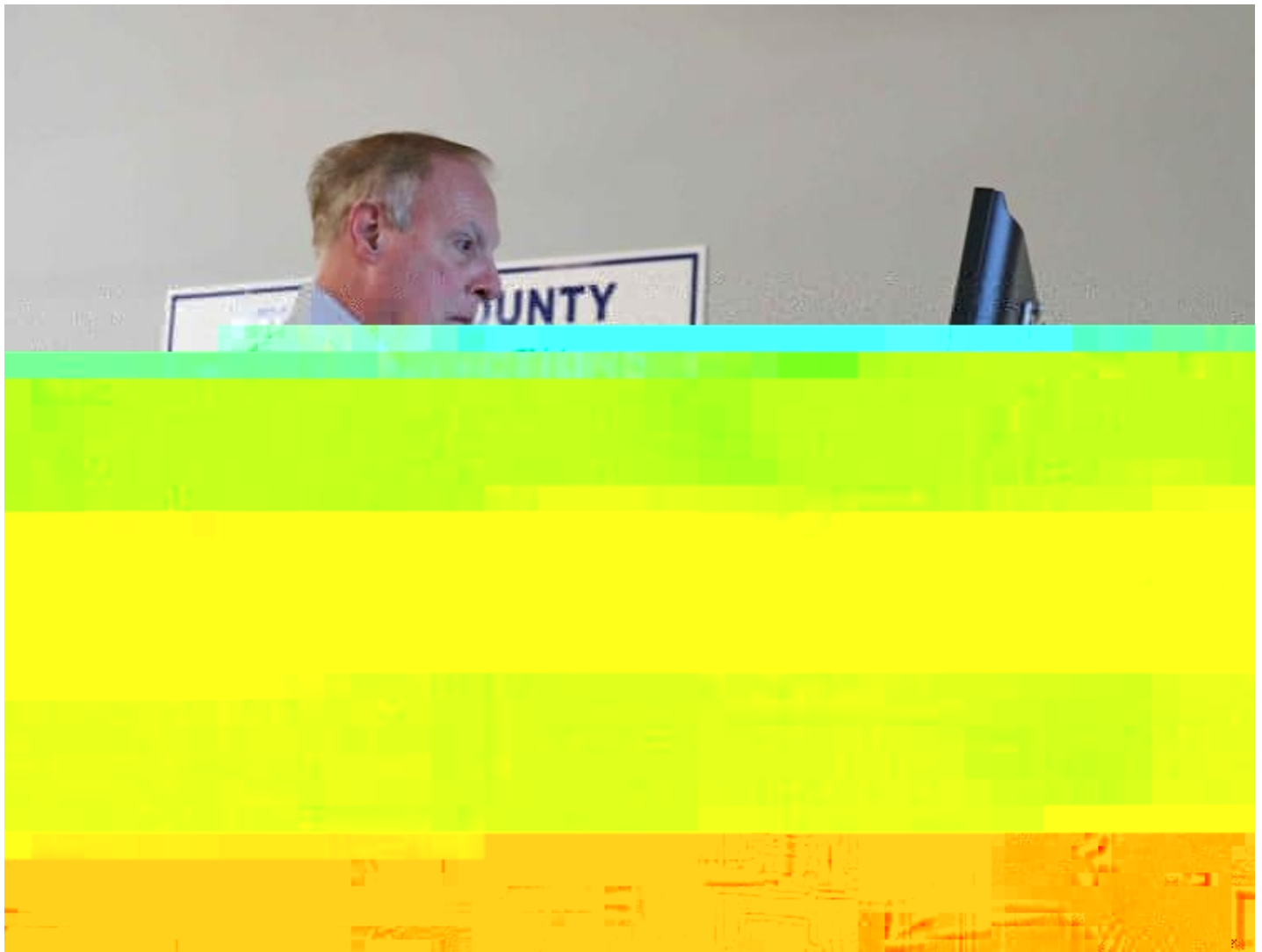


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Boards of elections adjust as early vote counting allowed

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A new state law allows Boards of Election to start counting vote-by-mail ballots 10 days before Election Day, increasing the chance of getting earlier results but also creating a challenge to election security.

The counting is done electronically, using a scanner that reads the filled-in ovals on paper ballots.

“One of the things (the new law) brought up is, how can you safeguard ... so that no one can get into that machine?” Atlantic County Board of Elections Democratic member John Mooney said during the board’s Tuesday night special meeting.

Access to early results could be misused by parties or individuals trying to influence races by focusing last-minute efforts where their candidates are losing, Mooney said.

Gov. Phil Murphy signed three bills into law a week ago Friday, one of which allows early counting as a way of giving election boards more time to count the unprecedented number of paper mail-in ballots they will see in the general election. He previously released two executive orders requiring the election to be conducted mostly through vote-by-mail ballots, as a way of preventing the spread of the coronavirus.

Atlantic County Board of Elections Chair Lynn Caterson, a Republican, said the new law specified that any release of results before close of polls on Election Day will be a third-degree criminal offense.

At Tuesday’s meeting, the board voted to purchase a second scanner for counting ballots at a cost of \$55,000, much or all of which it hopes will be reimbursed by federal funding for COVID-19 related expenses.

The wording of the new law makes it clear it is the responsibility of boards of elections to secure results.

“If a county board of elections begins opening the inner envelopes and canvassing (counting) the mail-in ballots from the inner envelopes prior to the day of the election, the county board shall implement the measures necessary to ensure the security and secrecy of the mail-in ballots,” the law states. “The contents of the mail-in ballots and the results of the ballot canvassing shall remain confidential and ... in no circumstances disclosed prior to the close of polls on the day of the election.”

Allowing early counting of vote-by-mail ballots will get results to voters faster in a high-interest election where turnout is expected to be extremely high.



“Timely results are definitely in the public interest,” said John Froonjian, executive director of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University. “If they are delayed a long time, people question whether the election was rigged. Nobody wins if voters lose faith in the electoral system.”

Atlantic County anticipates receiving 120,000 to 140,000 ballots, and Cape May County anticipates handling 60,000.

“We can run ballots through the scanner, and we just don’t print results,” Cape May County Democratic Registrar Michael Kennedy said of that county’s approach to keeping results secret. “Nobody at the Board of Elections would know what the outcomes are, because we are not going to print them.”

But Kennedy said there isn’t a foolproof way to prevent someone from doing so.

“Unfortunately, I don’t know if there is a way to 100% stop that from happening. I can tell you it will not happen here at Cape May County Board of Elections. I’m the last guard of defense, and those reports will not be printed or shown until election night,” he said.



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Kennedy acknowledged it “comes down to individuals.”

The Cape May County Board of Elections purchased two new scanners in April for the July 7 primary, Kennedy said. That office now has three scanners.

Council Ward 1 (Vote for 1)

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E (B)H			

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Candidate	Party	Votes	Winner
LaToya Dunston			

BRIGANTINE

Council Ward 1 (Vote for 1)

Candidate	Party	Votes	Winner
Ben Zor			

Candidate	Party	VOTES	Win
Richard Nixon	D		

	C		P		
	K				

CORBIN CITY

Mayor (Vote for 1)

	C		P		

Counci

Candidate	Party	Votes	Winner
Lisa Jampetti	Democrat		
Joseph A. Ricci, Jr.	Republican		

ESTELL MANOR

TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE (Vote for 1)

Candidate	Party	Votes	Winner
Julia A. Sparks	Republican		

FOLSOM

Council - 1 year unexpired (Vote for 1)

Candidate	Party	Votes	Winner
Albert W. Norman	Republican		

Council (Vote for 2)

Candidate	Party	Votes	Winner
James C. Whittaker Jr	Republican		
Jacob Blazer	Republican		

NORTHFIELD

Council Ward 1 (Vote for 1)

Candidate	Party	Votes	Winner
Lisa Lehne-Gilmore	Democrat		
David Notaro	Republican		
Alicia Garry	Independent		

Council Ward 2 (Vote for 1)

Candidate	Party	Votes	Winner
Rich DiCriscio	Democrat		
Thomas Polistina	Republican		

PLEASANTVILLE

Mayor (Vote for 1)

Candidate	Party	Votes	Winner
Judy M. Ward	Democrat		

Candidate	Party	Votes	Winner
Lawrence "Tony" Davenport	Independent		

Council-at-Large (Vote for 1)

Candidate	Party	Votes	Winner
Carla Thomas	Democrat		
Sharnell Morgan	Independent		

Council Ward 1 (Vote for 1)

Candidate	Party	Votes	Winner
Ricky Cistrunk	Democrat		

Council Ward 2 (Vote for 1)

Candidate	Party	Votes	Winner
Joanne Famularo	Democrat		

PORT REPUBLIC

)

(

Candidate	Party	Votes	Winner
Roger Giberson			

)

(

Candidate	Party	Votes	Winner
Thomas Kurtz			

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Candidate	Party	Votes	Winner
Jacob Nass			

)

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Candidate	Party	Votes	Winner
Joseph T. McCarrie, Jr			

Council Ward 1 (Vote for 1)

Candidate	Party	Vote	Write In
Cheryl Weale	Republican		

WEYMOUTH TOWNSHIP

Township Committee (Vote for 1)

Candidate	Party	Vote	Write In
Cheryl Weale	Republican		

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Bill A 4475 wording on early counting

"A county board of elections may begin opening the inner envelopes and canvassing each mail-in ballot from the inner envelopes no earlier than 10 days prior to the day of the election. The secretary of state shall establish guidelines concerning the early canvassing process. If a county board of elections begins opening the inner envelopes and canvassing the mail-in ballots from the inner envelopes prior to the day of the election, the county board shall implement the measures necessary to ensure the security and secrecy of the mail-in ballots. The contents of the mail-in ballots and the results of the ballot canvassing shall remain confidential and shall be disclosed only in accordance with the provisions of Title 19 of the Revised Statutes, regulations and guidelines concerning the disclosure of election results, and in no circumstances disc

Officials Fatal shooting of UPS hostage

Michelle Brunetti Post

Staff Writer

In my first job after college got paid to read the New York Times and summarize articles for an early online data base. First reporting job was with The Daily Record in Parsippany. I have also worked in nonprofits, and have been with The Press since 1990.