



CHAPTER 7: ABSENTEE VOTING¹

Section 7.01 Absentee Voting Introduction

This chapter explains how to handle all aspects of absentee voting in Ohio.

It covers who can vote absentee, how to process applications, and procedures for issuing and counting absentee ballots. The chapter covers special requirements for military and overseas voters, voters with disabilities, and those in special circumstances like hospitalization. It also includes mandatory timelines, security procedures, and step-by-step processes to ensure all absentee ballots are handled correctly and legally.

Absentee Voter: Any qualified voter who votes by mail or in person before Election Day. See also [R.C. 3509.02](#).

Section 7.02 Eligibility

Ohio is a no fault absentee state, meaning voters do not need to state a reason for requesting an absentee ballot. Any qualified, registered voter can vote absentee at any election without stating a reason.^{2 3}

Section 7.03 Application

REQUESTING AN ABSENTEE BALLOT

Qualified voters have two ways to request an absentee ballot:

- Submit a written application to the board of elections of their county.

¹[Directive 2026-34](#)

²[R.C. 3509.02](#).

³ Except as otherwise specified in **Section 7.04**, provisional voters can only vote absentee through early in person voting.

- Come in person to the board office or other site designated for early in-person absentee voting⁴ and request to vote absentee.

Voters who want to cast an absentee ballot in person at the board office or other designated location must:⁵

- Give their full name and current address,
- Provide valid identification (ID) to election officials. Acceptable IDs for early in-person voting are the same as for Election Day voting.

Early In-person Voting is when voters come to the board office or designated location to vote absentee before Election Day.

When the Board Mails Absentee Ballot Applications

Under Ohio law, the board cannot mail unsolicited absentee ballot applications to any voter.⁶ The application must be in the form required by the Secretary of State ([Form 11-A Absentee Ballot Application](#)).

The board may post absentee ballot application forms on its website or in public places such as libraries. Respond promptly to proper requests for absentee ballot applications.

Required Fields

Absentee ballot applications must be the current forms from the Secretary of State's office and must have **ALL** of the following:⁷

- voter's name
- voter's signature⁸
- address where voter is registered
- voter's date of birth
- ONE of the following forms of ID:

⁴A Board of Elections can only have one location for early in-person absentee voting. [R.C. 3501.10\(C\)](#).

⁵[R.C. 3509.051\(B\)](#).

⁶[R.C. 3509.03\(E\)\(2\)](#).

⁷[R.C. 3509.03\(B\)](#) and [R.C. 3511.02\(A\)\(1\)](#).

⁸Generally, signing or affixing a signature to an election-related document requires a person's written, cursive-style legal mark written in that person's own hand. However, voters with a disability may personally affix their signature through the use of a reasonable accommodation, including the use of assistive technology or an augmentative device such as a signature stamp. See [R.C. 3501.011](#), [3501.382\(F\)](#) and related [OAG 2015-012](#).

- voter's Ohio driver license number
- last four digits of the voter's Social Security number
- copy of Ohio driver license, Ohio state ID card, or interim ID form issued by Ohio BMV; a U.S. passport or passport card; or a U.S. military ID card, Ohio National Guard ID, military dependent ID card, or U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs ID card. Include front and back images of the photo ID, except for a passport, which must include the passport's identification page.
- Statement identifying the election for which the absentee ballot is requested.
- Statement that the person is a qualified elector.⁹
- voter's party, if for a primary election ballot
- Mailing address if they want the absentee ballot to be mailed to a different address.

Important Notes

- Some absentee voters must provide additional information, as described below.
- Absentee ballot applications are valid for a single election only, and voters must reapply before each election.¹⁰
 - Exception: The Federal Post Card Application (FPCA), which is used by absentee voters who are uniformed services or overseas citizens (UOCAVA), is valid for all elections in a calendar year unless otherwise noted. See additional details on *UOCAVA* in the subsections below.

⁹Under [R.C. 3503.01](#), a voter's qualifications to vote are determined as of the date of the election. [R.C. 3511.02](#).

¹⁰[R.C. 3509.02](#); [R.C. 3509.03\(D\)](#).

Early In-Person Voting

Early in-person voting is a form of absentee voting under Ohio law.¹¹ If a voter applied for a mail ballot but comes to vote early in person at the board or early vote center, they don't need to vote provisionally, so long as no other reason for provisional voting applies.¹²

UOCAVA Voters are a special class of voters created by the federal Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act in 1986. They include military members, their families, and U.S. citizens living overseas.

Provisional Ballots

As a reminder, if a voter requested an absentee ballot (either by mail or in person), they must be flagged in the voter registration system and pollbook.¹³ If they show up at their polling location to vote on Election Day, they must vote provisionally, even if they did not return their ballot.¹⁴

Affidavit of Religious Objection to Photo ID

If a voter objects to being photographed for religious reasons and doesn't have a photo ID, the precinct election official (PEO) or board staff must provide an Affidavit of Religious Objection ([Form 12-O](#)). These voters also vote provisionally. If the voter does not complete the affidavit when casting the provisional ballot, they may appear at the board office within four days after the day of the election and complete the affidavit. See [Chapter 8, Provisional Voting](#) and [Chapter 10, Canvassing the Vote](#) for more on Affidavit of Religious Objection.

Noncitizen Identification

All voters must be U.S. citizens eligible to vote and have a valid photo ID. The PEO or board must:

- Verify the voter appears in the pollbook.
- Ask for a valid photo ID.

Important: Only require additional citizenship proof if ID shows a "noncitizen" designation or if they provide some other unauthorized form of photo identification. (See also [Boustani v. Larose, N.D. Ohio No. 1:06CV2065, 2024 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 196824, at *18 \(Oct. 30, 2024\).](#))

¹¹[R.C. 3509.051](#).

¹²[R.C. 3505.181](#) for reasons that a voter may be required to vote provisionally.

¹³This does not apply to Safe at Home address confidentiality program participants per [R.C. 111.44](#).

¹⁴[R.C. 3509.09\(B\)](#).

- Verify the voter's name and photograph and that the license or ID has not expired.
- Reject the ID as invalid if the license or ID contains a "NON-RENEWABLE/NON-TRANSFERABLE" identifier (on the front).
- Require additional proof of citizenship if the license or ID contains a "NONCITIZEN" identifier (on the back).
 - Use [Form 10-U](#) to verify citizenship qualifications.
 - If the voter completes Form 10-U, provides a valid photo ID, *and* acceptable proof of citizenship, they may vote a regular ballot.
 - If they complete Form 10-U but don't provide a valid photo ID *and* acceptable proof of citizenship, they must vote a provisional ballot.

Section 7.04 Absentee Voting by Mail

VOTING BY MAIL

Deadlines to Apply for an Absentee Vote by Mail Ballot

Voters must apply to cast an absentee vote by mail using [Form 11-A](#). They may submit applications beginning January 1 of the election year, or 90 days before the election, whichever is earlier, and ending at close of business seven days before Election Day.¹⁵

When the Board Mails Ballots

The board may begin mailing absentee ballots the first day after the close of voter registration, before Election Day. Continue mailing absentee ballots until close of business seven days before Election Day.¹⁶

How Voters Return Ballots

Voters may return absentee ballots by mail or personal delivery to the board office in the county where they're registered. If the county has designated an alternate location for early in-person voting, absentee ballots may also be returned there by in-person delivery.

¹⁵[R.C. 3509.03](#).

¹⁶[R.C. 3509.01](#); [R.C. 3509.03](#).

Return by Mail

- Non-UOCAVA absentee ballots must be received by the board by the close of polls on Election Day.
- UOCAVA ballots must be received by the board by the fourth day after Election Day.¹⁷

Return by Personal Delivery

- Voters or their family members may deliver the absentee ballot personally¹⁸ by the close of polls on Election Day to the board office only. No one may return a voted absentee ballot to a precinct polling location.¹⁹
- Disabled voters may choose anyone except their employer or union representative (or agents of those people) to return their ballot.²⁰
- Provide [Form 12-P](#) to anyone returning a ballot for someone else. They must declare under penalty of election falsification that they are:
 - Returning a ballot for a family member under [R.C. 3509.05\(C\)\(1\)](#), and that they are lawfully designated to do so; or
 - Assisting a disabled voter under the Voting Rights Act, and that they are not the voter's employer, agent of that employer, or an officer or agent of the voter's union.

Family member includes spouse, mother, father, mother-in-law, father-in-law, grandfather, grandmother, brother, or sister of the whole or half blood, or the son, daughter, adopting parent, adopted child, stepparent, stepchild, uncle, aunt, nephew, or niece.

Boards are encouraged to develop a drive-through ballot drop-off system for periods of high-volume turnout. These plans must be approved by a vote of the board and meet requirements and best practices established by the Secretary of State.²¹

¹⁷[R.C. 3511.11\(B\)](#).

¹⁸[R.C. 3509.05\(C\)\(1\)](#). "Family member" includes the spouse of the elector, the father, mother, father-in-law, mother-in-law, grandfather, grandmother, brother, or sister of the whole or half blood, or the son, daughter, adopting parent, adopted child, stepparent, stepchild, uncle, aunt, nephew, or niece.

¹⁹[R.C. 3509.05](#).

²⁰*League of Women Voters of Ohio v. LaRose*, 741 F. Supp.3d 694, 726 (N.D. Ohio 2024) (citing [52 U.S.C. § 10508](#)).

²¹See [Advisory 2024-03](#).

Secure Receptacles (Drop Boxes) Rules and Security

- Only one drop box for absentee ballots is allowed per board and must be located on board office property.²² If the board has multiple offices in the county, it may designate any office for absentee ballot returns, but only ONE office for the drop box.
- Post a weather-resistant notice ([Drop Box Protocol Sign](#)) at or on a drop box specifying security protocols and clear instructions on who is eligible to return ballots and instructions if someone other than the voter is attempting to return a ballot.
- To ensure compliance with state and federal law, and to protect the security of absentee ballot delivery, the only individual who may use a drop box to return the ballot is the voter.
- All individuals delivering ballots for a family member or disabled voter may either:
 - Mail the ballot to the board of elections, or
 - Return it to an election official at the board office and complete an attestation ([Form 12-P](#), see above info).
- Only a bipartisan team of election officials may open a drop box or handle its contents.
- The team must collect drop box contents daily and deliver them to the board.
- Collect contents promptly at the close of polls on Election Day. If people are in line to deposit ballots at the close of polls, they must be permitted to do so.
- The drop box must be open to receive ballots from the first day after voter registration closes through the close of polls on Election Day. It must remain open to receive ballots at all times during that period.
- Before early voting begins and after Election Day, signs should say ballots cannot be deposited in the drop box. Drop boxes can be used for other purposes year-round.

²²[R.C. 3509.05\(C\)\(3\)](#).

- Video surveillance is required at all times for drop boxes. Recordings are public record.
- Choose one option for complying with public records requests related to video surveillance:
 - Make recordings available for inspection upon request per [R.C. 149.43](#).
 - Make each day's recording available free, online for streaming or download within 72 hours after the recording ends.
- Keep video recordings for at least two weeks. Note that some counties co-own the video recordings with another office, such as the county sheriff, which may require a longer retention period.
- Consult the county prosecutor and county records commission for further guidance.
- If a voter tries to return an absentee ballot to the wrong county:
 - If the voter can be contacted quickly, they can come to collect their ballot.
 - If the voter can't be contacted or chooses not to collect their ballot, forward the unopened absentee ballot ID envelope to the correct board of elections via U.S. mail.
 - Ballots received by the correct county board by the close of polls on Election Day must be counted.

USE OF REMOTE BALLOT MARKING SYSTEM.

Voters with a qualifying disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) may apply for an absentee ballot by mail and request to mark their ballot using the county's remote ballot marking system. The voter must provide all standard absentee application information PLUS:

- A statement that the person has a qualifying disability under the ADA.²³

²³A board of elections must accept as true the voter's statement that they have a qualifying disability under the ADA. Under no circumstances may a board of elections require a voter to provide documentation of their disability or any information beyond what is requested on [Secretary of State Form 11-G](#).

- A statement that the person needs to use the remote ballot marking system to independently mark their ballot.
- The email address where the board can deliver the ballot.
- The address where the voter wants the ID Envelope ([Form 12-A](#)) mailed (if different from the registration address).

The voter may use [Form 11-G](#) for this purpose. It is on the Secretary of State's website and the board must make it available upon request.

If a voter submits a written absentee ballot application on a different form but indicates they have a disability and want to use the remote ballot marking system, make reasonable efforts to get any additional information needed to process the application and make the remote ballot marking system available to the voter.

What the Board Sends to the Voter

By Email

Once the board has received a completed application from a voter, send the following promptly to the voter via email:

- A link to access and mark their ballot using the remote ballot marking system.
- Secretary of State [Form 12-A](#) (Identification Envelope – Statement of Voter).²⁴
- Secretary of State [Form 12-N](#) (Instructions to Voters Using a Remote Ballot Marking System).
- Any additional instructions from the board or vendor for the remote ballot marking system.

If the board gets a notice of delivery failure for the email, verify the attempt to send to the email address provided, and, if the provided address is correct, contact the voter immediately for a valid email address. The voter must provide an alternate email address

in writing using a separate written application for an absentee ballot. If the board can't

Identification Envelope: Envelope ([Form 12-A](#)) with voter's name, address, signature, and ID that contains their voted ballot.

²⁴Each board must use the version of Secretary of State [Form 12-A](#) that appears on the Secretary of State's website, because that version of the form is compliant with [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#) (WCAG) 2.1AA and is a fillable PDF.

get a valid email address by the close of business seven days before Election Day, send the ballot to the voter by regular U.S. mail.

By Regular Mail (Same Day as Email):

Send the voter an absentee ballot ID envelope ([Form 12-A](#)) and an absentee ballot return envelope ([Form 12-F](#)) via regular U.S. mail on the same day the board emails the link and instructions. The ID envelope and absentee ballot return envelope must be sent to the voter's registration address or the address requested on their written application.

Pre-print the voter's name and the address (where they're registered to vote) on the ID envelope before mailing it. To show where the voter needs to sign, punch two small holes with a hole puncher — one on the "X" following "Signature" and one at the end of the signature line. This lets the voter detect by touch where they need to sign.

How the Remote Ballot Marking System Works

Voters can mark their ballot by accessing the remote ballot marking system through the board's link. Work closely with the remote ballot marking system vendor to help troubleshoot, resolve issues, and provide step-by-step instructions using the system.

After marking the ballot, the voter must print it and enclose it in an envelope using one of two methods:

- They complete the Statement of Voter ([Form 12-A](#)) electronically, then print and sign it. They then enclose this form with their ballot in any other envelope.
- They complete and sign the Statement of Voter ([Form 12-A](#)) that the board mailed to the voter and enclose their ballot in the ID Envelope.

Voters may return their voted ballot to the board of elections by mail or personal delivery in the same way as described in the ***How Voters Return Ballots*** section above.

EARLY IN-PERSON ABSENTEE VOTING

Early In-Person Absentee Voting Location

The board can use its office or designate another location for early in-person absentee voting.²⁵

If the board chooses to designate an alternate location:

²⁵[R.C. 3501.10\(C\)](#).

- Early in-person absentee voting may occur at ONLY that location.
- The designated location must comply with all applicable polling location requirements and prohibitions.²⁶
- It may NOT issue absentee ballots to voters from the board office, except by mail.
- It may accept absentee ballot returns at an alternate site in addition to the board office.
- It may only allow early in-person absentee voting at ONE location.

Uniform Statewide Hours

Early in-person absentee voting begins the day after voter registration closes and ends at 5 p.m. on the Sunday before Election Day.²⁷

All boards must adopt these exact business hours for early in-person absentee voting:²⁸

²⁶[R.C. 3501.11\(Z\)](#).

²⁷[R.C. 3509.01](#); [R.C. 3509.051](#); [R.C. 3509.06](#); [R.C. 3511.10](#).

²⁸[Substitute House Bill 458 \(134th General Assembly\)](#): "SECTION 4. (A) It is the intent of the General Assembly to enact legislation that specifies the days and hours during which the boards of elections shall permit in-person absent voting before an election. (B) The Secretary of State shall prescribe by directive a uniform schedule of days and hours for in-person absent voting, consistent with section 3509.051 of the Revised Code, as amended by this act. The schedule shall reallocate the six hours of in-person absent voting on the day before election day that, before the effective date of this section, were prescribed by Directive 2022-11. The Secretary of State shall do so by requiring the boards of elections to permit in-person absent voting during additional hours Monday through Friday of the week before the week of the election."

Uniform Statewide Early Voting Hours	Elections Conducted in Even Years (excluding special elections)		Elections Conducted in Odd Years, Special Elections, Primary Elections (excluding Presidential Primary)
	<i>Presidential General Election</i>	<i>Presidential Primary and Gubernatorial General Elections</i>	
	Voting begins the day after registration closes.		
State and Federal Holidays	Must be open for early in-person absentee voting.	Must be open for early in-person absentee voting.	Must not be open for early in-person absentee voting.
Week One of Voting	Day after the end of voter registration to Friday: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.	Day after the end of voter registration to Friday: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.	Day after the end of voter registration to Friday: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Week Two of Voting	Monday to Friday: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.	Monday to Friday: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.	Monday to Friday: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Week Three of Voting	Monday to Friday: 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday: 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday: 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.	Monday to Friday: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday: 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.	
Week Four of Voting	Monday: 7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Tuesday: 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. Wednesday to Friday: 7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Saturday before Election Day: 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday before Election Day: 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.	Monday: 7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Tuesday: 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. Wednesday to Friday: 7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Saturday before Election Day: 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday before Election Day: 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.	Monday: 7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Tuesday: 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. Wednesday to Friday: 7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Saturday before Election Day: 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday before Election Day: 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Rule: If in-person absentee voters are waiting in line when voting ends on any day during the early in-person absentee voting period, keep the voting location open until those voters who were in line when the location closed have cast a ballot.²⁹

²⁹R.C. 3509.051(A)(2).

Required: Place signage at the board office (and early in-person absentee voting location, if different) alerting voters to this schedule.

Early In-Person Absentee Voting Ballot Issuing and Return Procedures

Identification Requirements

A voter who chooses to receive and cast an absentee ballot early in person must provide one valid form of ID acceptable for Election Day voting purposes.³⁰

Receiving and Casting a Ballot

1. Verify voter eligibility.
2. Provide a signature book to be signed by the early in-person absentee voter.³¹
3. Verify the voter's signature.

Check for a provisional flag in the pollbook. If the voter is flagged to vote provisionally, follow the directions provided in [Chapter 8, Provisional Voting](#).

Identify the correct ballot style for the voter.

Issue an absentee ballot to the voter.

A voter who applies for and receives an absentee ballot in person may:

- Vote the ballot immediately.
- Take a paper ballot home to complete later. However, boards are prohibited from issuing these "hand carry" absentee ballots after the absentee ballot request deadline of the close of business on the seventh day before the election.³²

An early in-person absentee voter who is issued an optical scan ballot must mark the ballot at the board office or other designated site and insert the voted ballot into the scanner to cast it.

An early in-person absentee voter casting their ballot on a direct recording electronic (DRE) machine or touchscreen must mark and cast the ballot using the voting machine.

³⁰[R.C. 3509.051\(B\)](#). See **Section 7.03** of this Chapter for valid forms of identification.

³¹[R.C. 3509.051\(B\)](#).

³²[R.C. 3509.03\(D\)](#).

No Identification Envelope – Statement of Voter is required for early in-person absentee voting.³³

If an absentee voter chooses to take a paper ballot home, the board **must** provide the return mailing envelope ([Form 12-F](#)) and ID Envelope ([Form 12-A](#)). A voter who receives a paper absentee ballot in person and takes it home to vote may return it through the mail or by personal delivery. Follow the procedures outlined above in the Return by Mail and Return by Personal Delivery sections.

CURBSIDE VOTING

Curbside voting must be available for voters with a disability who can travel to the polling location but are physically unable to enter the location.³⁴ The voter may send another person into the polling location to inform election officials that they want to vote.³⁵ Boards should clearly display parking information and explain eligibility requirements for curbside voters.

If the disabled voter has assistance in completing the ballot, [Form 12-C](#) should be completed.

See [Chapter 9, Section 9.06](#), for details on the procedure for curbside voting. Also note that this process is the same for both Early Voting and Election Day.

STEPS FOR VOTING EARLY IN-PERSON ABSENTEE AFTER A VOTER HAS APPLIED FOR AN ABSENTEE BALLOT BY MAIL

If a voter previously submitted an absentee ballot application for a mailed ballot and appears for early in-person voting, the voter does not need to vote provisionally, as long as no other provisional reasons apply.³⁶

Process

- **If the voter hasn't returned the mailed absentee ballot**, record the original ballot as spoiled in the voter registration system.
- Ask the voter to return the spoiled ballot for tracking purposes.
- **If a voter returns the original ballot**, place it in the spoiled ballot container.

³³[R.C. 3509.051\(B\)](#).

³⁴[R.C. 3501.29\(C\)](#).

³⁵[R.C. 3501.29\(C\)](#).

³⁶See [R.C. 3505.181](#) for reasons that a voter may be required to vote provisionally.

- **Note:** A voter does NOT need to return the original absentee ballot to cast a regular early in-person ballot.

Replacement Ballots³⁷

- If a voter tears, soils, defaces, or erroneously marks a paper ballot before casting, or if the voter mistakenly requested the wrong form of a ballot in a primary, they may return the ballot and receive a replacement.
- A voter who received one ballot in the mail and one early in-person ballot may receive ONLY ONE MORE replacement paper ballot.³⁸
- No replacement ballots may be provided after the ballot is cast.
- Electronic ballots on a voting machine don't need replacements because voters can change their selections before casting the ballot.³⁹

ABSENTEE VOTING UNDER SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Ohio law provides some guidelines for other types of absentee voting under special circumstances.

Disability or Confinement

Eligibility

A voter who has a disability or is confined and cannot vote at a polling location on Election Day or in person at the board office due to personal illness, physical disability, infirmity, or confinement may vote by absentee ballot.⁴⁰ This includes voters who are confined to a nursing home, jail, or workhouse.

Application

- Use [Form 11-F](#) for applications.
- Submit applications to receive an absentee ballot in the same manner as other absentee voters.

³⁷ [R.C. 3505.23](#).

³⁸ [Chapter 9, Section 9.05](#), Marking the Ballot for instructions on processing Replacement Ballots

³⁹ [R.C. 3505.23](#) and [R.C. 3509.051\(E\)](#).

⁴⁰ [R.C. 3509.08\(A\)](#).

Return Methods for Disability or Confinement

A voter who has a disability or is confined may receive and return an absentee ballot by mail or in person through two board employees:

Return by Mail

The same requirements apply to returning a special circumstances ballot as regular mail ballots:

- Ballots must be received by the board by the close of polls on Election Day.⁴¹

Receipt and Return by Two Board Employees⁴²

- Two board employees from different major political parties may deliver an absentee ballot to a voter who has a disability or is confined and return the completed ballot to the board office.
- Both employees must be present during delivery, voting, and return of ballot.
- Both employees must subscribe to this fact on the absentee ballot ID envelope ([Form 12-C](#)).

Provisional Absentee Ballots

An absentee voter who has a disability or is confined and who also is required to vote a provisional ballot due to a change of address, change of name, or BMV/SSA mismatch may vote a provisional absentee ballot.⁴³

- Use [Form 11-I](#), the absentee ballot application prescribed for this purpose.
- No other type of absentee voter may vote provisionally by absentee ballot through the mail.

Unforeseeable Hospitalization

If a voter or their minor child is confined to a hospital due to an accident or unforeseeable medical emergency that occurred after the absentee voting by mail application deadline, they may vote by absentee ballot.⁴⁴

⁴¹[R.C. 3509.05\(D\)](#).

⁴²[R.C. 3509.08\(A\)](#).

⁴³[R.C. 3503.16\(G\)](#).

⁴⁴[R.C. 3509.08\(B\)\(1\)](#).

Unforeseeable Hospitalization Application Process

The voter must apply by completing [Form 11-B](#) with all required information, including:

- Listing the hospital where the applicant or their minor child has been admitted.
- Date of admission to hospital.
- Elections and ballot types for which the applicant is qualified to vote.⁴⁵

Voters may submit applications beginning after the close of business on the seventh day before Election Day (after the close of the normal absentee ballot request deadline).

The deadline is 3 p.m. on Election Day.⁴⁶

Absentee voters with an unforeseeable hospitalization *within the county* may receive and return the absentee ballot through a family member or through two board employees.⁴⁷ They must provide the same voter ID as someone who casts a ballot by mail.

If the voter's hospitalization is *outside of the county*, they may receive and return an absentee ballot through a family member or by mail.⁴⁸

Receipt and Return by a Family Member

- Certain family members⁴⁹ of a voter are permitted to deliver the absentee ballot to the voter and return the voted absentee ballot to the board office by the close of polls on Election Day.⁵⁰ Be sure that the family member completes [Form 12-P](#).⁵¹
- Voted absentee ballots cannot be returned to the precinct polling location.

⁴⁵[R.C. 3509.08\(B\)\(2\)](#).

⁴⁶[R.C. 3509.08\(B\)\(2\)](#).

⁴⁷[R.C. 3509.08\(B\)\(2\)](#).

⁴⁸[R.C. 3509.08\(B\)\(2\)](#).

⁴⁹[R.C. 3509.05\(A\)](#). "Family member" includes the spouse of the elector, the father, mother, father-in-law, mother-in-law, grandfather, grandmother, brother, or sister of the whole or half blood, or the son, daughter, adopting parent, adopted child, stepparent, stepchild, uncle, aunt, nephew, or niece.

⁵⁰[R.C. 3509.08\(B\)\(2\)](#).

⁵¹ Specifically, as voters with disabilities are concerned, federal law allows such voters to select a person of their choice to assist them with voting, including the return of the voter's absentee ballot. Federal law thus preempts state laws limiting that choice to only certain family members. See *League of Women Voters of Ohio v. LaRose*, 741 F. Supp.3d 694, 726 (N.D. Ohio 2024) (citing [52 U.S.C. § 10508](#)).

Receipt and Return by Two Boards of Elections Employees (hospital within the county)

- Two board employees from different major political parties may deliver a ballot to the absentee voter who is hospitalized or whose minor child is hospitalized within the county.⁵²
- Both employees must be present during delivery, voting, and return of the ballot.
- Both employees must subscribe to that fact on the Absentee Ballot ID Envelope ([Form 12-C](#)).

Receipt and Return by Mail (Hospital Outside the County)

- If the hospital is outside the county where the voter is registered, the board may mail the absentee ballot to the hospital per [Form 11-B](#).⁵³
- The ballot has the same mail return requirements as regular absentee ballots.⁵⁴

Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) Voters

Federal and state laws govern absentee voting by uniformed services and overseas U.S. citizens. The Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)⁵⁵ and the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act⁵⁶ protect the rights of U.S. citizens to vote in federal elections while serving or residing overseas. Ohio incorporated those federal protections into the Ohio Revised Code and extended them to state and local elections.⁵⁷

Types of UOCAVA Voters⁵⁸

Uniformed Services Voters

- member of active or reserve components of the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard
- National Guard and organized militia members on activated status⁵⁹

⁵²[R.C. 3509.08\(B\)\(2\)](#).

⁵³[R.C. 3509.08\(B\)\(2\)](#).

⁵⁴[R.C. 3509.05\(B\)\(2\)](#).

⁵⁵52 U.S.C.A. § 20301.

⁵⁶52 U.S.C.A. § 20101.

⁵⁷[R.C. 3503.191](#); [R.C. 3511.01](#); [R.C. 3511.011](#); [R.C. 3511.021](#).

⁵⁸[R.C. 3511.01](#).

⁵⁹The Ohio organized militia consists of Ohio citizens who are members of the Ohio National Guard, the Ohio Naval Militia, the Ohio Military Reserve, and the Ohio Cyber Reserve. [R.C. 5923.01](#).

- Merchant Marine members
- Commissioned Corps: Public Health Service or the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- spouses or dependents of any of above

Overseas Voters

- A person considered by law an Ohio resident but currently outside the U.S. These individuals were last eligible to vote in Ohio before leaving or would have been eligible if they had been 18 or older.⁶⁰
- A person born outside the U.S. with a parent/guardian who last resided and was last eligible to vote in Ohio before leaving the U.S.⁶¹

UOCAVA Application Process

UOCAVA voters apply for absentee ballots using the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) or by filing a written request with the board containing all the following required information:⁶²

- ☐ voter's name
- ☐ signature
- ☐ address where registered to vote in Ohio
- ☐ date of birth
- ☐ acceptable form of identification
- ☐ election(s) for which the voter is requesting ballots for
- ☐ statements the voter is a qualified elector, absent UOCAVA voter, and that voter or their parent/guardian, if applicable, resided in Ohio for at least 30 days before commencing service or leaving the U.S.
- ☐ voter's party affiliation (primary elections only)
- ☐ method to receive ballot (mail, email, or fax)
- ☐ mailing address, email address, or fax number for ballot delivery

⁶⁰[R.C. 3511.01\(B\)\(1\)-\(2\).](#)

⁶¹[R.C. 3511.01\(B\)\(3\).](#)

⁶²[R.C. 3511.02\(A\).](#)

UOCAVA voters may choose among mail, email, fax, or in person to submit absentee ballot applications.⁶³

Deadline: Applications by mail, email, or fax must be received by the board by the close of business on the seventh day before the election.⁶⁴

Relatives of UOCAVA voters may apply for absentee ballots on the UOCAVA voter's behalf if the UOCAVA voter is already registered to vote. Use [Form 11-E](#) or the FPCA.⁶⁵ A relative must submit the form on behalf of the registered UOCAVA voter in person or by mail to the board office.

Special FPCA Rules

Dual Purpose: The FPCA serves as both a voter registration form (if the voter is not registered or needs to update their registration) AND as a request for absentee ballots.

Registration Deadline: An FPCA used to register or update the registration of qualified UOCAVA voters must reach election officials no later than 30 days before the election.⁶⁶

Annual Validity: FPCA absentee ballot request is valid for every election in that year unless the voter specifies a single election only.⁶⁷

Accommodation Requirement: If the board receives an absentee ballot application that is not an FPCA and it's clear the applicant is a UOCAVA voter, provide the same accommodations as if they applied using the FPCA.⁶⁸

Electronic Submission: An emailed or faxed copy of a signed FPCA is acceptable for voter registration.⁶⁹

Board UOCAVA Tasks

1. Prepare Two Notices of Elections for Voters Using the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot

The board must prepare initial and updated election notices for each precinct for

⁶³ [R.C. 3503.19\(B\)](#); [R.C. 3511.021\(A\)\(2\)](#).

⁶⁴ [R.C. 3511.04\(B\)](#).

⁶⁵ [R.C. 3511.02\(C\)](#). Relatives include "spouse, father, mother, father-in-law, mother-in-law, grandfather, grandmother, brother or sister of the whole blood or half blood, son, daughter, adopting parent, adopted child, stepparent, stepchild, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, uncle, aunt, nephew, or niece."

⁶⁶ [52 U.S.C.A. § 20302](#).

⁶⁷ [R.C. 3511.02](#).

⁶⁸ [R.C. 3509.10](#).

⁶⁹ [R.C. 3503.19\(B\)\(2\)\(a\)](#).

Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot use.⁷⁰ A uniformed services or overseas voter may request a copy of this notice to be sent via mail, fax, or email.⁷¹ If the board maintains a website, post both notices online.⁷²

Use [Form 120](#) for the election notice template.

a. Initial Notice⁷³

Deadline: The initial notice should be available at least 100 days before each regularly scheduled election and as soon as practicable before an election that is not regularly scheduled.

The initial notice must include:

- i. A list of all federal, state, and local offices the board expects on the ballot.
- ii. A list of all questions and issues the board expects on the ballot.
- iii. Specific instructions for UOCAVA voter to indicate choices on the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot.

b. Updated Notice⁷⁴

Deadline: The updated notice must be prepared as soon as the form of the ballot is certified and no later than 46 days before each election.

Updated notice must include:

- i. A list of certified candidates for each office on the ballot.
- ii. A list of all certified questions and issues on the ballot.
- iii. Specific instructions for UOCAVA voters to indicate choices on the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot.

2. Transmit UOCAVA Ballots on the 46th Day Before Each Election

Deadline: On the 46th day before each election — even if it's a day the board is not regularly open for business — the board must transmit an absentee ballot to every UOCAVA voter who filed a valid application with the board during the application period beginning January 1 or 90 days before the election (whichever

⁷⁰[R.C. 3511.16.](#)

⁷¹[R.C. 3511.16\(B\).](#)

⁷²[R.C. 3511.16\(D\).](#)

⁷³[R.C. 3511.16\(A\).](#)

⁷⁴[R.C. 3511.16\(C\).](#)

is earlier). UOCAVA ballots must be transmitted on the 46th day.⁷⁵ **This is a mandatory deadline.**

Boards must have the necessary personnel on-site to accept UOCAVA applications, review them for validity, and issue ballots on the 46th day prior to the election.

UOCAVA voters may receive absentee ballots by mail, email, or fax, as indicated on their application. If they didn't express a preference on the application, deliver the absentee ballot via standard mail.⁷⁶

All uniformed services and overseas voters may vote a complete ballot — all federal, state, and local candidate and issue contests — of the Ohio precinct where they resided immediately before leaving Ohio.

A person who moves from Ohio to a location outside the United States without becoming a resident of another state does not lose Ohio residency and is therefore eligible to vote on all candidate and issue contests.⁷⁷

What to transmit to UOCAVA Voters:

- ballot
- [Form 12-A](#) (Identification Envelope with Statement of Voter)
- [Form 12-K](#) (Instructions to Uniformed Services or Overseas Voters)
- [Form 12-J](#) (Ballot Tracking for Military and Overseas Voters-Notification of PIN)

When sending these materials via email, it is sufficient to attach the ballot to the email in .pdf form generated from the election management system (EMS). The actual ballot issued to the UOCAVA voter will be the one used when remaking the ballot upon return. It will have a stub.

⁷⁵[R.C. 3511.04\(B\).](#)

⁷⁶[R.C. 3511.021\(A\)\(2\).](#)

If the board receives more than one absentee ballot request from a UOCAVA voter and has already issued them a ballot, do NOT transmit another ballot to the same voter UNLESS all the following apply:

- Voter's subsequent request states they submitted the initial request more than 30 days before the election.
- They haven't received a ballot as of the 15th day before the election.
- The board hasn't received a voted ballot from that voter.⁷⁸

3. Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB)

The FWAB serves as a backup ballot for UOCAVA voters who made timely application for, and did not receive, an absentee ballot.

Voter Process:

- The voter downloads the FWAB from the Federal Voting Assistance Program website at [FVAP.gov](https://www.fvap.gov).
- They complete the ballot with information the board provides in the election notices explained above.
- These voters can vote for all federal, state, and local offices, questions, and issues in every election.⁷⁹

Counting Requirements:

- A FWAB is counted only if the voter requested an absentee ballot by the deadline, which is the close of business on the seventh day before Election Day.⁸⁰
- If, after mailing the FWAB to the board, the voter receives the requested absentee ballot, they may vote the ballot and return it to the board of elections.
- If the board receives a voter's valid absentee ballot by the fourth day after the election, it will count the absentee ballot (not the FWAB).

⁷⁸[R.C. 3511.08.](#)

⁷⁹[R.C. 3511.14.](#)

⁸⁰[52 U.S.C.A. § 20303; R.C. 3511.02.](#)

Registration Function:

- The declaration accompanying a FWAB may register the person to vote in the next election if received no later than 30 days before the election.
- If submitted after that point and if the voter is not already registered, the ballot cannot count, but the declaration serves to register the voter for future elections.⁸¹

4. Maintain Centralized Ballot Tracking System (CBTS)

The Centralized Ballot Tracking System (CBTS) allows UOCAVA voters to track the status of their absentee ballots.⁸²

Initial Setup:

- When the board receives a valid FPCA or [Form 11-E](#), enter the voter into the CBTS to create a voter record.
- The CBTS will automatically generate a unique, personal identification number (PIN) for the voter.
- Using [Form 12-J](#), provide the voter their assigned PIN and instructions to access the CBTS website and track their ballot.

The voter uses their PIN to log in and view the status of their ballot. The board is required to update and maintain the accuracy of each voter record. Update each absentee ballot record with:

- ☐ Date the board received the FPCA or [Form 11-E](#).
- ☐ Date the board transmitted the blank absentee ballot to the voter.
- ☐ Date the board received the voted absentee ballot.
- ☐ Any errors that were detected on the absentee ballot ID envelope.
- ☐ Whether the absentee ballot was counted.

All CBTS records must be updated completely before the Official Canvass is completed.

⁸¹[R.C. 3511.14\(B\)](#).

⁸²[R.C. 3511.021\(B\)](#).

If the board does not have a copy of the CBTS manual, please contact the Secretary of State's Elections Division.

Safe at Home Voters

Safe at Home is an address confidentiality program under Ohio law.⁸³ It assists survivors of:

- Domestic violence.
- Menacing by stalking.
- Human trafficking.
- Trafficking in persons.
- Rape.
- Sexual battery.

The program shields personal information from public record and provides individuals who are otherwise eligible a safe and secure way to register and vote.

Program participants eligible to become electors may have a confidential voter record.⁸⁴ They will not appear in a pollbook. To protect their confidentiality, Ohio law limits program participants to voting *only* absentee by mail.⁸⁵ The participant may use their program participant identification number instead of their address on the absentee ballot application and identification envelope.⁸⁶

Safe at Home discourages participants from voting provisionally because:

- It reveals their address to those in the polling location.
- Provisional ballot counting decisions must be resolved in a public meeting.

Exception: A provisional ballot affirmation completed by a program participant with a confidential voter registration is NOT a public record.⁸⁷ A director or deputy director must promptly consult their county prosecutor if they receive a public records request

⁸³[R.C. 111.41 et seq.](#)

⁸⁴[R.C. 111.44.](#)

⁸⁵[R.C. 111.44\(D\)\(2\).](#)

⁸⁶[R.C. 3509.04\(B\).](#)

⁸⁷[R.C. 149.43\(A\)\(1\)\(ee\).](#)

regarding provisional ballots when a program participant with a confidential registration voted a provisional ballot in that election.

Participants with questions about requesting and receiving an absentee ballot without compromising address confidentiality should contact the **Safe at Home Program** at the Secretary of State's office at 614-995-2255.

DAILY REPORTING REQUIREMENTS FOR RETURNED ABSENTEE BALLOTS

Beginning on the 45th day before the election and ending on the fifth day after the election, the board is required to report information about early voting from the previous day to the Secretary of State's office.⁸⁸ The Secretary of State must make this information available to the public. Provide daily files to the Secretary of State's office containing all voters who requested or returned absentee ballots or voted early in person. Files must conform to the format and data requirements set forth in the *Absentee File and Data Requirements* document in the Boards of Elections Portal.

Section 7.05 Processing Absentee Ballot Applications

PRE-PRINTING ONLY NAME AND ADDRESS ON ABSENTEE BALLOT APPLICATION

The board may pre-print ONLY a voter's name and address on absentee ballot applications before mailing to a voter who requests it.⁸⁹

Do not complete any other required fields for the voter unless:

- The voter asks for help.
- The voter has a disability or literacy challenges.⁹⁰

PROHIBITION ON PRE-PAYING POSTAGE ON ABSENTEE BALLOT RETURN

The board cannot pre-pay return postage for any type of absentee ballot application.⁹¹

⁸⁸[R.C. 3509.05\(C\)\(4\)\(a\)](#).

⁸⁹[R.C. 3509.03\(F\)](#); [R.C. 3511.02\(F\)](#).

⁹⁰[R.C. 3505.24](#).

⁹¹[R.C. 3509.03\(E\)](#); [R.C. 3511.02\(E\)](#). This prohibition does not affect UOCAVA voters' use of the USPS Official Absentee Balloting Materials postage-paid envelope if they choose to return their FPCAs through the USPS.

SUBMISSION METHODS

Only UOCAVA voters may choose among mail, email, or fax to submit absentee ballot applications.⁹²

Non-UOCAVA absentee ballot applications must be mailed or delivered to the board in person. The board cannot accept or process non-UOCAVA absentee ballot applications received by fax or email.

INCOMPLETE APPLICATIONS

If the board receives an absentee ballot application that is missing required information, it must promptly notify the voter of the missing information and ask them to submit a new, complete application with all required information.⁹³

If the board is unable to verify the voter's date of birth, driver's license or state ID number, last four digits of their Social Security number, or residence address, it must send [Form 11-R](#) to inform the voter of the issue and alert them that they must vote provisionally if the problem is not resolved.⁹⁴

How to Contact Voters

- Notify the voter by phone and email that additional information is required to provide an absentee ballot.
- Send [Form 11-R](#), when applicable.
- Use regular mail if electronic contact is not possible.⁹⁵

For UOCAVA Voters

- If an absentee ballot application from a UOCAVA voter is missing required information or the board can't open the file in which the voter transmitted the FPCA, contact the voter immediately. Use the quickest and most effective available means of communication.
- Try to contact the voter using all the contact information provided.
- Ask the voter to resubmit a complete application.

⁹²[R.C. 3503.191\(A\), \(B\)](#); [R.C. 3511.021\(A\)\(2\)](#).

⁹³[R.C. 3509.04\(A\)](#).

⁹⁴[R.C. 3503.19\(C\)\(1\)-\(2\)](#); [3503.151\(E\)](#); [3503.201\(A\)\(1\), \(B\), \(D\)\(1\)-\(2\)](#); [3505.181\(A\)\(4\)](#).

⁹⁵[R.C. 3509.03](#); [R.C. 3509.04\(A\)](#); [R.C. 3509.04\(B\)](#).

Important Rules for Absentee Ballot Applications

- Never return an original incomplete application of any type to the voter. Once an application is received at the board office, it is a public record.
- Do not complete missing information for the voter.
- The voter must personally complete any missing information unless they have a designated attorney-in-fact.⁹⁶

ABSENTEE BALLOT APPLICATIONS SENT TO THE WRONG COUNTY

If the board receives an absentee ballot application intended for another county:

- Transfer the original application to the correct county within two days of receipt.
- Transfer it on the same day if the application is received within the week prior to the absentee application deadline.
- First, electronically transmit a copy of the original application to the correct county board.
- Then, mail the original application to the correct county board.
- Include a transmittal form cover page with:
 - Name and contact information for the board.
 - Transmission date.
 - Number of applications transferred.
 - Optional: List of applicants whose forms are included.
- Keep a copy (paper or electronic) of the original application and transmittal form.

ISSUING BALLOTS

When Absentee Voting Begins

- UOCAVA voters: 46 days before each election⁹⁷

⁹⁶[R.C. 3501.382](#); [R.C. 3509.03](#); [R.C. 3511.02](#).

⁹⁷[R.C. 3511.04](#).

- All other voters: the day after the close of registration⁹⁸

The board must have ballots proofed and ready to mail before the 46th day for UOCAVA voters.

Once the board receives a complete application, provide the voter with the correct ballot for their precinct based on the voter's residence address.

Prohibition on Canceling Requests

The board cannot cancel a valid absentee ballot application once a voter submits it.

After processing a complete absentee ballot application, the board must issue the ballot unless:

- It receives notice that the voter moved to another precinct.
- The voter died.
- The voter is otherwise ineligible to cast the ballot.

Voters may:

- Decide not to cast their absentee ballot.
- Vote early in person instead.
- Request a replacement absentee ballot to be sent by mail.

If the voter goes to their polling location to vote on Election Day, they must cast a provisional ballot.⁹⁹

Identification Envelope and Pre-Printing ONLY Name and Address

Ohio law requires boards to provide an identification envelope with the absentee ballot ([Form 12-A](#) and [Form 12-C](#)).¹⁰⁰ State law permits boards to pre-print the voter's name and address (at which the voter is registered to vote) on the identification envelope unless the voter has a confidential voter registration record (Safe at Home participant).¹⁰¹ Do not complete any other required information on absentee ballot

⁹⁸[R.C. 3509.01\(B\)](#).

⁹⁹[R.C. 3509.09\(B\)](#).

¹⁰⁰[R.C. 3509.04](#); [R.C. 3511.05](#).

¹⁰¹[R.C. 111.42](#); [R.C. 3511.02\(F\)](#).

applications or identification envelopes unless the voter requests help due to disability or literacy challenges.¹⁰²

How to Pre-Print Information

- Pre-print the voter's name and the address (at which the voter is registered to vote) directly onto the voter's identification envelope, or
- Pre-print voter's name and address onto a sticker or label and affix it to the identification envelope, or
- Use another method that achieves this purpose.

Additional Information Allowed

The board may print other helpful administrative information, such as:

- Voter ID number.
- Ballot style.
- Precinct.
- Party-affiliation.
- Municipality or other jurisdictions.
- Bar codes, etc.

Do not pre-print the address of a participant in the Safe at Home program.¹⁰³

If a voter's name is written anywhere on the identification envelope by the election board (for example, in a location other than the designated blanks on [Forms 12-A](#) or [12-C](#)), it fulfills the legal requirement for the envelope to include the voter's name.

Prohibition on Paying Return Postage on an Absentee Ballot

The board cannot pre-pay return postage for any absentee ballot.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰²[R.C. 3505.24](#); [R.C. 3509.04](#); [R.C. 3511.05\(E\)](#).

¹⁰³[R.C. 3509.04](#).

¹⁰⁴[R.C. 3509.04](#); [R.C. 3511.04](#). This prohibition does not affect UOCAVA voters' use of the USPS Official Absentee Balloting Materials postage-paid envelope to return their ballots through the USPS.

Mailing Considerations and Instructions

These instructions help ensure ballots are received on time and, if otherwise valid, can be included in the Official Canvass. They are based on close collaboration between state and local election officials in Ohio and USPS.

Board officials should:

- Include [Form 12](#) with every mailed absentee ballot.
- Use letter-size courtesy reply envelopes.¹⁰⁵
- Contact and use available postal resources that support election mail coordination, mailpiece design, mailing preparation and entry activities, and coordinating mailpiece delivery and pickup.

For help with mailpiece design, contact a Mailpiece Design Analyst (MDA) by calling the MDA Support Center at 855-593-6093 (Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. ET) or send the request by email to MDA@USPS.gov.

USPS recommends that all trays and sacks with mailings of ballot materials affix Tag 191 (a bright green tag). This tag provides a high degree of visibility on ballot mail as it enters postal processing centers.

- Domestic and International Ballots: These tags are available by contacting an USPS Election Mail Coordinator (see above).
- The board must use First-Class Mail postage for delivery of outbound absentee ballots. Use USPS-approved practices such as presort First-Class Mail to maximize postage discounts.
- USPS requires balloting materials for all types of absentee ballots to clearly show the proper amount of First-Class Mail postage that must be paid. Include this information in balloting materials (for instance, on ballot instructions, mailing instructions, or the envelope) with the marking "First-Class Mail postage must be applied."

¹⁰⁵This recommendation does not contemplate the use of #10 business envelopes. In fact, USPS regulations allow a letter size envelope to be up to 6½ inches in height, 11½ inches wide, and ¼ inch thick. This maximum size is substantially larger than a #10 business envelope.

- Alternatively, print “Apply First-Class Mail postage here” in the upper-right corner of the address side of the return envelope.
- USPS will also accept approved variations of the above markings. Additionally, balloting materials must show, in a prominent location, the specific amount of First-Class Mail postage required for the return of the ballot to election officials. The marking requirements will not apply to ballot materials that are qualified under the [special exemptions](#) specified by USPS.¹⁰⁶

STEPS FOR SENDING A REPLACEMENT BALLOT BY MAIL

The board may receive requests for replacement ballots when absentee voters:

- Did not receive their ballot in the mail.
- Made a mistake completing their ballot.
- Defaced their ballot.
- Have another reason for wanting a replacement.

Replacement Rules

- The board may provide up to two replacement absentee ballots per voter.¹⁰⁷
- Send replacement absentee ballots only to the address included on the original application.
- If the voter wants the ballot mailed to a different address, they must complete an application with the new address.¹⁰⁸
- No voter may receive a replacement ballot after their absentee ballot is scanned or entered into the automatic tabulating equipment.¹⁰⁹

If a voter wants the board to mail a replacement absentee ballot, board employees must take the following steps:

1. If a voter made a mistake or their ballot was defaced, ask them to return the original ballot for tracking purposes. The voter should fold the ballot for privacy,

¹⁰⁶USPS Domestic Mail Manual, [Balloting Mail](#). See also <http://about.usps.com/election-mail/election-mail-resources.htm>.

¹⁰⁷This is consistent with the law governing replacement ballots on Election Day. See [R.C. 3505.23](#): “In no case shall more than three ballots be issued to a voter.”

¹⁰⁸[R.C. 3509.03](#).

¹⁰⁹[R.C. 35 09.051\(E\)](#).

but not seal it within the identification envelope. Assure the voter that only one ballot will be counted.

2. If a voter did not receive or lost the ballot, tell them when it was issued and that USPS delivery takes two to five days.¹¹⁰
3. Depending on when the voter makes the replacement ballot request, caution them that there may not be enough time for mail delivery and suggest other options, such as voting early in person or at their polling location on Election Day.
4. If the voter still requests the board to mail a replacement absentee ballot, board employees must promptly issue the replacement ballot and clearly document electronically when it was issued.

Important: The board may count only one ballot per voter. If the voter marks and returns more than one ballot:

- Count only the first ballot received.
- If multiple ballots arrive simultaneously, use a bipartisan process to determine which ballot was received first.
- Knowingly voting more than once in the same election is a felony.¹¹¹

POLL LIST TO IDENTIFY ELECTORS REQUESTING ABSENT VOTER'S BALLOT

The board must mark the name of each registered voter in the precinct who requested an absentee ballot for that election.¹¹² If a voter marked as having requested an absentee ballot appears at their polling location to vote on Election Day, they must cast a provisional ballot.¹¹³

ABSENTEE BALLOT STATUS LOOKUP

The board website must allow absentee voters to check the status of their ballot from the date of application to the date it was accepted for counting. Specifically, the website must include:

¹¹⁰[State and Local Election Mail — User's Guide.](#)

¹¹¹[R.C. 3599.12\(A\)\(2\).](#)

¹¹²This does not apply to Safe at Home address confidentiality program participants per [R.C. 111.44.](#)

¹¹³[R.C. 3509.09.](#)

- ☐ The date the voter's absentee application was approved.
- ☐ The date the voter's approved absentee application was processed (that is, the date the board mailed or issued the ballot).
- ☐ The date the voter's voted absentee ballot was received by the board.
- ☐ The date the voter's voted absentee ballot was accepted for counting (or, if not accepted, the reason why and deadline to correct it).

This search functionality must be available from at least the 46th¹¹⁴ day before the elections through the 35th day after the election.

Section 7.06 Eligibility of Former Ohio Residents to Vote by Absentee Ballot in Ohio in a Presidential Election

Former Ohio residents may vote for President and Vice President only if they:

- Are qualified to vote in Ohio, with the exception of residence and registration:
 - Must be a U.S. citizen.
 - At least 18 years old by presidential Election Day
 - Resided in Ohio for at least 30 consecutive days before moving
 - Otherwise eligible to vote before moving.
 - Moved to another state from Ohio residence no more than 90 days before presidential Election Day.
- Have not registered to vote in the new state.
- Are not eligible to vote for President and Vice President, or for presidential and vice-presidential electors, in a new state.
- Complete a Certificate of Intent to vote in a presidential election.

A former Ohio resident who meets these requirements may vote in Ohio for President and Vice President, but not for any other offices or issues.¹¹⁵

The voter may:

¹¹⁴ [R.C. 3511.04](#).

¹¹⁵ [R.C. 3504.01](#).

- Vote absentee ballot by mail,
- Vote absentee ballot in person at the board office or other designated location during the early in-person voting period, or
- Vote in person on Election Day at their former Ohio precinct polling location.

CERTIFICATE OF INTENT TO VOTE IN A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Filing Requirement

An eligible former resident must:

- Complete two copies of the Certificate of Intent to Vote in a Presidential Election ([Form 107-A](#)).¹¹⁶
- File them in person or by mail with the board where voter was last a resident.¹¹⁷
- Deadline: File the certificates by 4:00 p.m. of the 30th day before the presidential election.¹¹⁸

Notice to Secretary of State

The board must send one copy of the Certificate of Intent to Vote in a Presidential Election to the Ohio Secretary of State's Elections Division no later than the 25th day before the day of the presidential election.¹¹⁹

ABSENTEE BALLOT FOR FORMER OHIO RESIDENT

Former Ohio residents may request and receive absentee ballots by mail or in person if they:

- Timely file the Certificates of Intent.
- Submit an absentee ballot application by the close of business the seventh day before the election.
- Request the ballot be mailed to the voter's new residence.

¹¹⁶[R.C. 3504.02.](#)

¹¹⁷If the voter has a confidential voter registration record (in other words, if the voter is a participant in the Safe at Home program), the applicant may include the applicant's program participation identification number instead of the applicant's address or precinct in the Certificate of Intent. [R.C. 3504.02.](#)

¹¹⁸[R.C. 3504.02.](#)

¹¹⁹[R.C. 3504.05.](#)

- Use former Ohio voting address on the application.
- Meet all other ID requirements for both the application and identification envelope.

Section 7.07 Processing and Counting Absentee Ballots

The board may begin processing absentee ballots the day after voter registration closes.¹²⁰ Processing includes scanning, but not tabulating. See [Chapter 10, Section 10.02](#), for details on processing absentee ballots.

COUNTING ABSENTEE BALLOTS¹²¹

Follow the step-by-step process in [Chapter 10, Section 10.02](#), for counting absentee ballots.

Key Reminders

When reviewing voter information on absentee ballot ID envelopes, follow these rules (along with [Chapter 10, Canvassing the Vote](#) instructions):

- Date of Birth

Small mistakes in dates of birth are not valid reasons to reject ballots.

 - Examples of small mistakes include switching month and year, writing today's date, or flipping numbers.
 - Check board records first to see if a board error caused the problem before rejecting the ballot.
- Address
 - Small mistakes in the address are not valid reasons to reject ballots.
 - The postal address (such as Columbus) may differ from political subdivision (city, village, or township) where the voter lives (such as Bexley). The political subdivision, ZIP Code, and/or city (from USPS) are generally not relevant here.

¹²⁰[R.C. 3509.06; 3509.01\(B\)\(2\)](#).

¹²¹[Instructions for administering absentee voting are found in Chapter 7.](#)

- The address is valid without a municipality or zip code when the street number and name are in your county (except when the same address exists in two or more different precincts within the same county).

Examples for ballots cast by voters in Franklin County:

Street No. & Name	City/ZIP	Political Subdiv.	In County?	Valid?
2598 Ruhl Ave.	Columbus, 43209	Bexley	Yes	Yes
2598 Ruhl Ave.	Bexley, 43209	Bexley	Yes	Yes
63 Pinebrooke	Westerville, 43082	Westerville	No	No

Important: Only use the board's voter registration system (CVRS) or the statewide voter registration database (SWVRD) to check addresses on absentee ballot ID envelopes. Do not use property records of a County Auditor or Treasurer or County Engineer maps.

- Identification
 - Voters don't need to use the same ID type on an absentee ballot ID envelope they used when registering.
 - **Important:** Only use CVRS or SWVRD to verify ID. Do not use the BMV website.
 - Follow the [Voter Identification Requirement Chart](#) at the end of **Chapter 10** for all ID verification.
- Empty Data Fields
 - If a data field in the CVRS or SWVRD is "null" (no data is present, or the field has placeholder values, such as "1/1/1800" for birth date), the voter meets requirements when they give this information on the identification envelope.
 - Board employees may enter this info into the CVRS.

Include all absentee ballots returned by the close of polls on Election Day in the unofficial results.¹²²

Count valid non-UOCAVA ballots received by the close of polls on Election Day and valid UOCAVA ballots received through the fourth day after the election in the Official Canvass. This includes ballots with insufficient ID envelopes that were cured by the fourth day.¹²³

See [Chapter 10, Canvassing the Vote](#), for more details on processing and counting absentee ballots.

¹²²[R.C. 3509.06; 3505.30.](#)

¹²³[R.C. 3509.05.](#)

Chapter 7 Checklist: Absentee Voting

Pre-Election Setup

- ☐ Order sufficient quantities of all required forms.
- ☐ Post [Form 11-A](#) on the board website.
- ☐ Make forms available at public locations (libraries, etc.).
- ☐ Set up absentee ballot status lookup on website (available 46 days before through 35 days after election).
- ☐ Post early voting hours and location information.
- ☐ Display drop box signage.
- ☐ Program voting equipment with security features and passwords.
- ☐ Install tamper-evident seals on voting equipment and ballot boxes.
- ☐ Set up video surveillance for drop boxes.
- ☐ Arrange for daily bipartisan collection of drop box contents.

Application Processing

- ☐ Check application completeness (name, signature, address, date of birth, ID, election, eligibility statement, party if primary, mailing address).
- ☐ Verify all required information is present.
- ☐ Verify ID and signature match.
- ☐ Pre-print voter name and address on ID envelopes.
- ☐ Process applications within required timeframes.
- ☐ Incomplete Applications:
 - Contact voter promptly (phone/email preferred, mail if necessary).
 - Provide [Form 11-R](#), if applicable.
 - For UOCAVA voters: Use the quickest communication method available.
 - Never return original, incomplete applications to voters.

- Never complete missing information for voters (except with disability assistance requests).

❑ Wrong County Applications:

- Transfer to correct county within two days (same day if received during second-to-last week of early voting).
- Send electronic copy first, then mail original.
- Include transmittal form with contact info, date, and number of applications.
- Keep copy of transferred applications.

Ballot Issuance

- ❑ Begin mailing UOCAVA ballots 46 days before election (mandatory deadline).
- ❑ Begin mailing other absentee ballots day after voter registration closes.
- ❑ Continue issuing until seven days before election (close of business).
- ❑ Use First-Class Mail postage only.
- ❑ Include [Form 12](#) with all mailed ballots. Use letter-size envelopes when possible (USPS recommendation).
- ❑ Mark postage requirement clearly on materials.
- ❑ Apply Tag 191 to trays and sacks of ballot materials, per USPS.
- ❑ Ballot Contents:
 - Correct ballot for voter's precinct
 - Pre-printed ID envelope with voter name/address
 - Return envelope ([Form 12-F](#))
 - Instructions ([Form 12](#))
 - Additional forms as needed (UOCAVA: Forms [12-K](#), [12-J](#))

Early In-Person Voting

Daily Setup

- ❑ Inspect voting equipment and ballot boxes before opening.

- ❑ Verify tamper-evident seals are intact.
- ❑ Ensure bipartisan team present for opening/closing procedures.
- ❑ Secure all materials at end of each day.
- ❑ Power down machines without tabulating votes.

Voter Processing

- ❑ Verify voter eligibility in pollbook.
- ❑ Check valid photo ID (same as Election Day requirements).
- ❑ Provide signature book for voter to sign.
- ❑ Issue correct ballot style for voter's precinct.
- ❑ Allow voter to vote immediately or take ballot home.

Replacement Ballots

- ❑ Limit to two replacement ballots per voter maximum.
- ❑ Mail only to address on original application.
- ❑ Document when replacement ballots issued.
- ❑ Ask for return of spoiled ballot when possible.
- ❑ Count only first ballot received if multiple returned.

Special Circumstances

UOCAVA Voters

- ❑ Accept applications by mail, email, or fax.
- ❑ Issue ballots 46 days before election (mandatory).
- ❑ Send complete ballot (all federal, state, local contests).
- ❑ Provide email/fax transmission as requested.
- ❑ Update Centralized Ballot Tracking System (CBTS).
- ❑ Prepare election notices (initial and updated).
- ❑ No postmark required for counting.

Disability/Confinement Voters

- ❑ Use [Form 11-F](#) for applications.
- ❑ Offer ballot delivery by two bipartisan employees.
- ❑ Use [Form 12-C](#) (ID envelope).
- ❑ Both employees must sign ID envelope.
- ❑ Allow family member delivery as alternative. Be sure that the family member completes [Form 12-P](#).

Hospitalized Voter or Child

- ❑ Use [Form 11-B](#) for applications.
- ❑ Accept applications after normal deadline (until 3 p.m. Election Day).
- ❑ Deliver within county via bipartisan team or family member.
- ❑ Mail if hospital outside county.
- ❑ Verify hospital name, admission date, and eligible offices.

Safe at Home Participants

- ❑ Never pre-print address on materials.
- ❑ Accept program participant ID number.
- ❑ Maintain confidentiality of voter registration.
- ❑ Limit to absentee voting only.

Ballot Return Processing

Receipt Verification

- ❑ Check timely submission
 - ❑ Regular absentee ballots must be received by the close of polls on Election Day.
 - ❑ UOCAVA ballots must be received by the fourth day after the election, unless the return envelope was signed after the close of polls on Election Day.

ID Envelope Review

- ❑ Verify minimum required information (name, signature, proper ID).

- ❑ Check signature against registration record.
- ❑ Confirm name matches pre-printed information.
- ❑ Review identification number/copy.
- ❑ Use voluntary information only if needed for eligibility determination.

Incomplete Envelopes

- ❑ Issue [Form 11-S](#) to supplement information within required timeframes:
 - Two business days (start of voting through third Saturday before)
 - One calendar day (third Monday through last Friday before)
 - Same day (Saturday before through three days after election)
- ❑ Include courtesy reply envelope with [Form 11-S](#).
- ❑ Contact voter by phone/email when possible.
- ❑ Send to both registration and ballot mailing addresses if different.
- ❑ For ID mismatches: Review voter registration records for errors before fourth day.

Ballot Opening and Counting

- ❑ Open only eligible ballot envelopes.
- ❑ Verify correct ballot and stub attachment.
- ❑ Reject if multiple ballots or wrong ballot enclosed.
- ❑ Reject if Stub A is detached.
- ❑ Mark rejected envelopes "Not Counted" with reason.
- ❑ Include eligible ballots in appropriate canvass (unofficial or official).

Drop Box Management

- ❑ Install ONE drop box maximum per board on office property.
- ❑ Post weather-resistant protocol sign.
- ❑ Monitor with video surveillance 24/7.
- ❑ Collect contents daily with bipartisan team.

- ❑ Final collection at the close of polls on Election Day.
- ❑ Open only for voter deposit (others use mail/in-person delivery).
- ❑ Maintain video recordings per public records requirements.

Daily Reporting Requirements

- ❑ Submit daily files to Secretary of State (45 days before through 5 days after election).
- ❑ Include all voters who requested/returned absentee ballots.
- ❑ Include early in-person voting information.
- ❑ Update ballot tracking systems.

Record Keeping

- ❑ Mark pollbooks for all absentee ballot requesters.
- ❑ Maintain copies of transferred applications.
- ❑ Document all replacement ballot issuances.
- ❑ Retain rejected ballots per retention schedule.
- ❑ Update voter registration system for spoiled ballots.
- ❑ Complete CBTS records before Official Canvass.

Presidential Election Special Procedures for Former Ohio Voters

- ❑ Process Certificates of Intent ([Form 107-A](#)) for former Ohio residents.
- ❑ File deadline: 30 days before presidential election.
- ❑ Send copy to Secretary of State by 25th day before election.
- ❑ Issue presidential-only ballots to eligible former residents.
- ❑ Mark pollbooks "Former Resident's Presidential Ballot."
- ❑ Remake ballots to count only President/Vice President contest.

Reminders

- ❑ All absentee voters (except in-person with ID) must seal ballot in ID envelope.

- ❑ Count only first ballot received if voter returns multiple ballots.
- ❑ Provisional ballot required if absentee voter appears at polling location on Election Day.
- ❑ Never accept ballot returns by fax or email.
- ❑ Pre-paid postage prohibited for ballot applications and returns.
- ❑ Applications valid for single election only (except UOCAVA FPCA).