

MARYLAND

PROGRAM

The Maryland Election Protection Program encompassed Baltimore City, Howard County, Prince George's County, and Montgomery County. On Election Day, volunteers covered 120 precincts. There was also a local call center located in Baltimore which received calls from Maryland.

Maryland voters reported a variety of concerns before and on Election Day, including early voting problems, the effects of Superstorm Sandy, late openings of polling places, long lines, voting machine failures, problems with provisional ballots, and accessibility issues.

BEFORE ELECTION DAY

Absentee Ballots

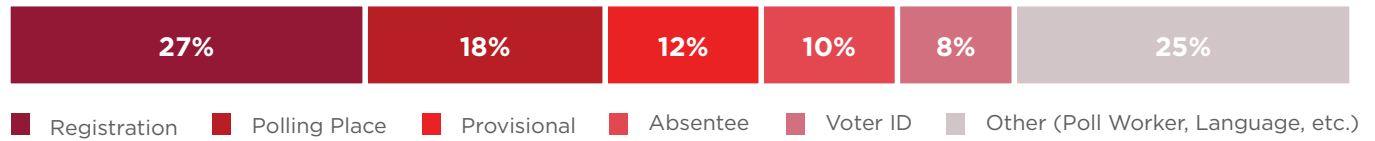
In late October, Election Protection received 15 separate reports that absentee ballots in Maryland had been sent to voters with missing pages. Election Protection volunteers worked with the State Board of Elections to determine what voters should do in case they received incomplete applications. If voters received an incomplete ballot, Election Protection informed them that they would need to contact their local board of elections to request a complete replacement ballot.

Early Voting and Superstorm Sandy

During early voting, polling locations experienced wait times of up to seven hours statewide, and the long lines were particularly problematic in Prince George's County. Long lines during early voting were likely exacerbated by Superstorm Sandy.

Early voting on October 29 and October 30 was cancelled due to the approach of the storm. However, to help ease the burden on the system with Election Day rapidly approaching, early voting was extended, with all early voting centers open between 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Wednesday, October 31 through Friday November 2. The additional hours accounted for all but one hour lost from the cancellation due to the storm. In addition, the deadline for

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submitting a request for an absentee ballot was extended to October 3. Generators were provided to all polling sites without electricity so that they could remain open.

ELECTION DAY

Late-Opening Polling Places

On the morning of Election Day, some polling locations did not open on time, causing a great deal of frustration for morning voters. For example, at the polling location at Swan Field Elementary School in Howard County, poll workers did not know how to turn on the voting machines and could therefore not open the polling location. Election Protection dispatched two volunteers from the Greenbelt Command Center to evaluate the situation and to encourage voters to stay in line. Election Protection volunteers also notified the State Board of Elections of the problem.

Long Lines

Long lines were consistently a problem in Maryland on Election Day, especially in Prince George's County. Election Protection alerted the Maryland Board of Elections about each report of long lines. Polling locations with wait times over three hours were reported in a number of precincts, including Oakland Elementary in Laurel, Bladensburg Community Center in Prince George's County, Oxon Hill Library in Prince George's County, and Sargent Shriver Elementary in Montgomery County.

A number of factors seemed to contribute to the long lines, including confusion at locations with multiple precincts, as well as poor signage in many polling locations (with most of the reported problems occurring in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties). Election Protection volunteers verified that voters were in the correct line for their precinct, and encouraged them to stay when the lines became long.

Voting Machine Failures

Voting machines presented a challenge to voters in Maryland. Some precincts did not have enough machines to adequately handle voter turnout, while at others, machines malfunctioned or broke down. At Church Lane Elementary in Baltimore, four out of the ten machines malfunctioned, which caused up to three hours of wait time. A group of Election Protection volunteers were dispatched to encourage voters to stay in line.

Additionally, voters complained of having to re-enter their vote repeatedly after the machines tabulated their initial vote. At the Boys & Girls Club polling location in Laurel, a voter reported to the Hotline that, upon making her selections on the touch screen, not all of her choices were recorded. Election Protection contacted the Maryland Board of Elections to request that they send someone to fix the machines. In addition, the Hotline received reports that the Lakeland Elementary School polling location in Baltimore City had opened, but the machines were not properly set up. Voters were offered a paper ballot, but some decided not to wait to vote.

Provisional Ballots

In Precincts 5 and 6 in Baltimore, Election Protection volunteers reported that many voters were given provisional ballots. Election Protection also received reports that several individuals in Bishopville were being denied the chance to vote a regular ballot because the birthdate on their voter registration cards, which was correct, did not match the information on the voter rolls. All of these voters were required to fill out a provisional ballot.

The last phone call of Election Day in Maryland was from a first-time voter at a precinct in Oxen Hill. When she registered to vote, she did not provide any identification, and when she showed up at the polls, the poll worker did not ask her for any identification. She was only told that her name was flagged and that she had to vote provisionally. Election Protection informed her how to follow up after Election Day to determine whether her provisional ballot had been counted.

Accessibility Problems

Accessibility problems were widespread on Election Day. At the Montgomery Village Middle School polling location in Montgomery County, a deaf voter reported that poll workers had not provided adequate assistance. One poll worker, in particular, repeatedly ignored the voter's multiple attempts to communicate that the voter was deaf and could not understand the poll worker. The voter tried to write a note on a napkin that the poll worker was being rude, and the poll worker grabbed the pen out of the voter's hand.

At the Bladensburg Community Center polling location in Prince George's County, some disabled voters were asked to provide proof of their disability, which is not required under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Election Protection dispatched a group of volunteers to help clarify the situation. In addition, Election Protection notified Coalition partners at the National Disability Rights Network, who also contacted the Board of Elections. Election Protection volunteers received a call indicating that disabled voters in Clinton were being turned away unless they had brought someone to the polls to assist them. In this case as well, Election Protection contacted the Prince George's County Board of Elections to correct the situation.

Using Social Media to Dispel Rumors

There were several calls to the Hotline about a rumor that if a voter posted an image of their ballots on Facebook, his or her vote would not be counted. Election Protection called the Maryland Board of Elections to investigate what would happen if a voter did in fact post his ballot online. Election Protection was informed that even though cameras are prohibited within the polling place in Maryland, there is no punishment for people who do in fact bring a camera inside. Election Protection communicated this information to voters via the Election Protection Facebook account to dispel the rumor.