

FROM Election Day TO Inauguration Day

A primer on what to expect between **November 3** and **January 20**

We are in the home stretch of an election that—like so much in 2020—has been and will continue to be unlike any before it. With an unprecedented tens of millions of Americans expected to vote by mail this year, and with many states prohibiting counting until Election Day, it may be days or even weeks before we know the outcomes.

That’s cause for preparation and patience—but not concern.

Here’s what you need to know about what’s ahead.

FAST FACTS



More than 60 million voters—**39% of all voters—are projected to vote by mail this year.**¹ That would be nearly double the 33 million mail-in votes (20.9%) in 2016 and 23 million mail-in votes (18.5%) in 2012.²



4 states (including swing states Pennsylvania and Wisconsin) must wait until Election Day to begin processing mail-in ballots, and 20 states may continue to receive ballots after Election Day, so long as they’re postmarked on or before Election Day.



8 states have a high likelihood of an extended tabulation period before a winner can be declared (including swing state Pennsylvania); 16 states have a medium likelihood.³



Lawsuits related to this election have already exceeded past years, continuing a 20-year upward trend following the 2000 election. To date, at least **345 election-related lawsuits** have arisen out of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴



All states have established official procedures to handle election complications. In the event of delays, remember: We have local election officials trained to handle those situations.

1 Pew Research Center <https://pewrsr.ch/3IXXDgx>
 2 Pew Research Center <https://pewrsr.ch/2CFTADr>
 3 Harvard Kennedy School, Belfer Center State by State Election Database
 4 Stanford-MIT COVID-Related Election Litigation Tracker

Keep in mind: Even under normal circumstances, election outcomes often take time to finalize.

RECENT HISTORY

In **2000**, it took **26 days** to determine the outcome in the presidential election

In **2016**, it took **34 days** to certify Trump’s win in Wisconsin

In **2016**, it took **30 days** to conduct a partial recount in Nevada

In **2018**, it took **12 days** to resolve the Florida senate race

POST-ELECTION TIMELINE

NOVEMBER
3

General Election

Polls will close between 6:00 and 9:00 PM depending on the state. All states have chosen to appoint electors based on a popular election.

DECEMBER
8

State “Safe Harbor” Deadline

The soft deadline for states to resolve disputes and choose electors to be accepted by Congress.

DECEMBER
14

Meeting of Electoral College

Disputes must be resolved and results certified before this meeting.

DECEMBER
23

Receipt of Certificate of Electoral Votes Deadline

If Congress has not received a state’s certificate of electoral votes by this date, it must be requested from the secretary of state.

JANUARY
3

New Congress Sworn In

JANUARY
6

Joint Session of Congress to Count Electoral Votes

In the event of a tie, the 12th Amendment provides that the House of Rep. will choose the president and the Senate will choose the vice president.

JANUARY
20

End of Current Presidential Term (Inauguration Day)

If there is no clear winner at noon, the Electoral Count Act provides for an “acting president” until disputes are resolved (the Speaker of the House is first in line).

BEWARE: DISINFORMATION ONLINE

Foreign actors and cybercriminals could try to exploit the time required to certify and announce election results by disseminating disinformation that includes reports of voter suppression, cyberattacks targeting election infrastructure, voter or ballot fraud, and other problems intended to undermine public perception of the legitimacy of the election.⁵

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) have urged Americans to critically evaluate the sources of the information they consume and to seek out reliable and verified information from trusted sources, such as state and local election officials. And remember: If foreign actors or cyber criminals were able to successfully change an election-related website, the underlying data and internal systems would remain uncompromised.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM FBI & CISA:

- Seek out information from trustworthy sources, such as state and local election officials; verify who produced the content; and consider their intent.
- Verify through multiple reliable sources any reports about problems in voting or election results, and consider searching for other reliable sources before sharing such information via social media or other avenues.
- For information about final election results, rely on state and local government election officials.
- Report potential election crimes—such as disinformation about the manner, time, or place of voting—to the FBI.
- If appropriate, make use of in-platform tools offered by social media companies for reporting suspicious posts that appear to be spreading false or inconsistent information about election-related problems or results.

[Click here for more tips and information from CISA](#)

[Click here for CISA’s Rumor vs. Reality Information Center](#)

What You Need to Know to VOTE

For information on how to vote by mail, where to find your precincts, and who’s on the ballot in your states and district, [click here to visit our Vote for Jobs voter education tool.](#)

⁵ FBI AND CISA Public Service Announcement