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## **Monroe County voter turnout higher than statewide average**

By Ernest Rollins erollins@heraldt.com Dec 10, 2018

Voter turnout in Monroe County last month was higher than the statewide average for the first time in decades.

Around 54 percent of registered Monroe County voters voted on Nov. 6, according to the 2018 Indiana secretary of state voter registration and turnout report recently released. That's compared with about half of all registered Hoosier voters — 51 percent to be exact — who voted in this year's midterm election.

“This is the highest midterm turnout in over two decades,” Secretary of State Connie Lawson said in a news release. “The last time we saw a midterm with turnout in the 50s was in 1994. Both of these election cycles highlight how candidates and issues drive higher turnout in elections.”

The turnout was also record-breaking in Monroe County.

William Ellis, the Republican representative on the Monroe County Election Board and chairman of the Monroe County Republican Party, said a surge of students voting led to the higher turnout. He said the 18- to 24-year-old age bracket was the second highest overall during this election. Ellis said [Indiana University pushed to get students to the polls this year as part of the Big Ten Voting Challenge](#).

“The student precincts had good turnout this year,” said Carolyn VandeWiele, the Democratic representative on the Monroe County Election Board. “They did a really good job of turning out the students.”

More voters, especially at student polling sites, caused some delays on Election Day. Some sites, including at the Indiana Memorial Union on campus, ran out of ballots. A judge granted an order to keep polls open an extra hour to help accommodate the unexpected voter turnout.

Early voting continues to grow in popularity among Hoosiers. According to state data, 32 percent of Hoosiers opted to vote before Election Day. That number was 14 percent in 2014.

The statewide early voting trend seems to also be reflected locally. VandeWiele said during the past two major elections the split between early voting and Election Day voting has been pretty close in Monroe County.

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Ellis said if early voting continues to be a strong option among Monroe voters then election staff will need a bigger space. He said Monroe County Election Central, where early voting takes place, is maxed out in terms of space.

County Clerk Nicole Browne said they have shared these space concerns with the Monroe County Board of Commissioners.

### **Area voting numbers**

In Brown County, 7,340 of 11,953 registered voters — or 61 percent — cast a ballot during the most recent election. In Greene County, voter turnout was around 58 percent, with 10,942 of 18,903 registered voters showing up to vote.

Voter turnout in Owen County tied with Monroe at 54 percent with 7,325 of 13,681 registered voters voting. To the north, Morgan County reported 25,480 of 48,280 registered voters — 53 percent — and in Lawrence County to the south voter turnout was around 51 percent, with 15,724 of 30,766 registered voters.

While results for the IU Big Ten Voting Challenge have not been released, Monroe County voter turnout exceeded Tippecanoe County, home to Purdue University, the only other Big Ten School in Indiana. Tippecanoe County reported 52,070 of 110,712 registered voters voting this past election. That is a voter turnout of 47 percent.

Of the 92 counties in Indiana, Henry County had the highest voter turnout at 64 percent.