

Issue Guide for Candidate Removal from Ballot

Overview

As an election official, reassuring voters, media, and other community stakeholders during and around candidate changes is important. This document includes generic responses and tips based on best practices to help guide your discussions with key audiences. We encourage you to customize the material below based on the particulars of your jurisdiction or the candidate impacted.

When discussing the topic with your community, remember to:

- Be proactive when engaging with media
- Stay focused on key facts, a clear narrative, and avoid tangents
- Clarify any parameters at the beginning of the conversation
- Considering reviewing these [10 tips about what to do when the media comes calling](#)

In general, both the Sample Statement and the Sample Responses to FAQs below focus on reassuring voters that there is a legal process, that you are aware of the legal process, and that you plan to keep folks informed at every step of the way.

Nothing in this document is intended to serve as legal advice or analysis. Every state is different and has different laws governing candidate changes and ballot creation. Be sure to check with your county or state attorney about the process in your jurisdiction.

Sample Statement for Candidate Changes

“Our office is committed to ensuring that every voter can safely and securely cast a ballot for their candidate of choice in every election. When there is a candidate change, we follow the processes set out in state and federal law for removing and/or replacing that individual’s name on the ballot.

[Let voters know the status of the ballot in your jurisdiction. For example, “Our office has not yet finalized the ballot for this year’s general election.”]

We will continue to work closely with the appropriate officials and adhere to any court rulings to make sure the ballots voters receive accurately list the candidates who have qualified to run for office in the *[Insert Election Date/Name].*”

[\[see sample post\]](#)

There is a Change in the Ballot

For instances when there is a candidate or contest added, removed, or amended **after** ballots printed:

Immediate Communication:

- Notify voters, media, and key stakeholders of the ballot change through multiple channels (email, website, social media, mailers, etc.).
- Provide a clear explanation of what has changed, why, and how it affects the voter’s choices.
- Reassure the public that their right to vote will not be infringed despite the last-minute change.

Ballot Reprinting:

- Coordinate with the printing vendor to reprint ballots that reflect the changes.
- Ensure quality control to prevent errors during the reprinting process, and check that all relevant contests and candidates are accurately updated.

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Ballot Version Tracking:

- Track different versions of the ballot to ensure that the correct version is sent to voters, and maintain records of which version each voter receives.
- If multiple ballot versions are in circulation (e.g., some voters already received the original ballot), put safeguards in place to prevent confusion or double voting.

Handling Ballots Already Sent Out:

- Issue replacement ballots to voters who have already received the original version, clearly indicating that their old ballot is no longer valid.
- Provide instructions for how to return the outdated ballot or ensure it is not counted.

Extending Deadlines if Necessary:

- If ballot changes occur close to the election date, work with local authorities to extend voting deadlines or adjust the voting timeline to ensure that all voters can participate with the updated information.

Public Education:

- Run an education campaign explaining the change(s) and what actions voters need to take (e.g., whether they need to request a new ballot or return a spoiled ballot).
- Use FAQs, hotlines, and community forums to answer voter questions and address concerns about the change.

Poll Worker Training:

- Ensure that poll workers are fully briefed on the changes and prepared to assist voters in person, especially if the change impacts the voting experience on Election Day.

Sample Responses to Potential FAQs

1. Will changing the name of a candidate for office disrupt voting?

We know that when unexpected changes happen, disruptions to voting are a top concern. The process for listing a candidate on the ballot is governed by state and federal law. Our office will follow those laws, and work diligently to ensure that the *[Insert Election Date/Name]* runs smoothly. We adapt to changing circumstances, whether it is natural disasters, changes in laws, and even changes in candidates. *[Feel free to insert local examples that voters in its area might know]*

Local election administrators are tracking and will be ready to respond as needed. We will keep you updated and informed throughout the process.

2. Will I still be able to vote for the candidate that was removed, even if he or she has dropped out of the race?

No matter the individual running for office, ballots will reflect the candidates certified to be listed for each race. If a candidate announces their decision to cease campaigning for an office but the deadline for removal has passed or there is no mechanism to remove the name of a living candidate, we will adhere to state law or court orders for whether that candidate's name remains on the ballot.

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Even after deadlines set in federal/state laws have passed, such as when ballots are to be printed and mailed, we will comply with whatever actions are necessary as set forth in last-minute court orders to ensure the sanctity of the elections system.

A voter may choose to write in the name of their chosen candidate even if that name does not appear elsewhere on the ballot, if allowed by law in that jurisdiction.

3. Do election administrators decide who runs?

Individuals decide whether to run for office, a party has rules to determine its candidates, states have a process for approving a candidate for the ballot, and election administrators ensure that candidates who have completed all of the state and/or federal legal requirements are listed on the election ballot in accordance with state and federal law.

The process for replacing a candidate in this jurisdiction is *[Insert discussion of local process]*.

4. How/when will ballots be finalized?

State and federal law govern when and how ballots must be finalized. For the *[DATE/NAME OF ELECTION]*, *[add your jurisdiction, and explain by which date ballots must be finalized and the procedure for doing that as set out in state law]*.

Our office will follow those requirements, laws, and court decisions and continue to work every day to ensure that elections run smoothly and that elections are free and fair.

5. Will this delay any ballots?

While this court decision may result in some delays, we are working diligently to minimize the impact on absentee and mail-in voters. Our priority is to expedite the distribution of the newly-printed ballots as soon as we receive them.

6. How much will this change cost and who pays?

We don't yet know the full cost of this ballot change and the reprinting, but we will implement this in as cost-effective a manner as possible. While this decision may result in some temporary delays, we are working diligently to minimize the impact on ballot printing, mail ballots, and voter disruptions overall.

7. How are you preparing for potential changes?

My office is staying nimble, preparing for a variety of contingencies, and serving as a source of accurate information for our community. We are training staff on all relevant laws, guidelines and court orders regarding changes to the ballot. We are continuing the good work we do every day, like educating voters and ensuring that everyone eligible to vote can cast their ballot.

[If applicable - add what you are doing to educate the community. Mention ways that your office generally responds to changes or add specific examples of how an election office is nimble every election.]

We will navigate any changes that come our way, and we are confidently administering fair elections where folks can vote for the candidate of their choice.