
How do I complete and return my absentee ballot?

Do not fold, bend or damage the ballot in any way. Place the ballot in the small envelope that has an affidavit on the front. Sign the affidavit and seal the ballot in that envelope. Be sure to sign your name as you registered. The absentee ballot is mailed to you in the name you are registered. Then place the sealed envelope in the larger envelope provided and mail or bring it to your local election office.

The absentee ballot can be delivered to your local election office by a family member.

Can I change my mind and vote at the polls even if I've sent in an absentee ballot?

Yes you can, as long as your absentee ballot has not been processed at the polling place.

Must my absentee ballot be witnessed?

No.

Can someone help me mark my absentee ballot?

Yes. Whoever helps you must print his or her name and your name in the designated place on the envelope that is sent with the absentee ballot, write the reason you needed help, and sign his or her name as the assisting person.

Voter Registration

Can I register to vote at the polls?

No. You must register in advance. The last day to register to vote for **all elections** is 20 days before the election.

Where and how do I register?

You can register to vote in person at any local election office*, at any registration event, and at the following state agency offices: Registry of Motor Vehicles, Department of Transitional Assistance, Division of Medical Assistance, Commission for the Blind, Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing,

* You can register at any local election office or at any of the locations listed here, but you must vote in the community where you are registered.

Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, Department of Mental Health, Department of Mental Retardation, or the Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth.

You can also register to vote by mail. Mail-in Voter Registration Forms are available at all local election offices, and anyone can pick one up for you. Or you can use the Internet to request that a Voter Registration Form be mailed to you. Go to the League of Women Voters' site, www.votinginfo.info/receive_a_voter_registration_form.htm, or call 800-882-1649.

Complete and mail the form as directed. It must be postmarked by the registration deadline or it can be hand-delivered to any local election office by the voter registration deadline.

Do I need identification to register to vote?

Yes. Voter Registration Forms require your driver's license number or the last four digits of your Social Security number. If you have neither, write "none" in the box on the form. You must then provide a copy of your identification either with your mail-in Voter Registration Form **or** at the polling location when you vote for the first time.

Suitable identification, which must show your name and address, includes a copy of a current and valid photo identification, current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck or other government document.

League of Women Voters of Massachusetts
Citizen Education Fund
Lotte E. Scharfman Memorial Fund
133 Portland Street, Boston, MA 02114
Phone: 617-523-2999 - Fax: 617-248-0881
E-mail: lwwma@lwwma.org
Voter Information Phone
800-882-1649 or 617-723-1421

www.votinginfo.info

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Absentee Voting in Massachusetts



Vote Power
League of Women Voters

Absentee Voting In Massachusetts

The right to vote is fundamental in a democratic society. This pamphlet will help make it easy for you to exercise this right. For additional information about voting in Massachusetts call the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts' Voter Information Phone, 800-882-1649, or visit the League's election and voting website, www.votinginfo.info.

Who is eligible to vote?

To be eligible to vote in Massachusetts, you must be a Massachusetts resident and U.S. citizen who will be at least 18 years old on Election Day; you cannot be under legal guardianship with respect to voting; in jail by reason of felony conviction; or convicted of election fraud even if the jail sentence is completed. To vote, you must also have registered to vote.

Can I vote if I can't get to the polls on Election Day?

Yes. If you are registered to vote, you can cast an absentee ballot if you will be absent from your city or town on Election Day, if you have a physical disability preventing you from voting at the polling place, or if your religious beliefs prevent you from voting on Election Day.

Do I have to be registered to vote absentee?

Yes (voter registration information follows). Several exceptions exist; those outside of Massachusetts who are members of the armed forces or merchant marine and their spouses and dependents do not have to be registered to vote absentee. They apply for an absentee ballot to the local election office in the community where they last resided inside the country.

How do I apply for an absentee ballot?

You must apply in writing to the local election office in the city or town where you are registered, either by filling out an application form or by writing a letter. Application forms for absentee ballots are available at your local election office. Most local election offices are in the City or Town Hall. You can also download the absentee ballot application form at www.votinginfo.info.

If you write a letter requesting an absentee ballot, include your name, address as registered, ward or precinct if you know it, address where you want the absentee ballot sent, which political party ballot you want if the election is a primary (you must be either registered to vote in the party you request or unenrolled, that is, not registered as belonging to any party), and your signature. If you wish to vote absentee for more than one election in a year, you can fill out one application and ask that ballots for all elections in that **calendar year** be sent to you.

In some cases, a designated health care facility will have election officials distribute absentee ballots.

Can someone else apply for me for an absentee ballot?

Yes, a family member can apply for an absentee ballot for you to the city or town where you are registered. They can apply either by letter including all the information listed above or they can use a special absentee ballot application for family members, which is available at www.votinginfo.info.

Do I have to include identification with my absentee ballot?

You do not have to include identification with your absentee ballot if you have voted previously in a state or presidential primary or in a state or federal election. You do have to include suitable identification *the first time you vote in Massachusetts* if you registered to vote by mail after January 2003 and did not include a copy of suitable identification, or if the identification number you provided on your Voter Registration Form (your driver's license number or the last four digits of your Social Security number) could not be verified.

Suitable identification, which must show your name and address, includes a copy of a current and valid photo identification, current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck or other government document.

If you don't mail in the required identification, your absentee ballot will be considered provisional and may not be counted. Provisional voting means that every voter will be able to cast a ballot.

What are the deadlines for voting absentee?

The deadline for **applying** for an absentee ballot is noon on the day before an election. Of course, if you plan to vote by mail, your application must be submitted with enough time for the absentee ballot to get to you and for you to mail it so it is received at the local election office before the deadline for **return** of absentee ballots, which is the close of the polls on Election Day.

If you are planning to vote in the local election office, you may be able to apply for an absentee ballot and vote in the same visit. Absentee ballots are generally available three weeks before an election. If you reside outside the U.S., for local and primary elections your absentee ballot must arrive by the close of polls (8 p.m.) on Election Day. For federal elections your absentee ballot must be postmarked by Election Day and arrive at the local election office no later than 10 days after the election.

Do I have to reapply for an absentee ballot for every election?

Not necessarily. The absentee ballot application asks you to designate which election(s) you are applying for. An absentee ballot application can be made for a single election or for all elections in a calendar year.

Note: If your address changes within a calendar year you must submit a new application for an absentee ballot. *This is especially important for college students who are usually focused on an academic year, not a calendar year.*

If you are permanently disabled, you can file a doctor's letter with the local election office that states that you are permanently unable to vote at the polls due to a physical disability. The local election office will automatically mail you an application for an absentee ballot for all elections in a calendar year. You must sign the application and send it back to your local election office.
