

ACCG and Georgia Office of the Secretary of State

Answers to Common County Election Questions for the June 2020 Primary

1. What if a voter shows up to vote with face mask on, the poll worker asks the voter to remove the face mask so that she may compare the face to the photo id, and the voter refuses to remove the face mask? Can we require a signature then and there for verification purposes?
 - Response: It is not advised for poll workers to ask anyone to take off their mask. Checking a state-required ID is sufficient to verify voters. The voter's earlier signature is not available to poll workers at the polls.

2. Can a county require all voters submit to having their temperature taken prior to entering the polling place? What if a voter refuses, especially if they are not otherwise displaying any symptoms such as a cough?
 - Response: It is not recommended to check all voters' temperature at the door of the polling place. If voter show signs of illness, it would be allowed to take them to a set-aside location in the polling place to vote (if this is possible). This separate machine (or booth), if used, then could be wiped down and disinfected after each use. It is also possible to have the person vote by a paper ballot if an extra machine is not available to set aside. Poll workers must be sure to apply uniformity in all such instances so that no voters feel singled out. Any clearance barrier can lead to litigation.

3. If a person shows up at the polls to vote and is displaying symptoms associated with COVID-19, can that person be denied entry to the polls and forced to vote in some other manner?
 - Response: A person cannot be denied the right to vote if they are properly registered. However, you can utilize the separate area or paper ballot as mentioned in #2 above.

4. Has the SOS office recommended any COVID-19 Safety Procedures outside those recommended by the CDC?
 - Response: The CDC "[Recommendations for Election Polling Locations](#)" are broad and counties are asked to adapt them to best reflect local polling place needs, circumstances, and the advice of local health officials. CDC recommendations may change based on improving knowledge. The SOS Office is providing signage (pointing out social distancing) to local election offices.

5. Is there a list of the different grant funding opportunities (and eligibility requirements) available to counties for helping ensure voter and election staff safety for the upcoming primary election?
 - Response: Yes. Grant Applications for expenses for listed items should be submitted by counties to their SOS Georgia Secretary of State's Office Liaison by June 12, 2020. Counties may submit questions about these grants to grants@sos.ga.gov. Grants can be used to fund:
 - Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) & Sanitizing Disinfectant Supplies
 - Secure Drop Boxes
 - Security Needs
 - Accessibility/ADA
 - Voter Privacy
 - General Purposes

6. Are we aware of any lawsuits other states are facing related to the primary election and Coronavirus issues, particularly facial recognition, the showing of symptoms, etc.?
 - Response: While many states continue to face litigation on election issues, we are not aware of any lawsuits specific to COVID-19 safety requirements being employed.

7. Has the SOS or the Governor considered the use of the National Guard to help staff the polls? They could be fitted with requisite PPE, staff at least one or more polling stations in every county so that if a symptomatic person does show up, the Guard member could process that voter and then disinfect the voting equipment afterwards, thus relieving regular poll workers from having to deal with symptomatic voters.
 - Response: Discussions continue on this issue, but at this time that is not currently planned. The Federal support dollars for the National Guard are scheduled to cease at the end of May. The Governor has requested that the support be extended until the end of June.

8. What happens if poll workers do not show up or leave and the county doesn't have enough personnel to staff a polling place? Can the county simply close a polling place?
 - Response: Counties should always develop contingency plans whereby they can shift voters from one precinct/polling place to another if an "emergency" occurs – whether it be due to COVID-19 issues or any emergency. This is allowed under state law. What counties cannot do is use the current situation to "plan" on closing a poll at the last minute, and then say it was due to COVID-19. If counties plan to close a polling place, then they must give proper notice by law. Counties should have signs and other informational materials ready and available should an emergency closure be necessary. Counties should be able to have the voter's correct ballot available at the alternative polling place.
 - State law spells out the procedures for closing a polling place and is found at O.C.G.A. Section 21-2-265. If it is known in advance that a polling place will not be available, then a two (2) week notice published in the legal organ and posted at specified locations in the county is required. If an emergency develops less than 10 days before the election date, the statute allows for a different method of closure. This provision assumes the emergency could not have been foreseen more than 10 days before the election.

9. The volume of absentee ballots being submitted will likely result in the inability to scan and count them all on election night without running into the next day. If that is the case, elections workers will likely be on duty for 24 hours or longer, leading to extreme fatigue. Can elections workers work until midnight, then return the following morning and complete the counting of absentee ballots?
 - Response: An "emergency rule" will soon be considered by the State Election Board that will allow election workers to start scanning ballots up to seven days before the election. This system allows for the scanning of ballots without tabulation. Tabulation of these votes would still take place on Election Day.
 - To date, 1.25 million absentee ballot requests have been received by counties. The ballot packet vendor has mailed 1.15 million ballots to those voters and 932,000 have made it to voters' mailboxes. As of Thursday May 7th, 146,391 ballots have been voted and accepted by county registrars.
 - Counties need to plan to have backup poll workers available, possibly utilizing other county employees, and recruiting younger poll workers if possible.