

What to Expect When You're Expecting (Election Results)

PUTTING CONSTITUENTS FIRST

As with most things this year, 2020 has challenged how we talk about all things elections. "Election day" has become "election month." As more voters than ever turn to early, absentee, or mail-in ballots, many experts are preparing for a potential lag in finalized election results. *What does that mean in terms of expectations and what should you be telling your constituents?*

Using the messaging strategies below, you can help combat misinformation, alleviate any anxieties about the vote tabulation process, and engage constituents—whether we know results the night-of or sometime thereafter.

How to Set Expectations that Prioritize American Democracy

Election scenarios continue to emerge. To support our trusted messengers, the Millennial Action Project is sharing a few messaging recommendations that hold true regardless of the eventual outcome, and are rooted in the promotion of respect for democracy and trust in our election integrity.

- Election night "calls" are typically based on projections, not a final tabulation of votes. In any year, election administrators count and finalize ballots for several days following Election Day. This is a normal process and one that ensures that all votes are properly counted.
- It is important to remind yourself, friends, and family that though this election process may be slightly different, our system is resilient and strong, and we have successfully held valid elections during many challenging periods in our history.
- A lag in results does not necessarily mean there is an issue with the election. There are several measures in place to ensure the integrity of the vote, including the identity verification process, barcodes to track ballots, and post-election audits. Learn more about your state's specific security measures at the [National Association of Secretaries of State](#), a non-partisan resource.
- American elections are administered by dedicated public servants with years of experience. They are committed to the integrity of our democracy and are working hard to ensure the health of our body politic.

Counting Every Vote

Elections, even a presidential election, are local events administered by state and local election administrators. In a presidential election, this mix of voting procedures and rules can lead to ballots being processed and counted on different days and times. **The simplest way to understand how the mixture of election**

State legislators and local officials are *trusted messengers*: **68% of Americans have confidence in their local officials** to do what is right for the country. By contrast, only **39% have confidence in the Federal Government**.*

Your voice can help dispel false narratives about the safety of our elections and set realistic expectations for your community.

*democracyforpresident.com

procedures affects the speed of vote counting is to look at when election administrators are **legally allowed to begin processing ballots**. With the massive increase in mailed and absentee ballots, we can anticipate an impact on how quickly ballots are tallied.

States that may begin processing more than one week before election day (Nov. 3rd)	States that begin processing less than one week before election day (Nov. 3rd)	States that begin processing on election day (Nov. 3rd)
Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington Cities/Territories: District of Columbia, Guam, US Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico	Alaska, Arkansas, Idaho, Iowa, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina	Alabama, Mississippi, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming Cities/Territories: Northern Marianas Islands

[\(Source: National Vote at Home Institute\)](#)

Throughout this election cycle, there has been significant focus on Wisconsin and Pennsylvania as key swing states. Both of these states will not begin processing ballots until Election Day. If absentee turnout is consistent with what was seen during the primaries, final counts will not be completed on November 3rd.

Regardless of potential delays from key swing states, Americans should be encouraged to exercise patience during this election season. While stateside this election will look different, for Americans overseas and military personnel who vote entirely by mail—a count that is frequently delayed—voting this year will be like any other. For more information on military voting, check out [CountEveryHero.com](#), a project spearheaded by retired senior U.S. military commanders.

But wait! What if we do not have to wait? Much of the talk about delayed election results is a function of the diverse election policies across our 50 states and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. There is, however, a possibility that we will receive conclusive results on election night or shortly thereafter.

Overall, it is important to frame voting as an action we will take together, as part of a larger community. As an elected official, you should articulate a clear "we" when communicating with your constituents.

Through your leadership, voters will be reassured that they are the ones who ultimately have agency in this election, and that putting faith in election integrity is an act of respect towards their community and country.