

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS, CONNECTICUT VOTERS: VOTING ABSENTEE IN THE NOVEMBER 3, 2020 ELECTION



No one should have to choose between protecting their health and exercising their right to vote. For many people, voting absentee during the COVID-19 pandemic is the easiest way to safeguard their health and voting rights.

During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, every Connecticut voter has the right to vote absentee in statewide elections (this includes federal elections).

This special edition Know Your Rights guide explains your rights when voting absentee in statewide elections in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Who can vote absentee?

Connecticut has adopted a special law to allow **all voters to vote absentee** in the November 3, 2020 general election due to COVID-19. This law would also apply to any other statewide election held in 2020.

Connecticut law also allows the following voters to vote absentee in any election:

- People who are active members of the armed forces
- People who will be out of town during all hours of voting on Election Day
- People who are ill
- People whose religious beliefs prevent them from conducting secular activities, like voting, on Election Day
- People who are election officials at a polling location other than their own on Election Day
- People with a physical disability

All of the above categories apply to registered Connecticut voters. You can check to see if you are a registered Connecticut voter online at portaldir.ct.gov/sots/LookUp.aspx, or by contacting your local registrar of voters.

If you need to register to vote, you can do so online, via mail, or in person with your town clerk. Connecticut also allows people to register to vote on Election Day at a designated Election Day registration site. For more about Election Day registration, see our other Know Your Rights guide: acluct.org/Know-Your-Rights

If you do not wish to or cannot vote absentee, you do not have to. Voters who prefer or need to vote in person can still do so at their polling location.

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Applying to vote absentee

How do I apply to vote absentee?

To receive an absentee ballot, you must first complete an application to vote absentee. This application is not your absentee ballot itself. The deadline to apply to vote absentee is the day before Election Day. For the November 3, 2020 general election, this means you must submit your application by November 2, 2020. If you are applying to vote absentee, it is important to do so as early as possible to avoid the risk of your application potentially not being received in time.

If you are an eligible voter for the November 3, 2020 general election, you can obtain an application to vote absentee in any of the following ways:

- You should automatically receive an application in the mail. Connecticut's Secretary of the State has announced that she will mail absentee ballot applications to all Connecticut voters eligible to vote in the November 3, 2020 general election, and that her office will send those applications by mid-September. This application will go to the address connected with your voter registration.
- You can download an application online at myvote.ct.gov/absentee. Note: if you are downloading an application, you can only do so for your own use, the use of a member of your immediate family, or the use of your designee. If you're downloading five or more applications for people outside of your immediate family (immediate family members do not count toward the five-person limit), you need to register and complete a form from the town clerk of the town where you will be distributing forms, and there are strict rules you will need to follow.
- You can request and receive an application in person at your town clerk's office.
- If you have a permanent disability, you can contact your town clerk to see if you are eligible for a permanent absentee ballot, which means you will automatically be sent a ballot in every subsequent election.
- If you are a military or overseas voter, you also have the option of using the Federal Post Card Application to request an absentee ballot: fvap.gov. If you are a military or overseas voter, you also have the option of returning your absentee ballot application via fax or email to your town clerk, as long as you also return your original completed application, including signature, with your completed ballot by 8 p.m. on Election Day.

If you are requesting an application to vote absentee, instead of licking application envelopes, please use a wet sponge or cloth to seal them – this isn't a requirement, but it is a courtesy.

There is also a special emergency absentee ballot application, available only for voters who are submitting their application within six days before the election **AND** are applying to vote absentee because they are **either** 1) experiencing an unforeseen illness or unforeseen physical disability that occurs within six days before the close of the polls **or** 2) are a patient in a hospital within six days before the close of the polls. This emergency application is available online on the Secretary of the State's website, or from your town clerk. If this applies to you, you can have your caretaker, immediate family member, or other designee deliver the ballot to you and/or return it on your behalf.

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How do I return an absentee ballot application?

Once you have completed your absentee ballot application, you will need to submit it. The deadline to apply to vote absentee is the day before Election Day, and it is important to return your application as early as possible, to avoid risking the possibility that your application will not be returned on time.

You can return your application in the following ways:

- **Mail:** If you are submitting an absentee ballot application that was mailed to you by the Secretary of the State's office, it will come with a return envelope with pre-paid postage.
- **Mail:** If you downloaded an application independently or received one through your town clerk, you can return your absentee ballot application via mail to your town clerk (the clerk for the town where you are registered to vote). You will be responsible for paying the postage to mail the application.
- **In Person:** You can return your absentee ballot application in person to your town clerk's office.
- **Fax:** You can fax your absentee ballot application to your town clerk's office.

If you are a military or overseas voter, you can use the Federal Post Card Application to request an absentee ballot: fvap.gov. If you are a military or overseas voter, you also have the option of returning your absentee ballot application via fax or email to your town clerk, as long as you also return your original completed application, including signature, with your completed ballot by 8 p.m. on Election Day.

Remember, your absentee ballot application is NOT your absentee ballot. After you have submitted your application, you still need to receive and complete your actual ballot.

Instead of licking application envelopes, please use a wet sponge or cloth to seal them – this isn't a requirement, but it is a courtesy.

How do I check the status of my absentee ballot application / What happens after I submit my application?

After you have submitted your absentee ballot application, your town clerk is responsible for processing it.

Connecticut law requires town clerks to wait until 31 days before Election Day to mail absentee ballots. Town clerks will begin mailing absentee ballots for the November 3, 2020 general election on October 2, 2020. If you are unsure of the status of your application, you can call your town clerk to check.

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Submitting your absentee ballot

How do I vote absentee?

After the town clerk has processed your application to vote absentee, you will receive your absentee ballot in the mail. Clerks will begin mailing absentee ballots on October 2, 2020.

After you have received your absentee ballot, you need to complete and return it. Connecticut law requires all absentee ballots be received by town clerks by 8 p.m. on Election Day. It is therefore very important to return your ballot as early as possible, to avoid risking the possibility that your ballot will not be received on time.

There are three ways you can return your absentee ballot:

- **Drop Box:** You can return your ballot via a secure, official drop box. Connecticut has adopted a special law to allow voters to submit absentee ballots via drop box for the November 3, 2020 general election. This law requires every town in the state have at least one secure drop box for people to submit ballots. It is up to each town to decide where to place those drop boxes, but they are typically outside of the town/city hall. If you cannot find your municipality's drop box, you can call your town clerk for the exact location. Your ballot is likely safest if you submit it in the town where you are registered to vote, as it needs to be received by your town clerk.
- **Mail:** You can return your ballot via mail to your town clerk. Remember: your ballot must be received by your town clerk by 8 p.m. on Election Day, which means you likely need to mail it before Election Day for it to arrive on time. If your ballot is postmarked on Election Day, you are taking a risk, as your ballot will only count if your town clerk receives it by 8 p.m. that day.
- **In Person:** Your ballot can be returned in person to your town clerk's office. If your ballot is being returned in person by your designee or immediate family member, they must deliver it to the town clerk by 8 p.m. on Election Day. **If you are returning your own ballot in person, you must deliver it to your town clerk by the day before the election (November 2, 2020).**

If you are an active duty member of the uniformed services or their spouse or dependent, OR a member of the merchant marine or their spouse or dependent, OR a U.S. citizen living abroad, AND you have applied for an absentee ballot from your Connecticut town clerk AND have not received it in time, you also have the right to submit a Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot (FWAB), a back-up ballot solely for general elections for federal offices: fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/Forms/fwab2013.pdf. You will still need to mail your FWAB in time for your Connecticut town clerk to receive it by 8 p.m. on Election Day.

Instead of licking ballot envelopes, please use a wet sponge or cloth to seal them – this isn't a requirement, but it is a courtesy.

How do I know if my ballot was received?

You can check online to see if your absentee ballot was received by your town clerk. To check the status of your absentee ballot: portaldir.ct.gov/sots/LookUp.aspx

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Problems Voting or Additional Questions

To learn more about your voting rights generally, visit the ACLU of Connecticut's Know Your Rights page: acluct.org/Know-Your-Rights

If you have problems voting or have additional questions, please call the national, non-partisan Election Protection hotline:

- English: 1-866-OUR-VOTE (1-866-687-8683)
- Spanish: 1-888-VE-Y-VOTA (1-888-839-8682)
- Arabic: 1-844-YALLA-US (1-844-925-5287)
- Bengali, Cantonese, Hindi, Urdu, Korean, Mandarin, Tagalog, or Vietnamese: 1-888-274-8683