

621—5.3(20) Methods of voting—general procedures. The agency may conduct an election, in whole or in part, in person, by mail ballot, or through a telephonic/web-based system.

5.3(1) *In-person election.* An eligible voter shall cast the voter's ballot by marking the voter's choice on the ballot and depositing it in the ballot box or inserting it in a voting machine, whichever is applicable. If a voter inadvertently spoils a ballot, the ballot may be returned to the agent who shall void and retain it and provide another ballot to the voter. Eligible voters may be asked to cast their votes via a nondocument ballot when there is a voting machine present that accommodates this technology.

a. Absentee ballot. An absentee ballot shall be delivered to an eligible voter upon the voter's written notice to the agency of the voter's inability to be present at the election. The marked absentee ballot shall be in the possession of the election agent prior to the close of the in-person election in order to be counted. The marked absentee ballot shall be contained in the secret envelope provided to the voter, and the postage-paid, return-addressed outer envelope provided for the return of the ballot to the agency shall be signed by the voter in order for the ballot to be counted.

b. Observers. Each party to an election may designate an equal number of representatives to act as the party's observers during the election and tally of ballots. Unless agreed to by the parties, observers shall not be supervisory employees of the public employer.

c. Ballot box. Upon examination by the observers and prior to the opening of the polls, the election agent shall seal the ballot box so that entry thereto is limited to one slot. In the event that the election is continued for more than one polling period or at more than one polling place, the ballot box shall be sealed in its entirety and shall remain in the custody of the election agent until immediately prior to the next polling period or the counting of the ballots.

d. Voting machines. The agency may utilize voting machines to assist with the casting or tabulation of votes.

e. Tally. The agency shall tally the ballots by manual count or electronic count and file the tally after the close of the election. Void ballots are those which do not indicate a preference or the clear intent of the voter or which appear to identify the voter. The employer shall promptly post copies of the tally of ballots in the manner and locations customarily used for the posting of information to employees. If a public employer customarily distributes information to employees by additional means, such as by email or hard copy, the public employer shall also promptly distribute such notice to employees by those means.

5.3(2) *Mail-ballot election.* When conducting a mail-ballot election, the agency shall send an official voting package to each eligible voter by ordinary mail and direct a date by which voted ballots must be received by the agency in order to be counted.

a. Contents of official voting packages. Voting packages sent to eligible voters shall consist of voting instructions, a ballot, a secret envelope in which the marked ballot is to be inserted, and a postage-paid, return-addressed outer envelope which identifies the voter for purposes of proposing challenges to the voter's eligibility. In the event of a challenge, both envelopes shall remain sealed until such time as the challenge is resolved.

b. Tally of ballots—observers. The agency shall set a time and place for the tally of ballots, at which time observers designated by the parties to the election shall be entitled to be present. The voter's outer envelope shall be opened, and the secret envelope containing the voter's ballot shall be commingled with the other secret envelopes. The agency shall tally the ballots and file the tally after the close of the election. Void ballots are those which do not indicate a preference or the clear intent of the voter, which appear to identify the voter, which are not enclosed in the secret envelope provided to the voter, or which are returned in an outer envelope which does not bear the voter's signature. The employer shall promptly post copies of the tally of ballots in the manner and locations customarily used for the posting of information to employees. If a public employer customarily distributes information to employees by additional means, such as by email or hard copy, the public employer shall also promptly distribute such notice to employees by those means.

5.3(3) *Telephonic/web-based election.* The agency may utilize an election services vendor for the receipt of telephonic and web-based ballots and for the tabulation of those ballots.

a. Notice of election. When conducting a telephonic/web-based election, whether in whole or in part, the agency shall include in the notice of election the telephone number the voter is to call to cast a ballot, the website address for web-based voting and a sample ballot or script.

b. Tally. Following the close of the election period and the agency's receipt of the ballot tabulation from the election services vendor, the agency shall tally the ballots and file the tally. Void or blank ballots are those which do not indicate a preference or clear choice by the voter in favor of one of the voting options presented by the ballot. The employer shall promptly post copies of the tally of ballots in the manner and locations customarily used for the posting of information to employees. If a public employer customarily distributes information to employees by additional means, such as by email or hard copy, the public employer shall also promptly distribute such notice to employees by those means.

c. Inoperable voting system. The board may extend the period of the election due to inoperable voting systems.

5.3(4) Alternate voting method. When a voter promptly informs the agency of the voter's inability to cast a ballot using the designated methods of voting, the agency shall assist the voter in using an alternate method to cast a secret ballot.

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