

Voting & Elections

North Dakota voters will be receiving their ballots by mail for the June 9th primary election. Voters must submit an application to receive the ballot, and [can complete an online application](#) to print, sign, and mail at vote.nd.gov.

County Commissions in all 53 counties have authorized Vote-by Mail for the election as a measure to reduce the public's risk of exposure to COVID-19.

Governor Doug Burgum signed Executive Order 2020-13 on March 26, 2020 strongly encouraging counties to use Vote by Mail for the June 9, 2020 , election. The Executive Order suspends the requirement for counties to have at least one physical polling location. Decisions in each of North Dakota's 53 counties, established that all voting will be done through the mail for this election. There will be no polling places for the June 9 election.

This Executive Order was issued at the request of the North Dakota County Auditors Association and supported by the North Dakota Secretary of State out of safety concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many states have moved elections or closed polling places as the election day neared because few polling places were available and the difficulty in recruiting election workers, whose average age puts them in vulnerable segment of this pandemic. The decision for the Executive Order came in late March as the statutory and practical deadlines neared in order to effectively conduct the June 9 election.

Just as at the polls, North Dakotans will be required to demonstrate proof of identification when voting. While applications have been sent to all voters in the Central Voter File, voters must attest their eligibility when applying for a ballot.

Records for those persons who were mailed an application but have now moved, causing the application to be undeliverable, will be moved into a separate category to no longer be eligible for future election-related mailings.

Key Election Dates

April 24-28 – Applications mailed to all listed in the North Dakota Central Voter File

May 1 – Ballots will begin to be mailed to voters whom submitted applications

May 1 – [Accessible ballot marking device](#) for voters needing assistance made available by [contacting the voter's County Auditor](#)

June 8 – Deadline for ballots returned by mail to be postmarked

June 9 – **Deadline to return ballots - All ballots must be received by the County Auditor by 4 p.m.**

Voting and Ballot-Return Options

After submitting your application, you will receive your ballot by mail. Allow 10 days to receive your ballot from sending your application. If you complete your application after May 31, it is recommended you take it to your County Auditor or call your auditor for email or fax options for the application.

You can vote and return your ballot as soon as you receive it. Return your ballot as soon as possible to allow time for your ballot to be received by your County Auditor. You can return your ballot by mail or to a [secure drop box](#).

If mailing your ballot, please remember to affix a first-class postage stamp to the envelope.

If you have not received your application, you may go to vote.nd.gov to [prepare an application](#), print and sign it, and then email, mail, or fax it to your county auditor.

Ballot Return by Mail

You can vote and return your ballot through the U.S. Postal Service as soon as you receive it. **We recommend putting your ballot in the mail as soon as possible to make sure it's submitted in time to be counted.** Your ballot must be Postmarked by June 8 2020.

Ballot Return to Drop Box

Return your ballot to a secure ballot drop box, no stamp required. Your ballot must be returned to a [ballot drop box](#) by 4 p.m. Election Day, June 9. Please contact your County Auditor for drop box locations.

Accessible Voting Options

Voters with accessibility needs have the opportunity to mark their ballots privately and independently using assistive ballot marking devices. These devices have a variety of accessibility options including audio, large font, color contrast, touch screen input and tactile input to assist voters in marking a ballot. The machines print out a scannable, marked ballot which the voter can review, the ballot is then placed in an envelope and dropped in a ballot box with other ballots.

Contact your [County Auditor](#) for more information.

Vote by Mail Security

The voting system being used in the June 9 election is the same system and equipment used by the State of North Dakota for all State and Federal Election. North Dakota's election systems are secure, have built-in redundancies, and have been subject to security testing. The State of North Dakota always uses a paper-based voting system. This means that there is a paper record of every vote cast, and these ballots can be re-tabulated if needed.

In order to vote by mail, North Dakota voters must verify the same eligibility with identification as they would at the polls. The information completed on the application will be compared to that on the ballot return envelope to confirm eligibility according to North Dakota state law.

Frequently Asked Questions

(updated May 8, 2020)

How is the June 9 Election going to be run?

Each county in North Dakota will be conducting this election exclusively through the mail, except for voters requiring an assistive device.

Why is the Election going to be run by ballot by mail?

This is in response to the concerns of the COVID-19 pandemic at the time of the Governor's order in late March. In order to ensure the election would be conducted as scheduled, the decision was needed at that time to either postpone the election or consider modifying the method of voting this particular election.

The leading concern, other than the safety of election workers and voters due to the COVID-19 Virus, was ensuring that the pandemic did not disrupt or delay the Primary Election. Many other states have delayed their spring and summer elections, and North Dakota was faced with the same pandemic issues as those states. While the Primary races in June are important, there is additional significance because the June 9th election is also the General Election for the cities, school districts, and county measures.

Given the deadlines established in law and the long lead time it takes to make an election successful, the Executive Order and subsequent county decisions were necessary to ensure an undisrupted election.

How is that different from absentee voting?

All counties in North Dakota offer **absentee voting** starting at 40 days prior to an election. This means someone who wants to vote absentee could either mail, fax, or e-mail the County Auditor an application, and the County Auditor would send them a ballot in the mail. The other method was they could stop in our office to apply for and receive a ballot at that time. Early Voting opens the week before Election Day and precincts are open on Election Day.

In mail balloting, all active voters in the Central Voter File are mailed an application to complete and return to the county auditor to get a ballot back in the mail. Due to the unusual circumstances this year, the Secretary of State mailed applications to all voters in the Central Voter File, both active and inactive. These applications need to be completed and sent back to the county auditor to receive a ballot. Normally one precinct is open on Election Day. This year, due to the unusual circumstances, no precincts will be open on Election Day.

Why was the decision to go mail balloting made in April?

By the 64th day before the election polling places need to formally be named. The 64th day is a major milestone in North Dakota election planning. That is the filing deadline for candidates and measures to be placed on the ballot. We also need to order our ballots in this week for all 102

ballot styles. We order absentee or mail ballots separately from Election Day ballots—absentee or mail ballots come pre-folded to save time. Election Day ballots are not folded because they are easier to use with precinct scanner. At this point we either start preparing for a Mail Ballot Election or our normal election with Early Voting and Election Day Precincts.

Can I go to the Early Voting site prior to the election?

No, the Early Voting sites will not be open due to the COVID-19 virus pandemic.

Can I go to my regular precinct on Election Day?

No, the Election Day precincts, or polling places, will not be open due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

How will I get my Ballot?

The Secretary of State's Office has mailed applications to all the individuals listed in the Central Voter File

The applications were prepopulated but require additional input from you. You must complete the forms, sign them, and mail them to your county auditor to get your ballot.

Do I have to vote my ballot right away?

No, but ballots must be post-marked by June 8, the day before Election Day. Counties will also have [secure dropboxes](#) for you to drop the ballot off before 4 p.m. on June 9. Contact your County Auditor for the locations of those [dropboxes](#).

What if I do not get an application from the Secretary of State?

It is possible that you will not get an application from the Secretary of State. Usually the reason is you moved and have not updated your address with the North Dakota Department of Transportation or have moved too recently for that data to be updated and transmitted to the Central Voter File. You may be new to the state and have not been issued a driver's license or state issued non-driver's identification card.

Whatever the reason, if you don't get an application directly from the Secretary of State's Office, you can go online to WWW.VOTE.ND.GOV and fill out, print, sign, and mail your application to your county auditor. You can also call your County Auditor, who can mail you an application.

What if I am filling out my ballot and I make a mistake?

If you make a mistake when filling out your ballot you can request a replacement ballot. Call your County Auditor's office and they will process another ballot for you.

Anything else I have to do with my ballot after voting?

After voting put your ballot into the secrecy envelope, put the secrecy envelope with ballot, in the return envelope provided. You must date and sign the back of the return envelope and you must put postage on the envelope before mailing it back to the county auditor.

Ballot envelopes that are returned to the county auditor without a signature will not be processed.

I have questions related to completing the application?

Call your [County Auditor](#), who would be glad to help you with any questions.

I've seen something related to school election by mail. Are there two separate elections?

There could be. In some counties, the school elections are part of your county June 9 ballot. In others, the school districts are conducting their own mail-ballot elections this summer. To see what's on your county June 9 ballot, click [My Voting Information at Vote.ND.Gov](#) to look up your specific information. After voting put your ballot into the secrecy envelope, put the secrecy envelope with ballot, in the return envelope provided. You must date and sign the back of the return envelope and you must put postage on the envelope before mailing it back to the county auditor.

Ballot envelopes that are returned to the county auditor without a signature will not be processed.

I am aware of some applications being mailed to persons who no longer live in North Dakota. Why is this happening and how does this affect the election's security?

North Dakota's Central Voter File contains records of Active Voters and Inactive Voters. Inactive Voters are those who have not voted in the last two federal elections. In many cases, these persons may have moved but unless the State is notified, there is no way to determine their residential status. Many persons in the Inactive Voter category have never voted and, in some cases, were not eligible to vote. The file is primarily fed by applications for Driver's Licenses at the Department of Transportation.

To comply with the Governor's Executive Order, the Secretary of State mailed applications to all voters, Active and Inactive, in the Central Voter File. Of the approximately 680,000 voters in Central Voter File, about 100,000 were processed by the United States Post Office as undeliverable. This now will allow the State to work these returns and process the associated records into a category to make them eligible to remove. Similarly, those returned from households that made it through the mail, for persons who no longer live at that location, will be processed to consider these individuals as eligible for removal.

It is important to point out that these are applications to obtain a ballot, not actual ballots. Applications are also published by counties in newspapers and are available online at any time. In order to vote by mail, North Dakota voters must verify the same eligibility with identification as they would at the polls. The information completed on the application will be compared to that on the ballot return envelope to confirm eligibility according to North Dakota state law.

When an individual applies for an absentee ballot (as required by North Dakota law) the person must provide a driver's license number from the ND DOT, a nondriver's ID number also from ND DOT, or a tribal ID number. When the application comes into a county office, the residential address listed on the application is compared with the residential address of the ID that is

provided. If those addresses do not match, the applicant is contacted to inform them that there is a discrepancy between the addresses. The applicant then must correct the address of their ID with DOT for example before they are sent a ballot. This is just one way that fraud is prevented and it is similar to the way fraud is prevented in a polling place.

When the ballot is returned from the voter, voters must sign in the proper space on the back of the return envelope, and beyond validating the ballot with a signature, the voter is signing an affidavit of eligibility, and a false attestation is a criminal action subject to prosecution.

At the designated time, an election board that has representatives from both major political parties in the state compare the signature on the back of the envelope with the signature on the application form. If the signatures do not match, the unopened envelope with the ballot still sealed inside is set aside for review by the County Canvassing Board that meets 6 days after the election. At that time, a final determination is made by that Board, also with representatives from both parties, regarding whether a ballot should be counted or rejected.

What happens to my ballot when I mail it to the County Auditor?

When your ballot is received, it will be recorded by the County Auditor. The County Auditor retains the application and later attaches it to your returned envelope. Election Judges compare these two signatures before opening and counting your ballot. It is important that **you** sign your application and **you** sign your return envelope to ensure your vote counts.

My son/daughter is my Power of Attorney. Can they apply for a ballot for me?

Your vote is yours to cast. You need to apply for your ballot under your signature, you can have anyone help you with completing the application. Your ballot can not be mailed based on a request from your Power of Attorney.

How secure is my vote?

You will only be issued a ballot if you have requested one through the application. Your name, address, and ID number provided on the application will be compared with the Central Voter File before sending you a ballot. We cannot issue you a ballot without your signature. When you return your ballot, election Judges compare the signature on your application with the signature on the ballot return envelope.

Mail ballots go through the same review process as absentee ballots in a regular election. Mail ballots will be reviewed as noted above by the Absentee Board before being opened and processed. If that board cannot determine if the application and ballot envelope are signed by the same person, they will not process the ballot. They will instead refer that ballot to the County Canvassing Board that meets six days following each election.

Will anyone know how I voted?

No, the ballots are opened by Election Judges. They first separate the secrecy envelopes from the ballot return envelopes after examining the signatures. Once the ballot return envelopes are

empty, they are set aside before ballots are removed from the secrecy envelopes and initialed by the Election Judges.

When will my ballot be counted?

For this Mail Election, the Governor's Executive Order has given us five business days before Election Day to process the mail ballots. The ballots may be opened and processed over this period; however, the ballot scanners will be locked so that no results can be tabulated until after 7:00 PM on Election Day.

When and how will election results be released?

Election results will be uploaded to the Secretary of States website, where statewide results will be published after 8:00 p.m. Central Time on Election Day.