Absentee and Mail-in Ballot Pre-Canvass and Canvass Observer Procedures

For safety and election security purposes, those permitted to be present for the Pre-Canvass and Canvass (collectively, "Canvass"), other than Board of Elections personnel, may be limited to Observers pursuant to 25 P.S. § 2650 and 25 P.S. § 3146.8 of the Pennsylvania Election Code. Observers may be appointed as follows:

- Any candidate may appoint themselves, and individuals they have authorized to represent said candidate, as Observers for the Canvass.
- Any party or political body or body of citizens[1] that now is, or hereafter may be, entitled to have watchers at any primary or election may appoint individuals authorized to represent said party or body as Observers for the Canvass.

Observer credentials for the Canvass will be issued as follows:

- Those entitled to appoint Observers must email Elections.Credential@phila.gov to request access to the request form. The form will require (1) the name of each appointed Observer, (2) written confirmation authorizing each appointee to represent the candidate, party, or body, (3) the Observer's address, and (4) the Observer's email address.
- Due to security restrictions, Observer requests must be received by 7 p.m. on Friday, October 30, 2026 in order to be approved and have credentials issued prior to Election Day. Late requests will be accepted on a rolling basis and processed within two business days.
- Approved Observers can retrieve their credential necessary for access to the Canvass at the Election Warehouse's Credentialing Center, located at 11311 Roosevelt Blvd. Approved Observers must present a government-issued photo ID and their confirmation email at the guardhouse gate. Credentials must be picked up in person by the approved Observer, who will have their photo taken on-site to be printed on their credential.

Observers must be approved by the Board[2] and bring their credential in order to be admitted to the property where the Canvass is being conducted. Observers must comply with safety guidelines at all times. Observers must remain within the physical area designated for Observers behind the stanchions. One Observer per candidate (inclusive of the candidate themselves) and three Observers per party or body shall be permitted to be present at any one time. To the extent the number of Observers requesting to be present in this area at any given time exceeds the number consistent with reasonable capacity limitations within the Observer area, the Board of Elections will limit in-person viewing by endeavoring to allow Observers to view in-person on a rotating basis. Observers may not disrupt, engage with, or interfere with Board staff completing the Canvass, including by asking questions or making requests of Board staff while they are performing their duties. During the ballot adjudication process, staff shall not slow down, go back, nor stop at anyone's request. Observers shall not be permitted to take photographs, video, or audio recordings, or use cell phones inside the observation area during the Canvass except in a designated area provided for pictures, video, and cell phone use. Violators will be removed and have their Observer eligibility revoked.

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[1] Body of Citizens: Body which has not yet but intends to become a political party or political body as defined by 25 P.S. § 2831 through the nomination of candidates and/or the receiving of votes in a future election.

[2] Credential requests may be denied for individuals who pose a risk to Board staff or electoral processes.

Absentee and Mail-in Ballot/Application Challenge Procedures

Any person challenging a Philadelphia elector's (1) application for an absentee ballot, (2) absentee ballot, (3) application for a mail-in ballot, or (4) mail-in ballot must follow the following procedure:

1. Only candidates, political parties and bodies, and authorized poll watchers may challenge.
2. Challenges may only be made on the ground that the applicant was not a qualified elector.
3. Challengers must complete the "Absentee or Mail-in Ballot or Ballot Application Challenge" form online for each application or ballot challenged at the following website: https://phila.jotform.com/212974912800052
    a. The following information must be provided in the form:[3]
        i. Name of challenged elector
        ii. Date of birth of the challenged elector
        iii. Address of challenged elector
        iv. Ward and Division of challenged elector
        v. Alleged reason challenged elector is not qualified
        vi. A description of the evidence, including proposed testimony, of the challenged elector's non-qualification
        vii. Name of challenger
        viii. Name of the candidate, political party, or political body the challenger represents
        ix. Address of challenger
        x. Phone number of the challenger
        xi. Email address of the challenger
4. Challengers must print the form submission confirmation page and sign it in ink.
5. Challengers must deliver the original, signed challenge form to the Board of Elections at City Hall, Room 142, by 5 p.m. on Friday, October 30, 2026.
6. Challengers must also deposit ten dollars ($10) with the Board by 5 p.m. on October 30, 2026, for each challenge they submit. The person who made and signed the challenge must make the deposit. The Board only accepts certified checks and money orders made out to "City of Philadelphia." If a challenger is submitting multiple challenges, a single certified check or money order for the aggregate amount will be accepted.
7. Challenges from challengers who do not comply with each of these requirements may be dismissed as improperly filed without a hearing by the Board.
8. Unless otherwise announced, the Board will hold a hearing or hearings on all challenges beginning with their next publicly announced meeting. The time and place of any such hearings will be publicly announced.

[If the online fillable form is unavailable, challengers may obtain paper forms from the Board at City Hall, Room 142. Challengers submitting more than two challenges who do not use the online fillable form must also provide the Board, via email to vote@phila.gov, with an .xlsx file containing the information in paragraph 3.a.i-xi above by the time the required deposit is made.]

[3] Information such as date of birth or ward/division may be obtained from the Board.