

Accessible Ballot Use at 2020 General Election

(a) the number of individuals who requested an Accessible Absentee Ballot

Boards of Elections reported 4,675 requests for accessible ballots at the 2020 General Election. However, boards indicated that 1,063 of these requests were made in error, typically through the New York State Board of Elections (“NYSBOE”) Ballot Request portal.¹ Other boards of elections did not include erroneous requests in their whole number of requests.

(b) the number of individuals who were provided an Accessible Absentee Ballot

Boards of Elections reported transmitting 3,500 accessible ballots. In some instances, counties included in the number of ballots “sent” ballots sent to voters who later indicated they had not intended to request an accessible ballot.

(c) the number of individuals who returned an Accessible Absentee Ballot

Statewide, 1,549 accessible ballots were returned to boards of elections.

(d) descriptions of any complaints or feedback received from voters regarding Accessible Absentee Ballots and descriptions of how any complaints were resolved.

The most common complaint was the voter did not intend to request an accessible ballot and did so in error and wanted a paper ballot. Many of these voters recommended changes to the NYSBOE portal structure to make the difference between the accessible ballot portal and the regular ballot request portal more evident. NYSBOE did make changes to the portal descriptions and placement on its website in an effort to mitigate this problem.

Some voters complained about receiving paper envelopes without a paper ballot for the return of the accessible ballot. The reason for this was explained.

¹ As one county noted: “We called each voter who requested an accessible ballot and were told the request was made in error (since the portal permitted the voter to request a regular or accessible ballot via the same form, which the voters found confusing). We sent each of the voters we spoke with a regular ballot by mail, pursuant to their request. We were not able to reach one of the voters by phone, so an accessible ballot was sent to the voter.”

One voter complained that the white background of the PDF rendered it inaccessible to the voter, and the voter requested a paper ballot. The voter used a magnifying tool with the paper ballot.

Some voters expressed concern about having returned a ballot using the self-constructed envelope template emailed to the voter prior to the arrival of the board-issued envelopes that were also required to be sent. The voter was made aware that use of the self-constructed envelope or the envelopes mailed to the voter was acceptable.

Some voters reached out the board to confirm that the emailed ballots were legitimate. The board confirmed.

Some accessible ballot voters complained that the duration from ballot request to delivery was too long. The board informed them on the status.

Some voters complained of difficulty printing the ballot for lack of access to a printer. This problem was resolved in various ways including use of printers of neighbors or family members.

Some voters complained that they did not receive accessible ballots that were requested. Upon inquiry, the voters were found to have requested regular ballots via the NYSBOE portal. Upon informing the appropriate board that they wanted accessible ballots, accessible ballots were sent.

One voter complained of a glitch using their JAWS software to mark the ballot. NYSBOE nor the local board could replicate the error. A new ballot packet was offered.

Two voters reported that their ballots could not be opened and follow-up was directed. Similarly, another complained of having scrolling issues; further follow up was directed.

There was a complaint that voters received mailed envelopes for the return of their ballots that were not postage-paid. This was corrected.

Notation on Completeness. This report does not include data from one county. When this information is provided the report will be updated.