



Department of Elections & Voter Registration

Frequently Asked Questions & Useful Information

Security/Election Integrity

- Botetourt County uses optical scanners manufactured by Elections Systems & Software (ES&S)
 - Each state has their own specifications for equipment
 - Localities must use equipment that has been certified by the Virginia State Board of Elections
 - Equipment from same manufacturer does not necessarily have same components/functionality as equipment in other states
- Scanners are never connected to the internet (do not have modems or capability to connect)
- No totals are transmitted electronically (not capable without modem)
- Every piece of equipment used is tested prior to every election
 - Logic & Accuracy Testing is required by Code of Virginia
 - Test desk of ballots with a pre-determined outcome are run through all equipment
 - ensures each line of each ballot style is read and tabulated correctly
 - each scanner is programmed exclusively for the assigned precinct it will be used in
 - ensures proper function of equipment (no paper jams, display, etc.)
 - Totals are cleared and a "zero totals tape" is run showing all votes for every office have been cleared
 - This same tape automatically prints when the scanner is opened at the precincts
 - Equipment is locked and sealed with a numbered seal
 - Seal number is recorded on Statement of Results for each precinct
 - Seal number is verified by Chief prior to equipment being opened on Election Day at precinct
- No totals are pulled until after polls close at 7:00 pm on election night (even for early voting)
 - Totals are **called** into Registrar's office by chief from each precinct
- Totals reported by precincts are entered into the state database by Registrar's office staff on election night
 - Usually takes about an hour or so for all precincts to begin reporting totals after polls close
- Write-in totals must be at least 10% or more of the total votes cast for that office before votes for each written-in candidate are counted (state law)
- Total number of ballots printed for Botetourt County is certified by the printer to the Virginia Department of Elections
 - Every ballot must be accounted for to the state after the election indicating their use for training, testing, absentee, in-person early voting or election day voting
- Election Officers are trained prior to every election on the most up to date laws and procedures (required by Code)

Early Voting/Absentee

- Ballots used during Early Voting or in Vote By Mail are the same ballots used on election day
- Early Voting/Vote By Mail is available for all registered Botetourt County voters
- Office is open Monday - Friday, 8:30 am - 4:30 pm during early voting period
- Office is open two Saturdays immediately prior to election
- Deadline for in-person early voting is 5:00 pm on Saturday immediately prior to election day
- Applications for a mailed absentee ballot must be received in Registrar's office no later than 5:00 pm on the second Friday immediately preceding election day
 - Due to mail delays, voters are encouraged to submit applications as soon as possible and to return their marked ballots as soon as possible as well.
- Marked absentee ballots must be postmarked by election day and received by Registrar's office by noon on Friday immediately following the election to be eligible to be counted
- Witness signatures are required for absentee ballots (state is no longer under state of emergency due to a communicable disease)
- Curbside voting is available at Registrar's office during early voting for voters who are 65 years old or older or who have a temporary or permanent disability
 - Designated areas will be marked off with cones
 - Voter can call the posted phone number to alert election officers of their arrival
 - Election officers will bring ballot with a privacy folder to vehicle
- Voters who have received an absentee ballot but wish to vote in-person **must surrender** the mailed absentee ballot when they come to vote
 - If ballot is not surrendered, voter must vote a provisional ballot (if on election day)
 - **Please do not request a mailed absentee ballot unless you intend to use it**
 - Each mailed absentee ballot package costs close to \$5 including postage, envelopes, etc.
 - Virginia now has a Permanent Absentee List
 - If you have requested a Vote By Mail ballot in last couple of years, you could be on the permanent list.
 - Check registration online or contact Registrar's office if you are unsure.

Returning Absentee Ballots

- Marked absentee ballots can be returned via USPS mail or commercial carrier (UPS, FedEx)
- Marked absentee ballot can be returned to Registrar's office
 - By law, only voter who was issued the absentee ballot can return their marked ballot if handed to Registrar's staff
 - Marked ballots can be put into the dropbox opening in vestibule of Registrar's office
 - vestibule area is recorded by security camera
- Each precinct will have a locked ballot box for return of marked absentee ballots on election day

Election Day Voting

- Voters must present a valid form of identification as stipulated by the Commonwealth of Virginia
 - Photo id is not required

- Full listing of acceptable forms of identification can be found on the Dept. of Elections website (vote.virginia.gov)
- Current Virginia driver's license, voter card, passport, military ID are a few examples of acceptable forms of identification
- Voters not possessing a valid form of identification specified by the state are allowed to sign a Statement of Identification affirming their identity by penalty of a felony
- Curbside voting is available at all precincts on election day for voters who are 65 years old or older or who have a temporary or permanent disability
 - Designated areas will be marked off with cones
 - Voter can call posted phone number to alert election officers of their arrival
 - If voter has someone who can take voter id into precinct, that helps to expedite process
 - Election officers will bring ballot with a privacy folder to vehicle
- Marked ballots can be put into scanner face up or face down (dual-sided scanner)
 - Ballots with stray marks or too many candidates marked in one office will be rejected by the scanner for voter's action
 - Voters can surrender spoiled ballot for replacement or cast improperly marked ballot and office in question will not be counted
 - Scanner will not reject a blank ballot (no candidates marked)
- Scanner has two counts listed on the screen
 - Count on top is total number of ballots run through that scanner for this election (public count)
 - Count under the public count is total number of ballots run through scanner since it has been in use (protected count)
 - These counts are like a car's odometer (trip/permanent)
 - public count = trip odometer (it can be cleared out)
 - protected count = odometer (it continues to increase with use)
- When ballot is placed in scanner, the screen will change momentarily with a "thank you for voting" screen which indicates ballot was counted
 - Voter can miss this screen if they look away as it only displays for a couple of seconds
 - Public count and protected count on screen will increase by one
- Polls are open 6:00 am - 7:00 pm on election day

Additional Information

- Virginia does not register by party
 - All registered voters are eligible to vote in any primary
 - Each party primary is a separate election with separate ballots
 - Voters will be asked which primary they wish to participate in
- Voter Registration records are not linked to any other governmental record (tax, DMV, etc.)
 - Voter is responsible for updating their record online or by paper application when a change in name or address takes place
 - Registration closes 21 days prior to every election
- Voters must vote in precinct for the address on their voter registration record
 - There is no voting in Registrar's Office on election day
- Sample ballots are on the Botetourt County website (<https://www.botetourtva.gov>)
 - Voters will need to know precinct registered in to find correct ballot style