

MERCER COUNTY ELECTION SURVIVAL GUIDE '20 ...

... OR (ALMOST) EVERYTHING AN INFORMED VOTER NEEDS TO KNOW!

SPECIAL NOTES FOR 2020

1. There will be a Special Election on March 17, 2020, for the 8th Legislative District seat to fill the spot vacated by the resignation of Tedd Nesbit. All registered voters in the following municipalities are eligible to vote: Coolspring, Deer Creek, Fairview, Findley, Fredonia, French Creek, Grove City, Jackson Center, Jackson Township, Lake, Liberty, Mercer, Mill Creek, New Lebanon, New Vernon, Perry, Pine, Sandy Creek, Sandy Lake Borough, Sandy Lake Township, Sheakleyville, Springfield, Stoneboro, Wolf Creek and Worth. A link dedicated just to this election will be added to the county's web site.
2. The County deployed a new paper-based voting system in November 2019. All voters are utilizing hand-marked paper ballots where voters simply fill in ovals for the candidates of their choice and then feed the ballot into an optical scanner at the polling location. Voters with accessibility needs have the option to use a ballot marking device. Instructional videos for both machines can be found at <https://www.mcc.co.mercer.pa.us/election/help/how.to.vote.htm> or please visit the county election office during business hours to get a hands on demonstration.
3. The County consolidated 10 precincts in 2019. Information for these changes can be found at <https://www.mcc.co.mercer.pa.us/election/precincts/PrecinctChanges.htm>.
4. Pennsylvania lawmakers enacted Act 77 at the end of 2019, which provides a couple of significant changes for voters and is in effect beginning with the April 28 primary. They are:
 - a. All voters can register up to 15 days before each election, but the application must be in the election office by that date (listed below). Postmarks are no longer good.
 - b. Voters can apply for a mail/absentee ballot now without an excuse. In addition, voters can apply for an absentee ballot electronically at <https://www.votespa.com/Voting-in-PA/Pages/Voting-by-Absentee-Ballot.aspx>. The deadline for the ballot to be received by the county election office has been extended to 8 p.m. Election Day.
 - c. Beginning in 2020, there will no longer be a straight party option for voters on ballots so all voters will have to select candidates individually.
 - d. Counties now have to count mail/absentee ballots centrally so it will take several days for 100 percent of the results to be reported in our county. The good thing is we've already been centrally counting these ballots since 2008 so county voters should see little change in the timing of that process.

POLLING PLACES

5. You can check your polling place location online at the county's Web site: www.mcc.co.mercer.pa.us. Click on Voter Registration/Elections at left and look for a link to polling locations. There are also precinct maps.
6. Shenango Township West will continue to vote at the Presbyterian Church of West Middlesex, 3082 Main Street, due to ongoing renovations at the township building. We hope to have those voters back in the township building in 2021.
7. Two precincts at Kennedy Catholic High School (Hermitage SW-2 and SW-3) will be moved from the gymnasium to the field house across the parking lot beginning in 2020. We will update this information once that move is finalized and approved.

ELECTIONS

8. Election Dates:
 - a. **Primary – June 2, 2020**
 - b. **General – November 3, 2020**
9. Voting Hours: **7 a.m. to 8 p.m.**
10. Educate yourself as to what offices are on the ballot. This year you will see the following:
 - a. Federal races: President of the United States; U.S. Representative, 16th District, and National Delegates and Alternate Delegates for the 16th Congressional District (delegates and alternate delegates are for primary only)
 - b. Statewide races: Attorney General, Auditor General and State Treasurer
 - c. State-level races: Representative in the General Assembly, 7th, 8th and 17th Districts. There will be a special election in the 8th District and that information will be added once announced by the state.
 - d. Countywide races: None
 - e. Municipal races: None
 - f. School board races: None
 - g. Precinct-level races: None
11. Voter ID. Those voting for the first time in a new precinct are required to show some form of ID, but it can be anyone of a dozen valid photo or non-photo IDs under the current law and listed here: <http://www.votespa.com/en-us/Pages/First-Time-Voter.aspx>.
12. Expect lines at certain times of the day, especially first thing in the morning, around lunch time and then after dinner. The shortest waits usually occur late-morning or mid-afternoon.
13. Pennsylvania law allows candidates and campaigners to electioneer, pass out campaign materials and talk to you as long as they are at least 10 feet from the polling room. There is nothing, however, that requires you to answer them or take their materials. But if you do take any campaign literature, please DO NOT leave it in the polling place. You MUST have a clear path to the polling room and if you believe campaigners are impeding or blocking that path, please inform a poll worker.

14. Mercer County voters are permitted to wear political attire into the polling place. Voters cannot, however, do or say anything beyond simply wearing the item or they will be asked to leave.
15. Poll workers and poll watchers and constables are not permitted to wear political attire.
16. Electronic recording or photo devices are **not** permitted to be used in precincts.
17. ALL voters **in line** at 8 p.m. – even if that line stretches outside the building – are permitted by Pennsylvania law to vote. If you are NOT in line at 8 p.m. when the Judge of Elections announces the polls are closed, you are NOT by law allowed to vote.
18. Election returns will be posted as they arrive at the courthouse on the county's Web site at www.mcc.co.mercer.pa.us.

PETITION INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES

19. There are no local offices on the ballot this year. Any candidate running for state or federal office must get their petition packets from the Pennsylvania Department of State.

VOTER REGISTRATION

20. Voter Registration Deadlines (application must be received by these dates):
 - a. **Primary – May 18, 2020**
 - b. **General – October 19, 2020**
21. If you have moved since you last voted, you need to register at your current address. If your name has changed as a result of marital status or some other reason, you need to register under your new name. This can be done online or by filling out and submitting a new Voter Registration Mail Application to the Bureau of Elections, 5 Courthouse, Mercer, PA, 16137. Both can be found at www.votespa.com.
22. If you haven't voted in more than five years, it is possible your voting status has been made inactive or canceled. If you are inactive, you can vote but you are required to show a proper form of identification and sign an affirmation.
23. If you have been canceled, you must register again by the registration deadline.
24. If you have any question about your voting status, it's worth the time needed to check on it. Stop in the election office at the courthouse or call us at 724-662-7542. Our hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday-Friday.

MAIL/ABSENTEE BALLOTS

25. Voters no longer need an excuse to vote by mail/absentee ballot. Applications are available at post offices, municipal buildings and libraries in the county, as well as online at the county's Web site or by calling the election office. Or voters can access and submit the application electronically at <https://www.votespa.com/Voting-in-PA/Pages/Voting-by-Absentee-Ballot.aspx>.
26. The deadline to apply for a regular absentee ballot for the primary is **5 p.m. May 26, 2020**, and the ballot must be returned to the election office by **8 p.m. June 2, 2020**.

27. The deadline to apply for a regular absentee ballot for the general election is **5 p.m. October 27, 2020**, and the ballot must be returned to the election office by **8 p.m. November 3, 2020**.
28. **Voters should mail all items more than a week before any deadline to ensure timely delivery.**