

Best VBM Practices LWVUS Call 2020 03 25

[Becky Gladstone](#)

President, [LWVOR](#)

See the Oregon [Vote By Mail Procedures Manual](#), from [this page with other manuals and tutorials](#). This is from the state Elections Division:



Also, these:

Video, "How Ballots are processed in Lane County, Oregon". <https://vimeo.com/269755185>

Video, "Maintaining Voter Privacy with the Optional Secrecy Sleeve", Multnomah County Elections: https://youtu.be/XD_Klcl5FPs

BEST PRACTICES

What are the best practices for the following sections in operating a vote by mail infrastructure?

Request a mail-in ballot

Oregon is VBM so all ballots are mail-in. to replace a ballot, see [\(ballot help\)](#):

If your ballot arrives damaged, you make a mistake, spill something, lose your ballot, or for any other reason, contact your [county elections office](#) for a replacement ballot.

Observing the counting process

Oregon supports unparalleled transparency. Contact your [county elections office](#) to observe the election process.

See the [VBM Manual](#), p. 22, and the [Election Law Summary Manual](#), p. 20. I can send our Observer Training PPT, needs updating, underway.

Deadlines for receiving and postmarks for ballots?

Varies by state. Oregon, by 8pm on election day: received in the mail, into dropboxes/drop sites, or delivered to the County Elections offices. Late arriving ballots are not counted. We encourage and hammer with heavy publicity to get ballots in. Campaigns and political parties call daily, using daily ballot return reports from elections, to get ballots in.

Counting Timelines

When do they start counting and when must counting be completed?

Ballot counting in Lane County, Oregon usually starts the Friday before election day. NO results are ever released before polling closes. Counting continues until completed on election day. That is not the same as election certification, determined by statute. For our May 19, 2020 primary, the election must be certified by June 18th. See our [2020 election calendar](#) for state statute references. Use the Oregon Revised Statute (law) look-up link [from UO Law](#). Elections law is Chapter 260. Harder to navigate and the official source to cite is [Oregon Revised Statutes \(ORS\)](#).

Prepare to count-

How many people are needed, how are these people trained? See Oregon [Vote by Mail Procedures Manual](#). Experienced staff usually just needs a review, otherwise a day, half-day to train.

How are drop box locations determined?

See [VBM Manual](#), p. 10 for drop box security. See [Oregon drop box locator](#). Drop site requirements are in statute.

Training people for signature matching, creating signature matching procedures?

See [VBM Manual](#) under Staffing, p. 36.

Securing the ballots before, during and after counting?

What are the top 5 reasons people's ballots are rejected?

Per our state Elections Director, 2 big reasons- ballot isn't signed or signature doesn't match.

How are voters notified if there is a "problem" with their ballot and what processes are in place to allow voters to remedy the "problem"?

If voters share contact info, county elections will call or email. Problematic since this is public info and voters now don't want the spam. Track with ballot tracker, need to verify if it can notify for problems.

What are the key considerations when operating a vote by mail infrastructure to ensure all votes are counted?

1. **Voter Registration:** publicize widely and remind often because if voters aren't registered, they can't vote. Our #MotorVoter through the DMV is not perfect. We haven't gotten back to address party registration online, currently a separate, easily overlooked postcard. Our nonaffiliated voters because drivers' licenses are renewed every
2. **Ballot Mailing Alerts:** tell voters when ballots are being mailed, to contact their county elections' offices if they haven't gotten theirs.

3. **Track Your Ballot** Encourage voters to sign up for ballot tracker, or whatever program your area may use, to track their ballots, from mailed, to received, to counted. Here in [CA](#), [Multnomah CO, OR](#), [King CO WA](#).
4. **Deadline pushing**- Ballots must be received by deadlines, in Oregon by 8pm on election day- postmarks don't help, and now, with pre-paid envelopes, our state Elections Director cautions that there will not be postmarks anyway. Be sure to use realistic mail processing time, longer if post offices have closures (we did a few years ago).
5. **Secure Procedures** See the videos and Manuals for thorough safety protocols to control location oversight, tracking, redundant staff review, always having political party inclusion in each team with everyone stopping together for meal or rest room breaks, etc.

Who are key allies for this issue? Do they include groups representing communities of color, the disability community, etc.?

ACLU, political parties, even though they do not work directly with LWV. Disability Rights Oregon are very active but strictly advocating for their limited constituency, not for benefit of voters overall. more directly the State Library, TBABS, Talking Books and Braille Services for vision related concerns. Very important, those advocating for current ballot measures, eg League of Conservation Voters, education communities, etc.

What research or data can you share to show that vote by mail has actually increased turnout, especially among underrepresented groups?

See The [SoS Election Statistics](#) page for general, primary, special election turnout and ballot return history since 2000. [OR VBM statistics](#), a comprehensive history, up to 2006.

Please explain your public education messaging on how to vote by mail

Is there any type of messages or methods that seemed effective when explaining to the general public on how to vote-by-mail?

Oregon started VBM in the early 1980s, gradually, for local special elections. Please see the videos; messaging has evolved.

How did you measure its effectiveness?

During the implementation of all-mail elections in your state, what were some of the challenges advocates for all-mail elections had to overcome?

Vote by mail, automatic voter registration, pre-paid ballot postage, pre-registration for younger voters, all have been opposed, sometimes invoking vulnerability to voter fraud. No one has been able to validate those concerns. From [NPR, 2018](#), "If and when a bank gets robbed or a car gets stolen, we don't stop using banks or cars. We enforce the laws we have in place."

How should advocates for all-mail elections prepare for these challenges?

Encourage elections offices to prepare ASAP:

- Establish needs (quantity, cost, time, and materials' availability), for paper, printing, processing and staffing/labor needs.
- Equipment needs to be in place and compatible, with staff trained to use it.
- We are concerned that our veteran pollworking crew, many older and notably vulnerable to COVID-19, may not be available.

- Coordinate a publicity campaign with trustworthy branding, multi-faceted outreach to various communities and media, especially social media.
- Include partners like the Dept of ED, youth groups, League, ACLU, disability and minority voters rights' groups, Chambers of Commerce, City Clubs, etc.

Oregon has [compiled election statistics from 1992-2018](#), for cost per ballot (received), and per voter with turnout.

These notes were assembled quickly and more information is available. –[Becky Gladstone](#), LWVOR