

Arizona 2020: Election Administration in the Coronavirus Pandemic

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Abstract:

Arizona was the most competitive state in the 2020 presidential election. Joseph Biden beat Donald Trump in the state by only 10,457 votes. As a result, the state's administration of the election came under great scrutiny and produced considerable litigation. This chapter explores how Arizona prepared for, administered, and certified the 2020 general election in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. The state has a long history of mail voting and was able to expand and modify existing voting infrastructure to ensure a smooth and safe election. Lawsuits in the months leading up to the general election challenged deadlines for voter registration, for receipt of mail-in ballots, and for fixing ballots with missing signatures. Because of the narrow margin of victory, many aspects of Arizona's election administration were challenged in court. None of these lawsuits challenging the count succeeded, however. In the end, Republican and Democratic election officials in Arizona vouched for the security and accuracy of the election, and the courts validated their assessments. As this volume went to press, however, Arizona was conducting a controversial and unprecedented audit of the ballots in Maricopa County, which further stoked unjustified fears of fraud and a lack of confidence in the election outcome.

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Other Contributors: This memo draws on four prior memos published by Stanford-MIT Healthy Elections:

- [“Arizona’s 2020 Election in the Wake of COVID,”](#) Mike Norton, Zahavah Levine, Sophia Danielpour, Rebecca Smalbach, Joven Hundal (June 25, 2020)
- [“Arizona’s Election Readiness After the August 4 Primary,”](#) Zahavah Levine, Ali Bloomgarden, Joven Hundal, Sophia Danielpour (Sept. 24, 2020)
- [“Signature Verification and Witness Requirements in the 2020 Elections,”](#) Ali Bloomgarden, Arushi Gupta, Garrett Jensen, Zahavah Levine, Chris Middleton, Kyra Sikora (March 10, 2020)
- [“Arizona: 2020 Election Policies and Practices,”](#) Haley Schwab (Nov. 2, 2020)

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I. Introduction

In the days following the November 3, 2020, general election, protests outside of the Maricopa County elections office in Phoenix, Arizona, made national news as one of many stories that thrust the state into the swing state spotlight. The [protests](#) may have given the impression of a chaotic election and vote-counting process, an impression bolstered by eight post-Election-Day lawsuits and the 20 days it took to tally results (though Arizona [historically has taken weeks](#) to canvass the vote). But the actual mechanics and administration of the election—the voting, the vote counting, and the certification of results—were smooth, timely, and accurate, a remarkable feat in light of the challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic and the highly partisan landscape of Arizona which at times impeded consensus regarding appropriate election accommodations. Voter turnout reached a historic high.

Arizona was uniquely well-situated to administer a general election during the pandemic because of its long history and culture of mail voting (referred to in the state as “early voting,” as the same ballots are used for voting by mail and early voting in-person). Even so, early voting in the state reached a record rate of 88% in both the [August 2020 primary](#) and the [2020 general election](#), exceeding the early voting rates of 83% in the August 2016 primary, [75%](#) in the 2016 general election, and [79%](#) in the 2018 midterm election.

One of the chief concerns about Arizona’s election administration leading up to the general election was the potential impact of the state’s [historically protracted](#) vote-counting procedures. The vote-counting process in the 2020 general election took the entire period allowed by state law but went smoothly, despite the increased turnout. The last two counties—Mohave and Maricopa—submitted their results to the secretary of state’s office on November 23, on the 20th day after the election—the last day allowed by state law.

The post-election canvass also proceeded smoothly and was officially [adopted by](#) Governor Doug Ducey, Secretary of State Katie Hobbs, and Attorney General Mark Brnovich, a week later, on the state deadline of [November 30](#). Adoption of the canvass is the process by which Arizona certifies its [election results](#). Despite the boisterous protests, rampant conspiracy theories, and lawsuits that cast doubt about the accuracy of the results, the administration of the election went as smoothly as it ever has gone in the state, supporting record turnout and producing [results](#) that proved to be reliable and precise. In the end, both [Governor Ducey](#) and [Secretary Hobbs](#), members of different political parties and often political rivals, [used their respective platforms](#) to instill confidence in the results.

II. Key Election Facts

In the presidential contest in Arizona, Joe Biden received [10,457](#) more votes than Donald Trump. Biden is only the second Democratic presidential candidate to [carry the state](#) since 1948 and the first to do so in 24 years. Maricopa County, home to 60% of the state's population, also went blue for the first time since 1948.

The historic result in Arizona took place alongside an historic turnout. According to Arizona Secretary of State Katie Hobbs, roughly 80%, or 3.4 million, of the state's [4.28 million](#) registered voters turned out. That exceeds the [74%](#) turnout rate in the 2016 presidential election, in which almost [2.7](#) million ballots were cast by the state's [3.6](#) million registered voters. The number of registered voters in Arizona increased by almost [700,000](#) since the general election of 2016. Much of the growth in voter registration may be attributable to Arizona's population growth, which has increased steadily at a rate of approximately [1.7% yearly for the last few years](#), as well as increased voter enthusiasm.

Despite the historic turnout, Republican Governor Doug Ducey was able to certify the state's election results on schedule, on November 30, 2020. He did so after multiple [logic and accuracy tests](#) were applied to the results in Maricopa County, confirming the canvassed results. The certification also withstood several legal challenges brought by the state Republican Party, as detailed in section IV.

Like the state, Maricopa County, the state's most populous county, also experienced record turnout. The county saw a voter turnout of [80.51%](#) among registered voters, narrowly outpacing the state's 79.90% registered voter turnout rate. In fact, the county's turnout by October 30, 2020, three days before Election Day, [exceeded the county's total 2016 turnout](#).

III. Early Voting and Vote by Mail

Of the [3.4 million ballots](#) cast in the state, almost [three million](#) were cast by early ballot and about 400,000 were cast in-person on Election Day. Arizona does not distinguish between mail ballots and ballots cast through early in-person voting; the state labels all such ballots "early votes," and [statistics on "early voting"](#) reflect both types of voting. The November 2020 early vote turnout of [nearly three million](#) mail ballots and early-in-person votes [exceeded the November 2016 early vote turnout](#) by about one [million](#) votes, and exceeded the *total* 2016 general election turnout (of almost [2.7 million](#) ballots) by more than 300,000. Of the [three](#)

[million](#) early ballots cast in the Arizona 2020 general election, about [240,000](#) were dropped off by voters on Election Day.

While demand for mail voting was particularly high due to the pandemic, several statewide and county specific policies contributed to the high turnout of early votes in Arizona. First, Arizona has a “no-excuse” policy for vote-by-mail—registered voters can obtain a mail ballot for any reason. This has been the law in Arizona since [1991](#) and helped the state avoid the legal challenges that many other states encountered from plaintiffs seeking to ease state restrictions on eligibility to vote by mail. Also, registered voters in the state can choose to vote by early ballot in a single election or they can opt to join the [Permanent Early Voter List](#) (PEVL), to automatically receive an early ballot by mail for every election in which they are eligible to vote. Of the almost [3.5 million](#) early ballots requested and mailed out to voters in 2020, over [three million early ballots](#) were sent to voters on the PEVL for the 2020 general election, representing almost [75%](#) of registered voters in the state. In Maricopa County, [nearly 2 million](#) of the county’s 2.6 million registered voters (about 77%) are on the PEVL.

The state’s long early voting period also facilitated early voting at large scale. Voters who did not wish to mail their early ballot could drop off their early ballot or vote at any [in-person early voting location](#) in their county. Statewide, in-person [early voting](#) began 27 days before Election Day, on [October 7, 2020](#), and continued through the Friday before the election, October 30, 2020. Hours of operation varied by location, but many were open on weekends. Locations typically included the county recorder’s office, as well as designated locations in each county. Early voters who missed the October 30 deadline for early in-person voting could [drop off](#) their early ballots through 7 p.m. on Election Day at any drop-box or voting location in their county.

A [key change](#) for Maricopa County, the state’s largest county, in the 2020 elections was its shift from precinct voting to a “vote center” model. The county converted in-person polling locations at 500 local precinct polling places to [175 countywide “vote centers”](#) for the general election (and 160 countywide vote centers for the August primary). Vote centers are often referred to as “universal polling places” because, under the vote center model, voters are not required to vote at one specific precinct in which they live but can vote in any vote center in the county in which they live. The move to the vote center model was credited with [decreasing voter confusion](#) regarding where to vote and substantially reducing the number of provisional ballots, as discussed in more detail below.

Because of the [27-day](#) early voting period, Maricopa County vote centers opened October 7 and contributed significantly to Maricopa’s record early vote turnout. By November 1, 2020, the number of early votes cast in the county already [exceeded](#) total voter turnout in the county in 2016. Early voting at vote centers also included [ballot drop boxes](#), so that voters who received

their ballot by mail could return them to the drop boxes instead of returning them through the postal service.

The vote center model had the added benefit of requiring fewer poll workers (for a longer period of time), which helped address fears of poll worker shortages due to the coronavirus pandemic. In the March primary election, many retirees who typically volunteer at the polls [stayed home](#) because their age put them in a higher-risk category for serious complications from COVID-19.

State and county officials and civic organizations took several measures to avoid a similar poll worker shortage for the August primary and November general elections. On July 22, 2020, Governor Doug Ducey signed an [executive order](#) (EO 2020-50) designed to help counties recruit poll workers. The executive order [allowed state employees to serve as poll workers](#) on Election Day (for both the August primary and general election) without impacting their pay or leave time. Additionally, civic groups, such as the nonpartisan [Power the Polls](#) in partnership with [AZ Advocacy](#) recruited thousands of potential poll workers through coalitions with businesses, social media platforms, and local stakeholders.

Maricopa County, as part of officials' back-up plan, trained dozens of [extra poll workers](#) for the August 4 primary and, according to County Recorder Adrian Fontes, hired 115% of the required number of poll workers for November, in case some dropped out at the last minute. Ultimately, Maricopa County received [20,000 poll worker applications](#) for the 1,800 poll worker slots needed for November, rendering those fears moot.

Furthermore, [election system upgrades and increased staffing](#) helped the county process ballots much faster than in previous years. Maricopa County Recorder Adrian Fontes [explained](#) "...we more than doubled the staff at the elections department....Now, I've got trained career professionals, subject matter experts, processing ballots. They can supervise those citizen boards to make sure they're doing it right and we don't have to stop to send the experts out to set up polling places. Now we've got the resources, the human resources and the money we need, to make this all happen."

There were concerns leading up to the general election that the [U.S. Postal Service](#) would not be able to process the increased demand created by the record number of requested mail-in ballots. Arizona's "received by" ballot deadline requires that mailed ballots are received by election officials by 7 p.m. on Election Day or they are considered late and are not counted. To reduce the incidence of late ballots, Secretary Hobbs produced a [public messaging campaign](#) to encourage voters to [return their ballots](#) via the post office by Tuesday, October 27, one full

week before the election. Voters unable to have their ballots postmarked by that date were [encouraged](#) to return their ballots to a ballot drop box or a polling place.

Maricopa County provided a platform to ensure voters knew their [options](#) for voting and were able to [track](#) and [check the status](#) of their early ballots. [Navajo](#) and [Pima](#) counties provided similar ballot tracking services that voters could register for to receive updates. The text message service [notified voters](#) when their ballot was mailed out to them, when it was received back by the county, when it was verified, and when it was sent to be counted. The county also provided about 20 [drop box locations](#), including drive-through drop boxes, for voters to drop off mail ballots through Election Day. And, of course, voters could return their mail ballots in person at election sites.

The public messaging campaign instructing voters to drop off their completed ballots, instead of mailing through the USPS after October 27, was successful. Many voters chose to return their early ballots in person on Election Day, rather than risk sending them in the mail and having them arrive late. In Maricopa County, an estimated [175,000 early ballots](#) were returned on Election Day (dubbed “late earlyies”). This increased the counting burden on Election Day because the dropped off ballots still had to be processed for signature verification before they could be counted. These ballots were also processed and counted last, after ballots cast in person on Election Day were counted. Additionally, if the signature on the return envelope was determined not to match the signature on file, the voter was notified and given until five days after Election Day to cure the mismatched signature. The process of signature verification and waiting for the cure period necessarily deferred the final vote tally.

A [new law](#) passed in 2019 allowed election officials to process and tabulate early ballots 14 days before Election Day, instead of the previously allowed seven days. Early results could not be reported until polls closed on Election Day. Consistent with the new law, tabulation of early ballots started 14 days before Election Day (pursuant to Ariz. Rev. Stat. § [16-550\(B\)](#)), after confirmation from the secretary of state that all voting equipment passed any required logic and accuracy test (pursuant to Ariz. Rev. Stat. § [16-552\(A\)](#)). November 2020 was the first general election with the extended pre-Election Day processing and tabulation timeline, and it helped Arizona deliver election returns more quickly, since the bulk of the early ballots could be processed before Election Day.

Early mail ballots generally take longer to process than in-person ballots due to the signature verification procedures required of mail ballots. Once the signature on an early ballot affidavit is verified by the county recorder, the ballot is sent to the early ballot board, which is made up of two or more volunteers of [opposite party affiliations](#). The early ballot board removes the ballots from their envelopes and transports them to the tabulation room where election

officials run them through [tabulators](#). The ballot tabulation room is required by [law](#) to have a live video feed so voters can watch the ballot tabulation process.

Smaller counties with fewer resources experienced challenges due to the high voter turnout. While early ballots could be processed before Election Day, the processing took time, required tremendous diligence, and involved voter outreach if the ballots required curing. In Pima County, which has about one-fourth the population of Maricopa, [376,000 early ballots](#) were returned as of October 30, over 72% of all the ballots requested by county voters, and the county began processing those votes before Election Day. By comparison, on Election Day, only [50,000 of the 638,000](#) registered voters in Pima County turned out to vote in person. In Yavapai County, which has about one-fourth the population of Pima, 80% of the registered voters were on the PEVL, but the county needed days after Election Day to count the [7,800 "late earlies"](#) dropped off at vote centers on Election Day.

A. Expanding Voting Access to the Disabled in the Pandemic

In an effort to expand voting access to voters with certain disabilities, Maricopa County Recorder Adrian Fontes [developed an accommodation](#) for some voters to receive virtual assistance from county officials to both register to vote and to actually vote [via video conference](#). Arizona law allows voters who are physically unable to go to the polls or mark their ballots due to limited mobility or severe illness to request what is known as a "special election board." Historically, these boards visit the voter in person, but in-person visits were not possible in 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic. This accommodation was developed with [guidance](#) from Secretary of State Katie Hobbs, who also sought to permit a very limited number of voters with disabilities and a severe risk of COVID-19 complications to exercise their right to vote via video conference. Governor Ducey, the attorney general, and some county recorders [challenged the virtual voting by video conference](#) in state court, arguing that the state legislature did not permit voting by video. But a judge [upheld the practice](#), stating that videoconferencing may be necessary under a very limited set of circumstances and that, without this accommodation, those voters may be disenfranchised. According to Fontes, 44 voters requested such accommodation for the August primary, of whom 10 voters, including voters with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), multiple sclerosis, and cerebral palsy, cast votes via video conference.

IV. Election Day Administration

While early voting in the 2020 general election reached record highs, about [400,000](#) voters showed up to vote in person on Election Day. Despite the unique challenges posed by the pandemic, Election Day voting went remarkably well. There were no reports of voters encountering any significant challenges across the state on Election Day. Most voting lines were relatively short, polling places were adequately staffed, health precautions were taken, and there were no reports of voter intimidation. Nor were there any reported problems with the issuance or collection of ballots.

Though a few polling places had [long lines](#) at various points throughout the day, there were no reports of lines that exceeded 45 minutes. This was a welcomed development after the state's March 17 Democratic primary, during which [long lines](#)—up to five hours—were reported throughout the state. Through Arizona's Citizens Clean Elections Commission, Maricopa County and other counties provided voters with an online "Voter Dashboard and Clean Elections" application to determine the current wait time at particular vote centers.

In Maricopa County, the vote centers [increased the number of check-in stations](#) at each center (with between 9 and 15 check-ins at each location), enabling each center to check in voters more quickly. In previous elections, the county's polling places typically had only two check-in stations. Also in Maricopa County, a relatively [new check-in tool](#), a proprietary technology system called "[SiteBook](#)," reduced check-in time for voters by 75 percent, according to Recorder Fontes, and allowed approximately 165,000 voters in Maricopa County to vote in person on Election Day without incident.

Procedures for tabulating and processing in-person ballots differed by county but, across the state, there were no reported issues, regardless of the method. Some counties used the [central count](#) method in which voters put their completed ballots in a "secured ballot bin" which was transported to the county's ballot tabulation center after the polls closed. This transportation was carried out by election workers of both political parties. Other counties used the [precinct tabulation](#) method, in which voters or poll workers fed the completed ballots into a tabulation machine located at the voting location. The machine tabulated the ballots immediately and saved the vote count to a media device inside the tabulator. After the polls closed, the poll workers or sheriff deputies removed the media devices and transported them to the central counting location for the county. At the central counting location, an election official loaded the results from the removable media device into the secure election management system and combined the vote totals for all the polling locations.

All counties followed [chain of custody protocols](#). These required documentation on the handling of every ballot, the storage of all ballots in secure locations, and a live video feed of the ballot tabulation rooms. Counties also followed the required protocols for ensuring the security of all ballots, including the use of tamper-evident seals, identification badges, and having two or more election officials of opposing political parties present.

There were some [minor hiccups](#). Some polling places ran out of ink for their printers faster than anticipated. At one voting center, computers crashed and had to be rebooted. These minor issues were resolved promptly and did not cause inordinate delay. Rain triggered a news alert (in the desert of Arizona) and was cause for brief concern for some polling places that had lines out the door.

There was one alleged incident, dubbed "[Sharpiegate](#)," rumored to have taken place on Election Day, which went viral on social media and led to a lawsuit in the state. The report has since been debunked. In-person voters on Election Day in Maricopa County were provided with Sharpie brand pens with which to mark their ballots, even though, up until the 2020 election cycle, Sharpie pens were a prohibited method for filling out a ballot. The reason for the change in 2020 was that the manufacturers of the new ballot tabulators, [Dominion Voting Systems](#), recommended the use of Sharpies on their machines because of the clear coloration and a change in ballot design with offset columns on the front and the back so that marker bleed-throughs were not an issue for the machines. Some voters claimed the Sharpie pen caused the tabulators to cancel their ballots. There was no evidence to support this claim, and the lawsuit on the issue was [quickly thrown out](#).

A. Health and Safety

Election officials in all states and localities had to scramble to purchase additional materials required to adapt to the pandemic. Polling places required personal protective equipment (PPE) for poll workers and voters, sanitation supplies, and materials to facilitate social distancing. The increase in mail ballots required additional ballot printing, processing, and tabulating equipment. The change in polling locations and Maricopa's transition to the vote center model required new public outreach and education efforts. All of these accommodations required funding. Federal funding for states through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, as well as grants from the nonpartisan, nonprofit [Center for Technology and Civic Life](#) (CTCL), helped fill gaps in local election funding to provide for a safe administration of the election.

On July 2, 2020, Governor Doug Ducey and Secretary of State Katie Hobbs [announced](#) that the \$9 million in CARES Act funding allocated to Arizona would be used to fund AZVoteSafe, a state plan to ensure voter and poll worker safety. The funding was allocated to the following initiatives in approximately these amounts:

- \$5 million to election departments and county recorders for their coronavirus pandemic response initiatives, such as increasing the number of ballot drop-off locations, hiring additional temporary staff and poll workers, and expanding curbside voting.
- \$1.5 million to increase early voting opportunities, especially in tribal and rural communities.
- \$1.5 million to inform voters of their voting options.
- \$1 million towards purchases of personal protective equipment (PPE) and sanitation supplies for voting locations, including face masks, face shields, gloves, hand sanitizer, disinfectant spray, disposable pens, and, in some areas, handwashing stations.

In addition to CARES Act funding, [nine](#) of Arizona's 15 counties received grant assistance from the nonpartisan [Center for Tech and Civic Life](#) (CTCL) as part of its COVID-19 Response Grant Program: Apache, Coconino, Graham, La Paz, Maricopa, Navajo, Pima, Pinal, and Yuma counties. [Maricopa County](#) received \$2,995,921 million; [Pinal County](#) received \$806,042; [Apache](#) received \$593,203; [Coconino County](#) received \$614,692; and [La Paz](#) received \$17,531. This funding was part of a national effort by the voting advocacy group to supplement local election department funds with private funds to help election officials address the challenges of adapting elections to the pandemic, challenges which, in many cases, were exacerbated by funding shortfalls. Specifically, the grants were designed to [enable](#) local election officials to provide safe and secure voting procedures during the pandemic. According to a [legal brief](#) filed by CTCL defending the grants against a legal challenge in the state, "[m]ost of th[e] funds were used to purchase personal protective equipment for voters and election workers, to recruit and train additional staff, to provide improved security, to establish in-person polling places, to process mail-in ballots, and to ensure emergency preparedness. (The legal challenge against the CTCL grants in Arizona failed, just as similar challenges against CTCL grants in other states also failed.)

Due largely to health measures and accommodations funded by the CARES Act and CTCL, there were no reported health-related issues at the polls during Arizona's August 4 primary or November 3 general election. State and county election administrators took significant [health and safety measures](#) to protect voters and poll workers for the August 4 primary, which proved successful, and those measures were then extended and enhanced for the general election in November.

Among other initiatives, Arizona used the CARES Act funds to produce and distribute voter education materials to encourage safe voting practices. The state released the [2020 AZVoteSafeGuide](#), which outlined voters' options to vote early, vote by mail, or vote in person. It also suggested precautions for in-person voting, such as wearing a face covering, bringing one's own pen, maintaining physical distance, washing one's hands, and avoiding touching one's face. The state also released [Guidance for Reducing COVID-19 Risks at In-Person Voting Locations](#), with numerous suggestions for reducing risks when voting in person.

Some counties also supplemented statewide measures with their own health and safety plans. Maricopa County released [detailed plans](#) for addressing the health risks of the coronavirus pandemic in the August 4 primary, which it supplemented for the [general election](#). In addition to increasing access to mail voting, these plans aimed to ensure safety during in-person voting by transitioning to the vote center model, establishing additional safety protocols, and expanding early in-person voting. Most of Maricopa's [vote centers](#) were about 2,000 square feet in size, allowing for [socially distanced in-person voting](#). They were also equipped with hand-washing and hand sanitizer stations.

Maricopa County also developed training materials for poll workers, such as a ["Health and Safety" training video](#) and a new training manual that addressed vote center safety in the pandemic. While the training manual is no longer available online, it substantively mirrored the Maricopa County ["Election Day and Emergency Voting Plan for November General Election,"](#) which required the following COVID-19 safety accommodations for both poll workers and voters at vote centers:

- **Physical distancing:** All voting locations will be large enough to accommodate physical distancing. We are separating check-in stations, voting booths, precinct tabulators, and areas for standing in line by at least six feet to allow for adequate physical distancing. We will also be providing signage and markers to implement physical distancing for voters when standing in line outside our Vote Centers.
- **Protective Safety Supplies:** We will be providing all voters with the ability to wear disposable latex gloves during the check-in and voting process. We will also offer masks for any voter that does not have a mask and would like a mask when voting in one of our in-person voting locations. Our Poll Workers will be provided with and required to wear a mask and gloves when working in our voting locations. We will also provide poll workers with face shields that should be worn when voters are present in the voting location.
- **Frequent cleaning and disinfecting:** Our cleaning procedures require the cleaning and disinfecting of high touch surfaces every 30 minutes. If a voter chooses not to wear a mask or gloves during check-in and while voting, we will immediately clean those surfaces after the voter uses them.

- **Encouraging good hygiene:** We will ask Poll Workers to monitor themselves for symptoms (e.g., high temperatures, cough, sore throat, loss of taste/smell) and to frequently wash their hands. In addition to hand sanitizer, we will also have hand washing stations or bathrooms available for voters and Poll Workers to wash their hands.

Most vote centers were [staffed](#) with between 10 and 12 poll workers in order to be able to assist voters, maintain safety protocols, and “allow for the Elections Department to still provide in-person voting options even if 30–40 percent of our Poll Workers were absent.” Voters were [encouraged](#) to wear masks as part of a county-wide mask mandate, but masks were not required, and no voters were turned away if they refused to wear a mask.

Pinal County published an [instruction manual](#) for poll workers which provided some guidance on polling place safety. The guide suggested that:

- Poll workers should stay home if they are sick and take other sensible precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19, such as maintaining physical distancing, washing or sanitizing their hands often, and avoiding touching their eyes.
- Poll workers should ensure that the polls remain clean and safe. They were instructed to regularly disinfect voter marking pens, to encourage curbside voting, clean and disinfect tables and voting booths every hour with alcohol wipes, increase distance between voting booths when setting up equipment, and to encourage using a stylus for poll pads.

To ensure safety, poll workers in Pima County were [supplied](#) with masks, plastic face shields, gloves, disinfectant spray, and hand sanitizer. Furthermore, masks and proper social distancing were required to cast a ballot. If a voter did not have a mask, poll workers provided one at the polling location. [Special accommodations](#) were provided for those who chose not to wear a mask. There was either a separate place for them to vote, or they could vote outside or in their car. Those options were also available to voters who did not want to enter the polling place to drop off or fill out a ballot. [Coconino County](#) established a new protocol to allow voters with health concerns or fears of contracting COVID-19 to participate in emergency early voting (on the Saturday and Monday prior to the election, after the end of the statewide early voting period). Voters had to complete a form stating that they wished to vote early due to an emergency, but they did not have to disclose the specifics of the emergency. Ballot drop boxes were also made available.

V. Native American Voting

Election officials and community organizations worked with Native American communities in Arizona to improve access to both early voting and Election Day voting for the 2020 general election. They did so against a historical backdrop of cultural, socioeconomic, and language barriers and a contemporaneous [high rate](#) of COVID-19 infections in disproportionately high numbers for the population. Native Americans accounted for nearly [6% of the state population](#) and, for the 2020 election cycle, Native American voter turnout was higher than previous elections. The Navajo and Hopi reservations cast approximately [60,000 ballots](#) in 2020, compared to 42,500 in 2016. Turnout in some precincts in reservations rose as much as 13%, outpacing the statewide turnout growth of 8% from 2016 to 2020. Historically, Native Americans have had a [lower average turnout rate](#) than white voters in Arizona.

Some election observers cited [turnout among Native American populations](#) as a contributing factor in Biden's winning in the state. Precinct-level data, as of November 9, showed "the three counties that overlap with the Hopi Tribe and Navajo Nation went for Biden at a rate of 57%, as opposed to 51% statewide. Voter precincts in the Navajo Nation ranged from 60-90% for Biden." The data on voting patterns of Native American populations was limited by the fact that the majority of Native Americans live in [urban areas](#) and, therefore, do not appear in tribal land voting data.

A few specific initiatives may have contributed to the increase in Native American turnout. Many homes on the reservations [do not have street numbers and names](#) but are identified by way of directions to the location. And many Native Americans get their mail through post office boxes. Historically, many governmental institutions have failed to recognize these non-standard addresses on tribal lands, which has limited the ability of reservation residents to register to vote. But in 2020, Secretary Hobbs [updated](#) the state's online voter registration platform to accommodate voters with non-standard addresses.

Additionally, several civic organizations worked to increase voter turnout among Native American populations. The [Native Vote Election Protection Project](#) organized tribal residents to register to vote, helped drop off mail ballots, and provided transportation to the polls. A voter information initiative from the Arizona State University [Indian Legal Clinic](#) created a [poll locator tool](#) that helped voters find their polling location, ballot drop boxes, and early voting information to assist Native American citizens seeking to cast a ballot. A 30-year-old Diné woman named Allie Young created an initiative called "[Ride to the Polls](#)," which organized voters traveling by horseback to ride Navajo Nation trails together to early voting sites. She led

groups on horseback along the 10-mile route from Church Rock in Navajo County to the polling stations in Kayenta, Arizona.

Despite the increased turnout, Native American voters still faced some unique voting barriers in the 2020 general election. Due [to the closure](#) of an early voting site on Pascua Yaqui tribal land in Pima County in 2018, some tribal members had to travel up to two hours round-trip on public transportation to vote early in the 2020 general election. Tribal representatives sued and lobbied to reopen the early voting site, but their efforts were unsuccessful. Additionally, members of the Havasupai tribe had less time to vote in-person than other voters because tribal leaders [requested shorter voting hours](#) to limit the potential transmission of the coronavirus.

In-person voting options are particularly important for Native American communities. Ballots are [rarely translated](#) into indigenous languages, and monolingual Native American language speakers often depend on language assistance services at polling places. Such onsite assistance is particularly important for some Native American languages, such as Apache, because the languages are largely unwritten and translation assistance must be provided orally.

Although there was a surge in vote-by-mail across the nation because of the coronavirus pandemic, Native Americans were [more hesitant to adopt mail-in voting](#). In addition to language issues, voters living on reservations had less access to transportation to post offices and, in many cases, ballots could not be delivered to post office boxes. Limited internet access and mistrust of mail voting, based on a history of disenfranchisement, also played a role.

A federal appeals court [rejected](#) a request that 67,000 Navajo Nation members in Arizona get an extension of the deadline by which mail ballots had to reach state election officials. In [Yazzie v. Hobbs](#), filed in August 2020, plaintiffs, Navajo Nation members, alleged that Arizona's requirement that mail ballots be received—not postmarked—before 7 p.m. on Election Day was an unconstitutional burden on their right to vote, as applied to members of the Navajo Nation during the coronavirus pandemic and United States Postal Service (“USPS”) reorganizational issues. They argued that the Election Day receipt deadline disproportionately impacted Native Americans who owned far fewer cars and who lived in locations with fewer post offices and slower mail service.

Despite the particular challenges Native Americans in Arizona faced at the polls, the organizing efforts of statewide groups led to a record turnout among native populations, which ultimately helped [swing the state](#) for Biden in the 2020 election cycle.

VI. Ballot Processing, Tabulation, Counting, and Certification

Though some of Arizona's general election procedures were subjected to protests and court challenges, the procedures withstood the challenges of a record-breaking election turnout and pandemic circumstances. No evidence of election mismanagement or fraud was uncovered by the courts or otherwise, and the processing and tabulation of ballots and the certification of the election proceeded smoothly and timely.

A. Processing Ballots

A 2019 law (Ariz. Rev. Stat. § [16-550](#)) that extended the period for election officials to process and count early ballots—from seven days to 14 days before Election Day—helped ensure the smooth and timely processing of ballots cast in 2020. Under the new law, officials could verify the voters and open and tabulate the votes but were not permitted to release vote counts until all precincts had reported or until one hour after the polls closed (at 7 p.m.) on Election Day.

To be counted, all mail ballots in the state were required to be received by election officials by the close of the polls, 7 p.m. on Election Day. A case filed in August, [Yazzie v. Hobbs](#), challenged the requirement that mail-in ballots be *received* by election officials—rather than just *postmarked*—before 7 p.m. on Election Day. The Ninth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals [affirmed](#) the district court's [denial](#) of plaintiffs' request to extend the ballot receipt deadline.

B. Signature Verification for Mail Ballots

The [new law](#) that allowed signature verification to begin as soon as mail ballots were received provided election officials ample time to process ballots. Mail-in ballots in Arizona are verified through a process that includes signature verification. Election officials are required to [compare the signature on the voter's mail-in ballot](#) return envelope with the signature on the voter's registration record. If the signature is "inconsistent," the election official is required to make "reasonable efforts" to contact the voter to provide an opportunity to cure the problem. The new law allowed election officials to undergo the signature verification process as soon as the ballot was received by the county recorder or official in charge of the election. Ballots were mailed out to voters beginning [October 7](#).

Arizona required election officials to notify voters and provide them an opportunity to cure ballots that had *mismatched* signatures (a signature that did not match the one on file with

voter registration) and those that were *missing* signatures altogether. However, the period allowed for voters to cure each of these defects was different. Mismatched signatures could be cured up to five business days *after* Election Day, while [missing signatures to be cured by 7 p.m. on Election Day](#), when the polls closed. In June 2020, the Arizona Democratic Party [sued](#) over this disparity and sought to extend to voters with missing signatures the same cure deadline allowed for voters with mismatched signatures. Though the party prevailed at the district court level, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit [overturned the district court ruling](#) in October, so the Election Day deadline for curing missing signatures remained intact for the 2020 general election.

C. Provisional Ballots

There was a substantial decrease in the number of provisional ballots cast in the 2020 general election, a development attributed to Maricopa County's new vote center model, the high-quality public information campaigns by the state and various counties on how and where to vote, and the lower rate of in-person voting relative to mail voting. Fewer provisional ballots meant less time waiting for voters to cure ballot issues and less time to tabulate and count those ballots. As one of the chief concerns going into the 2020 election was the historically slow nature of Arizona's vote count, the reduced number of provisional ballots helped to ameliorate that issue and to enable the state to finalize results on time.

Arizona state policy in 2020 was to discard provisional ballots cast in the wrong precinct. Some feared this policy might affect a high number of provisional ballots because so many precinct locations had to be closed or relocated to accommodate pandemic circumstances. In [Brnovich v. DNC](#), plaintiffs sought to [eliminate](#) the policy and proposed instead that votes for county, state, and national offices on provisional ballots cast in the wrong precinct should be counted and only votes for city council seats should be discarded. Plaintiff claimed that discarding the entire provisional ballot violated Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act. The Ninth Circuit sitting en banc [upheld](#) a district court decision that struck down the out-of-precinct policy for provisional ballots on January 27, 2020, finding that that policy was enacted with the intent to discriminate against minority voters. The Arizona attorney general [appealed](#) the decision to the Supreme Court of the United States, which [granted certiorari](#) before the election but scheduled to [hear the case](#) afterwards, in March 2021. The law, therefore, [remained in effect](#) during the 2020 general election and had the potential of disqualifying a large number of provisional ballots.

In the end, however, largely due to the adoption in Maricopa County of the vote center model, the number of provisional ballots in the state overall dropped dramatically in 2020, despite the new state policy of discarding provisional ballots cast at the wrong precinct. In the 2016

presidential election, [52,173 provisional ballots](#) were cast in Maricopa County; of those, 36,923 (71%) were eventually counted. In the 2020 presidential election, only [18,310 provisional ballots](#) were cast in the county; of those, 6,198 (34%) were eventually counted. The vote center model reduced the number of provisional ballots in Maricopa County because voters could go to any vote center in the county. They were not required to go to one specific precinct, so no county voters were “out of precinct.” The reduced number of provisional ballots was even more remarkable in light of the county’s increased voter turnout for the 2020 election, from [1.6 million](#) ballots cast in 2016 to nearly [2.1 million](#) in 2020.

D. Reporting and Counting the Vote

Under Arizona [law](#), unofficial tabulated results may be released publicly after all precincts have reported or one hour after the closing of polls, whichever comes first. On election night 2020, the [secretary of state \(SOS\) website](#) released the first results at 8 p.m., one hour after the polls closed at 7 p.m. The first results included early ballots, such as mail-in ballots, that had been counted starting 14 days before election night. After that, the results were updated “sporadically,” as counties received information from voting machines at their polling locations. [These results were unofficial](#), as they had not yet been certified by the board of supervisors or other officers in charge. Results were simultaneously shared with the secretary via phone, fax, or other electronic means as they were tabulated at each precinct.

For its election night reporting system, Arizona used software from [BPro](#), a private company that operates the TotalVote Election Software. Most Arizona counties also relied on this software to display their results to the public. On election night, the state updated election results on [its Election Night Reporting \(ENR\) website](#) as information came in from all counties. The state ENR website allowed the public to view results by county, and 13 out of the 15 counties relied on this website as their main ENR system. In most cases, the individual counties also uploaded results to their own websites as .pdf or .txt files. Two counties, [Greenlee](#) and [Pinal](#), used [Scytl](#), another private company’s election software, to post their results on their individual county websites.

By clicking on “[Precincts Reporting](#)” at the top of the page on the state’s ENR website, the public could view “the total number of voting locations that have reported election results, how many ballots have been cast and what the voter turnout is in each county.” Because results were updated “sporadically” as precincts reported, it was unclear if the number of “precincts reporting” included precincts that had reported partial tabulations but still had votes left to count or only those that had finished tabulating votes.

VII. Post Election Day

On the evening of Election Day, as the returns came in, the decision desks of various news organizations took different approaches to deciding when to call the state. The 14-day pre-election window to tabulate the vote meant that a greater number of ballots were reported as part of the election night early result releases than had been in the past. Two organizations, Associated Press (AP) and Fox News, called the election for former Vice President Joe Biden in the late hours of November 3 and early hours of November 4, respectively. Their announcements were controversial because other major news organizations, such as NBC, ABC, CNN, and the New York Times, maintained that the race was still too close to call in Arizona. While Biden was in the lead when AP and Fox News called the election in his favor, and while he remained in the lead with each successive vote update, his lead continued to diminish. It was not until late on [November 12](#) that the other networks, including [NBC](#), [ABC](#), [CNN](#), and the New York Times, finally called the state for Biden. That was three days after the final votes were cast, due to the signature mismatch cure deadline, and when the total number of [outstanding uncounted votes](#) (10,315) was smaller than Biden's lead at that time (11,434).

In Arizona, [recounts are triggered](#) automatically for presidential elections when the vote canvass indicates that the margin between the top two candidates is less than or equal to the lesser of (i) one-tenth of one percent of the number of votes cast for both candidates (in this case, about 3,334 votes) or (ii) 200 votes. Biden's margin of victory in Arizona was [10,457 votes](#), well above either margin that would have triggered a recount. Arizona does not permit recounts by request, as other states—such as Wisconsin and Georgia—allow. In Arizona, the only means by which the election could be challenged was through lawsuits challenging particular electoral processes. As discussed below, several such lawsuits were filed, but all were quickly resolved and none of them successfully invalidated any of the election results.

A. Logic and Accuracy Tests

Arizona required that all election equipment used in the state be tested and certified before the election. Under Arizona Revised Statutes § [16-449](#), this testing and certification process must take place both before and after each election to ensure the equipment counted votes accurately and attributed them to the correct candidates and ballot measures. Each county was required to test all of its [election equipment](#) (i.e. voting machines) before any tabulation could begin. These tests were required to be [overseen](#) by at least two elections staff or inspectors of different political parties. In addition, the testing was required to be open to observation by representatives of political parties, candidates, the press, and the public. For any election that

included a federal, statewide, or legislative office, the secretary of state was required to conduct additional [logic and accuracy tests](#) on equipment at random in various counties.

B. Certifying the Vote

State law required the election results to be certified no later than 27 days from Election Day—which, for 2020, meant November 30. To [certify](#) the election results, election officials were required to canvass the election results of each precinct or election district. The Secretary of State Election Services Division was in charge of [certifying](#) the results on the state level, while the board of supervisors for each county certified the results at the county level. The canvasses [verified](#) vote totals, including write-ins, for all contests.

At the county level, a [board of supervisors](#), composed of [county officials](#) elected to four-year terms, carried out the canvassing in public meetings between six and [20 days](#) after the election. The official election [results](#) were required by state law to include a Statement of Votes Cast, a cumulative Official Final Report, and a Write-Ins Vote Report. The [Statement of Votes Cast](#) included the number of ballots cast in each precinct and county, the titles of offices up for election, the name of the people up for election, the number and title of each ballot measure, and the number of votes cast for and against each ballot measure. The [Official Final Report](#) included the total number of precincts, total number of ballots cast, total number of registered voters eligible for the election, and number of votes cast for each candidate by district or division. The [Write-Ins Vote Report](#) included the name and number of votes for each authorized write-in candidate by precinct. Once the board of supervisors [completed](#) the election results certification, the Official Final Report and Statement of Votes Cast were published on the website of the county officer in charge of the election. Under Arizona Revised Statutes § [16-645](#), if the election included a federal, statewide, or legislative office or a statewide ballot measure, the board of supervisors or the county officer in charge was required to [transmit](#) the official canvass to the secretary of state electronically and by mail.

In November 2020, this entire post-election canvassing leading up to the certification went smoothly and efficiently. Governor Ducey and Secretary Hobbs certified the election results on schedule on November 30. Republican groups sought to nullify the certification through legal challenges, none of which were successful.

VIII. Legal Challenges

A. Pre-Election Challenges

Despite Arizona's historically accessible and popular vote-by-mail option, several lawsuits sought to extend deadlines and remove barriers in anticipation of large increases in the use of mail voting during the pandemic. The voter registration deadline was the target of one legal dispute, [Mi Familia Vota v. Hobbs](#), until just a month before Election Day. On October 5, the U.S. District Court for Arizona [extended the registration deadline](#) from October 5 to October 23, the same deadline to request an absentee ballot. On October 13, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit [stayed](#) that district court ruling and instated a voter registration deadline of October 15. The extension of the deadline from October 5 to October 15 enabled an additional [35,000 voters](#) to register.

Another lawsuit sought to extend the deadline for the receipt of completed mail ballots. Mail ballots in Arizona must be *received* by election officials by 7 p.m. on Election Day in order to be counted. (Some states direct that mail ballots must be *postmarked* by Election Day and received by some defined number of days after Election Day.) In [Yazzie v. Hobbs](#), plaintiffs sought to extend the Arizona mail ballot receipt deadline so that ballots would be counted if they were *postmarked* by Election Day. They noted the unique circumstances for voters in the Navajo Nation, such as living in large rural areas, having fewer cars, and experiencing high instances of COVID-19, as well as issues with the U.S. Postal Service. Both the [U.S. District Court](#) and the [Ninth Circuit](#) upheld the legislatively-enacted "received by" deadline, citing minimal burden on voters and the fact that the lawsuit was filed within a month of Election Day, while the deadline had been in place since 1997.

Another deadline dispute played out in the courts regarding the cure period for mail ballots missing the voter's signature. Arizona statutes are silent regarding a cure period for a ballot rejected because it is missing the voter's signature, but the [2019 Elections Procedure Manual](#), in effect for the 2020 general election, provided that missing signatures could be cured by 7 p.m. on Election Day. State law allows voters seeking to cure *mismatched* signatures up to five days *after* Election Day. The lawsuit [Arizona Democratic Party v. Hobbs](#) sought to extend the deadline for curing a missing signature by five days to match the deadline for curing a mismatched signature. The Election Day receipt deadline, plaintiffs argued, made voters who forgot to sign their ballots more likely to have their vote rejected because it was less likely they would receive notice in time to correct their error. In addition, there was a risk that the inconsistency between the deadlines could be a source of confusion for voters. The [U.S. district court](#) granted an

injunction and extended the deadline, but the Ninth Circuit [overruled the decision](#) in October and reinstated the Election Day receipt deadline established in the Elections Procedure Manual. The Ninth Circuit found that the Election Day deadline to cure missing signatures created only a minimal burden on voters and was outweighed by the state's interest in preserving its existing laws for orderly administration of the election.

Another major case, [Arizona Republican Party v. Democratic National Committee](#), was headed to the U.S. Supreme Court during the general election. This case challenged the legality of two Arizona election rules: One was a state policy of tossing out an entire provisional ballot if it was cast in the wrong precinct (rather than tossing just the votes for city council-specific races and counting eligible votes for county, state, and national offices). The other was a state law criminalizing the collection of completed mail ballots by a third party for the purpose of dropping them off to election officials on behalf of the voter (a practice sometimes called "ballot harvesting"). In January 2020, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit sitting en banc [issued a split ruling](#), invalidating both rules. The majority held that both policies violated Section 2 of the federal Voting Rights Act because both rules had a discriminatory impact on American Indian, Hispanic, and African American voters. The Ninth Circuit issued [a stay](#) of its ruling pending appeal to, and final disposition by, the U.S. Supreme Court. As a result, both election rules remained in effect during the 2020 general election. The state [appealed](#) to the U.S. Supreme Court, which [heard](#) oral arguments in the case in March 2021 ([together](#) with [Brnovich v. Democratic National Committee](#)). The legality of the challenged rules will be decided by the Supreme Court in 2021.

Both policies at issue in the case had a heightened importance in the pandemic. The need to reduce the number and location of polling places due to the pandemic arguably had the potential to confuse voters more than usual regarding where to vote. This confusion was mitigated, however, by Maricopa County's adoption of the vote center model, in which voters could cast votes at any vote center in their county. But not all Arizona counties adopted the vote center model. And plaintiffs contended that the continued criminalization of collecting ballots for others forced some voters to choose between incurring health risks by delivering their ballot in person or risk criminal penalties for having another person return their mail ballot for them and possibly not having the ballot counted.

B. Post-Election Challenges

After Election Day, the Donald J. Trump For President campaign and its allies filed over [72 lawsuits nationwide](#), primarily in swing states, alleging various incidents of election misconduct and fraud. [Eight](#) of these lawsuits were brought in Arizona.

Three were filed against Maricopa County Recorder Adrian Fontes and Arizona Secretary of State Katie Hobbs in the wake of the election returns; all three were dismissed without any effect on the results of the election. First, some voters in Maricopa County [alleged](#) that their in-person ballots cast on Election Day were not counted by the tabulation machines because they were given Sharpie brand markers by election officials to fill out their ballots. Their lawsuit claimed the voting tabulation machines could not read votes marked in Sharpie ink. Arizona officials maintained that the votes were properly counted, and the manufacturers of the machine specifically recommended the use of Sharpies for the ballots. The plaintiffs requested the court dismiss their suit just three days after they filed it.

In the second [lawsuit](#) against Fontes and Hobbs, the Trump campaign alleged that votes were rejected as “overvotes” after voters were induced by poll workers to override the tabulator’s rejection of the ballot. The Trump campaign asked the U.S. district court to halt the state’s canvass until the county’s Ballot Duplication Board could review the ballots that were allegedly improperly disqualified. The case was dismissed as moot because the ballot totals at issue would not impact the election outcome.

In the third lawsuit, the state Republican Party [brought suit against Maricopa County Recorder Fontes](#) to increase the sample size of the required quality control hand count—from 2% of “polling places” (which, in this case, would be 2% of the vote centers used by Maricopa County) to 2% of “precincts.” This case was dismissed as well.

Four cases filed between November 30 and December 7, sought to decertify the state’s election results—results that were officially certified on November 30, 2020—and/or to recertify the results for Trump, prior to the vote of the Electoral College. The first of these, [Ward v. Jackson](#), filed on November 30 by the Chairwoman of the Arizona Republican Party, [claimed](#) that mistakes in signature verification and in the duplication of ballots which could not be machine read in Maricopa County led to Trump’s defeat. The trial court permitted inspection of 1,626 randomly sampled ballots, for which there were fewer than 10 errors. The [Supreme Court of Arizona](#) found that the error rate was “statistically negligible” and might have resulted in only 153 votes lost for Trump, below the margin that triggers a mandatory recount. The state supreme court [affirmed](#) the trial court’s decision finding no fraud, and it confirmed the election of the Biden slate of electors under Arizona state law, effectively ending any further legal challenge to the outcome of the presidential election in the state. Ward and the Republican Party [filed for certiorari](#) with the U.S. Supreme Court, which denied review on February 22, 2021.

Three lawsuits seeking decertification of election results were filed against the governor, all of which alleged a wide range of fraud. In [Stevenson v. Ducey](#), plaintiffs argued that [private election grants to Maricopa County](#) were unlawful and exacerbated problems with “unlawful ballots.” Plaintiffs eventually requested the court to dismiss the suit. In [Burk v. Ducey](#), plaintiff focused on the Dominion Voting Systems voting equipment and alleged that thousands of fictitious votes had been counted. The case was [dismissed for lack of standing](#) because the plaintiff was not registered to vote in the 2020 election in Arizona. In [Bowyer v. Ducey](#), Trump campaign attorney Sidney Powell’s so-called “Kraken” case, plaintiffs [alleged](#) a laundry list of fraud, from ballot chain-of-custody issues to allegations that some Maricopa County officials were biased because they were registered as Independents. The court [threw the case out](#) on December 10, 2020, criticizing the merits of the case as “sorely wanting of relevant or reliable evidence” but [dismissing](#) the lawsuit on the grounds that the plaintiffs—electors pledged to President Trump had he won Arizona—did not have standing. Petitioners [appealed](#) to the U.S. Supreme Court, which [denied review](#).

As of the time of writing (March 10, 2020), all efforts to prove fraud or to challenge or invalidate the election results in Arizona in the courts have been short-lived and unsuccessful. For a more detailed summary of each of the Arizona cases filed post-Election Day, and the disposition of each, see the Stanford-MIT Healthy Elections Project’s report called [Post-Election Litigation Analysis and Summaries](#).

IX. Conclusion

In the leadup to Election Day, a national narrative about the potential for delayed election results, voter intimidation, and election fraud allegations led to fears of ensuing chaos. The protests outside of the Maricopa County election department in the days following Election Day contributed to that narrative. In response, [Governor Ducey](#) and [Secretary Hobbs](#), members of different political parties and often political rivals, [each used their platforms](#) to instill confidence in the results and to urge for patience as the process played out. As a predominantly vote-by-mail state, Arizona often takes more time than other states to tabulate its election results and, with the added complication of a pandemic, 2020 was no different. Governor Ducey and Secretary Hobbs helped Arizonians and Americans understand that the allegations of voter fraud and election misconduct were unsubstantiated, that the Arizona election was conducted with [integrity](#), and that the results were accurate. Some were convinced. Unfortunately, others were not.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, Arizona election officials administered a remarkably successful general election in 2020. It was safe, secure, accurate, and ultimately managed the largest turnout in the state's history. Arizona was better poised than many other states to address the challenges of mail voting at scale due to the state's history and culture that already supported and encouraged mail voting at scale. Mail voting was further augmented by a [2019 law](#) that permitted election officials to process and count early ballots 14 days before Election Day, seven days earlier than in past election cycles. Additionally, in response to challenges identified in the March presidential primary, state and local officials acted early and effectively to secure provisions and preparations required to support the record turnout election in the pandemic. An extended voter registration deadline, transition to a vote center model in Maricopa County, enhanced check-in technology, intensive poll worker recruitment efforts, the expanded use of ballot drop boxes and early voting, improved access for Native American populations, and strong public messaging campaigns, all supported with funding from the CARES Act and CTCL grants, encouraged and accommodated safe voting by a record number of voters. The ballots were counted accurately and the election was certified on time. Legal challenges to the results were unsuccessful and did not impact the outcome.