Massive voter-registration campaigns by independent political groups have helped to enlist more than 160,000 new registered voters in Cuyahoga County this year, pushing the county's official voter rolls over 1 million.

The number of new voters added to the county rolls is five times greater than the number of new voters who registered before the 2000 election.

"This is a record-breaking year in terms of voter participation," said Jess Goode, a spokesman for America Coming Together, a Democrat-friendly group responsible for 10,700 local registrations. "The massive numbers in newly registered voters in Cuyahoga County and the rest of Ohio has exceeded everyone's expectations."

But the new voters could also lead to unexpected problems. The flood of new registrations increases the potential for error on voter rolls.

Some new voters may also appear at the wrong polling locations.

Still, local election officials say they're confident that the Nov. 2 election will run smoothly, if more slowly.

For more than a week, election workers have been trying to verify about 50,000 registration forms filed around Cuyahoga County just before the registration deadline on Oct. 4. Another 2,000 registrations shipped from the Secretary of State's office on Tuesday may still be added to the county's total.

In all, the county elections board has received more than 344,000 registration forms this year - up from 103,000 four years ago - including duplicate cards and voters updating their addresses or other information.

Michael Vu, Cuyahoga County's election director, has encountered some problems with registrations. More than 3,700 forms had mailing addresses that could not be verified or simply don't exist, he said.

A smattering of those also included suspicious signatures written with the last name first. Those will be turned over to the county prosecutor's office to be investigated as a possible fraud, Vu said.

"We've anticipated this all along," said Vu. "It's a balancing act between trying to prevent voter fraud and trying to prevent disenfranchisement."

Waves of new voters have also registered around Ohio and the rest of the country. Summit County has added nearly 47,000 new voters this year, state records show, and Stark County - considered the bellwether political county in the bellwether political state - has added 36,000 new voters to the rolls.

With the intense interest in this year's presidential election, voter-registration groups canvassed the state for months, aiming to boost turnout on Nov. 2. The largest numbers of new registrations have come from the state's urban counties, which have traditionally favored Democratic candidates.
In Cuyahoga, the largest wave of new registrations came from Cleveland's East Side and surrounding inner-ring suburbs.

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