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What is a Provisional Ballot??

In every election paper Provisional Ballots are supplied to the Poll workers. They are commonly used for things such as a voter appearing in person but does not show up in the poll books (for a whole host of reasons) and for people who were issued a Vote by Mail Ballot. They are given the paper Provisional Ballot and the affirmation statement that they fill out. After the election each Provisional Ballot Cast is investigated by the Board of Elections and if the voter's registration is deemed valid, or the voter did not return a ballot in the mail (thus casting a vote twice) the Provisional Ballot is accepted.

For the November 3, 2020 General Election Governor Murphy's Executive Order #177 (EO) has stipulated that voters who go to the polls on Election Day will be given a Paper Provisional Ballot – See Page 10, Section 8 of the EO. There will be no voting on machines at the polling places. Voters with disabilities that prevent them from voting on a paper Provisional Ballot will have the opportunity to vote an ADA accessible ballot.

Facts about Paper Provisional Ballots in Warren County (I specify Warren County because each County is responsible for their own ballot design):

- The paper Provisional Ballot looks exactly like the ballot we sent to you in the mail except "Provisional Ballot" or "Mail-In Ballot" appears in the upper right hand corner. Other than that they are identical.
- Paper Provisional Ballots require the voter to fill out a form (affirmation Statement) to go along with the ballot. This form is what is used to investigate the eligibility of the voter.
- Provisional Ballots are the last ballots counted in every election. This is because of the Vote By Mail program. The Election Board must wait until after the deadline to receive Mail-In Ballots has passed before they can conclude their investigation. This is to prevent a dishonest person from dropping their ballot off at a post office and then heading to the polls to vote a Provisional Ballot (voting twice). Once the deadline is closed, and if the voter did not return a ballot via mail, their Provisional Ballot is accepted.
- For the November 3rd, 2020 General Election the deadline to receive ballots in the mail is November 10th, so no Provisional Ballots will be counted before November 11th at the earliest.
- All Provisional ballots that have been investigated and deemed eligible get counted.

The EO allows voters to return their Mail-In Ballots to their polling place on Election Day (this is new this election) and hand them to a Poll Worker. These ballots are counted starting the day after the election, November 4th.