

ELECTION FAQ 2024

HOW DO I VOTE?

On Election Day



Go to the polling station listed on your voter registration card. If you live on campus and have a campus PO Box, your polling location is in Kirby Sports Center. Polls are on the first floor, directly outside the basketball courts.



Bring a valid form of ID - your Lafayette student ID counts - and if you are voting for the first time, your voter registration card. Voter registration cards are not required, but may make the process go more smoothly.



Polls are open from 7:00am - 8:00pm. If you are in line before 8:00pm, you can vote.



When it is your turn, you will be instructed by a poll worker to sign in and your signature will be compared against the one on file. If they match, you will be able to proceed to the voting machine, where you will cast your ballot.



PA doesn't allow straight ticket voting, so you will have to vote for each candidate individually, even if everyone you are voting for is in the same party. In a general election, you can vote for any candidate in any party, regardless of which party you are registered with.

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WHAT HAPPENS AFTER MY BALLOT IS CAST?

In-Person Ballots



When ballots are cast at the polls, they are automatically deposited into a sealed ballot box, which remains sealed until counting begins.



After the polls close, poll workers pack up the ballots and deliver them directly to county election offices.

Mail-In Ballots



PA will pre-process ballots, but will not count them before Election Day. Election officials pre-process ballots by sorting them by precinct and verifying that the voter information on the outside envelope corresponds to an actual person.



Election officials open the outer envelope, confirm that the ballot has been submitted by a registered voter, the voter hasn't voted by any other means, and that the voter's signature matches the signature on file. First-time voters must include a valid form of ID.



Mail-in ballots must be received in the county election office by 8:00pm on Election Day in order to be counted.

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HOW ARE VOTES COUNTED?



Both in-person and mail-in ballots are counted by electronic scanners and tabulators. The machines are calibrated before and after Election Day to ensure accuracy. Pennsylvania also conducts post-election audits by counting a sample of ballots by hand and comparing them with the machine tally to catch any discrepancies. Election officials test the tabulators prior to Election Day by inputting a set of ballots (these are not actual voting ballots) with known results, which the tabulator must correctly read and tally. After being calibrated, the tabulator is sealed with tamper-evident seals and not opened again until Election Day and a chain-of-custody record is maintained.



There are a number of factors that can prolong election results. In 43 states, mail-in ballots are counted and reported first. In the remaining states, one of which is Pennsylvania, mail-in ballots cannot begin to be counted until the polls close on Election Day. In 2020, 22 million more people voted in the presidential election than in 2016, and election officials are predicting an even higher participation rate in 2024. Each ballot has to be counted and compared against the number of votes and machines have to be audited against a sample of hand-counts to ensure accuracy. In close elections, recounts are often triggered. Counties must report their unofficial results to the Secretary of the Commonwealth by 5:00pm on November 12, and any recounts must be completed by November 27. States must certify their results by December 11, but we will most likely have a good sense of the results long before then.

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WHAT IS THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE?



The Electoral College refers to the process of indirect voting used in the United States to elect the nation's President and Vice President. This means that the winners of these two offices are not decided by a popular vote (who gets the most citizens' votes), but by a slate of electors - the Electoral College - chosen at the party's state convention or by each party's central committee before the election. The total number of electors in the Electoral College is 538, and the number of electors assigned to each state is largely determined by that state's population. Each state has two electors to represent each of its Senators plus a proportional number to represent its Representatives in the House. The number of Representatives a state has is determined by its population - California has the most at 54 and Wyoming has the fewest at 3. Washington D.C. also has 3 electors. Pennsylvania has 19. 270 electoral votes are needed to win the Presidency. 48 states follow a winner-takes-all model, which means that whichever candidate wins the popular vote receives all of the electoral votes for that state. The nation's Founding Fathers devised the Electoral College as a way of ensuring that more densely populated states didn't have too much power in the election process and as a way to mitigate potential manipulation of popular opinion by candidates for the nation's highest office.