



Georgia Secretary of State

ELECTIONS DIVISION

# Absentee Voting

## A Guide for Registered Voters

2020

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This guide is an overview of Georgia's absentee voting process. Additional information is available on the Secretary of State's web site at [www.sos.ga.gov](http://www.sos.ga.gov). Please use this guide along with the Georgia Election Code and the Georgia State Election Board Rules. Citations in this guide refer to the United States Code (U.S.C.), Georgia Election Code (O.C.G.A.) or Georgia State Election Board Rules.

**In all matters, the law and rule are the final authority.**

# THE WAYS TO VOTE IN GEORGIA

## **Election Day Voting**

On Election Day, you must vote at your assigned precinct and present a photo ID. To check your precinct location online go to: [www.mvp.sos.ga.gov](http://www.mvp.sos.ga.gov).

## **Absentee Voting By Mail**

Any voter registered in Georgia can vote absentee by mail. Just complete the application found in the back of this guide. Then, mail, fax, email (as an attachment), or drop the application off at your county registrar's office. We urge you to request your mail-in ballot and get it back to your county registrar's office as soon as possible. Mail-in ballots can be requested no earlier than 180 days prior to the election and must be received by your county registrar no later than close of the polls on Election Day.

There are special provisions for Georgia Military and Overseas Voters that can be found at: [http://sos.ga.gov/index.php/elections/military\\_and\\_overseas\\_voting2](http://sos.ga.gov/index.php/elections/military_and_overseas_voting2).

## **Absentee Voting in Person**

Any voter registered in Georgia may vote absentee in person. This allows you to vote on a day and time that is convenient for you. Beginning on the 4th Monday prior to Election Day, simply visit your county or municipality early voting site, fill out the application, and present one of the permitted forms of photo ID. As Election Day approaches, your county may have multiple early voting sites and even extended hours. Voting times and locations for your precinct can be found at: [www.mvp.sos.ga.gov/](http://www.mvp.sos.ga.gov/).

Some counties offer ballot delivery for registered voters who are hospitalized. Contact your county registrar at least 5 days prior to the election for information regarding this option.

# ABSENTEE VOTING BY MAIL

## Applying For Your Absentee Ballot

Paper absentee ballots will be mailed to voters only upon request. All written requests must be submitted (by mail, fax, email) or personally delivered to the registrar office in the county where you are registered to vote. Addresses and contact information can be found at:

<http://sos.ga.gov/cgi-bin/countyregistrarsindex.asp>.

Written requests for absentee ballots can be made in the following ways:

1. Absentee applications can be downloaded from the Secretary of State's website at [www.sos.ga.gov/elections](http://www.sos.ga.gov/elections).
2. You can submit a written request for an absentee ballot by providing the following information to your county registrar or absentee ballot clerk:
  - Your name,
  - Date of birth,
  - Registration address,
  - Temporary out of county address to which the ballot should be sent,
  - Type of election (presidential preference primary, general primary, primary runoff, municipal, municipal runoff, special, general, general runoff),
  - Name of party ballot being requested (for primaries),
  - Date of election, and,
  - Your signature including the date of the request (or the dated signature and noted relationship of the person requesting the ballot on your behalf).

Except in the case of a physically disabled voter residing in the county or municipality or a voter in custody in a jail or other detention facility, no absentee ballot shall be mailed to an address other than the permanent mailing address of the elector as recorded on the elector's voter registration record or a temporary out-of-county or out- of-municipality address.

There are no restrictions on who may assist an elector in completing an absentee ballot application when the elector is personally submitting the application.

There are restrictions on who can apply for an absentee ballot on behalf of an elector and what must be contained within the application. See page 6 of this guide for more information.

## Ballot Application Submittal Dates

Absentee ballots may be requested any time between 180 days prior to the election and the end of the business day on the Friday before Election Day. Under State law, ballots cannot be mailed to you on the day prior to Election Day. Please note that you should make your request early to allow enough time for the ballot to be mailed to you, voted, and be received back at the county registrar office before the close of polls on Election Day.

## Receiving Your Absentee Ballot

### Absentee ballots will be mailed:

Presidential Preference Primary	45 days prior to the election through the Friday before Election Day
General Primary	45 days prior to the election through the Friday before Election Day
General Election	45 days prior to the election through the Friday before Election Day
Special Election - Federal office	45 days prior to the election through the Friday before Election Day
Municipal General Primary	21 days prior to the election through the Friday before Election Day
Municipal General Election	21 days prior to the election through the Friday before Election Day
Special Election - Other	21 days prior to the election through the Friday before Election Day
Runoffs	As soon as possible

## Voting Your Absentee Ballot

Follow the instructions that your county elections official provides with your ballot. You will receive all the forms and envelopes necessary for marking and return of the ballot. Failure to complete your ballot correctly could cause your ballot not to be counted.

If you registered by mail and did not submit a copy of one of the required forms of registration identification, you will receive notification with your ballot package. Copies of any ID's must be placed in the outer envelope. If you have any questions, please contact your county registrar.

## Submitting a Voted Absentee Ballot

A ballot must be received by the county registrar no later than the close of polls on Election Day. Delivery can be either U.S. first class mail or hand delivered by the voter. If mailing, you must affix postage to the ballot envelope. Ballots received after the polls close cannot be counted.

## Processing Your Voted Absentee Ballot

Once the absentee ballot is received by the county office, the registrar will compare your signature on your absentee ballot oath envelope to your signature on your voter registration card and your application for absentee ballots to verify your signature. If the signature on the absentee ballot oath envelope is missing or does not match the previous signatures, your county will contact you and provide a document whereby you can provide a signature and ID to verify your ballot.

## ABSENTEE VOTING IN PERSON (ADVANCE VOTING)

### Applying For Your Absentee Ballot and Voting

Voting any time prior to Election Day, even at a precinct, is absentee voting. You will complete an absentee ballot application in person at the early voting location immediately prior to casting your vote.

#### Photo Identification Required

You will need to provide proper photo identification anytime you vote in person. If you do not have photo identification when you go to vote, you will be allowed to vote a provisional ballot. You will be required to provide proper photo identification to the registrar within three days after Election Day for your ballot to count. For more information on Georgia's photo identification requirements, please visit

[http://sos.ga.gov/index.php/elections/georgia\\_voter\\_identification\\_requirements2](http://sos.ga.gov/index.php/elections/georgia_voter_identification_requirements2) or call the Secretary of State's Election Division at (404) 656-2871.

#### **Advance Voting Will Be Available:**

Presidential Preference Primary	4th Monday prior to election through the Friday before Election Day
General Primary	4th Monday prior to election through the Friday before Election Day
General Election	4th Monday prior to election through the Friday before Election Day
Special Election - Federal office	4th Monday prior to election through the Friday before Election Day
Municipal General Primary	4th Monday prior to election through the Friday before Election Day
Municipal General Election	4th Monday prior to election through the Friday before Election Day
Special Election - Other	4th Monday prior to election through the Friday before Election Day
Runoffs	As soon as possible

Early voting times and locations can be found for all elections on your personal voter information page at: [www.mvp.sos.ga.gov](http://www.mvp.sos.ga.gov).

#### **Voting Your Ballot**

After returning your paper absentee ballot or voting in-person during advance voting, you will be marked in the voter registration system as "voted" and your vote(s) will be tabulated on Election Day

## **ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS ABOUT ABSENTEE VOTING**

If I lose the absentee ballot that was sent to me, can I get another one?

Yes; however, you must sign an affidavit affirming that you lost, destroyed, or did not receive the first absentee ballot. In this instance, another ballot will be issued. A new request is not required.

If I request an absentee ballot, can I change my mind and still vote at my regular polling place?

If the ballot has been voted and returned to and received by the board of registrars, then the absentee ballot shall be deemed to have been voted. No other ballot shall be issued.

If you still have the absentee ballot and give it to the poll manager of the precinct in which your name appears on the electors list, then the elector may vote a regular ballot.

If you have not received an absentee ballot, or if you have returned the absentee ballot, but the registrars have not received the ballot, you may cancel the absentee ballot by making a written request to have the ballot marked "cancelled." The managers of your precinct shall permit you to vote in person at that precinct.

Canceled absentee ballots are handled in the same manner as those returned too late to be cast.

Can a third-party request an absentee ballot on my behalf?

A family member may request an absentee ballot on your behalf if you are residing temporarily out of the county or municipality or if you are a physically disabled voter residing within the county or municipality. The application for your absentee ballot may, upon satisfactory proof of relationship, be made by your mother, father, grandparent, aunt, uncle, sister, brother, spouse, son, daughter, niece, nephew, grandchild, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, mother-in-law, father-in-law, brother-in-law, or sister-in-law of the age of 18 or over. Relatives applying for absentee ballots for you must also sign an oath stating that facts in the application are true.

The absentee ballot will be mailed directly to you at the permanent mailing address on record at the registrar's office or to a temporary out-of-county or out-of-municipality address. A voter with a physical disability or a voter that is in custody in a jail or a detention facility may have the ballot mailed to a different address within the county.

The application must be in writing and must contain the name and relationship of the person requesting the ballot, if other than yourself.

Can I give my voted absentee ballot to someone else to return for me?

It depends on how the ballot is returned.

A voted absentee ballot can be returned, by mail or in-person, by a family member as designated on O.C.G.A. 21-2-385(a) or by a person living in the same house as the absentee voter.



If the absentee voter is physically disabled, their voted absentee ballot may be returned by a family member or housemate (as described above) OR by the voter's caregiver, regardless of whether the caregiver resides with the voter.

Can I vote by absentee ballot if I am confined to the hospital?

In some counties, a voter who is confined to a hospital on a primary or election day can vote an absentee ballot that is delivered by a registrar or deputy registrar. The ballot must be voted, sealed properly, and returned to the deliverer. If the voter registered to vote for the first time in Georgia by mail and has not previously provided proper identification, the voter will be allowed to vote by provisional ballot if he or she fails to provide proper identification. Once the identification and registration of the voter have been verified, the vote will be officially recorded. Please contact your county elections official to inquire about absentee ballot delivery, if you are in the hospital.

Do I have to apply for an absentee ballot for each election if I have a physical disability or I am 65 or over?

If a physically disabled voter or voters 65 years or older makes a written request to receive an absentee ballot for the primary, primary runoff, election, and election runoff he or she will receive ballots without having to ask again by specifically stating such on the written request or absentee application. Physically disabled voters 65 years or older must submit separate absentee applications for all Special Elections.

Can I receive assistance with my absentee ballot application?

Yes, but the person providing the assistance must sign the application for the absentee ballot.

May an absentee application that is pre-printed or filled out in advance by a third party be accepted if signed by the elector?

There is no prohibition against a third party assisting in the completion of the application provided that the voter personally signs the application, affirming that the information is true and correct.

May absentee applications be accepted in bundle?

Yes. They can be returned by fax, by mail, or in person. There are no restrictions on who may take possession of and transmit or deliver an application for an absentee ballot, or how those applications are transmitted or delivered.

Some of the important points of which you need to be aware, if you distribute applications for absentee ballots include:

- The voter must personally affix his or her signature to the application.

- Voters who use an absentee ballot application provided by an individual or organization must attest to the truth and correctness of the content of the application and sign the application.

May any organization provide campaign materials along with an absentee application?

There are no restrictions against campaign materials being distributed along with the absentee applications.

May I create my own absentee ballot application for others to use?

Any person or entity, except an election superintendent or registrar, that creates an application for an absentee ballot form for an elector, other than the elector themselves, shall ensure that the absentee ballot form is substantially in the same form as the application for the absentee ballot form made available by the Secretary of State. Such person or entity shall also clearly disclose on the face of the application for an absentee ballot form that they created the application for an absentee ballot form. Any nonconforming application for an absentee ballot shall still be processed if it meets the legal requirements of O.C.G.A. 21-2-381(a).

## **PENALTIES FOR FRAUDULENT ABSENTEE VOTING ACTIVITY**

- An individual who votes more than once in an election is guilty of a felony.
- It is a crime to do any electioneering, or otherwise attempt to influence a voter, at the time he or she is voting an absentee ballot.
- It is a crime to intimidate or use or threaten to use violence to interfere with anyone's lawful right to vote.
- It is a crime to pay or offer to pay a person any amount of money or to give a person anything of value in exchange for voting for a particular person or issue. Similarly, it is against the law to pay someone not to vote.
- It is a crime to violate the secrecy of the ballot, or otherwise tamper with ballots or the voting system.

## RESOURCES

County and city election officials can be a valuable source for absentee voting materials and information. They can assist you in answering specific questions about the absentee ballot process and can provide information to ensure the application and ballot is correct.

County contact information can be found at: <http://sos.ga.gov/cgi-bin/countyregistrarsindex.asp>

Georgia Election Code can be found at: <http://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopic/gacode/default.asp>

State Election Board Rules can be found at:  
[http://sos.ga.gov/index.php/elections/state\\_election\\_board](http://sos.ga.gov/index.php/elections/state_election_board)

Absentee Ballot Applications can be found at:  
[http://sos.ga.gov/index.php/Elections/absentee\\_voting\\_in\\_georgia](http://sos.ga.gov/index.php/Elections/absentee_voting_in_georgia)

# COMPLETING AN ABSENTEE BALLOT APPLICATION

**Prior to submitting an absentee ballot application, a voter must be registered in the county in which the voter resides. Voter registration status and county registrar information can be found at: [mvp.sos.ga.gov](http://mvp.sos.ga.gov)**

- Enter the name of the county or municipality
- Election dates can be found at: [www.sos.ga.gov/elections](http://www.sos.ga.gov/elections)
- Military or overseas voters, who are requesting Electronic Ballot Delivery, must provide an email address
- The following individuals may request multiple ballots with this single application:
  - 65 years of age or older
  - Physically Disabled
  - Military (including a spouse or dependent residing with member)
  - Overseas Citizens

Please check the appropriate qualification box when requesting multiple ballots.
- Military and overseas voters must also check this box when requesting Electronic Ballot Delivery.
- The application must be signed or marked by a voter.
- Anyone assisting a disabled or illiterate applicant must also sign in the appropriate section
- Family member must check the appropriate box and sign when completing an application on behalf of a relative who is either residing temporarily out of the county or who is physically disabled

COUNTY or MUNICIPALITY

## APPLICATION FOR OFFICIAL ABSENTEE BALLOT

**PLEASE PRINT** (FAILURE TO FILL OUT THE FORM COMPLETELY COULD DELAY YOUR APPLICATION)  
 Date of Primary, Election, or Runoff: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/20\_\_\_

FOR PRIMARY ELECTIONS ONLY (please check one):  DEMOCRATIC  NON PARTISAN  REPUBLICAN

APPLICATION DATE	DATE OF BIRTH	DAYTIME CONTACT NUMBER (optional)	EMAIL ADDRESS (required for Electronic Ballot Delivery)
___/___/___	___/___/___	(___) ___-___	_____

NAME AS REGISTERED: LAST \_\_\_\_\_ FIRST \_\_\_\_\_ MIDDLE \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS AS REGISTERED: STREET # \_\_\_\_\_ CITY \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP CODE \_\_\_\_\_

Mail the ballot to my temporary out-of-county address: (or alternate address for physically disabled voter).  
 # STREET \_\_\_\_\_ CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_

*Note: You must file a separate application for each election for which you are requesting an absentee ballot (exceptions below for voters over the age of 65, disabled, or military or overseas citizens). You may file your application more than 180 days prior to the Date of the Election.*

**\*EXCEPTIONS:**  
 If you meet the following criteria, you may choose to complete one application and receive a ballot for the General Primary Runoff (if any), General Election, and General Election Runoff (if any) by checking one of the following:

E - Elderly - I am 65 years of age or older.  
 D - Disabled - I have a physical disability.  
 U - UOCAVA Voter - Member of armed forces or Merchant Marines of the United States, commissioned corps Health Service or the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, spouse or dependent residing with or accompanying member, or a United States citizen residing overseas. My current status is (please mark one):

MOS - Military Overseas  MST - Military Stateside  
 OST - Overseas Temporary Resident  OSP - Overseas Permanent Resident (federal offices)

For UOCAVA Voters Only - I would like to receive my absentee ballots by electronic transmission .

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**SIGNATURE OR MARK\* OF VOTER - REQUIRED** \_\_\_\_\_  
signature of person preparing application if voter is disabled or illiterate

You may apply on behalf of another person only in the following circumstances: In the case of a voter residing temporarily out of the county, application may be made by mother, father, grandparent, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, spouse, son, daughter, grandchild, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, mother-in-law, father-in-law, brother-in-law or sister-in-law of the age of 18 or over upon completion of the following oath: I, the undersigned do swear (or affirm) that the above-named voter is (check one):  residing temporarily out of the county or is a  voter residing within the county and that the facts included in this application are true.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 SIGNATURE AND RELATIONSHIP OF RELATIVE REQUESTING BALLOT

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**OFFICE USE ONLY**

Voter Registration # \_\_\_\_\_

DIST. COMBO \_\_\_\_\_ PRECINCT \_\_\_\_\_

APPLICATION RECEIVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

BALLOT # \_\_\_\_\_ ISS. DATE \_\_\_\_\_

CERTIFIED DATE \_\_\_\_\_ REJECTION DATE \_\_\_\_\_

ID SHOWN: GADL \_\_\_\_\_ OTHER \_\_\_\_\_

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THE ABOVE NAMED VOTER  IS ELIGIBLE  IS NOT ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE AN ABSENTEE BALLOT

REASON FOR REJECTION: \_\_\_\_\_

Ballot to be: Mailed  Electronically Transmitted   
 Delivered to voter in hospital by Registrar/Deputy Registrar   
 Voted in office (Municipal Only)

Registrar Signature \_\_\_\_\_

FORM #ABS-APP-18