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Early, absentee voting on Oahu mixed

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Early walk-in voting has opened at Honolulu Hale, Monday, August 1, 2016.

This story has been corrected. [See below.](#)

Unlike two years ago, no hurricanes or tropical storms are in today's primary election day forecast, but there's a good chance of low voter turnout nevertheless.

In the 2014 primary election, a majority of voters — 51 percent — for the first time voted early or by mail-in ballot. That election was hampered by Tropical Storm Iselle, which closed two voting precincts in Puna, forcing the vote there to be continued six days later.

This year, with little more than breezy tradewinds and occasional showers in the forecast, early walk-in voting was way down on Oahu compared to 2014 and 2012, while early mail-in votes were up slightly.

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The change in both weather and voting preference left Scott Nago, the state's chief election officer, uncertain about what kind of turnout to expect when the first ballots are scheduled to be released at 7 tonight, an hour after the polls close at 6 p.m.

"We're supposed to have good weather, but I have no guess on turnout," Nago said. "Either we're going to have a big turnout at the polls or a low turnout this election."

The highest-profile race is the contest between Mayor Kirk Caldwell and challengers Charles Djou, a former city councilman and congressman, and former Mayor Peter Carlisle.

An outright winner must gain a simple majority of tonight's votes, or there will be a runoff among the top two vote-getters.

Only 9,925 people took advantage of absentee walk-in voting on Oahu, the Honolulu City Clerk's office reported Friday.

That's a 12.9 percent drop from the 14,859 votes cast at Honolulu Hale and Kapolei Hale during the 2014 primary. In the primary of 2012, the last time Oahu got to vote for U.S. president and Honolulu mayor, 12,941 absentee walk-in ballots were cast.

City Clerk Glen Takahashi said the percent of absentee walk-in participants suggests people are becoming more familiar and comfortable with the idea of voting via the mailbox.

The city had collected 83,106 absentee mail-in ballots out of 129,166 ballots that were sent out to Oahu voters by request, Takahashi said. Absentee mail-in ballots received by 6 p.m. Saturday will be counted. He advised those still holding onto mail-in ballots to not mail them, but to drop them off at any official precinct booth.

To match the 82.5 percent of absentee mail Oahu ballots cast in 2014, the city would need to see 22,572 more ballots received by 6 p.m.

Overall, 202,728 Oahu voters cast ballots in the 2014 primary, about 43.5 percent of those registered. To match that percentage of votes cast, a total of 210,138 people, out

of 483,076 registered voters on the island, would need to cast ballots.

Primary election day voting at precincts across the state runs from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Hawaii has 247 precincts statewide but only 233 polling places because some communities of 500 people or fewer in places such as Niihau and Kalaupapa are automatically sent mail-in ballots, Nago said.

To find your polling site, visit the Office of Election's website at elections.hawaii.gov.

The polls open at 7 a.m. and close at 6 p.m. but anyone in line at 6 p.m. will be allowed to vote, Nago said.

The smallest crowds tend to be from 7:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. and from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

"You want to avoid showing up when the polls open, the lunch crowd and when the polls close," Nago said. "Those are the busiest times."

Voters are encouraged to bring government-issued identification to speed up the voting process, but ID is not required, Nago said. Voters without ID will have to provide information to verify they're registered to vote, he said.

His office expects to release five election returns starting at 7 p.m.

Based on the 2014 primary election, the 7 p.m. printout of voting results represented 65 percent of absentee ballots but no votes cast at the precincts. The 8:30 p.m. printout included 3 percent of precinct voting and 74 percent of absentee ballots. The 10 p.m. printout had 80 percent of the absentee ballots and 99 percent of the precincts. The 11:30 p.m. printout contained 86 percent of absentee ballots and 100 percent of precincts.

An expected 1 a.m. printout should account for all absentee and precinct ballots, Nago said.

Staff writer Gordon Y.K. Pang contributed to this report.

[BACK TO ARTICLE](#)

CORRECTION

Glen Takahashi is the Honolulu city clerk. His last name was misspelled in an earlier version of this story and in Saturday's print edition.