

Media Release

from Gabriella Cázares-Kelly



Tuesday, November 19, 2024

Online ballot requests diverted to phone and email requests

A district boundary error discovered by Pima County in the weeks before the 2024 General Election led to an unavoidable delay in our vendor's printing and assembly of ballots. This delay caused concern, and despite assurances, many voters flooded the online form to request ballots. Some voters did so despite already being on the Active Early Voting List (AEVL). This duplicated their ballot requests.

The processing of online ballot requests is still a very manual process in our office, requiring us to look up each voter record and review many pieces of information. Follow-up communication is often necessary. After monitoring the progress of the ballot requests during the week leading up to the October 25 deadline, it became clear that our office could not manually process all the online requests in a timely manner. Only 39% of the more than 20,000 ballot requests manually processed before October 19 were valid.

On October 19, after our data team filtered out about 4,000 duplicate requests, we emailed the remaining 3,900 voters with unique online Early Ballot requests. We asked them to call our office so we could process the requests more quickly with one phone call versus back-and-forth correspondence. As stated earlier, only about 39% of all requests were valid, and processing those requests would have tied up our valuable resources and given voters a false sense of having requested a ballot when there was no physical way for our office to process their requests. It is important to note that when voters fill out our request online, they are notified that they will receive confirmation via email that their ballot request has been processed.

recorder.pima.gov

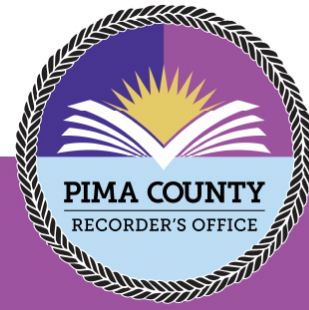
Voter Services (520) 724-4330 Document Recording (520) 724-4350 TDD 711

Main Downtown Office: 240 N Stone Avenue Tucson AZ 85701

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 3145 Tucson AZ 85702-3145

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"Your ballot request has been submitted:

Please Note: You will receive an email notification of our receipt of your request shortly.

Contact Voter Registration at (520) 724-4330 or send an email to: voter@recorder.pima.gov"

On Monday, October 21, more than 30 operators fielded about 3,500 phone calls and processed 1,858 vote-by-mail ballot requests via phone. Between that day and Friday, October 25, the office fielded 8,643 phone calls. Those calls resulted in 4,919 requests for early ballots processed by our staff over the phone

Regarding wait times, admittedly, the first hour or two of that first day was a challenge. The average wait time for calls on Monday was 4:29. For the week prior it had been 3:48. At no point did the wait time exceed 15 minutes. On Tuesday, we fielded 2,400 calls. Our average is usually about 1,800 per day. Based on this data, it appears that the majority of emailed voters either called us within that week to request ballots or received their first ballot requests.

This data reflects only ballot requests made by phone, but those numbers of requests don't tell the whole story. Many folks will call us to ask why their ballot wasn't sent only to find out that their registration is inactive because they need to update an address, which can only be done in person or through the Service Arizona website managed by the Arizona Motor Vehicle Department (MVD.) In those cases, our staff would have recommended that voters update their address at an Early Voting site due to a delay in receiving any MVD updates in time to request the ballots for them. During that week, our office sent 7,610 ballot requests to our printer. 8,750 voters voted in person. Many of those in-person voters and ballot requests would have been addressed during the phone connections we made.

We followed up that initial email with another email to the same 3,900 voters on October 30. On Friday, November 1, our staff manually looked up about 663 voters

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who had entered the wrong birth date or name in the form and called the 63 who were eligible and hadn't already voted. On November 4, we sent a third email to about 1,100 voters from the original list.

I am confident that most of the voters who requested a ballot using our online form either received their already queued ballots, voted early in person, updated their addresses online or successfully requested a mail ballot.

Some voters may not receive ballots for several legitimate reasons outlined below.

Of the 20,465 requests our office processed before removing the online form, 12,645 were not sent ballots for the following reasons:

- Voter already voted
- Voter already had a request because they were on the Active Early Voting List
- Voter was not registered
- Voter gave insufficient information to fulfill the request
- Duplicate requests
- Voter's record required an address update

Our commitment is always to find the best way to reach voters and order their ballots so they can vote. We have made considerable strides to improve our website and make it more informative, transparent and useful to voters. We have many more improvements in mind and look forward to upgrading our processes. We are already designing an automated solution to our online ballot request portal to avoid this situation in future elections.

During elections, my amazing team works extended hours and additional shifts, enduring threats and angry constituents. Everyone pitches in on the phones, in addition to their regular duties. We are extremely busy with not enough staff or hours in the day to respond to everything and we must prioritize voters over reporters, and new requests over duplicated submissions. My team met the

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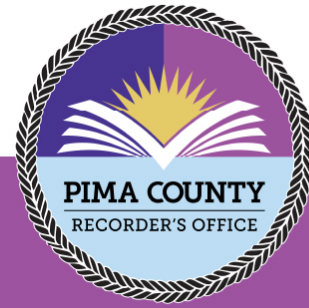
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additional challenges with extraordinary professionalism and competence, amid an already busy election.

I recognize the burden and disappointment the closure of the form may have caused during a stressful election cycle. Though perhaps inconvenienced, voters were not disenfranchised, and our office did all we could to reach those voters.

Sincerely,

Gabriella Cázares-Kelly

Pima County Recorder

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