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Voting by mail will face its biggest test since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic when seven states and Washington, D.C., hold primaries Tuesday. All eight locales have encouraged residents to vote by mail, even as President Trump has criticized mail voting in recent tweets. Some states delayed their primaries due to the pandemic, then scrambled to change procedures and put personnel in place to process an expected surge in mailed ballots.

Tuesday's presidential primaries—in Indiana, Maryland, Montana, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota and Washington, D.C.—offer little suspense since each political party already has a presumptive nominee. But state and local races are on ballots. And the voting will be an early test of how states might attempt to conduct elections if the virus remains a threat through the November general election.

Five states—Colorado, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington and Utah—conducted elections primarily by mail before the pandemic, with options for in-person voting and ballot drop-off sites as well. Last-minute court rulings and partisan fighting spread confusion leading up to Wisconsin's primary in April, and there were delays for absentee ballots and hour-plus waits at a reduced number of polling places in Milwaukee.

States voting Tuesday have taken varied approaches. Indiana announced that it would temporarily allow any voter to request an absentee ballot without a specific reason. Maryland pledged to send all voters a ballot, skipping the application process. And states are grappling with how to safely open at least some in-person polling sites.

Many local officials said they saw a flood of ballot requests. A Pennsylvania law passed last year allows any registered voter [to vote by mail](#), but the pandemic created a surge of requests that outstripped officials' expectations. More than 1.8 million voters have applied for a mail ballot, more than 18 times the number in the 2016 primary election. Jeff Greenburg, the election director in Mercer County, Pa., said Wisconsin's experience underscored for him the logistical challenges of a sudden shift to voting by mail. To prepare, the county signed a contract with a third-party mailing vendor to help with mail-in ballots, and his staff of about five people has worked 12-hour days to process ballot requests, Mr. Greenburg said. "It's been nothing short of insanity."

Kenneth Lawrence, a Democrat who is chairman of the Montgomery County, Pa., Board of Elections, said in an interview last month that he worried some voters wouldn't get their ballots in time. "We'll see how many ballots come in after June 2 that can't count," he said. Officials in states including

Allentown Morning Call

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Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

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Pennsylvania, Indiana and New Mexico also have said that results may be released more slowly, particularly for any close races, because it is expected to take longer to count a large number of mail-in ballots.

“My nightmare in November is that you’re waiting to get Montgomery County’s results, to get Pennsylvania’s results,” said Mr. Lawrence. “I certainly think that mail-in ballots are here to stay, and we’ll be dealing with a higher number in November.” In Indiana, counties have hired additional staff or reassigned them to help with processing mail-in ballots and planned for more counting locations on Election Day, said Ian Hauer, a spokesman for Indiana’s secretary of state.

Congress recently passed legislation offering \$400 million in federal grants to states to help with coronavirus-related election needs. Multiple states, including Indiana and Maryland, said they were spending at least part of that money on protective gear and hand sanitizer for in-person polling sites, educating voters about voting by mail, and reimbursing counties for expenses such as purchasing ballot drop-off boxes. House Democrats are pushing for an additional \$3.6 billion to expand mail-in voting and other changes ahead of November. Some Republicans [are open to extending more funding](#), though they say it should be up to states to determine their election procedures.

In Georgia, which moved its primary twice and will vote June 9, Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, a Republican, mailed absentee ballot applications to all 6.9 million active registered voters. More than 1.5 million Georgia voters have requested an absentee ballot. State officials estimate that as many as half of all voters will vote absentee, compared with 5% to 7% in a normal year.

Still, some early in-person voters have encountered long wait times, which officials in Georgia’s Cobb County and Fulton County attributed to social-distancing measures and shortages of volunteer poll workers due to the pandemic. “If a significant number of people vote in person, there will be a line,” said Richard Barron, Fulton County’s director of registration and elections. He urged residents to vote absentee. If they choose to go in person, he added: “Out of respect for poll workers and other people in line, I would encourage people to wear face masks.” – ***Wall Street Journal***; **[see also Philadelphia Inquirer with interactive charts: Democrats requested Pennsylvania mail ballots at higher rates than Republicans in every county](#)**

YouTube wants advertisers to spend more to reach the consumers who are increasingly using their television to watch videos on its platform. The effort is a bid for a piece of the massive ad budgets that go toward traditional TV as well as the fast-growing ad spending earmarked for streaming TV.

But YouTube’s idea isn’t an easy sale, advertisers say. Many marketers still treat YouTube as a mobile and desktop video-viewing platform—and not a streaming TV service in the vein of Walt Disney Co.’s Hulu or ViacomCBS Inc.’s Pluto TV—because that is how most people still watch it. Advertisers also want greater confidence the content on YouTube is safe for their brands and equal to the quality of TV. “Their soul is social media with user-generated video online,” said Gianluca Toccafondi, integrated media manager for Ingka Group, the largest IKEA franchisee and operator.

Such video is important, but offers marketers less control and less visibility into where their ads appear, he said. “Becoming a TV platform requires a lot of field work in curating the content and really defining the audiences you’re curating this content for,” Mr. Toccafondi added. More than 100 million people in the U.S. watch YouTube and YouTube TV, the company’s pay-TV service, on TV screens each month, according to YouTube. Watch time in the U.S. on TV screens was up 80% year-over-year in March.

Globally, YouTube says more than 2 billion logged-in users visit its platform each month, with 70% of watch time occurring on mobile devices. YouTube

isn't pitching its TV inventory as an improvement on mobile and desktop ads, but as an additional option for advertisers, albeit one that can help YouTube compete for the ad dollars allocated for TV. Advertisers spent more than \$6.5 billion in the U.S. on advertising that appeared on internet-connected TV screens in 2019, according to eMarketer Inc.

YouTube is proposing upfront deals, in which marketers commit to ad buys further ahead than they typically would for digital video, for its apps running on smart TVs and streaming-TV devices. YouTube on May 19 announced an ad-buying category for marketers seeking to reach its users on streaming TV screens. The lineup includes videos by personalities on the platform, YouTube's own programming and traditional TV shows and movies available through YouTube's main app or its pay-TV service. It is available only in the U.S. and as part of the platform's YouTube Select program, which reserves ad inventory across categories of top-performing YouTube channels.

Streaming TV inventory through YouTube Select can cost two or three times as much as TV ads available through YouTube's auction, ad buyers said. "More and more marketers are having a dedicated line item in their media plans for streaming," said Debbie Weinstein, vice president of global solutions for YouTube, a unit of Alphabet Inc.'s Google. "We want to make sure they are considering YouTube as well."

Marketers said they see value in YouTube's TV apps as an incremental addition to what they already spend on the platform. "YouTube has been more of a platform to be able to reach mobile consumers," said Minjae Ormes, chief marketing officer of Visible, a prepaid phone carrier owned by Verizon Communications Inc. "To the degree connected TV viewership is happening on YouTube as an extension of that, it's useful."

Ms. Ormes, a former YouTube marketing executive, said she wants to know more about what YouTube users watch on TV sets, whether it's the same programming they tend to view on mobile devices, for example, or whether it's more like TV. Ingka Group's Mr. Toccafondi said he wants to see more from YouTube on the particular value of its TV inventory and its brand-safety and quality standards.

YouTube offers brand-safety controls through YouTube Select, including the option to serve ads only on videos the company has verified as appropriate for brands, a YouTube spokesman said. TV screens are a small—but in some cases growing—piece of advertisers' YouTube purchases. A senior executive at one ad-agency holding company said TV screens account for 10% of YouTube ads it buys through the platform's auction, unchanged from last year.

An analysis of 10 clients' ad spending by digital ad agency ForwardPMX, part of Stagwell Group LLC, found that TV screens accounted for 28% of their spending on YouTube from January to May of this year, up from 13% a year earlier. Delivery on TV screens is included by default on YouTube ad buys, but in most cases, ForwardPMX will turn off that option and do separate TV-specific buys, said Jessie Mamey, senior vice president of digital strategy at ForwardPMX. TVs are better suited for raising brand awareness, for example, than for generating actions like clicking through to an advertiser's website, she said. "On connected TVs, your intent is to lean back, versus already being leaned-in on mobile," she said.

For some marketers and ad buyers, YouTube's biggest challenge will be YouTube itself. YouTube already commands a bulk of digital video ad spending, and the audience-targeting the platform provides makes the screen on which those ultimately ads appear less essential. "A lot of times on YouTube, I am targeting more the individual versus the household or a screen," said a top media buyer who said his agency spends more than \$100 million annually on digital video, of which the lion's share goes to YouTube. "I know if I'm reaching you on a screen, I don't care what screen it is." – **Wall Street Journal**

Stay safe



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