



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Mail Voting Steps for the Nov. 3 General Election Explained

Harrisburg, Pa. – Secretary of State Kathy Boockvar today outlined the steps for Pennsylvanians to vote by mail and urged voters planning on this option to apply now for their ballot.

“Mail-in or absentee voting offers eligible voters a secure, convenient, accessible and, during the COVID-19 pandemic, an especially safe option of voting in the privacy of their own homes. But it’s important that voters follow all the steps necessary so their mail-in ballot will be counted,” Secretary of State Kathy Boockvar said. “We want every voter’s voice to be heard – whether they vote by mail, early in person at their county election office or at the polls on election day.”

To vote by mail, remember these tips and requirements:

- Anyone registered to vote is eligible to vote by mail. The deadline to register to vote in the Nov. 3 election is Oct. 19. Pennsylvanians can [register to vote](#) or [check their registration status](#) at [votesPA.com](#).
- Anyone who plans to vote by mail must apply for a mail ballot. Voters can [apply online](#) or print a paper application at [votesPA.com](#) and return it to their [county board of elections](#). The deadline to apply for a mail ballot is 5 p.m. Oct. 27, but voters are urged to apply now, so they have plenty of time to return their ballot before the election. Voters who applied for a mail-in ballot for the primary and asked to be added to the permanent annual mail ballot list do not need to reapply for a mail ballot for the general election. Voters can [track the status](#) of their mail ballot at [votesPA.com](#).
- While [applying for an absentee ballot](#) still requires the voter to provide a reason, [mail-in voting](#) does not.
- Once the voter’s application for a mail ballot is verified, their county election office will mail them a ballot after they have been finalized and printed.
- As soon as the voter receives the ballot, the voter should:
 - - Read the instructions carefully.
 - Fill out the ballot, being sure to follow instructions on how to mark selections.
 - Seal the ballot in the white inner **secrecy** envelope that says, “official ballot.” Make sure not to make any stray marks on the envelope.
 - Then seal the inner secrecy envelope in the pre-addressed outer **return** envelope where the voter must sign.
 - Complete and sign the voter’s declaration on the outside of the outer return envelope.
 - - If the ballot is not enclosed in both envelopes, it will not be counted.
 - If the voter does not sign the outer envelope, the ballot will not be counted.
- The voter should then return their voted ballot to their county board of elections, the sooner the better.

- - Voters can mail their ballot. Mailed ballots must be postmarked by 8 p.m. on Nov. 3 and received by the county election office by 5 p.m. on Nov. 6. The Department of State is providing pre-paid postage on mail ballot return envelopes, or
 - Voters can hand-deliver their ballot to their [county election office](#) or other officially designated site. Hand-delivered ballots must be received by 8 p.m. on election day. Some counties are providing drop-boxes or drop-off sites for mail ballots. Check your county's website for information on locations. The Department of State will post a list of drop-off locations as the information becomes available. Check [votesPA.com](#) in the coming weeks.
- Under Pennsylvania law, voters may only return their own ballots. The only exceptions to this are for voters with a disability who have designated someone in writing to deliver their ballot, or for voters who are hospitalized or need an [emergency absentee ballot](#).
- Voters who provide an email address on their mail ballot application can [check the status](#) of their mail ballot at [votesPA.com](#).
- If a voter submits a voted mail ballot, they cannot vote at the polls on election day.
- If a voter applies for a mail ballot, but does not return it, they may vote by provisional ballot at the polls on election day. Their county board of elections will then verify that they didn't vote by mail before counting their provisional ballot.
- Voters who apply for and receive a mail ballot and then decide they want to vote at the polls must bring their entire unvoted mail ballot packet with them to be voided, including both envelopes.

Secretary Boockvar noted that eligible voters also have two other voting options:

- After ballots are printed by the counties in the coming weeks, voters can go in person to one of their [county election offices](#) any time it is open before election day, request a ballot, fill it out and return it on the spot – all in one visit.
- If they have not voted by mail or in person ahead of the election, they can [vote at the polls](#) on election day between 7 a.m. and 8 p.m. They should wear a mask and follow social distancing guidelines. The Department of State is supplying counties with masks, face shields, hand sanitizer, floor marking tape and other supplies for polling places so Pennsylvanians can safely exercise their right to vote during this COVID-19 emergency.

“Pennsylvanians now have more voting options – that are more secure, accessible and convenient – than ever before,” Secretary Boockvar said. “Whichever option you choose, the most important thing is that you vote and let your voice be heard.”

For more information on voting in Pennsylvania, visit the department's voting website [votesPA.com](#).