GOTV 2026 – Candidate Playbook

Statewide | Countywide | County Council | House of Delegates | State Senate

For Republican candidates in the Maryland 2026 General Election | October 17 – November 3, 2026

As of October 17, 2026 | Companion to the GOTV 2026 Statewide Plan and OAR Checklist

The bottom line

17 days to Election Day. Early voting opens in 5. From here on, a campaign's job is to find every voter who will vote for you and make sure their ballot is counted.

Every candidate, at every level, does the same core work (Part 1). What changes by race is scale: a statewide campaign wins through the party's coordinated program, while a council or delegate campaign can still win door by door. Parts 2–6 set out what to do for each race.

How This Playbook Is Organized

Part	For	What it covers
1. Every Campaign	All candidates	Key dates, the win number, voter universes, coordinating with the party, compliance, and protecting the count
2. Statewide	Governor/Lt. Governor, Comptroller, Attorney General	Winning through the coordinated statewide program, the candidate as chief motivator
3. Countywide	County Executive, State's Attorney, Sheriff, Clerk, Register of Wills, Orphans' Court, at-large seats	Covering every early voting center in the county; anchoring the county ticket
4. County Council	Council and commissioner district seats	Precinct-level door work; the candidate's own doors
5. House of Delegates	Delegate candidates in multi-member and single-member districts	Finishing in the top N; running as a district team
6. State Senate	Senate candidates	Anchoring the legislative district team
7. Final 17 Days	All candidates	Day-by-day candidate calendar
8. Worksheets	Campaign managers	Win number, race profile, daily report

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Part 1 – What Every Campaign Does

The same core GOTV program, whatever office you are running for.

1.1 Key Dates for Candidates

Date	Milestone
Tue, Oct 20	Volunteer, watcher, and greeter training complete
Thu, Oct 22 – Thu, Oct 29	Early voting, 7 a.m. – 8 p.m. daily, including weekends; any early voting center in the voter's county
Fri, Oct 23	**Pre-General Report 2** due to the State Board (covers Aug 19 – Oct 18). File in MD CRIS by 11:59 p.m. Late fees run up to $1,000 per report.
Tue, Oct 27	Last day for mail-in ballot requests by mail or fax (ballot mailed)
Fri, Oct 30	Last day for online mail-in requests with a print-at-home ballot
Mon, Nov 2	Election Day watcher certificates filed with the local board by its deadline
Tue, Nov 3	Election Day, 7 a.m. – 8 p.m. Mail-in ballots: drop box or local board by 8 p.m., or postmarked by Nov 3
Wed, Nov 11	Provisional canvass (challenged ballots decided)
Tue, Nov 17	**Post-General Report** due (covers Oct 19 – Nov 10)
After certification	Recount petition within 3 days; court challenge within the earlier of 10 days after the problem is known or 7 days after certification

1.2 Know Your Win Number

Every GOTV decision starts with how many votes you need and how many you can still find. Use the worksheet in Part 8.

Step	How to calculate
1. Expected turnout	Turnout in your district or jurisdiction in the 2022 gubernatorial general election, adjusted for registration growth
2. Win number (single-seat race)	Expected turnout × 50%, plus 1. Add a cushion of 2–3 points if there are third-party candidates on the ballot.
2. Win number (multi-seat race)	The vote total of the candidate who finished one place outside the winners last time (for example, 4th place in a 3-seat delegate race), plus a cushion. See Part 5.
3. Votes already banked	Confirmed early votes and returned mail-ins from your supporters (from the party tracker)
4. Votes still needed	Win number minus votes banked. This is the number your GOTV must deliver.
5. Contacts needed	Votes still needed ÷ your contact-to-vote rate (local experience; many campaigns plan on 3 contacts per vote)

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1.3 Your Voter Universes

Universe	Who	What they get
Mail-in chase	Your Republican and identified supporters who requested a mail-in ballot and have not returned it	Chase call/text: sign the oath, nearest drop box, or vote early in person instead; up to 3 attempts
Base turnout	Registered Republicans in your district, especially low-propensity voters	Plan-to-vote calls, early voting reminders, ride offers
Identified supporters	Unaffiliated and crossover voters who told your campaign they support you (1s and 2s)	Same GOTV as the base; never let a 1 or 2 go uncontacted
Persuadables	Unaffiliated voters still undecided (3s), in competitive precincts only	One more persuasion contact by Oct 27, then stop

> **The golden rule**
>
> Push turnout only to Republicans and voters who told you they support you. Everyone else gets a persuasion conversation first, or no contact at all. Turning out the other side's voters is the most expensive mistake in GOTV.

1.4 Work With the Party, Not Around It

Your county central committee is running a coordinated GOTV program (see the GOTV 2026 Statewide Plan). Plug into it rather than building a parallel one.

Owner	Action	Result (done when)
Candidate	Meet or call the county chair and GOTV Lead by Oct 19	Your campaign's role in the county plan agreed in writing
Campaign manager	Share your supporter IDs with the county Data Lead (as your campaign and the party agree); get access to the shared tracker	No voter contacted twice for the same thing; your IDs on the county GOTV list
Campaign manager	Commit volunteer shifts to the county greeter, phone, and ride schedule	Your volunteers on the county shift schedule
Candidate	Join a Republican sample ballot or joint literature piece with the ticket, with a proper authority line for each paying committee	One piece that tells voters the whole Republican ticket
Campaign manager	Recruit 2–5 poll watchers from your supporters and route them through the county Watcher Lead	Your watchers certified, filed, and on the county placement plan

1.5 The Candidate's Own Time

In the last 17 days, the candidate's hours are the campaign's scarcest resource. Spend them where only the candidate can make a difference.

Activity	Why only the candidate	Rough share of time
Early voting center greeting (outside the zone)	Voters remember shaking the candidate's hand on the way in	High during Oct 22–29

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Activity	Why only the candidate	Rough share of time
Door knocking in target precincts	A candidate at the door is the strongest contact there is	High in district races; low statewide
Volunteer rallies and thank-yous	Keeps volunteers coming back for the last weekend	1 short stop per day
Call time	Last dollars for final mail, digital, and Election Day operations	Brief daily block; ends by Oct 30
Earned media and community events	Reaches voters you cannot contact directly	High statewide and countywide

1.6 Compliance Every Candidate Must Know

- ☐ **Authority line on every piece of campaign material** (print, digital, signs, texts where required), naming the treasurer and the campaign finance entity. Joint pieces list every paying entity (Election Law §13-401).
- ☐ **No-electioneering zones:** 100 feet from the entrance at polling places and early voting centers (Montgomery County 25–100 feet as posted); drop boxes 50 feet (Montgomery 25 feet). Candidates and volunteers campaign only outside.
- ☐ **Designated agents:** a candidate may not act as the agent for a voter's mail-in ballot on a ballot that lists the candidate. Agents must be 18+, have the voter's written designation, and sign the affidavit.
- ☐ **Election judges:** candidates are not eligible to serve. Never ask a judge to act for your campaign.
- ☐ **Campaign finance:** file Pre-General 2 by Oct 23 and Post-General by Nov 17 in MD CRIS.
- ☐ **Honor stop-contact requests** and keep scripts factual; avoid overclaiming about election integrity in voter conversations.

1.7 Protecting Your Count

Owner	Action	Result (done when)
Candidate	Sign Challenger and Watcher Certificates (original ink signature) for your watchers; file copies with the local board before they enter	Board confirms receipt; watchers admitted
Campaign manager	Send watchers to the polling places that matter most to your race, coordinated with the county Watcher Lead	Priority locations covered at opening and closing
Campaign manager	Staff the mail-in and provisional canvasses (no certificate needed); file Canvass Challenge Forms at the session	Every disputed ballot in your race logged with the board's ruling
Candidate + counsel	If the margin is within 5%, decide on a recount petition within 3 days after certification; any court challenge goes through counsel within the §12-202 deadlines	Decision made before the deadline

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Part 2 – Statewide Campaigns

Governor and Lieutenant Governor, Comptroller, and Attorney General.

2.1 How Statewide Races Are Won

A statewide campaign cannot knock every door in Maryland in 17 days. It wins by making the coordinated party program bigger, faster, and better funded, and by using the candidate to drive turnout in every county.

Lever	What it means
Every vote counts the same	A Republican vote banked in Montgomery or Baltimore City is worth exactly as much as one in Garrett or Carroll. Statewide campaigns need all three county plans: max turnout in red counties, persuasion in swing counties, and banking every Republican vote in blue counties.
The 61,009	The outstanding Republican mail-in ballots are the single largest bank of votes still out there. Fund and staff the chase.
Scale contact	Texts, calls, digital, and mail reach voters statewide; doors are concentrated in swing-county precincts.
The candidate as motivator	Daily early voting stops across several counties, media in every market, and rallies that turn into volunteer shifts.
The ticket	Governor and Lieutenant Governor run as a joint ticket; all statewide candidates lift the down-ballot ticket with them.

2.2 Statewide GOTV Actions

Owner	Action	Result (done when)
Campaign manager	Agree with the state party and county chairs on which statewide resources go to which counties (staff, mail, digital, paid canvass)	Written county allocation by Oct 19
Data director	Fund and support statewide chase calls and texts to the 61,009 outstanding Republican mail-in voters	Every chase household attempted 3 times by Oct 29
Scheduler	Build a candidate travel plan hitting early voting centers in 2–4 counties per day, weighted to high-Republican and swing-county centers	Every county visited by the candidate or running mate during early voting
Surrogate director	Run a surrogate program: running mate, other statewide candidates, legislators, and local officials at centers the candidate cannot reach	At least one surrogate visit per county per weekend
Communications	Earned media in each media market (Baltimore, Washington, Salisbury, Hagerstown/Cumberland) on the early voting message	Daily early voting story placed or pitched
Digital	Early voting and mail-in return ads by county, with the center locator; shut off ads to voters who have voted where the platform allows	Ad spend shifts daily to unconfirmed voters

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Owner	Action	Result (done when)
Volunteer director	Move volunteers from blue and red counties to swing-county weekend canvasses (Oct 24–25 and Oct 31 – Nov 1)	Visiting teams logged by county
Counsel	Statewide election protection: hotline, watcher coverage targets with county Watcher Leads, canvass coverage, recount and court readiness	Counsel on call 6 a.m. – close on Election Day

2.3 Statewide Message for the Final Stretch

- “Vote early at any center in your county, October 22–29, 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Bank your vote.”
- In blue counties: “Your vote for governor counts exactly the same as anyone's in Maryland.”
- Tie the vote to two or three cost-of-living issues: taxes, energy and utility costs, public safety.
- Every ad and piece of mail ends with a specific action: where, when, and how to vote.

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Part 3 – Countywide Campaigns

County Executive (in charter counties with one), State's Attorney, Sheriff, Clerk of the Circuit Court, Register of Wills, Judges of the Orphans' Court, and council or commissioner seats elected at large.

3.1 How Countywide Races Are Won

Countywide candidates run on the same footprint as the county GOTV plan: every voter in the county, every early voting center in the county. Your strategy follows the county's type in the Statewide Plan.

County type	Countywide strategy
Red county	Maximize Republican turnout and the mail-in chase. Your biggest risk is supporters who forget a down-ballot race; push the full Republican sample ballot.
Swing county	Persuasion in swing precincts until Oct 27, then turnout to Republicans and identified supporters. Countywide candidates usually carry the heaviest persuasion load.
Blue county	Bank every Republican vote, then target competitive pockets and crossover voters who split tickets for law-and-order or tax issues (State's Attorney, Sheriff, County Executive).

Office-specific angles: State's Attorney and Sheriff candidates often draw crossover support on public safety; ask identified crossover supporters to vote early and to bring a neighbor. Clerk, Register of Wills, and Orphans' Court candidates are easy to skip on a long ballot: their best GOTV tool is the Republican sample ballot.

3.2 Countywide GOTV Actions

Owner	Action	Result (done when)
Candidate	Anchor the county ticket: host or attend the county GOTV kickoff and the weekend rallies	Volunteers from every Republican campaign in the county working one schedule
Campaign manager	Staff every early voting center in the county at peak hours (7–9 a.m. and 4–8 p.m. weekdays; midday weekends), shared with other campaigns	No center uncovered at peak times
Campaign manager	Print and distribute the Republican sample ballot (with all authority lines) at every center, outside the zone	Sample ballots at every center every day
Candidate	Visit every early voting center in the county at least once, prioritizing the highest-volume centers	Every center visited by Oct 29
Data lead	Run countywide chase and base turnout calls/texts from the county tracker; persuasion only in swing precincts	Daily contact targets met
Campaign manager	Pair with district campaigns (council, delegate, senate) so they cover doors in their districts while you cover centers and countywide media	Written split of who covers what
Communications	Local press, community newspapers, civic association newsletters, and county-specific digital ads	At least one local story or endorsement push per week

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Part 4 – County Council and Commissioner District Campaigns

District seats on the county council or board of commissioners. At-large seats follow Part 3.

4.1 How District Races Are Won

Council districts are small enough that the candidate and a core team can still reach a large share of target voters personally. These races are often decided by a few hundred votes, so precinct-level precision matters more than anywhere else.

Lever	What it means
Know your precincts	List every precinct in the district with past Republican share and turnout. Sort into base, swing, and low-performing (Statewide Plan Part 4.6).
The candidate's doors	The candidate knocks doors every day through Nov 2, focused on swing precincts and low-propensity Republicans.
Neighbor to neighbor	HOAs, civic associations, churches, and small-business owners in the district carry your message farther than mail.
Early voting centers	District voters can vote at any center in the county. Find out which centers your district's voters actually use and cover those.
In blue counties	A competitive council district may be the best Republican opportunity in the county. Ask the county chair for export help from other districts.

4.2 Council District GOTV Actions

Owner	Action	Result (done when)
Candidate	Knock doors daily: 3-hour block in swing precincts, plus a GOTV block in base precincts	Door target for the day met and recorded
Campaign manager	Build the district's Election Day list from the county tracker: Republicans and identified supporters who have not voted	List ready Oct 30
Volunteer lead	Friend-to-friend: every supporter texts 10 neighbors in the district with a vote plan ask	Number of participants and confirmed voters tracked
Campaign manager	Cover the 1–3 early voting centers most used by district voters at peak hours	Candidate or volunteer at each target center daily
Candidate	Personal calls to community leaders and past donors asking them to vote early and recruit five neighbors	Leader list called by Oct 25
Campaign manager	Election Day: greeters at the district's highest-turnout polling places; three contact passes; rides	Every target polling place covered

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Part 5 – House of Delegates Campaigns

Maryland's 47 legislative districts elect 141 delegates. Most districts elect three delegates; some are split into subdistricts that elect one or two.

5.1 How Delegate Races Work

District type	How voting works	What it means for GOTV
Three-member district	Voters may vote for up to three delegate candidates; the top three finishers win	You do not have to beat every opponent. You have to finish in the top three.
Two-member subdistrict	Voters may vote for up to two; the top two win	Same logic: finish in the top two.
Single-member subdistrict	Voters vote for one; the top finisher wins	Run it like a single-seat race (Part 1.2).

Your win number in a multi-member district

Look at the last general election in your district or subdistrict. Find the candidate who finished one place outside the winners (4th place in a 3-seat district). That vote total, plus a cushion, is your target.

Confirm your exact district and subdistrict lines and the number of seats on the State Board's official candidate list before you set targets.

5.2 Run as a District Team

In most districts, Republican delegate candidates share voters with each other and with the Republican State Senate candidate. A team campaign stretches every volunteer hour and dollar further.

Owner	Action	Result (done when)
All district candidates	Agree on a team plan: shared canvass schedule, shared phone bank, one team sample ballot or slate card	Team plan signed off by every Republican candidate in the district by Oct 19
Team manager	One shared contact list for the district so no voter is knocked by three Republican campaigns in one day	Shared turf assignments; duplicate contacts eliminated
All district candidates	Team literature lists every Republican candidate in the district with each committee's authority line (or a slate committee if one exists)	Team piece at every door and early voting center
Team manager	Split early voting center coverage by candidate so each center has a team member at peak hours	Center coverage chart filled through Oct 29
Team manager	Split precincts: each candidate takes primary responsibility for doors in their strongest area	Every target precinct has an owner

5.3 Full Ticket or Single Shot

Voters may vote for fewer candidates than there are seats. Voting for only one candidate in a three-seat race (a “single shot”) adds that candidate's vote without adding votes for anyone else in the race.

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Situation	Usual team approach
Republicans have as many candidates as seats	Ask supporters to vote for every Republican in the district. Single-shot requests by one candidate cost teammates votes and strain the team.
Republicans have fewer candidates than seats	Ask supporters to vote for every Republican and leave the remaining choices blank, so they don't add votes for opponents.
A split-ticket district	Some campaigns ask crossover supporters to vote for one Republican. Decide this as a team before Oct 22, and be open with teammates about the message.

5.4 Delegate GOTV Actions

Owner	Action	Result (done when)
Candidate	Knock doors daily in your assigned precincts; GOTV to base, persuasion only in swing precincts until Oct 27	Daily door target met
Candidate	Cover your assigned early voting center at peak hours	Center covered every assigned day
Team manager	Chase every outstanding Republican mail-in ballot in the district with the county Data Lead	District share of the 61,009 shrinks daily
Candidate	Brief supporters on how the multi-member ballot works: “vote for all [N] Republicans in District [#]”	Message in every script and team piece
Team manager	Election Day: team greeters at the district's top polling places; three contact passes; shared rides	Every target polling place covered

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Part 6 – State Senate Campaigns

One senator for each of Maryland's 47 legislative districts. The Senate district covers the same territory as the district's delegate seats.

6.1 How Senate Races Are Won

A Senate race is a single-seat race across a whole legislative district. The Senate candidate is the natural anchor of the Republican district team: the one candidate on every Republican voter's ballot in the district.

Lever	What it means
Anchor the team	Lead the district team plan in Part 5.2: shared turf, shared phone bank, one team piece.
Single-seat math	Win number = expected turnout × 50% + 1 (Part 1.2). Unlike delegates, you must beat your opponent head to head.
Crossover voters	Senate races draw more ticket-splitting than delegate races. ID and turn out crossover supporters in swing precincts.
District-wide coverage	Cover every early voting center district voters use, sharing shifts with delegate candidates.
Question 3	The constitutional amendment on the ballot concerns legislative and congressional districting. Know the party's position and how it affects your district; keep the explanation short and factual at the door.

6.2 Senate GOTV Actions

Owner	Action	Result (done when)
Candidate	Convene the district team (all Republican delegate candidates) and lead the shared GOTV plan	Team plan agreed by Oct 19; daily team check-in set
Campaign manager	Fund shared team resources where the law allows: phone bank space, team literature, rides, poll watcher recruitment	Shared resources in use by Oct 22
Data lead	District universes from the county tracker: chase, base, identified supporters, swing-precinct persuadables	District tracker live; daily update by 8:30 p.m.
Candidate	Daily: early voting center greeting at peak hours, then a door block in swing precincts	Daily targets met
Campaign manager	Recruit poll watchers for the district's highest-volume locations through the county Watcher Lead	Watchers certified and filed for every priority location
Candidate	Final weekend: district-wide team door push and rally with all Republican district candidates	Final weekend door target met
Campaign manager	Election Day: three contact passes, rides, greeters at the top polling places; post-election canvass coverage	Every target polling place covered; canvass staffed

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Part 7 – The Final 17 Days

A day-by-day calendar for every candidate. Adjust the share of time by race (Parts 2–6).

Date	Candidate	Campaign
Sat, Oct 17 – Sun, Oct 18	Meet county chair; lock team plan with district candidates; final fundraising calls	Win number worksheet; universes built; shifts scheduled
Mon, Oct 19 – Tue, Oct 20	Doors in swing precincts; volunteer training appearance	Training complete; watcher certificates signed; sample ballots printed
Wed, Oct 21	Doors; early voting eve message on social media and email	Packets to every center; first chase pass done
Thu, Oct 22	Opening day: 7 a.m. at a high-volume center; vote early yourself and post it	Watchers at opening; “early voting is open” contact wave
Fri, Oct 23	Center greeting at peak hours; doors midday	**Pre-General Report 2 filed by 11:59 p.m.**
Sat, Oct 24 – Sun, Oct 25	Weekend surge: rally, door blocks with visiting volunteers, center visits	Buddy and export teams deployed; Sunday night target review
Mon, Oct 26 – Tue, Oct 27	Doors and centers; last persuasion contacts by Oct 27	Mail-in request deadline (mail/fax) Oct 27; persuasion stops
Wed, Oct 28 – Thu, Oct 29	“Last chance to vote early” push; close out early voting at a center at 8 p.m. Oct 29	Build the Election Day list Thursday night
Fri, Oct 30	Thank-you calls to volunteers; doors to identified supporters	Online mail-in (print-at-home) deadline; final mail and digital
Sat, Oct 31 – Sun, Nov 1	Final weekend door push to supporters only; team rally	Election Day shifts filled; packets assembled
Mon, Nov 2	Doors to unconfirmed supporters; Election Day reminder video	Election Day watcher certificates filed by board deadline
Tue, Nov 3	Polling places from 7 a.m.; call supporters midday; visit volunteers; final hour at a high-turnout polling place	Three contact passes; rides until 8 p.m.; watchers at opening and closing
Wed, Nov 4 onward	Thank volunteers and supporters	Canvass coverage; recount and court deadlines tracked; Post-General Report by Nov 17

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Part 8 – Worksheets

Fill these in by Sunday, October 18, and update them at each weekly review.

8.1 Race Profile

Item	Your race
Office and district / subdistrict	
Number of seats (1, 2, or 3)	
Counties in the district	
Registered Republicans / Democrats / Unaffiliated	
Early voting centers your voters use	
Republican running mates / district team	
County chair and GOTV Lead contacts	
Treasurer and campaign finance entity (for authority lines)	

8.2 Win Number Worksheet

Line	Item	Number
A	Expected turnout (2022 gubernatorial general, adjusted)	
B	Win number: A × 50% + 1 (single seat) or last place-outside-winners total + cushion (multi-seat)	
C	Votes banked so far (confirmed early votes + returned mail-ins from supporters)	
D	Votes still needed: B − C	
E	Contacts needed: D × contacts per vote	
F	Volunteer shifts needed: E ÷ contacts per shift	

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8.3 Daily Candidate Report

Measure	Today	Running total	Target
Doors knocked by the candidate			
Volunteer doors and calls			
New supporters identified (1s and 2s)			
Confirmed early votes + returned mail-ins (supporters)			
Early voting centers visited			
Volunteer shifts filled			

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Sources

Official sources control. Confirm district lines, seats, and local deadlines with the State Board and your local board of elections. This playbook is not legal advice; consult your campaign's counsel and treasurer.

- SBE: 2026 Gubernatorial Election (dates and Question 3)
- SBE: 2026 General Election Candidates
- SBE: 2026 Campaign Finance Reporting Schedule
- Election Law §13-401: authority line
- SBE Challengers and Watchers Manual 2026
- SBE: Recounts
- Election Law §12-202: judicial challenges
- SBE: Voter registration data and lists

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