



## Absentee and Early Voting

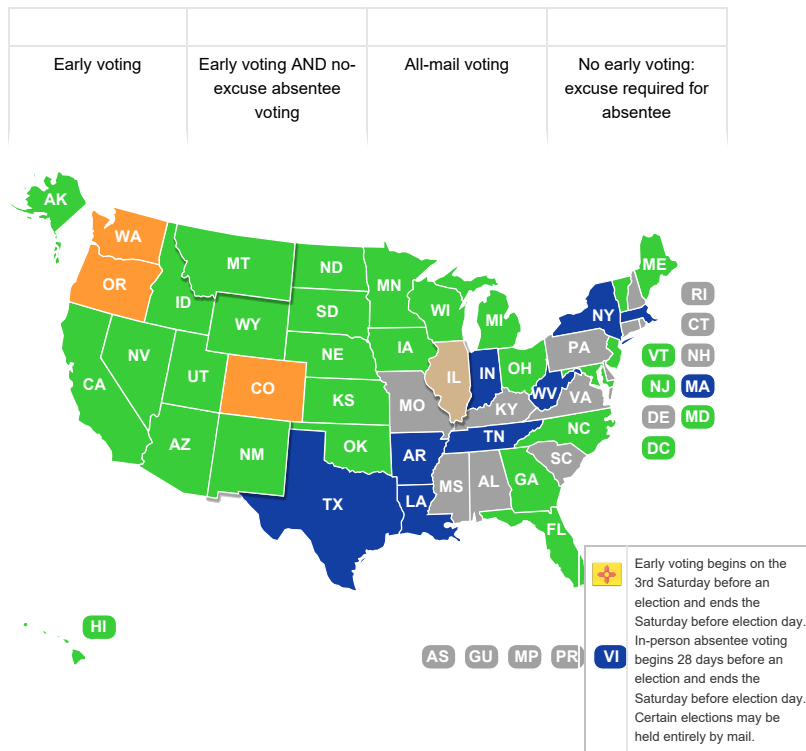
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Most states have a method for any eligible voter to cast a ballot before Election Day, either during the early voting period or by requesting an absentee ballot. In 11 states, early voting is not available and an excuse is required to request an absentee ballot.

States can choose to provide three ways for voters to cast a ballot before Election Day:

- Early Voting:** In 39 states (including 3 that mail ballots to all voters) and the District of Columbia, any qualified voter may cast a ballot in person during a designated period prior to Election Day. No excuse or justification is required.
- Absentee Voting:** All states will mail an absentee ballot to certain voters who request one. The voter may return the ballot by mail or in person. In 19 states, an excuse is required while 28 states and the District of Columbia permit any qualified voter to vote absentee without offering an excuse. Some states offer a permanent absentee ballot list: once a voter asks to be added to the list, s/he will automatically receive an absentee ballot for all future elections.
- Mail Voting:** A ballot is automatically mailed to every eligible voter (no request or application is necessary). In-person voting sites may also be available for voters who would vote in-person and to provide additional services to voters. Three states mail ballots to all eligible voters for every election. Other states may provide this option for some types of elections.

Scroll over the map below for state-by-state details.



### Overview

The table below details the types of pre-election day voting that are available in each state. Information on the details for each category may be found below the table.

### PRE-ELECTION DAY VOTING

State	In-Person	By Mail
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State	In-Person	By Mail			
	Early Voting	No-Excuse Absentee	Absentee; Excuse Required	All-Mail Voting	Permanent Absentee State
Alabama			•		
Alaska	•	•		(a)	
Arizona	•	•		(a)	•
Arkansas	•		•	(a)	
California	•	•		(a)	•
Colorado				•	
Connecticut			•		
Delaware			•		
D.C.	•	•			•
Florida	•	•		(a)	
Georgia	•	•			
Hawaii	•	•		(a)	•
Idaho	(b)	•		(a)	
Illinois	•	•			
Indiana	(b)		•		
Iowa	(b)	•			
Kansas	•	•		(a)	
Kentucky			•		
Louisiana	•		•		
Maine	(b)	•			
Maryland	•	•		(a)	
Massachusetts	(c)		•		
Michigan	(b)	•			

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State	In-Person	By Mail			
Minnesota	(b)	•		(a)	•
Mississippi			•		
Missouri			•	(a)	
Montana	(b)	•		(a)	•
Nebraska	•	•		(a)	
Nevada	•	•		(a)	•
New Hampshire			•		
New Jersey	(b)	•		(a)	•
New Mexico	•	•		(a)	
New York	•				
North Carolina	•	•			
North Dakota	•	•		(a)	
Ohio	(b)	•			
Oklahoma	(b)	•			
Oregon				•	
Pennsylvania			•		
Rhode Island			•		
South Carolina			•		
South Dakota	(b)	•			
Tennessee	•		•		
Texas	•		•		
Utah	•	•		(a)	•
Vermont	(b)	•			
Virginia			•		

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State	In-Person	By Mail			
Washington				•	
West Virginia	•		•		
Wisconsin	(b)	•			
Wyoming	(b)	•			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>36 states + DC</b>	<b>28 states + DC</b>	<b>19 states</b>	<b>3 states</b>	<b>8 states + DC</b>

**Source:** National Conference of State Legislatures, January, 2019.

(a) Certain elections may be held entirely by mail. The circumstances under which all-mail elections are permitted vary from state to state.

(b) Although these states do not have Early Voting in the traditional sense, within a certain period of time before an election they do allow a voter to apply in person for an absentee ballot (without an excuse) and cast that ballot in person to an election official's office. This is often known as "in-person absentee" voting.

(c) Massachusetts has Early Voting only during even-year November elections, beginning in 2016. Currently it does permit Early Voting in primaries or municipal elections.

## Early Voting

More than two-thirds of the states--39 plus the District of Columbia--offer some sort of early voting. Early voting allows voters to visit an election official's office or, in some states, other satellite voting locations, and cast a vote in person without offering an excuse for why the voter is unable to vote on Election Day. Some states also allow voters to receive, fill out and cast an absentee ballot in person at the elections office or at a satellite location rather than returning it through the mail. This is often referred to as in-person absentee voting. Satellite voting locations vary by state, and may include other county and state offices (besides the election official's office), grocery stores, shopping malls, schools, libraries, and other locations. More detailed information can be found on NCSL's [State Laws Governing Early Voting](#) page.

### Latest developments:

- In early 2019 the New York legislature enacted early voting ([SB 1102](#)).
- A 2018 ballot proposition approved by voters established in-person absentee voting in Michigan, and legislative action ([SB 1238](#)) was subsequently enacted providing more details on implementation.
- A 2013 law reducing early voting hours in North Carolina was struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court in August 2016. Going forward early voting in North Carolina begins on the third Thursday and ends on the last Thursday before election day.

## No-Excuse Absentee Voting

Absentee voting is conducted by mail-in paper ballot prior to the day of the election. States typically require that a voter fill out an application to receive an absentee ballot. Many states help facilitate this process by making absentee ballot applications available online for voters to print and send, and at least some states (Florida, Louisiana, Maryland, Minnesota and Utah) permit a voter to submit an application entirely online. Arizona has some counties that have online absentee ballot applications, and in Detroit, Michigan, voters can request an absentee ballot through a smartphone app.

While all states offer some version of absentee voting, there is quite a lot of variation in states' procedures. For instance, some states offer "no-excuse" absentee voting, allowing any registered voter to request an absentee without requiring that the voter state a reason his/her desire to vote absentee. Some states also allow a time period before the election for voters to appear at the elections office or other designated location in person to request, fill out and cast an absentee ballot in on stop. Still, some states permit voters to vote absentee only under a limited set of circumstances.

The following 28 states and D.C. offer "no-excuse" absentee voting:

### NO-EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING

Alaska	Kansas	North Carolina
Arizona	Maine	North Dakota
California	Maryland	Ohio
District of Columbia	Michigan	Oklahoma
Florida	Minnesota	South Dakota
Georgia	Montana	Utah
Hawaii	Nebraska	Vermont
Idaho	Nevada	Wisconsin
Illinois	New Jersey	Wyoming
Iowa	New Mexico	

**Source:** National Conference of State Legislatures

### Permanent Absentee Voting

Some states permit voters to join a permanent absentee voting list. Once a voter opts in, s/he will receive an absentee ballot automatically for all future elections. The states that offer permanent absentee voting to any voter are:

- Arizona: [Ariz. Rev. Stat. §16-544\(A\)](#)
- California: [Cal. Elec. Code §3200](#)
- District of Columbia: [D.C. Law §1-1001.07](#)
- Hawaii: [Hawaii Rev. Stat. §15-4\(c\)](#)
- Minnesota: [Minn. Rev. Stat. §203B.04\(5\)](#)
- Montana: [Mont. Code Ann. §13-13-212\(4\)](#)
- New Jersey: [N.J. Stat. §19:63-3\(e\)](#)
- Utah: [Utah Code §20A-3-304\(4\)](#)

At least ten states offer permanent absentee status to a limited number of voters who meet certain criteria:

- Alaska ([Alaska Admin. Code tit. 6, § 25.650](#)) - voters who reside in a remote area where distance, terrain, or other natural conditions deny the voter reasonable access to the polling place
- Connecticut ([Conn. Gen. Stat. §9-140e](#)) - permanently disabled voters
- Delaware ([Del. Code Ann. Tit. 15, §5503\(k\)](#)) - military and overseas voters, and their spouses and dependents, voters who are ill or physically disabled; voters who are otherwise authorized by federal law to vote by absentee ballot
- Kansas ([Kan. Stat. Ann. §25-1122\(g\)](#)) - voters with permanent disability or an illness diagnosed as permanent
- Massachusetts ([Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 54, §86](#)) - permanently disabled voters
- Mississippi ([Miss. Code Ann. § 23-15-629](#)) - permanently disabled voters

- Missouri ([Mo. Rev. Stat. §115.284](#)) - permanently disabled voters
- Nevada: [SB 447](#) (2017) - voters with a disability or 65+ years old
- New York ([N.Y. Election Law §8-400](#)) - permanently disabled voters
- West Virginia ([W. Va. Code §3-3-2\(b\)](#)) - voters who are permanently and totally disabled and unable to vote at the polls

## Mail Voting

Three states -- Oregon, Washington and Colorado -- conduct all elections by mail. A ballot is automatically mailed to every registered voter in advance of Election Day, and traditional in-person voting precincts are not available. However, these states still provide one or more locations for voters to return mail ballots, vote in-person if they would like, and receive other voter services. Learn more about each state's vote-by-mail program: [Oregon](#), [Washington](#), [Colorado](#).

Nineteen other states allow certain elections to be held by mail. More information can be found on NCSL's [All-Mail Elections \(aka Vote-By-Mail\) webpage](#).

## Early and Absentee Voting in Your State

Are you looking for information on how to vote early or by absentee ballot in an upcoming election? While NCSL is not involved in holding elections and cannot provide information or advice on how, when or where to vote in your state, we are pleased to provide this link to a page which will direct you to the answers you need regarding your state's laws: [Vote?](#)

## Military Voters

All states permit members of the military who are stationed overseas, their dependents, and other U.S. citizens living abroad to vote by absentee ballot. For more information, please visit the [Overseas Vote Foundation](#).

## Additional Resources

- NCSL's [State Laws Governing Early Voting](#) page
- Article from NCSL's elections newsletter, *The Canvass*: [Pre-Election Day Voting—Just the FAQs, Ma'am](#)
- FVAP's [Absentee and Early Voting Myths and Realities Fact Sheet](#)
- [NCSL's video Q&A with MIT's Charles Stewart III](#) on early voting and turnout
- [The Early Voting Information Center \(EVIC\)](#) based at Reed College
- [The U.S. Vote Foundation](#) has state dates deadlines for requesting and returning absentee ballots, as well as early voting periods
- [Long Distance Voter](#), a non-profit with information on registering and voting by mail

### NCSL Member Toolbox

#### Members Resources

- Get Involved With NCSL
- Jobs Clearinghouse
- Legislative Careers
- NCSL Staff Directories
- Staff Directories
- StateConnect Directory
- Terms and Conditions

#### Policy & Research Resources

- Bill Information Service
- Legislative Websites
- NCSL Bookstore
- State Legislatures Magazine

#### Accessibility Support

- Tel: 1-800-659-2656 or 711
- Accessibility Support
- Accessibility Policy

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