envelope.

5

State Board
of Elections

Your ballot must be received by the Board of Elections by 8 p.m. on

JUNE
2

Sign the *Voter's Mail Ballot Certificate* and return it in the return paid postage envelope.

6

SIGNATURE
VERIFICATION

Elections officials will verify your signature on the *Voter's Mail Ballot Certificate* envelope with the one on your mail ballot application.

7

Once your signature is verified, your mail ballot will be removed and inserted into a voting machine to be counted by the Board of Elections.

Insert



MAIL BALLOT APPLICATION PROCESSING

On April 20, the Rhode Island Department of State began sending mail ballot applications to 779,464 Rhode Island registered voters. This mailing included voter records marked INACTIVE, but did not include 8,674 voters who had already applied for a Presidential Primary mail ballot.

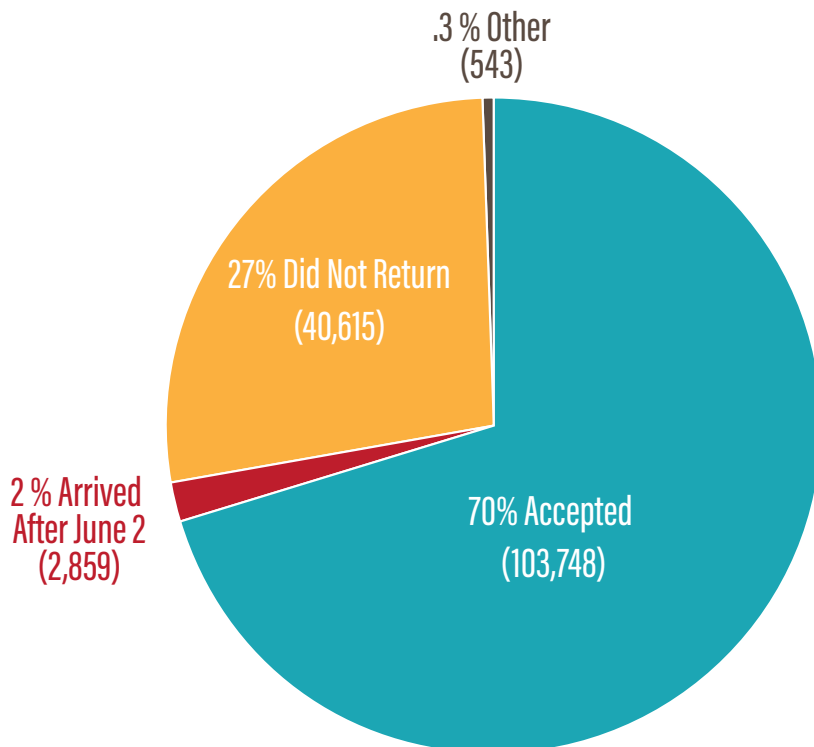
A total of 155,885 voters returned their mail ballot application, 147,211 received their applications via the statewide mailing.

Of these 155,885 applications, 148,553 (95%) were approved by the local boards of canvassers to receive a mail ballot. *(This includes those who applied for an Emergency Mail Ballot.)* Nearly all of the voters who applied for a mail ballot before the mass mailing had their applications approved.

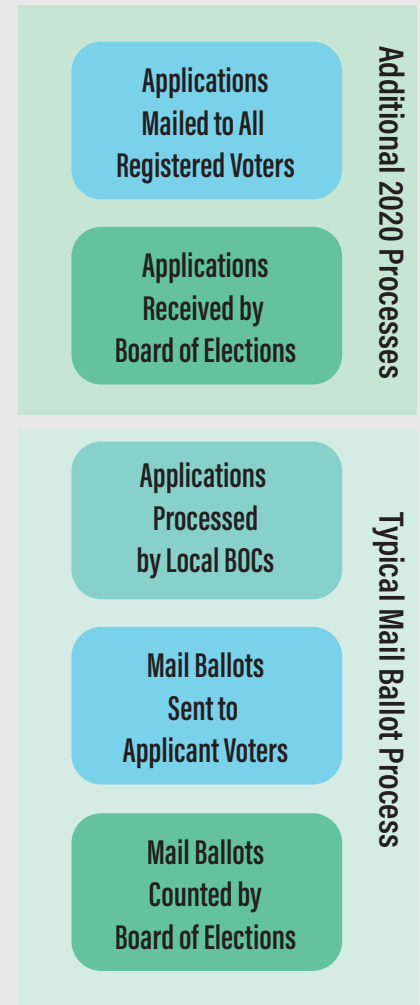
Application Status	Statewide Mailing	%	Applied before Mass Mailing	%	Total	%
Approved	139,895	95%	8,658	99.8%	148,553	95%
Rejected	7,316	5%	16	.2%	7,332	5%
Total	147,211	100%	8,674	100%	155,885	100%

MAIL BALLOT STATUS

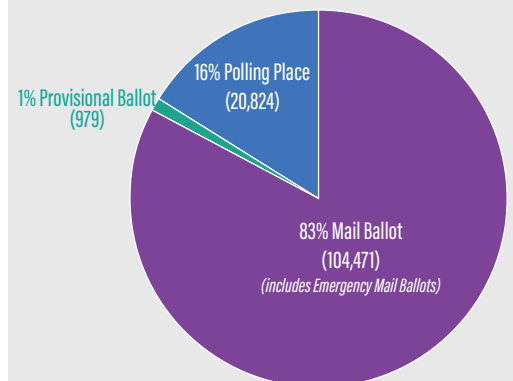
147,765 ballots were sent to voters. *(This does not include those who applied for an Emergency Mail Ballot.)* The vast majority were returned and counted.



MAIL BALLOT STEPS IN RHODE ISLAND



VOTING METHOD 2020 PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY



MAIL BALLOT APPLICATION AND BALLOT PROCESSING TIMELINE

- On average it took 12.7 days between the date when the mail ballot was requested and when the ballot was mailed.
- There were 7.5 days on average between the Secretary of State certification date and when the ballot was mailed to a voter. The average days varied by community with a range of 4 to 10 days.
- There were on average 9.5 days between when the Secretary of State mailed the ballots and when the Board of Elections received the ballots. The ranges varied between 9 and 12 days.
- On average it took 22.6 days from when a voter's mail ballot application was received to when the voter's mail ballot was received by the Board of Elections. The shortest average time was 17.5 days and the longest average time was 32 days.
- The Board of Elections reported the number of scanned applications sent to each municipality as of May 29. When compared to the final Mail Ballot Report, some towns had processed fewer applications than the number scanned by the Board. An estimated 1,829 voters in these communities did not have their applications processed. This is a rough estimate based on aggregate numbers and not unique voter IDs.

BALLOTS REJECTED FOR ARRIVING AFTER JUNE 2

Roughly 2 percent of mail ballots were not returned in time to be counted. This chart shows that the majority (72 percent) of mail ballots that were received after June 2, were sent between May 21 and May 23.

- On average it took about 1 day between the receipt of the voter's mail ballot application and when the application was certified for both the Accepted and Late ballots.

- Late ballots had fewer days on average between the date of request and the SoS Mail date when compared to accepted ballots.

Late ballots had 10.3 days.

Accepted ballots averaged 13.3 days.

- Voters whose ballots arrived after June 2 actually had more time between the date of when their ballot was mailed to them and when the ballot was received by the Board of Elections.

Late ballots averaged 14.6 days.

Accepted ballots averaged 9.3 days.

- 96 percent of ballots that arrived after June 2 were mailed to voters with a Rhode Island address.

Mail Date	Accepted Mail Ballots	Not Returned	Arrived After June 2	Other
Pre 5/1/20 482	242	218	14	8
5/1-5/17/20 1,027	754	266	7	-
5/18/20 11,199	6,710	4,309	129	51
5/19/20 20,034	15,942	3,766	239	87
5/20/20 24,934	19,637	4,929	318	50
5/21/20 31,991	22,444	8,915	516	116
5/22/20 38,399	25,590	11,674	990	145
5/23/20 18,152	11,558	5,957	565	72
5/24/20 396	216	155	21	4
5/26/20 49	23	22	3	1
5/27/20 947	566	324	48	9
5/28/20 41	12	29	-	-
5/29/20 107	53	45	9	-
6/1/20 6	-	6	-	-
Total	103,748	40,615	2,859	543