



2020 ELECTION FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Can I vote in person on Election Day like I always have?

Of course! Just like always, voters may make their voice heard by absentee ballot, early voting at the location designated by the county board of elections, or voting in-person on Election Day.

Can I still register to vote?

No, the last day to register for the November 3rd general election was October 5th. If you submit a voter registration form or register online after October 5, 2020, you will be eligible to vote in future elections.

I have since moved. Do I need to update my registration before requesting my ballot?

If you have moved within the same precinct but did not update your registration address before October 5th, you may vote a regular ballot at your regular polling location after completing a voter registration form to update your address. If you moved to a different precinct or county, you can vote a provisional ballot in-person at the office of the board of elections or on Election Day at the polling place in the precinct where you now reside. Please contact your board of elections for more information.

Are masks required to vote?

We ask that all voters wear a mask and, if a voter comes without one, masks will be provided at the door. Please consider the safety of others when voting and wear a mask. If you choose not to wear one, you will be asked to vote curbside. If you choose not to vote curbside, you will still be able to vote. No matter what, no one will be denied the opportunity to cast a ballot. Curbside voting is available at the early vote center or your polling location on Election Day.

When can I vote early in person?

Ohio has 216 hours of early voting – more than 43 other states. The calendar dates and times can be found here: VoteOhio.gov/Hours

Is it safe to vote in person?

Yes. Each board of elections is following a 61-point plan to keep voting areas and machines clean and safe, with poll workers trained to maintain social distancing and help voters make their voice heard safely this year. For more information, please read <http://ohiosos.gov/PollingPlaceSafety>.

How do I request an absentee ballot?

You can print off an absentee ballot application request form at VoteOhio.gov to complete and mail in to your county board of elections. Please mail it as soon as possible to ensure adequate time to receive and return the ballot. We recommend submitting the request by October 27th.

I don't have a printer. Can I request an absentee ballot?

Yes. You can call your county board of elections and an application can be sent to you. A directory of all boards can be found here: VoteOhio.gov/boards.

– OR –

Voters who can't print their own form may also simply write the following information on a blank sheet of paper and mail it to their board of elections;

- full name
- date of birth
- full registration address including county
- address where ballot should be mailed if different from your registration address
- one of the these: Ohio driver's license number, last four of your Social Security number or include a copy of an acceptable form of ID
- state that "I am a qualified elector and request an absentee ballot for the November 3rd General Election "
- sign it
- today's date
- phone number (optional, but recommended)
- email address (optional but recommended)

Can I track my absentee ballot?

Yes! You can track your absentee ballot like a package at VoteOhio.gov.

What should I use to fill out my absentee ballot?

To ensure the markings will be properly read by a ballot scanner, please use a blue or black pen when filling out your absentee ballot. It is recommended that you not use a marker or pencil.

Should I mail back my ballot or take it to the county drop box?

Both options will allow your ballot to be counted and your voice heard. The USPS is prioritizing election mail, and you can track your ballot like a package at VoteOhio.gov. Each county board of elections, for the first time for a general election, has a secure drop box to deposit your absentee ballot if you prefer not to mail it or miss the postmark date of November 2nd. If you do not return your ballot by mail, you must deliver it by 7:30 p.m. on Election Day.

When does my ballot need to be postmarked?

Unless you are a member of the U.S. military currently deployed overseas or an American living abroad, ballots must be postmarked by November 2, 2020 and received by the board of elections by November 13, 2020 to be counted in the general election. You must complete the required fields on the identification envelope and seal your ballot within it.

Is voting by mail secure? How do I know my vote won't be hacked?

Voting by absentee ballot is very secure. From the moment you request your ballot to the moment it is received at the board of election to be counted, the ballot may be tracked at VoteOhio.gov. Ballots are stored securely in rooms requiring both a Democrat and Republican staff member to gain access. For more information, please click "Is Absentee Voting Safe and Secure?" at VoteOhio.gov.

If I requested an absentee ballot, can I still vote in person?

Yes, if you would like to vote early in person instead of mailing your ballot, you may vote early in-person at your county board of elections or their early vote center if they conduct voting in a different building. However, if you request an absentee ballot and decide to vote on Election Day at your local polling place, under Ohio law you must cast a provisional ballot. This is to verify that you have not mailed your official absentee ballot and only one vote will count.

How do I know if my absentee ballot is counted?

Your ballot will be counted if it is properly filled out with the required information, postmarked by November 2nd, and arrives at the board of elections within 10 days of the election. You can track your ballot at VoteOhio.gov to ensure it has been received.

If you made a mistake when completing the identification envelope, such as forgetting to sign the identification envelope, the county board of elections will send you a form to correct the mistake. This will ensure your voice is heard this election. Complete and return the form to your county board of elections promptly to avoid missing the deadline (seven days after Election Day).

When are absentee ballots counted?

Absentee ballots may be scanned and verified as they come in, but cannot be tabulated until after the polls close on election night. Absentee ballots received by 7:30 p.m. on Election Day are the first ballots counted, and typically the first results released after the close of polls on election night.

Is voting by absentee ballot secure?

Yes. With multiple security checks, absentee voting is secure in Ohio. You can track your ballot online at VoteOhio.gov/track. More info is available at <https://www.ohiosos.gov/elections/voters/absentee-voting-by-mail/secure-absentee-voting/>

I have received unsolicited absentee ballot requests. What is the deal?

Ohio is one of the most important states in national elections and draws attention from many interest groups. Organizations may send out an absentee ballot request form to encourage people to vote. Additionally, ballot request forms have been mailed from the Secretary of State's office in every even-year general election going back to 2012. This is nothing new and encourages participation in the democratic process – and that's a win for all Ohioans.

Why can't I request an absentee ballot online?

State law does not currently allow for online ballot requests. Secretary LaRose has long supported changing the law to create a secure online request portal for absentee ballot requests, but the legislature has not yet amended election law to allow it.

Are absentee ballots ever lost or not counted?

Thousands of absentee ballots each year are not counted because voters do not return them on time, complete the ballot or Identification Envelope properly, or sign the Identification Envelope. There are multiple safeguards in place to make voting by absentee ballot safe and secure, as well as opportunity for voters to correct any mistakes made to their ballot, as well as including tracking of your ballot like a package at VoteOhio.gov/track.

What if I submit more than one request for an absentee ballot?

If you submitted more than one absentee ballot application, the safeguards in place ensure only one request will be fulfilled. Voting by absentee ballot is safe and secure in Ohio.

Are absentee ballots counted as provisional ballots?

No, provisional ballots are reviewed through a different legal process after Election Day. Absentee ballots are tabulated just like ballots cast early in-person or on Election Day.

When will the results of the election be announced?

Tabulation of votes will begin on November 3, 2020 at 7:31 p.m. starting with absentee ballots that have been received before Election Day. It's important to note that ballots postmarked by November 2, 2020 will still be counted, so the unofficial results are not final until the official certification by the boards of elections and Secretary of State. It's important to note that ballots postmarked by November 2, 2020 and received by the board by November 13, 2020 will still be counted as part of the official canvass. The counties complete their official canvass 15 days after the conclusion of the election, and final results will be released upon a review from our office.

What should people with disabilities or visually impaired voters do if they rely on accessible voting machines?

If you would like to vote early in person, a remote ballot marking system is available through each county board of elections for use by an absentee voter with a qualifying disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act. The remote ballot marking system allows a qualifying voter to mark their ballot privately and independently. You can contact your county board of elections or fill out this online form: <https://www.ohiosos.gov/elections/voters/11-g/>

People with disabilities and visually-impaired voters may also vote on an accessible voting machine at their polling location on Election Day.

Can I still sign up to be a poll worker?

Yes! Call your county board of elections: VoteOhio.gov/boards

How can I be a poll watcher?

Ohio does not have poll watchers. However, a political party, group of five candidates, or ballot issue committee recognized by the board of elections may appoint an observer at the election. Being an observer is a passive position, meaning they are not permitted to interfere in any way with the voting process at polling locations and they take no part in the counting of ballots. Contact your county board of elections for more information: VoteOhio.gov/boards

If I didn't complete my census form, can I still vote?

Yes. Voter rolls are not tied to the census. Completion of the 2020 Census does not have any impact on your voter registration or ability to vote in the election.

I never updated my driver's license due to COVID, can I still use it to vote?

Yes, a driver license or state identification card set to expire on or after March 9, 2020, are automatically extended and remain valid through the November 3, 2020 General Election. <https://www.ohiosos.gov/elections/voters/id-requirements/>

Can coronavirus be spread over the handling of paper?

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), “although the virus can survive for a short period on some surfaces, it is unlikely to be spread from domestic or international mail, products or packaging.” Election officials who handle mail-in ballots should wash their hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Secretary LaRose consulted with the CDC and Ohio Department of health and is committed to keeping all voters and election officials safe as possible while participating in and administering elections.

Do I need to include postage if I’m dropping by ballot off at the drop box?

No postage is necessary if you are dropping your ballot off in-person at the board of elections, but remember to complete the identification envelope and seal your ballot inside the ID envelope.

Can I drop off my ballot at my polling location?

No. You can only drop off your ballot at the board of elections or return it by mail. If you are returning your ballot by mail, it must be postmarked by November 2nd, 2020. If you are dropping it off at the board of elections, it must arrive no later than 7:30 PM on Election Day.

Who can return my ballot for me?

Aside from the postal service, Ohio law permits only the spouse, 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 of the elector to return an elector’s ballot to the board of elections.

What if my signature has changed or I can no longer sign my name?

If your signature has changed, you may contact your board of elections to obtain the necessary paperwork to update your signature. If you can no longer sign your name, please contact your county board of elections, and ask about the attorney-in-fact process which allows another individual who you authorize to sign on your behalf.