

News from the Somerset County Board of Elections

Contact: Jerry L. Midgette / 908.231.7084 / electionbd@co.somerset.nj.us

August 4, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Results of the Somerset County the July 7 Primary Election Have Been Completed

Following a seven (7) day extension, granted by the Assignment Judge of Vicinage Thirteen (13), the results of the Somerset County July 7, 2020 Primary Election have been fully counted, Jerry L. Midgette, Somerset County's Election Board Administrator announced today.

This was an historic election on many levels including process and results, said Midgette. As to process, due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Governor issued Executive Order 144 (2020) creating for the first time in New Jersey a hybrid election consisting primarily of voting by mail. There were a reduced number of polling places made available in each municipality for ADA-accessible voting machine and provisional ballot voting exclusively, he said.

Also, for the first time, a Ballot Drop Box was located in each of five (5) municipalities throughout the county for the convenience of voters to drop off their Vote-by-Mail ballots. Over an eleven (11) day period, 5,008 Vote-by-Mail ballots were dropped off in these boxes. That represented over 9.2% of the total Vote-by-Mail ballots cast and over 8% of the total votes cast in this election, said Midgette.

Additionally, a new court ordered Signature Verification process was implemented for this primary election, which provided voters an opportunity to correct any signature defect on their voted ballot before the Board of Elections could reject it. Consequently, a Cure Form was sent to 205 voters which they had to fill out with the required identifying information, sign and return to the Election Board no later than 2:00 P.M. on July 30th. A total of 94 voters returned the form with the required information and thus their ballots were subsequently accepted and ultimately counted. This represented a Cure Rate of 45.9%.

Another first for this primary election was that all Vote-by-Mail ballots received by the Election Board up until July 14 and postmarked no later than Election Day (July 7) were considered timely and counted. In previous elections, the timeframe for accepting timely postmarked ballots was limited to only 48 hours after Election Day. As a result of this new seven day timeframe, the Election Board received an additional 10,000 Vote-by-Mail ballots during this period. This represented 18.4% of the total Vote-by-Mail ballots cast in this primary election and 16.1% of the overall ballots cast, said Midgette.

As to the election results, the overall voter turnout for this primary election was 25.5%. Over 54,000 Vote-by-Mail ballots were cast and over 7,900 Provisional Ballots were cast at the polls. For various reasons, the Election Board rejected 1.6% of the Vote-by-Mail ballots and 3.1% of the Provisional Ballots, said Midgette.

Although one certified ADA-accessible voting machine was setup in each of the 37 designated polling sites throughout the county, only five (5) voters actually utilized this option. Notwithstanding, it was a necessary option made available to any registered voter who needed to cast their vote using the ADA-accessible voting machine, Midgette said.

There were several critical lessons learned from conducting this first time hybrid election in a COVID-19 environment. As we state and local election officials begin preparations for the November 3rd General Election, we expect to benefit from our shared experiences gained from conducting this primary election, stated Midgette.

The Somerset County Board of Elections office is currently not open to the public due to the Coronavirus. However, staff can be reached by phone at 908-231-7084 on weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The office is located on the first floor of the Somerset County Administration Building at 20 Grove St., Somerville.

For more information, go to the Board of Elections website at <http://www.co.somerset.nj.us/elections> or contact us at (908) 231-7084 or electionbd@co.somerset.nj.us.

###

