# MONROE COUNTY
# BOARD OF ELECTIONS

You're Right To Vote.

# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

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# ANNUAL REPORT 2020

- The Monroe County Board of Elections found 2020 to be the most challenging year in recent history. The COVID-19 pandemic condensed signature requirements for ballot access, postponed village Elections, combined a special Election with local and presidential primaries, allowed for an unprecedented number of voters to cast ballots by absentee mail, and made finding inspectors and polling locations very difficult.

- In spite of all these trials, the staff at the Board of Elections rose to the occasion, working diligently in a bipartisan team and certifying fair and honest Elections.

## MISSION STATEMENT MONROE COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

WE WILL PROVIDE, AS A NEW YORK STATE MANDATED DEPARTMENT OF MONROE COUNTY, THROUGH A SKILLED AND DEDICATED STAFF, IN COLLABORATION WITH FEDERAL, STATE, COUNTY AND LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES, FOR THE HIGHEST DEGREE OF VOTER PARTICIPATION IN HONEST AND FAIR ELECTIONS FOR ALL THE CITIZENS OF NEW YORK.

# PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION COMPARISON

## 2016 Election

Registered Voters 460,006

Early Voting Voters N/A

Absentee Ballot Voters 19,487

Day of Voters 331,522

**Total:   351,009**

## 2020 Election

Registered Voters 489,494

Early Voting Voters 105,712

Absentee Ballot Voters 102,974

Day of Voters 174,790

**Total:   383,476**

# BUDGET 2020

- The entire budget of the MCBOE is charged back to the taxpayers of Monroe County. The total adopted budget for the MCBOE in 2020 was $11,084,681. This represents an increase of $3,627,652 from 2019. The increase was due to 2020 being a Presidential year and that brings with it additional temporary staffing costs, printing costs, costs associated with the Presidential Primary, and additional requirements for the General Election during a Presidential year.  Our MCBOE budget was allocated to the following areas:

- Personnel costs

- Benefits

- Data processing charges

- Rent

- Voting machine parts and repair costs

- Fleet maintenance

- Postage and office supplies

- Professional service contracts which include:  Election night reporting, Election Inspector Coordinators, Spanish Interpreters, rental of city polling sites, printing costs, public notices, transportation of voting machines and record keeping

# BUDGET COMPARISON BY YEAR

**Adopted Budget**
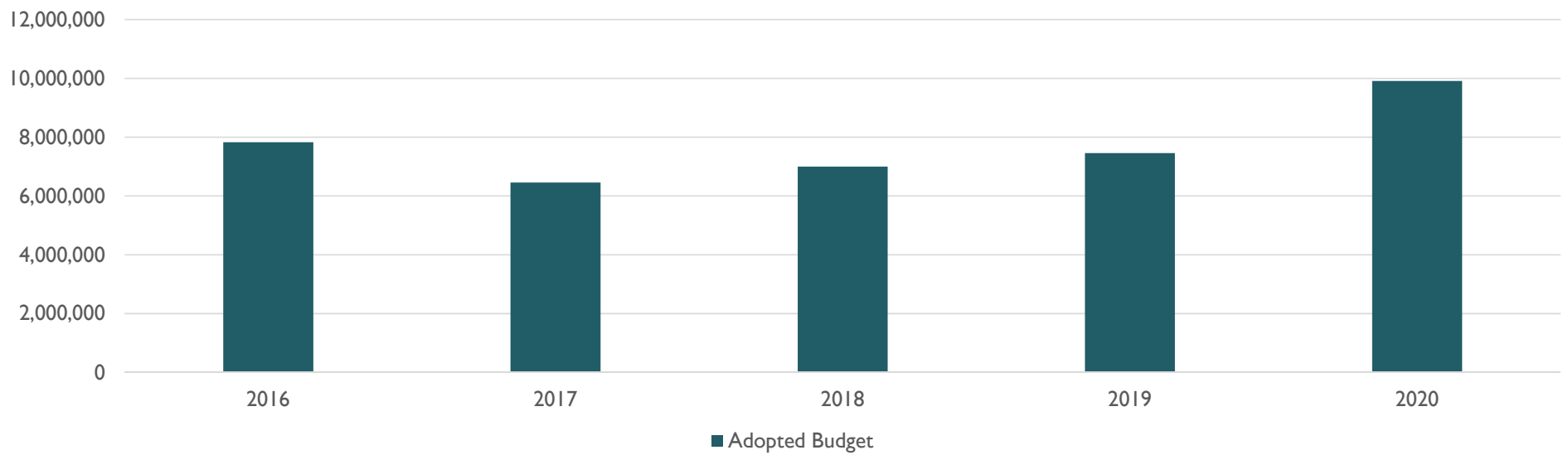
## STAFF 2020

The Monroe County Board of Elections (MCBOE) conducts all National, State, County, City, Town and Village Elections held within Monroe County.  Although the Board of Elections is a county agency, the structure, responsibilities and duties are mandated by New York State Election Law and Federal Law.  The New York State Board of Elections provides regulations on how to administer proper Election procedures to meet both Federal and State Election Law.

Two Election Commissioners manage the MCBOE, each serving a staggered four-year term.  The county leaders of each political party choose the Commissioners.   The Commissioners are each assisted by a Deputy Commissioner as required per Election Law 3-204.

- In 2020, the MCBOE began with 40 full time employees.  At the request of the Commissioners, the Monroe County Legislature recognized the need and granted six additional positions mid-year.   MCBOE hired an additional 40 seasonal workers to help with the influx of voter registration, absentee applications and absentee ballots.  MCBOE staff equally represents individuals registered in the Republican or Democratic Party as mandated by New York State Election Law.

- These dedicated employees worked a tremendous amount of overtime this past year to ensure that every new or changed voter registration form was processed in a timely manner and every eligible voter was allowed to cast a ballot in one of three ways:  Early Voting, Absentee Ballot or on Election Day.

# 2020 IMPROVEMENTS



MCBOE purchased two new Omation machines. These made it much quicker to slice open envelopes, count stacks of returned ballots and time/date stamp absentee ballot envelopes.

New scanners were also purchased for absentee ballots. This allowed the MCBOE to share a data file of ballot envelopes for digital review by candidates.

# POLLING LOCATIONS 2020

Polling locations were considerably difficult to find, especially for the June 23 Elections. The pandemic caused many typical polling locations, churches, schools, nursing homes, etc., to refuse use for the November 3, 2020 Election, as well. MCBOE had to be creative in finding locations using some non-traditional store fronts and private companies to accommodate voters.

- In 2020 we struggled to find polling sites for the Primary Election. Forced to consolidate districts due to COVID-19, MCBOE provided 66 polling locations. For the General Election, 281 polling locations were used to support 825 Elections Districts throughout the county.
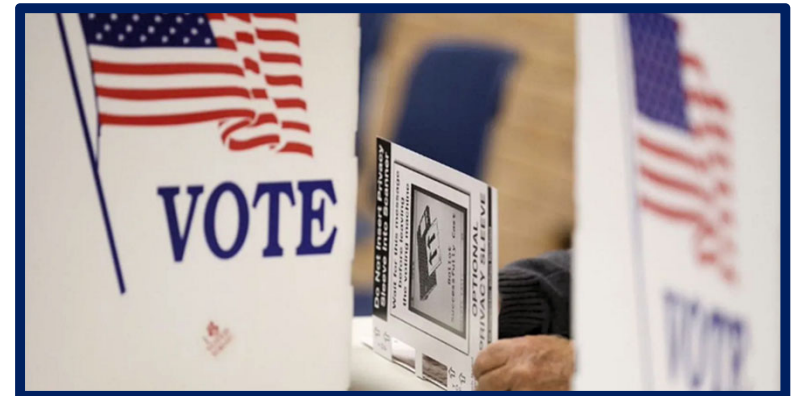
# TRAINING AND RECRUITMENT 2020

- MCBOE continued to implement a host of new policies and procedures in regards to Inspectors, Site Chairs and Coordinators to make Election Day in 2020 run as smoothly as possible. Election Inspectors must ensure fair and honest Elections. Qualifications to be an Election Inspector are:

  - Be a registered voter

  - Be a resident of the County in which one will serve

  - Attend an annual training session and pass an examination

  - Speak, read and write the English language

  - Not hold any public office, be a candidate for public office, be a party position to be voted on by the voters of the district in which the Inspector would be working, or be the spouse, parent or child of any such candidate

- Taking what was learned from the primaries on June 23, the MCBOE hired additional training staff, improved processes and procedures, stressed inspector responsibilities and created several training videos. This included additional sanitary measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

- MCBOE held 200 classes that were 2.5 hours per class and appointed 3,394 Election inspectors. It remains a challenge to find inspectors to work Elections. With the COVID-19 pandemic this year, this was even more evident. The training team was able to limit training to 25 people per class. Inspectors practiced social distancing and wore masks adhering to COVID-19 guidelines.

- These improvements resulted in an extremely successful General Election, despite the highest number of people voting in the history of Monroe County.

# VOTER REGISTRATION 2020

In 2020, MCBOE had approximately 489,494 registered voters compared to 462,279 in 2019. Forms were distributed by various groups, and through the counter box outreach program at banks, post offices, Town and City halls, schools, etc. The Department of Motor Vehicles automatically registers individuals to vote. Merging these into the Election Management System is cumbersome. A great number of duplicates are provided in these reports.

## Election Management System

- NTS Election Management System is one of the most critical parts of the Monroe County Board of Elections operations. It contains scanned images of each voter's registration forms, affidavits, absentees, returned mail, etc. Moving forward we are looking for an updated system that will be user friendly and have additional components.

# VOTER REGISTRATION – ACTION PLAN

COVID-19 effectively squelched any ability to coordinate or host voter registration events.   Public gatherings were limited and COVID-19 election related responsibilities took priority.

Hopefully, information sessions throughout the community can be offered by zoom or Skype with the goals of providing awareness to critical deadlines and processes relevant to participating in the electoral process.   Election Law has been changing rapidly and it is important to share this information through outreach.  Where possible, promotional/awareness materials suitable for social media were available on the MCBOE website.

- The Rochester City School District has expressed interest in developing a pre-registration program as part of student enrollment forms upon registering for the school year.  MCBOE will assist in providing materials, information and work collaboratively to ensure its success.

- The Board will continue being responsive to media requests, provide press releases and media access to the BOE and poll sites, ensuring transparency and appropriate coverage of Elections.

- Postal program - Each post office in Monroe County is delivered 100 registration forms and a counter box.  Instructions are provided to each office to contact the MCBOE when supplies run low.

- School program - Update comprehensive list of HS, Universities and Continuing Education facilities, notifying them that registration forms and flyers with 2021 registration cut off dates are available

- Media - Commissioners/Deputy Commissioners attend radio and television show opportunities when presented.  During all media interviews, registration instructions, deadline and new laws are discussed. The Board also prepares press releases when deadlines approach.

- Print resources, posters, presentations are available for the public and provided in Spanish, as well.

# ABSENTEE 2020

## Absentee Ballots

- For the 2020 Presidential Primary Election MCBOE processed over 61,449 new absentee ballot applications, and 61,381 for the State Primary. In 2020, MCBOE processed 131,871 absentee ballot applications for the General Election.

- The enormous increase in the volume of absentee applications and ballots required additional space for 2020. We were able to utilize the 8th floor of City Place and set up additional processing locations. All the absentee ballots were stored in a bipartisan locked room.

- MCBOE purchased absentee ballot drop boxes per the Governor's Executive Order. These secure boxes were placed at every early voting location, as well as every site for the General Election.

# AFFIDAVIT / COURT ORDER 2020

**Affidavit Ballots**

- In 2020, MCBOE processed 779 Affidavit Ballots in the Primary & Presidential Primary Elections. For the General Election, 4,270 Affidavit Ballots were processed. Of these 2,874 were ruled valid and 1,396 ruled invalid due to the voter not being registered in Monroe County/New York State, not registered at correct address or because they had already voted.

**Court Order Ballots**

- MCBOE processed 15 court orders for the Primary Election, 15 for the presidential Primary Election, 60 prior to the General Election, and 240 on the General Election day.

# VOTING MACHINES 2020

- The County of Monroe owns and operates a fleet of 762 optical scanning voting machines, including Image Cast Voting Machines (IC1), Image Cast with Ballot Marking Devices Voting Machines (IC2), and 20 ICE machines, which are all housed in a 30,000 square foot Service Center. These machines were utilized in 825 Election districts throughout Monroe County during the General Election. They are each tested annually as required by the New York State Board of Elections.

- Poll Pads make certain voters only vote once, and are not able to go to another center and cast a ballot or go to a district specific site on Election Day. Poll Pads communicate via a secure network connection and only transmit non-personal information to update files, thus ensuring voters are given the correct ballot for where they live.

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# VOTER SECURITY 2020

There are many checks and balances in place to process voter registration forms, absentee ballot requests and ballot counting:

- The MCBOE verifies against other government records, annual verification mailing, PO changes of address, State and Federal address changes, death records from the Department of Health, and signature verification.

- Absentee Ballots are not counted on Election night because they must be compared to voters from early and day-of voting polling sites to ensure each voter only votes once.

# AUDITS AND CYBER SECURITY 2020

After each Election, ballots from three percent of all the machines used, chosen in a double random draw, are hand-counted and compared against the electronic counts. This audit is also performed for absentee ballots. Paper tapes are pulled from the voting machines and are used to compare the total ballots cast against the totals reported Election night. Finally, every polling site is required to provide a detailed reconciliation of the ballots used, which we also review to compare against the actual ballots cast.

MCBOE participates in the Elections Cyber Security Remediation Grant Program. By receiving a grant for $262,000 from the NYSBOE and working together with Monroe County Information Services, Elections in Monroe County are safe and secure.

# CURES 2020





## "Cures"

If an absentee ballot was received by the MCBOE but was missing (or had an incorrect) signature or was unsealed or lacked a witness statement for a voter's mark, it could not be counted.

In an effort to correct this type of ballot, a MCBOE staff person called, emailed, and sent out a cure letter. The error was explained and the voter was asked to sign and return a cure form correcting the issue. When returned, these forms were attached to the voter's absentee ballot.

In total MCBOE received 1287 absentee ballots in need of a cure. 650 of these were returned, cured and able to be counted.

# VOTER ACCESSIBILITY 2020



- EVERY polling location is ADA accessible!

- In 2020 the MCBOE continued its commitment to improving accessibility to the Election process for all persons. The BMD (IC2) now allows people with almost any disability to vote independently and is available at every polling site.

- MCBOE statements on printed Election materials, such as the voter registration form, absentee ballot request and "Voter's Bill of Rights" are available in Spanish and Braille.

- American Sign Language interpreters were added to early voting and Election day sites.

- Accessible absentee ballots for voters who are blind or visually impaired were developed for use in both the Primary and General 2020 Elections.

# EARLY VOTING 2020

- Early Voting began in 2019 with seven locations and a dismal turnout. It was incredibly underutilized the first year. In 2020 an amazing 105,712 voters took advantage of the nine days and 12 locations and voted early.

- Voters can early-vote at any location. It can occur near their workplace, school or church, not necessarily their home Election district. Electronic Poll Pads allow voter data to be available at each location.

- None of the votes cast during early voting are counted until Election Day. Standards for protecting ballots and memory cards are extensive. A daily audit of each location is required.



Oct. 24-Nov. 1
**Early Voting**
★ ★ ★

**Dates & Times:**

Oct. 24 from 9am-3pm
Oct. 25 from 9am-3pm
Oct. 26 from 9am-5pm
Oct. 27 from 11am-8pm

Oct. 28 from 9am-5pm
Oct. 29 from 11am-8pm
Oct. 30 from 9am-5pm
Oct. 31 from 9am-3pm
Nov. 1 from 9am-3pm

**Locations:**

David F. Gantt
Community Center

City of Rochester
Recreation Bureau

*Genesee Valley
Field House
*changed from Roxie Ann Sinkler Rec

Edgerton Recreation
Center

SUNY Empire State
College

Town of Chili
Senior Center

North Greece Road
Church of Christ

Marketplace Mall
North Entrance

Irondequoit Public Library

Harris-Whalen Park Lodge

Perinton Square Mall

Webster Recreation Center

Early Voting is available to **all voters in Monroe County**. Voters can choose to vote at any of the 12 sites in the county from **Oct. 24-Nov. 1**.

# INFORMATION AND PUBLICATIONS 2020

The MCBOE website, https://www.monroecounty.gov/Elections has a tremendous amount of up-to-date, public information available.  One can obtain information about voter registration, polling locations, maps, petition requirements, party enrollment, early voting information, elected officials, how to run for office, Election results, absentee voting, and there is even a real-time interactive voter application.



New in 2020 was the Monroe County Board of Elections Facebook Page. This social media platform provides an easy and accessible way to share information, stay updated, and help engage the community in the electoral process.

@votemonroecounty

# 2020 SUMMARY

The MCBOE had an incredibly challenging year. The COVID-19 virus impacted every aspect of the electoral process. The unfamiliarity of the virus combined with the need to continue working was stressful to all employees. Every known precaution was taken to try and ease staff fears.
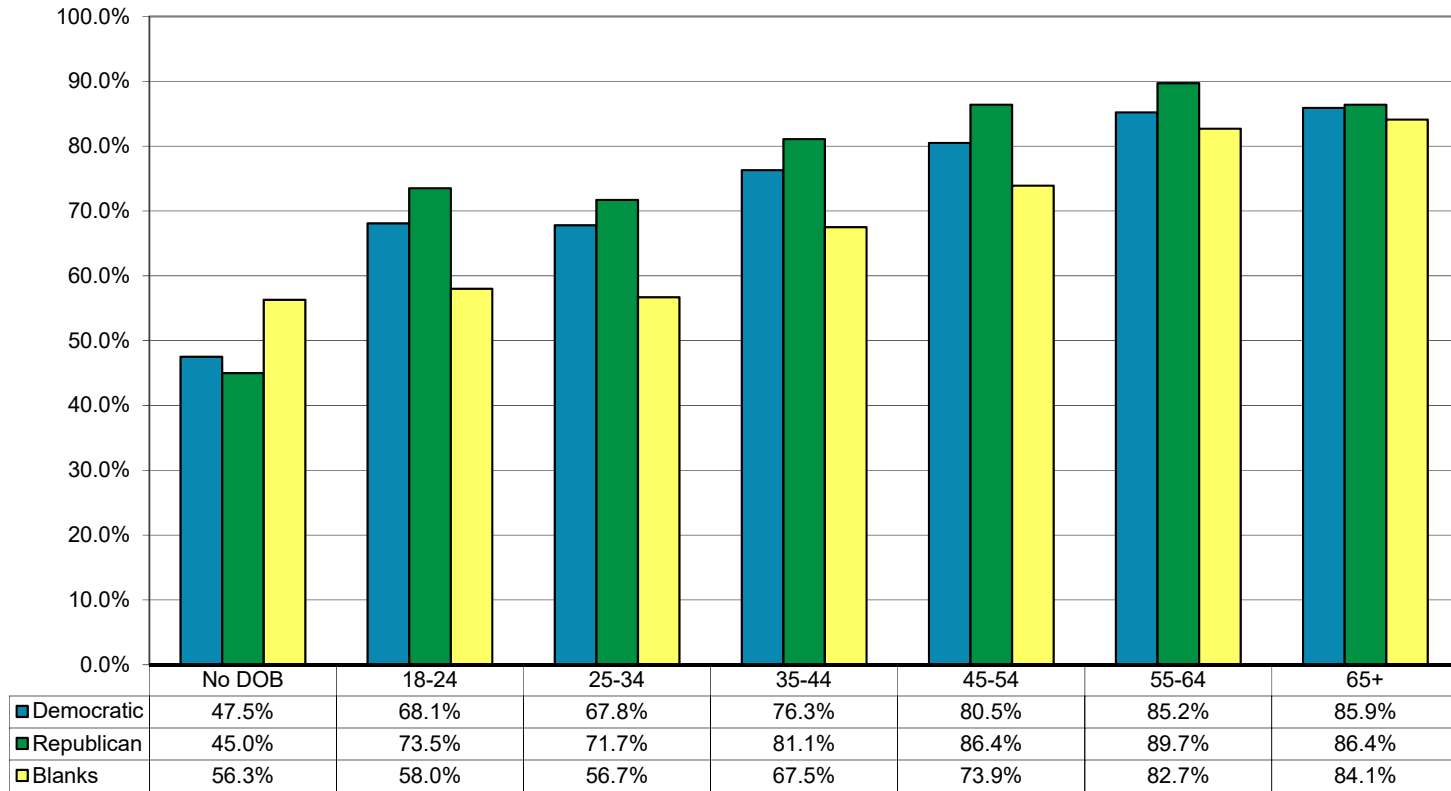
Numerous executive orders from the governor were passed down throughout the year, changing policies and procedures, sometimes at the last minute.

The MCBOE team took all of this in stride, they worked overtime, for weeks at a time. They processed an enormous influx of voter registrations, absentee applications, absentee ballots, early voting and polling for a Presidential Primary, Special Congressional Elections, Local Primary Election and a Presidential General Election.
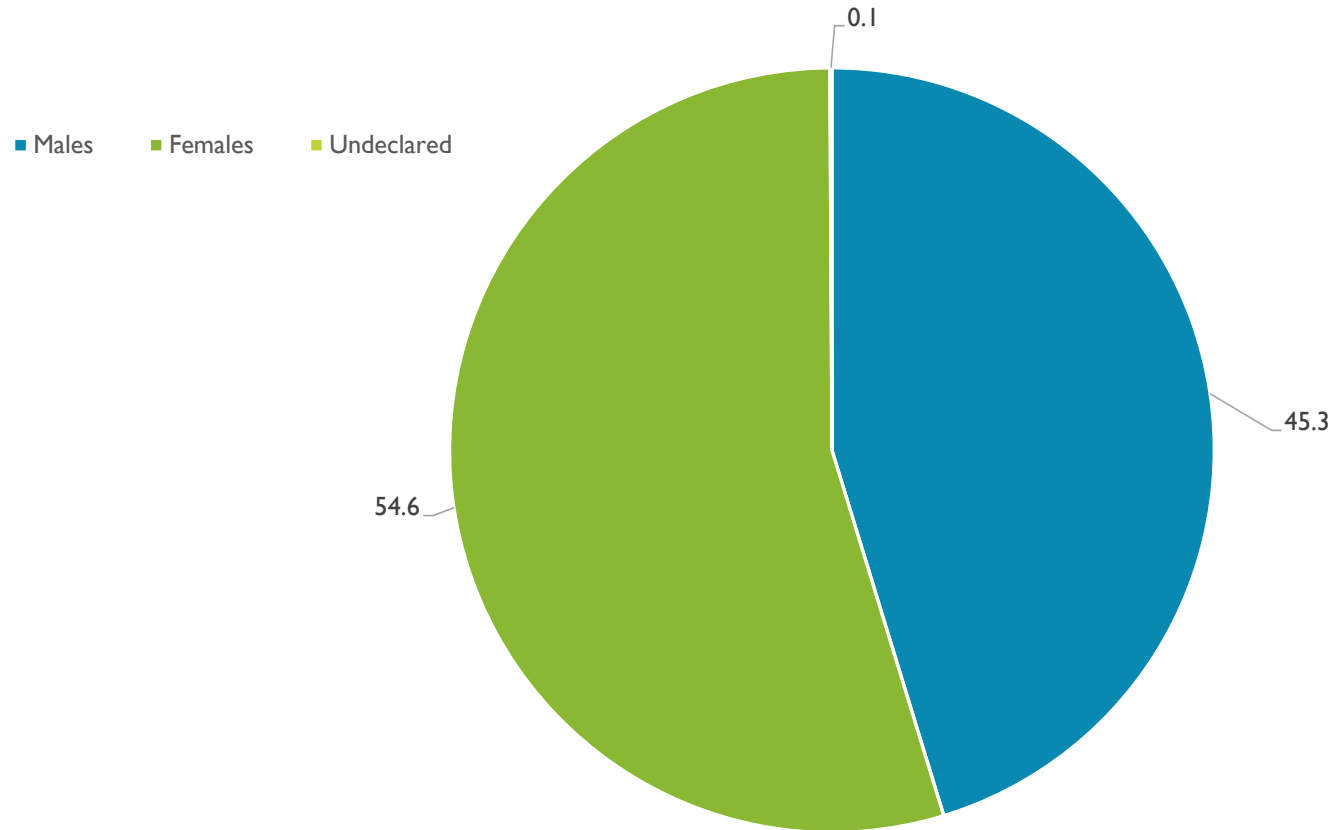
The Commissioners are proud of the work completed in 2020. Deadlines were met and certifications to New York State were timely. The MCBOE continued its legacy of administering fair, free and open Elections for each and every voter in Monroe County.

You're Right To Vote.

# COMPARISON OF TURNOUT BY AGE GROUP
## 2020 GENERAL ELECTION

| | No DOB | 18-24 | 25-34 | 35-44 | 45-54 | 55-64 | 65+ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ■Democratic | 47.5% | 68.1% | 67.8% | 76.3% | 80.5% | 85.2% | 85.9% |
| ■Republican | 45.0% | 73.5% | 71.7% | 81.1% | 86.4% | 89.7% | 86.4% |
| □Blanks | 56.3% | 58.0% | 56.7% | 67.5% | 73.9% | 82.7% | 84.1% |

# VOTER TURNOUT - TOTAL AND BY GENDER
## 2020 GENERAL ELECTION

■ Males  ■ Females  ■ Undeclared



0.1

45.3

54.6

# VOTER TURNOUT FOR THE GENERAL ELECTION
## 2005 Through 2019



| | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Turnout | 56.1% | 32.5% | 80.4% | 30.6% | 53.8% | 32.4% | 76.4% | 31.6% | 46.8% | 30.8% | 76.0% | 38.1% | 62.2% | 39.8% | 78.1% |

VOTER TURNOUT - TOTAL AND BY GENDER
2020 GENERAL ELECTION

| | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Democrats | 51.0% | 30.5% | 78.2% | 32.2% | 43.7% | 29.8% | 76.0% | 38.1% | 63.5% | 41.0% | 78.4% |
| Republicans | 64.3% | 41.3% | 80.7% | 38.2% | 58.3% | 39.3% | 81.3% | 45.2% | 68.4% | 47.7% | 83.9% |
| Blanks | 45.5% | 25.2% | 69.2% | 24.1% | 39.0% | 23.9% | 70.2% | 30.7% | 53.3% | 29.7% | 71.3% |
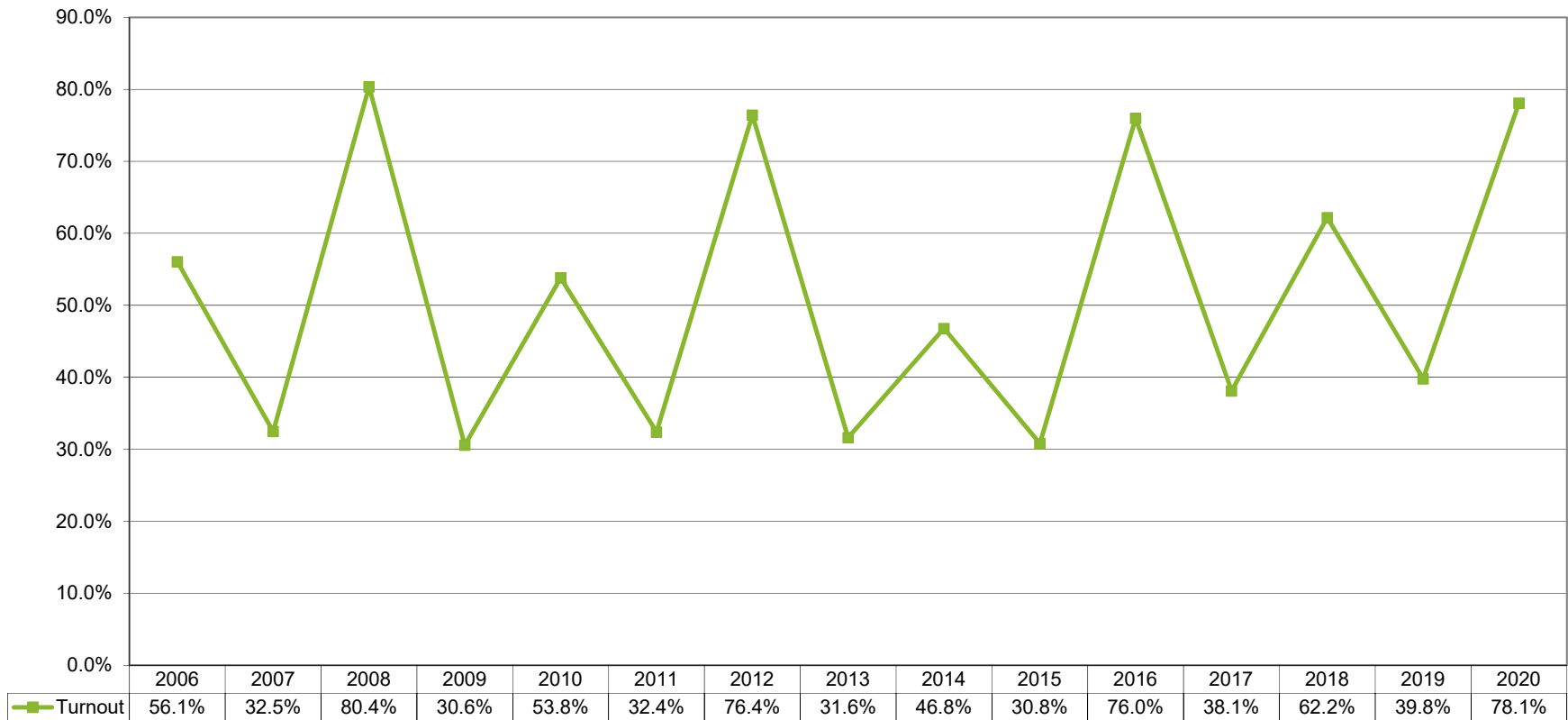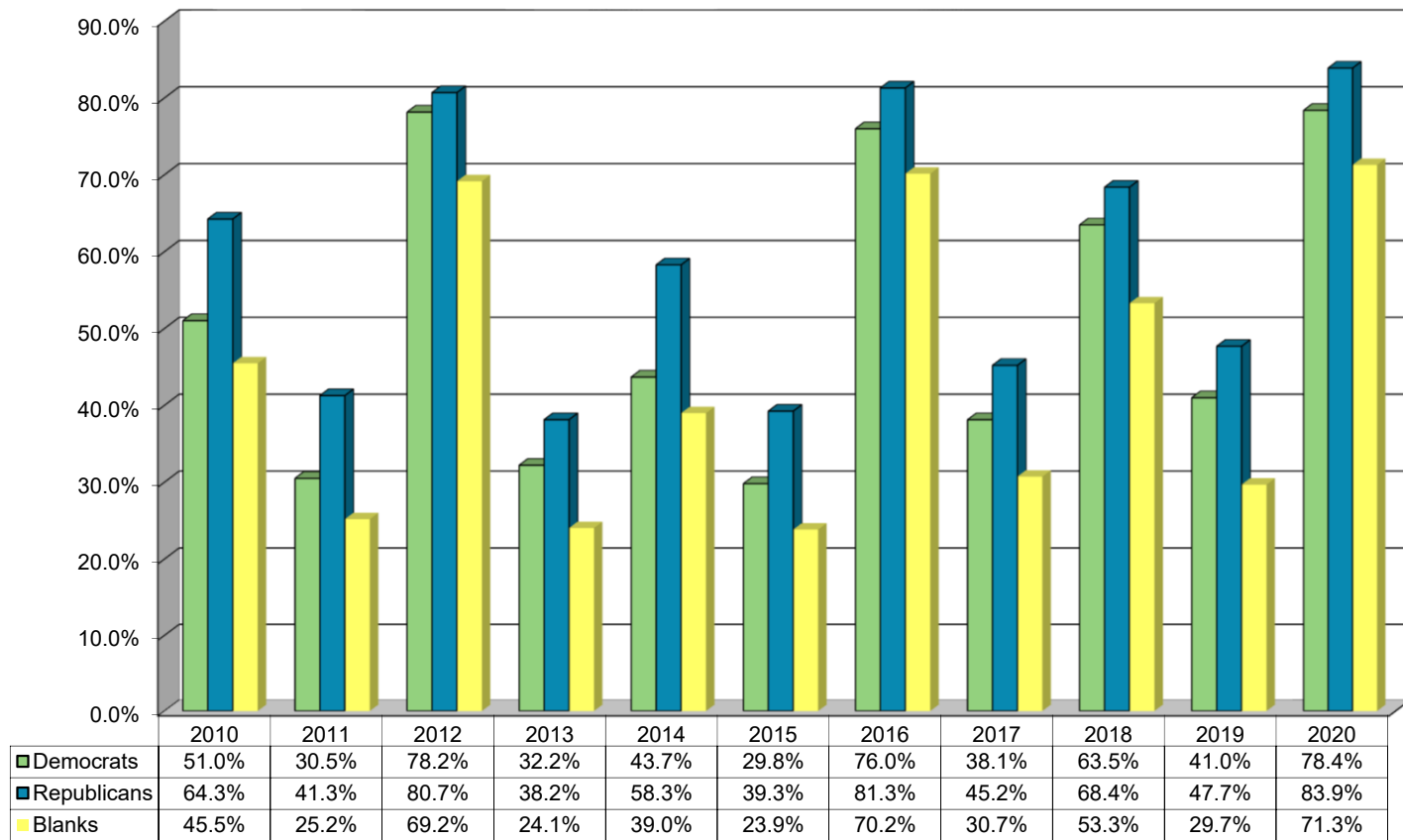
# VOTER TURNOUT BY PARTY
## 2020 GENERAL ELECTION