

Early Voting in Texas

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Q. WHAT IS EARLY VOTING?

A. In Texas, voters may choose between two kinds of early voting (formerly "absentee voting"):

1. early voting by personal appearance; and,
2. early voting by mail.

Voting early in person is now basically the same as voting on election day. To vote early by mail, a voter must state one of several legal reasons.

Q. WHO CONDUCTS EARLY VOTING?

A. Early voting is conducted by the early voting clerk. Different people can serve as the early voting clerk depending on the type of election being held:

- The county clerk is the early voting clerk in:
 1. a primary election;
 2. a special election ordered by the Governor;
 3. the general election for state and county officers; and,
 4. any other countywide election that is held at county expense.
- In a less-than-countywide election ordered by a county authority and held at county expense, the county clerk is the early voting clerk, unless another person is appointed by the county authority.
- In an election ordered by a county authority and not held at county expense, the authority ordering the election shall appoint the early voting clerk.
- The city secretary is the early voting clerk for an election ordered by an authority of the city.
- The early voting clerk for all other types of elections is appointed by the authority ordering the election.
- You may find answers to questions about places and hours for early voting by contacting the early voting clerk's office or the administrative offices of the political subdivision

conducting the election.

Q. WHEN IS EARLY VOTING CONDUCTED?

A. Early voting must be conducted for all elections. In most elections, early voting by personal appearance begins on the 20th day before election day and ends on the 4th day before election day.

Q. WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO VOTE EARLY?

A. 1. In Person:

- If you are a qualified voter, you may vote early by personal appearance. No reason is needed.

2. By Mail:

- If you are a qualified voter, you may vote early by mail if:
 - you will be absent from your county on election day and during the period to vote early in person;
 - you are disabled;
 - you are 65 years of age or older on election day; or,
 - you are confined in jail.
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Q. HOW DO I VOTE EARLY?

A. 1. In Person:

To vote early by personal appearance, you must vote in person at the main early voting polling place or at any other designated early voting branch location during regular hours.

2. By Mail:

If you are eligible to vote early by mail, you must submit an application for a ballot to the early voting clerk:

- on or after the 60th day before election day; and,
- before the close of business on the 7th day before election day.

Official Application:

- Applications for a ballot by mail are available from the early voting clerk or the Secretary of State's office.

Informal Application:

- You are not required to use an official application form, as long as your application in writing includes:
- your signature (or a witness' signature if you cannot sign);
- the name in and address at which you are registered to vote;
- the address to which the ballot is to be mailed (only if different from the address at which you are registered, as shown on your voter registration card);
- a description of the election for which you are requesting a ballot (for a primary election, you must state in which political party's primary you wish to vote); and,
- a reason why you are eligible to vote early by mail (to be eligible to vote early due to expected absence from the county, your application must give an out-of-county mailing address).

How to submit an Application:

If you are voting early by mail, you must:

- send your application by regular mail or by common or contract carrier;
- submit the application by fax if you are outside of the county and if a fax machine is available at the early voting clerk's office; or
- submit the application in person.

NOTE: This option may be used only before early voting by personal appearance begins (usually the 20th day before the election).

Deadline for Return of Marked Ballot:

The marked ballot must be returned to the early voting clerk before 7 p.m. on election day, and must be returned by mail or by common or contract carrier.

Q. WHAT IF I BECOME ILL OR DISABLED AND CAN'T GO TO THE POLLING PLACE ON ELECTION DAY?

A. If you:

1. become ill or disabled on or after the day before the final day for applying to vote by

mail; and,

2. you won't be able to go to the polling place on election day, you may send an application for a late early ballot by a representative who:
 - is 18 years of age or older;
 - is not employed by or related to any candidate on the ballot by blood or marriage;
 - has not served in the election as a representative for another applicant.

The application must have all of the same information as a regular application for an early ballot. A certificate issued by a licensed doctor, chiropractor, or accredited Christian Science Practitioner must also be included. The certificate must state that a sickness or disability happened on or after the day before the final day for submitting an application by mail which would prevent the voter from appearing at the polling place on election day without the possibility of needing personal assistance or of injuring his/her health. The certificate must also state the date that your disability occurred.

Your application for late voting due to a disability must be submitted to the early voting clerk:

- after the last day of the period for voting early in person; and,
- before 2 p.m. on election day.

The clerk will then review your application and give your representative a ballot to deliver to you. The ballot must be returned in its original carrier envelope to the early voting clerk before 7 p.m. on election day by the same person who delivered the ballot to the voter. Forms are available from the Office of the Secretary of State or from your county clerk.

Q. WHAT IF THERE IS A DEATH IN MY FAMILY AND I WON'T BE IN TOWN ON ELECTION DAY?

A. If anyone related to you within the second degree by blood or marriage dies on or after the fifth day before election day, and as a result, you must be absent from your county on election day, you may vote late.

Your application must be in the form of an affidavit. Your application must contain the same information as a regular application for a ballot by mail, as well as the day of the family member's death and a statement of your relationship to the family member.

Q. WHAT IS A FEDERAL POST CARD APPLICATION?

A. The Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) is a form provided by federal law to permit members of the U.S. armed forces and merchant marines, their dependents, and U.S. citizens abroad to vote early by mail and, if necessary, to temporarily register to vote.

You are eligible to vote early with an FPCA if you are qualified to vote in Texas and you are:

- a member of the U.S. armed forces or a spouse or dependent of one;
- a member of the U.S. merchant marines or a spouse or dependent of one;
- a U.S. citizen domiciled in Texas but temporarily living outside the territorial limits of the United States; or
- a U.S. citizen residing abroad who was last domiciled in Texas immediately prior to leaving the U.S. (persons in this category are no longer residents of Texas and therefore may vote only for federal offices).

An FPCA must be submitted to the early voting clerk by mail or common contract carrier. It may be submitted:

- any time during the calendar year of the election for which you are requesting a ballot; or,
- during the previous calendar year for elections to be held in January or February of the following year. In this case, the application must be submitted within 60 days before the election.

The application must be submitted to the early voting clerk before the close of business on the 7th day before election day. A single FPCA may be used to request ballots for all elections held by a particular authority (county, city, school district, etc.) within the calendar year. However, if you wish to vote in the elections of more than one authority, you must submit a separate FPCA to each authority's early voting clerk.

An applicant who wishes to vote in a primary election must state a political party preference for early voting ballots for both the first and second primary (runoff) elections to be sent.

While an FPCA may be used temporarily to register applicants for the elections for which they are requesting ballots, the FPCA may not be used as an application for permanent voter registration. Therefore, FPCA applicants who are residents of Texas are encouraged permanently to register to vote by using the regular postage-paid registration application which is available from your county voter registrar or from the Secretary of State's office. You may continue to use the FPCA, irrespective of whether you are permanently registered.

FPCA's may be obtained by eligible voters from voting assistance officers within their branch of service, from a U.S. consulate or embassy, or from the Voting Assistance Program of the Department of Defense, Washington, D.C. 20301.

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