



Georgia Secretary of State

ELECTIONS DIVISION

Absentee Voting

A Guide for Registered Voters

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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 <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.sos.ga.gov/MVP.

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: www.sos.ga.gov/elections/UOCAVA

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.sos.ga.gov/MVP.

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:

sos.ga.gov/elections/contact_information.htm

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.
2. You can submit a written request for an absentee ballot by providing the following information:
 - 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.
3. You can also request an absentee application by contacting the registrar or absentee ballot clerk in the county where you are registered to vote.

Except in the case of a physically disabled voter residing in the county or municipality, 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 information on the oath envelope is verified, the registrar will compare your absentee ballot oath envelope to your voter registration card to verify your signature, as well as compare your signature on the ballot envelope with your signature on the absentee application. On Election Day, the ballot and the envelope are separated to ensure confidentiality of the ballot. This process, and the processing and counting of absentee ballots shall be open to the public. If the absentee ballot is challenged, and that challenge is upheld, the ballot remains in the envelope, is not counted, and the reason is indicated on the envelope.

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 www.GAPHOTOID.com 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.sos.ga.gov/MVP.

Voting Your Ballot

After casting your ballot, you will be entered into the voter registration system as "voted" and your vote 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 appearing in person before the registrar or absentee ballot clerk and making a written request to have the ballot marked “cancelled.” After satisfying themselves as to your identity, the registrars or absentee ballot clerk shall grant the request and notify the managers of your precinct to 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 third-party 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 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?

Not unless you are a physically disabled voter. A physically disabled voter can designate a relative (spouse, child, parent, grandparent, grandchild, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, and in-laws) or an individual residing in the same household to return his or her voted ballot in person or by mail to the registrar or absentee ballot clerk.

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 75 or over?

If a physically disabled voter or voter 75 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 must submit separate absentee applications for the Presidential Preference Primary and all Special Elections.

If I am a resident of a nursing home or assisted living facility, can I receive assistance with my absentee ballot?

Only a physically disabled or illiterate voter who is a resident of a nursing home or assisted living facility can receive assistance in preparing his or her ballot from one of the following: any elector who is qualified to vote in the same county or municipality as the disabled or illiterate voter; an attendant care provider or a person providing attendant care; or the mother, father, grandparent, aunt, uncle, brother, sister, 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 disabled or illiterate voter.

Does someone have to sign my application if they are only assisting me?

The person giving assistance to the disabled or illiterate voter in preparing the ballot must sign the oath printed on the same envelope as the oath to be signed by the voter. In addition, no person may assist more than ten such voters in any election in which there is no federal candidate on the ballot. If a federal candidate appears on a ballot, a person can assist an unlimited number of voters in that election.

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.
- Any individual, organization or group that distributes applications for absentee ballots and receives completed application forms back from voters must deliver the forms to the appropriate elections official promptly to allow time to have the ballot mailed to the voter.

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 individual, organization or group may design their own form according to the requirements specified by Georgia Election Code. However, we strongly recommend that individuals or organizations planning to distribute absentee ballot applications include the return address of the appropriate county elections official to whom the voter can return the completed application. Absentee ballot applications should NOT be returned to the Secretary of State's Office. Also, the voter has the right to return his or her own completed absentee ballot application if desired.

The following fields must be included on a self-designed application:

- Voter's name,
- Date of birth,
- Registration address,
- 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,
- Place for voter's signature including the date of the request
- Place for the signature, date, and noted relationship of a person requesting the ballot on behalf of a disabled voter or a voter living outside of the county.

It is recommended that when creating the absentee application, that you also create a section "For Official Use Only" which should include:

- Date application received
- Date ballot mailed
- Date ballot returned
- Voter Registration #
- Precinct ID
- District combo#
- Reason for rejection
- Signature of registrar or clerk
- Boxes to indicate if voter is eligible or ineligible to receive the absentee ballot

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: www.sos.ga.gov/elections/contact_information.htm

Georgia Election Code can be found at: www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/gacode

State Election Board Rules can be found at: www.sos.ga.gov/elections/state_election_board

Absentee Ballot Applications can be found at:
sos.georgia.gov/elections/elections/voter_information/absentee.htm

VOTING AND ASSISTING RULES

	Voter Registration Application State, DDS, national VR card, FPCA	Absentee Ballot Application State, handwritten with required information	Absentee Ballot County issued ballot	Voting In Person Absentee in person or election day
Types allowed	State, DDS, national VR card, FPCA	State, handwritten with required information	County issued ballot	Absentee in person or election day
Where forms/applications are obtained	Secretary of State, county registrar, DDS, Designated Agencies, 3rd party, www.sos.ga.gov/elections	county registrar, www.sos.ga.gov/elections	Upon request by the voter, the county registrar mails the absentee ballot directly to the voter.	Early voting site, assigned polling location
Who can receive assistance in completing form or voting?	Physically disabled or illiterate individuals	Physically disabled or illiterate registered voters	Physically disabled or illiterate registered voters	Physically disabled or illiterate registered voters
Who may assist?	Anyone may assist. The person assisting must sign the voter registration application on the assistance signature line.	Anyone may assist. The person assisting must sign the absentee ballot application on the assistance signature line. A family member* may request an absentee ballot on behalf of the voter ONLY in the case of an elector residing temporarily out of the county or municipality or a physically disabled elector residing within the county or municipality.	<u>Election with federal candidate:</u> Anyone other than employer or officer or agent of such elector's union. <u>All other elections:</u> Any elector, except a poll officer or poll watcher, who is a resident of the precinct in which the elector requiring assistance is attempting to vote, or any family member* or attendant care provider** of the elector entitled to receive assistance. Exception: No person whose name appears on the ballot as a candidate at a particular election nor a family member* of that candidate shall offer assistance during that particular election to any voter who is not related* to such candidate.	Physically disabled or illiterate registered voters
Can the forms be returned bundled?	Yes	Yes	Georgia law prohibits anyone other than the voter from taking possession of, or delivering, a voted mail-in ballot. However, if voter is physically disabled, the voted ballot may be mailed or personally delivered to the county registrar by a family member* or an individual residing in the household of the voter.	N/A
Can campaign materials be distributed?	Yes	Yes	No	No
Submittal timeline for assistor	Must be returned no later than 10 days after the date the applicant signs the application.	Upon completion by registered voter	Ballot must be given to voter immediately upon receipt	N/A
Other restrictions:	No person may accept a completed registration application unless the application has been sealed by the applicant. No copies of the completed registration application may be made without the applicant's permission.		No person shall assist more than ten electors in any primary, election, or runoff if there is NOT a federal candidate on the ballot.	No person shall assist more than ten electors in any primary, election, or runoff if there is NOT a federal candidate on the ballot.
*Family members consist of the following: elector's 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.	**Attendant care provider shall be a person who furnishes services and support to an individual with a physical disability, as needed, to assist in accomplishing activities of daily living, instrumental activities of daily living, and health related functions through hands-on assistance, supervision, or cuing. Activities of daily living includes eating, toileting, grooming, dressing, shaving, transferring, and other personal care services.			

