

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Signs Executive Order to Protect Public Health by Mailing Every Active Registered Voter a VBM Ballot Ahead of the General Election

08/14/2020

TRENTON – Amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Governor Phil Murphy today signed an executive order to create a modified vote-by-mail (VBM) election for the November 3rd General Election. The order suspends the sending of sample ballots and requires that each county’s elections officials send VBM ballots with pre-paid postage to all active registered voters for the General Election. Additionally, every voter will have the option to either return their ballot through a secure drop box or turn in their ballot at a polling location on Election Day. The Administration is working with the Department of State to implement a new online voter registration system where New Jersey residents will have the opportunity to register to vote. The online system will launch on September 4, 2020.

“COVID-19 has impacted nearly every aspect of our lives, from our health and safety to how we participate in our democracy,” **said Governor Murphy**. “This virus continues to threaten public health, and with today’s announcement, we are ensuring that New Jersey voters do not have to make a decision between exercising their right to vote and protecting their well-being.”

“Every voter deserves to participate in free, fair, and safe elections,” **said Secretary of State Tahesha Way**. “By sending every New Jersey voter their ballot in the mail, we are protecting the health of voters, elections workers, and our democracy.”

In order to address the influx of VBM ballots, the executive order will extend the deadline to allow ballots being returned through the United States Postal Service (USPS) with a postmark on or before November 3rd to be counted as a valid ballot by the County Clerk, if received by 8:00 p.m. on November 10th. Ballots without a postmark that are received by the county boards of elections within 48 hours of the closing of polls on November 3rd shall be considered valid.

Today’s executive order will also require a minimum of at least one polling place in each municipality and a minimum of 50 percent of polling places in each county to provide New Jersey voters with access to in-person voting opportunities, including accommodations for voters with disabilities. All public schools will close for in-person instruction on November 3rd to allow counties to use their buildings as polling locations, if necessary. Polling locations will be required to follow public health standards, including ensuring six feet of distance, requiring poll workers to wear face coverings and gloves, frequent sanitization of high-touch areas, and providing sanitization materials to all individuals at a polling place.

 Back to top

Copy of Executive Order No. 177 (<https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-177.pdf>)

Governor Phil Murphy

[Home \(/governor/\)](/governor/)

Administration

[Governor Phil Murphy \(/governor/admin/about/\)](/governor/admin/about/)

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[\(/governor/admin/affordablehealthcare/index.shtml\)](/governor/admin/affordablehealthcare/index.shtml)

[Boards, Commissions & Authorities \(/governor/admin/bca/\)](/governor/admin/bca/)

[Internship Opportunities \(/governor/admin/internship.shtml\)](/governor/admin/internship.shtml)

[Governor's Residence - Drumthwacket \(http://drumthwacket.org/\)](http://drumthwacket.org/)

Key Initiatives

[Economy & Jobs \(/governor/initiatives/#Economy\)](/governor/initiatives/#Economy)

[Education \(/governor/initiatives/#Education\)](/governor/initiatives/#Education)

[Environment \(/governor/initiatives/#Environment\)](/governor/initiatives/#Environment)

[Health \(/governor/initiatives/#Health\)](/governor/initiatives/#Health)

[Law & Justice \(/governor/initiatives/#Justice\)](/governor/initiatives/#Justice)

[Transportation \(/governor/initiatives/#Transportation\)](/governor/initiatives/#Transportation)

News & Events

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[Public Addresses \(/governor/news/addresses\)](/governor/news/addresses)

[Executive Orders \(/infobank/eo/056murphy/approved/eo_archive.html\)](/infobank/eo/056murphy/approved/eo_archive.html)

[Administrative Orders \(/governor/news/ao/approved/ao_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/ao/approved/ao_archive.shtml)

[Direct Appointments \(/governor/news/appointments\)](/governor/news/appointments)

[Advice and Consent Appointments \(/governor/news/acappointments\)](/governor/news/acappointments)

Statements on Legislation

(/governor/news/statements/approved/statements_archive.shtml)

Administration Reports (/governor/news/adminreports/approved/archive.shtml)

Transition Reports (/governor/news/reports/approved/reports_archive.shtml)

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