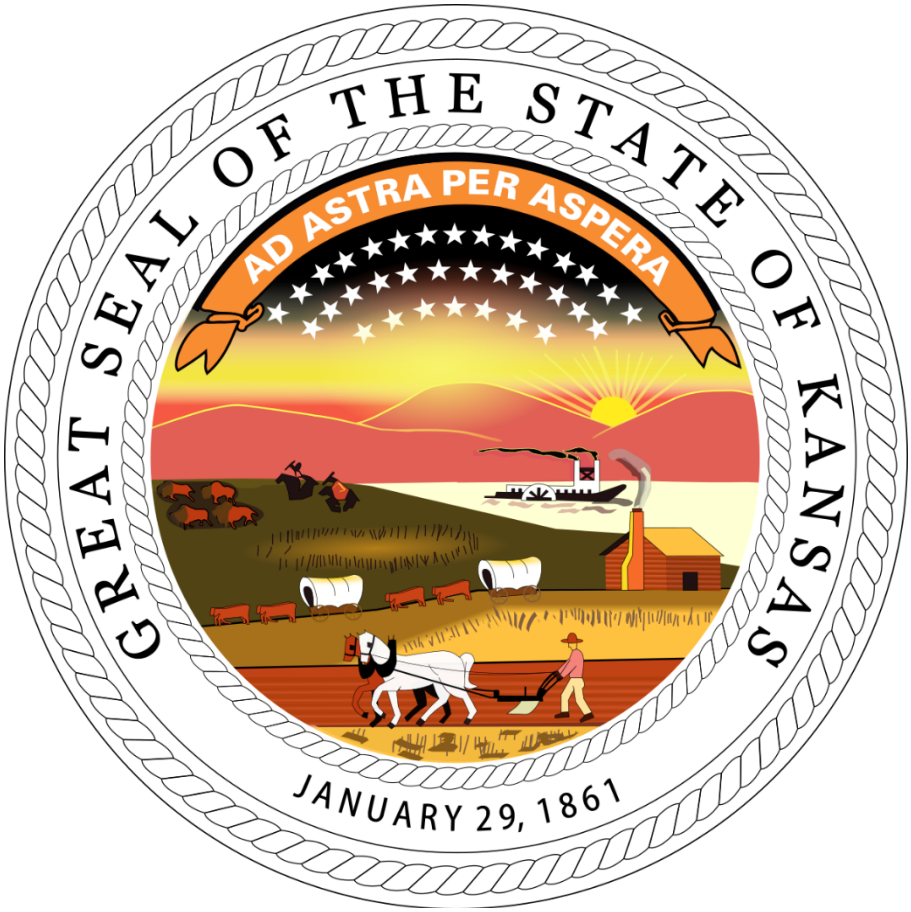


Kansas State Board of Canvassers

2020 General Election Overview

Monday, November 30, 2020

Similar to the August primary election, the November 3 general election saw historical turnout despite the coronavirus pandemic. Local election officials did a fantastic job in making additional improvements for the general election to limit the impact of COVID-19 while maintaining the security of Kansas elections and ensuring the health and wellbeing of voters and election workers.

For the 2020 general election, the following contested races appeared on the ballot (local races excluded):

- U.S. President/Vice President
- U.S. Senate
- U.S. House of Representatives; Districts One, Two, Three and Four
- Kansas Senate – 29 contested races
- Kansas House of Representatives – 80 contested races
- Kansas State Board of Education – two contested races

2020 General Election Turnout

In the 2020 general election, 1,375,125 votes were cast meaning 70.9 percent of Kansas voters participated. There were 1,938,560 registered Kansas voters prior to the 2020 general election. For reference, roughly 1,225,667 registered voters, or 67.4 percent, participated in the 2016 general election.

2020 General Voting Trends

Advance by mail ballots	459,229
Advance in-person ballots	371,854
Election Day in-person ballots	544,042

Historical General Election Statewide Turnout Figures

2016	|	67.4 percent
2012	|	66.8 percent
2008	|	72.3 percent

Historical Voter Statewide Registration Numbers (General Election)

2016	|	1,817,920
2012	|	1,771,252
2008	|	1,749,756

2020 General Election – advance by mail ballots

Since 1996, state law has allowed Kansas voters request an advance by mail ballot without providing an excuse (K.S.A. 25-1119). On the first day that advance by mail ballots could be sent to voters for the general election, 456,148 advance by mail ballots were sent to Kansas voters who completed and returned an advance by mail ballot application. Voters had until October 27 to request an advance by mail ballot from their local election office. Advance by mail ballot applications had to be post marked on or before election day (November 3, 2020) and received in their local election office by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, November 6, 2020. Voters could also return their advance by mail ballots by depositing them in secure county election office drop boxes; hand delivering them to their local election office; or dropping them off at any polling location in their respective county.

As part of the 2020 general election, 509,486 total advance by mail ballots were sent to Kansas voters. Comparatively, 194,505 ballots were sent to Kansas voters during the 2018 general election and 202,138 advance by mail ballots were mailed during the 2016 general election. Of the 509,486 advance by mail ballots sent to Kansas voters, 459,229 advance by mail ballots were returned to local election offices for a return rate of 90.1 percent. For the 2018 general election, 152,267 advance by mail ballots (78.2 percent) were returned and 173,457 advance by mail ballots (85.8 percent) were returned for the 2016 general election.

2020 General Election – advance in-person ballots

Pursuant to K.S.A. 25-1122(g), Kansas voters could begin casting their ballots through advance in-person voting on October 14. All counties were required to offer advance in-person voting by October 27, 2020. The deadline to cast a ballot through advance in-person voting was 12:00 p.m. (Noon) on November 2, 2020. For the 2020 general election there were over 150 advance in-person voting locations in Kansas.

A total of 371,854 ballots were cast through advance in-person voting for the 2020 general election. For the 2018 general election, 249,464 advance in-person ballots were cast. For the 2016 general election, 332,007 advance in-person ballots were cast.

2020 General Election – Election Day voting

Polling locations in Kansas are required to be open for a minimum of 12 hours on election day. Generally, polling locations are open from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., local time. Counties may open their polling locations for more than 12 hours, an option exercised by Sedgwick and Johnson Counties which opened polling locations at 6:00 a.m. and closed them at 7:00 p.m., local time.

For the 2020 general election, 45,671 provisional ballots were cast. This compares to 29,043 for the 2018 general election and 40,872 for the 2016 general election. Historically, Kansas has a higher number of provisional ballots than other states since state law allows everyone to cast a provisional ballot for any reason.

Post-Election Audits

2020 is the first year post-election audits occurred for major, statewide elections. In presidential election years, state law (K.S.A. 25-3009) requires counties to audit "one federal race, one state legislative race, and one county race." For even numbered, non-presidential years, state law requires counties to audit "one federal race, one statewide race, one state legislative race, and one county race." State regulation requires (K.A.R. 7-41-1), in each even numbered year, the Secretary of State's office to select races to be audited by Kansas counties following each candidate election. The office must transmit audit orders to each county no later than 24 hours after the close of polls on election day.

The selection was done by the Secretary of State's office through a randomized selection process the morning of Wednesday, November 4. The options for each category were limited to races that met the statutory and regulatory definition of an auditable race. Practically, an auditable race is considered one that has at least two candidates. Counties were then provided with the randomly selected, prioritized list for their county on the afternoon of November 4. Counties worked through their respective list until they reached an aforementioned "auditable race". On occasion a county may not have an "auditable race" in

one of the categories. In that case, all races in that category are available for random selection. The top selection will be audited even though the race is unopposed.

Overall, the audit process went well across the state. Each county audited at least one percent of precincts within their county and three races. All 105 counties matched exactly to the unofficial election night returns or were able to explain discrepancies of one or two votes. Discrepancies centered around manual review determining voter intent was different than the machine count due to odd marking of the ballot, or the voter marking the oval too lightly for the machine to read.

The Office of Secretary of State is happy to report that all 105 counties in Kansas successfully completed their post-election audits from the November general election. All votes have been accounted for and foul play, of any kind, was not found.

COVID-19 Impact

COVID-19 created an unprecedented situation requiring the Secretary of State and local election officials to evaluate all scenarios in preparation for the 2020 elections. Our office routinely visited with federal, state and local officials, our colleagues in other states and with the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) on the impact of COVID-19 to elections. As part of these conversations, election experts urged caution in making substantial changes to election timing or voting methods out of concern it could undermine trust in the elections and create voter confusion. Our goal was to maintain the accuracy and security of elections and to protect the health and welfare of our citizens.

In late March, the United States Congress passed the Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act). Included in the $2.2 trillion economic stimulus bill was $400 million in additional Help America Vote Act (HAVA) Funding. This batch of funds is separate from the 2018 and 2020 HAVA grants for election security. HAVA CARES Act were appropriated specifically to help states prevent, prepare for, and respond to the coronavirus for the 2020 Federal election cycle.

Kansas received $4.6 million from the CARES Act. Of those funds $2.6 million was allocated to reimburse counties with unplanned and unexpected expenses resulting from COVID-19. The use of this reimbursement varied based on local need. However, several local election offices used a portion of their funds to mail advance by mail ballot applications or send mailers with election dates, deadlines and other information to registered voters in their respective counties. Counties also used the funding to increase election worker pay, purchase additional ballot counting machines, improve virtual election worker training and more.

Approximately $1 million of the funds were used to purchase Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for polling places statewide. The Secretary of State's office purchased 2,200 plexiglass shields from Binswanger Glass in Topeka, Kansas. Two plexiglass shields, storage bags and hardware were provided to each polling location in Kansas. The plexiglass shields provide better separation between election workers and voters at polling locations. In addition, PPE kits containing hand sanitizer, disinfectant, disposable gloves and face masks were also purchased by our office to encourage proper sanitization at every polling location in Kansas. Finally, Anheuser-Busch donated over 500 gallons of hand sanitizer and more than 2,000 eight-ounce bottles of hand sanitizer to state and local election officials to use in the general election.

To limit voter contact with common touchpoints, election equipment vendors provided every local election office with instructions for how to properly sanitize their election equipment. Stylus pens were

also purchased to allow voters to use one end for electronic voting machines and the other end for paper ballots. Finally, social distancing best practices and greater distance between voting booths were among the COVID-19 precautions taken at polling locations.

In the primary election, state and local election officials observed an increase in voters returning advance by mail ballots through means other than the United States Postal Service (USPS). Alternative delivery means included hand delivery of ballots to local election offices, dropping off ballots at polling locations and placing ballots in secure election drop boxes. As a result, the Office of Secretary of State used HAVA CARES Act funds to purchase two drop boxes for each of Kansas' 105 election offices, unless otherwise noted by the election official. using CARES Act funding. The Office of Secretary of State provided best practices from the Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) and drop box FAQ's to every county as guidance for installation of the secure drop boxes.

Two guidelines were implemented for the 2020 elections in direct response to COVID-19. Pursuant to Executive Order 20-66, voters could use a driver's license or identification card that expired after March 12, 2020. The second was a directive from the Secretary of State's office that no voter be turned away for wearing, or not wearing, a face mask in a polling location.

Conclusion

The 2020 elections reaffirmed Kansas is a voter friendly state where voters have multiple options for how to cast their ballot safely and securely. Despite historical challenges, local election officials went above and beyond in preparing for and executing the 2020 elections. Although adjustments had to be made to protect the safety and welfare of election workers and the electorate, no substantial changes were made to the administration of Kansas elections. Voters were able to vote the same as they have been able to in previous elections – through advance by mail ballot, advance in-person voting or in-person on election day.

Unlike many states which struggled to implement mail balloting for the first time, Kansas' election system has 25 years of experience with mail ballots and has developed the institutional knowledge, procedures, and infrastructure to securely process the anticipated increase in mail ballot use at the general election. The Kansas election system's ability to handle the surge in mail ballots in the 2020 election demonstrates the election system's capabilities.

Kansas voters should be commended for their participation in the 2020 elections. Kansans exercised their right to vote in historic numbers. Voters were proactive in requesting advance by mail ballots and, also, in returning them. Voters who chose to cast their ballots in-person, whether it be through advance voting or on election day, exceeded figures from previous elections. Additionally, Kansans answered the call to action and volunteered to work as poll workers in the 2020 elections. Most Kansas counties reported they meet all election worker needed in their respective counties for the first time in several years.