

My ballot application came in the mail. Now what? election 2020

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FULL TEXT

This week, Connecticut's two million registered voters are receiving applications for absentee ballots for the general election in the mail.

Local registrars are expecting hundreds of thousands of state residents to choose to vote by mail this year. In the recent primary, Connecticut residents requested and received nearly 300,000 absentee ballots - the highest total in state history, officials said.

Based on the primary numbers, officials expect 66% of the votes cast on Nov. 3 to be by absentee. State officials are projecting a voter turnout of 80%.

Under a new state law, voters may check a box on the application that they are requesting to vote by absentee due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Many voters who are navigating the absentee ballot process for the first time remain confused about how to fill out the application, where to send it and what to expect next.

The following is a rough guide to absentee ballot application process, with additional information added about the ballots themselves.

Who is allowed to vote using an absentee ballot? Every active, registered voter can vote in the Nov. 3 general election using an absentee ballot. You can check your voter registration status and polling location by visiting myvotect.gov/lookup.

Registered voters must fill out an absentee ballot application to receive an absentee ballot. You can also download an application at myvote.ct.gov/absentee or pick up in-person from your town clerk's office.

When exactly will applications for absentee ballots be sent to the voters? The Office of the Secretary of State sent absentee ballot applications to every active, registered voter-Republican, Democrat and unaffiliated-in the state of Connecticut between Sept. 8-11. The total number of applications mailed out was around 2 million.

When will the actual absentee ballots be sent to voters? Once your absentee ballot application is received by your Town Clerk, you will be sent an absentee ballot sometime after Oct. 2. If your application was received after Oct. 2, the ballot will be mailed as soon as your application is processed.

If you applied before Oct. 2 and do not receive an absentee ballot by Oct. 10, contact your town clerk or the Office of the Secretary of the State.

Where should completed absentee ballot applications be sent? Where are voting drop boxes located? There is no central website for locating secure drop boxes, but every town in Connecticut has one. They are typically located at the Office of the Town Clerk or at Town Hall.

Due to the reported USPS slowdown, the Secretary of the State advised voters to use drop boxes both for applications and completed ballots.

Applications come with pre-paid mailing envelopes addressed to your town clerk. Completed applications should be inserted in the envelope provided and can be mailed through the United States Postal Service.

When and where must actual, completed absentee ballots be returned? All ballots must be received by the close of polls (8 p.m.) Election Day (Tuesday, Nov. 3). Only complete absentee ballots received before that deadline will be counted.

Completed ballots should be inserted in the envelope provided and placed in a secure drop box. Ballots will arrive with pre-paid mailing envelopes addressed to your Town Clerk and may be mailed through the United States Postal Service as soon as possible.

Once you send in your completed absentee ballot, you can see if it was processed by your Town Clerk by visiting myvotect.gov/lookup.

When must absentee ballot applications be returned? There is no due date given with the absentee ballot applications, but town clerks are advising voters to return them as soon as possible, as it does take time to process and mail absentee ballots.

Connecticut statutes require town clerks to mail out absentee ballots upon receiving applications until Nov. 2, but some say applications received the week before the election will be difficult to process in time to be counted. Drop boxes can be used for both applications and ballots.

Within six days of the election, a registered voter may fill out an Emergency Application for Absentee Ballot and return it to their town clerk.

Who do I contact if I didn't receive an absentee ballot application in the mail? If you do not receive an absentee ballot application soon, you should download one, fill it out and return it to your town clerk's office or place it in a secure drop box as soon as possible.

Absentee ballot applications may be downloaded by an individual's own use, the use of an immediate family member, or the use of a designee of the applicant. (Anyone who wants to distribute five or more applications needs to register with and obtain forms from the town clerk where they will be distributed.)

What does the absentee ballot application look like, and how do I fill it out? The mailing from the Office of the Secretary of the State consists of a one-page ballot application (with instructions in both English and Spanish), a glossy instructional insert and a pre-paid return envelope.

There are four sections to the ballot application. Section I lists your name, address, date of birth and other information on record with the Town Clerk. Section II requires you to check a box stating why you are requesting an absentee ballot. COVID-19, active service in the Armed Forces, absence from town hall during voting hours, illness, religious tenets, duties as an election official or physical disability; All voters are permitted to check the COVID-19 box as a reason for requesting an absentee ballot. Section III requires your signature and date of signing to declare the statements on the application are true and correct. Section IV (not required) allows a person assisting an applicant to provide his or her name and signature.

To fill out the ballot application, most voters must simply make sure his or her personal information is correct in Section I, choose a reason for voting by absentee ballot in Section II ("COVID-19" is valid for all voters), sign the application in Section III, seal the application in the return envelope and drop it in a secure drop box (most likely located at your town hall). You can also drop the envelope in the United States Postal Service (postage is pre-paid and does not require a stamp).

The Office of the Secretary of the State has detailed instructions regarding how to help someone with their absentee ballot application. Military personnel can indicate that they'd like their absentee ballot sent electronically to an email address provided in Section I.

Will I receive an absentee ballot if I do not fill out and return an application? No.

Can I vote at the polls if I change my mind and have already requested an absentee ballot? Yes. If you have not sent in a completed absentee ballot and prefer to go to the polls, simply discard the ballot. Your polling location is available by checking myvotect.gov/lookup.

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