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ABSENTEE VOTING

BE COUNTED!

VOTING ON AN ABSENTEE BALLOT

Notarization

Most absentee voters must have their ballots notarized. You vote privately, but in the presence of a notary. After voting, seal the ballot in the envelope which has the affidavit printed on it, complete the required information, and have the notary complete and sign the affidavit. Massachusetts notaries may not charge for this service. No one, including the notary, may see how you vote or communicate with you about your choices. A candidate may not notarize your ballot.

Students' ballot envelopes may either be notarized, or signed by the registrar or assistant registrar of the college or university they are attending.

Permanently disabled voters who have submitted a doctor's certificate placing them on their city or town list of permanently disabled voters, simply sign the ballot envelopes themselves. They do not need to have their ballot envelopes notarized.

Unable to mark ballot

If you cannot mark the ballot due to physical disability or the inability to read or read English, it may be marked for you by a notary or any registered voter whom you choose. This person must sign both your name and his own on the envelope and add a statement to the affidavit on the envelope giving the reason why you were unable to mark the ballot yourself. If you are unable to find assistance, ask your city or town clerk for help or call the local Democratic or Republican headquarters.

RETURNING THE ABSENTEE BALLOT

Mail your ballot

Absentee ballots must be mailed both ways. Ballots cannot be hand carried to the voter or from the voter to local election officials.

Deadline

Return your absentee ballot promptly. In order to be counted, **absentee ballots must be received by the time the polls close on election day.**

Postage

Return postage must be paid by the voter. The only exception is for federal service personnel, for whom postage is free if mailed from a U.S. Post Office.

WHO MAY VOTE ABSENTEE

Registered voters

To register as a Massachusetts voter, you must be 18 years old on or before election day, a United States citizen, and a resident of Massachusetts.

Registration is permanent in Massachusetts. However, you must register again if you move to another city or town; registration is not transferred automatically to your new community. If you move within your community, notify your registrars of voters in writing. If you have been living away from home temporarily, check with your local election officials to be sure you are still on the voting list.

Certain unregistered voters

United States citizens living outside of the country and federal service personnel including those on active duty in the armed forces and in the merchant marine, and accompanying spouses and dependents may vote absentee even if not registered. They may vote absentee from the city or town where they last resided or from which they entered federal service. When they return, however, they must register in person before voting.

VOTING ABSENTEE

Reasons for voting absentee

You may vote absentee if you are unable to vote at the polls on election day because of:

- absence from your city or town during the hours the polls are open
- physical disability
- religious beliefs

Illegal absentee voting is punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and up to a year in prison.

How to vote absentee

There are two ways to vote absentee prior to election day:

- by mail — an absentee ballot may be sent to any address you specify including your own home
 - in person — at your city or town hall
- You must apply in advance for either type of ballot. To be counted, a completed ballot must be received by the time the polls close on election day.

APPLYING FOR AN ABSENTEE BALLOT

Applying to vote absentee by mail

You must apply for an absentee ballot to your city or town clerk **no later than noon of the day before the election.**

Applications do not have to be mailed. They may be hand delivered. However, apply early since **ballots must be sent by mail both ways.** You may use the official application form or any form of written communication (letter or post card). Each applicant must sign his own name on the request.

Include on your application:

- your name as registered
- your registration address
- ward and precinct if you know them
- the precise address to which you wish the ballot sent
- in a primary election, the party ballot you wish to receive
- your own signature

In a primary election, if you are not enrolled in a party, you must indicate which party ballot you wish to receive. You then become listed as a member of that party until you request in writing to change your party or to return to your unenrolled (independent) status. If you are enrolled in a party, that party's ballot will be sent to you.

Applying to vote absentee at your city or town hall

Instead of having your ballot mailed to you, you may vote at your city or town hall prior to the election at a time arranged with the clerk. **Application for this ballot must be made no later than noon of the day before the election.**

Some communities allow a voter to apply for an absentee ballot and then vote the ballot over-the-counter in the same visit. Others require the voter to return after the application has been certified by the board of registrars. Be sure to check with your local election officials first.

Applying to vote absentee by mail if you are physically disabled

If you are **permanently physically disabled** and cannot cast your vote at the polling place, you may file a letter from your physician with your city or town clerk. Your physician must state that you are permanently unable to cast your vote at the polling place because of physical disability. The city or town clerk will then put your name on the list of permanently disabled voters. You will still need to request a ballot in writing before each election, but you will not have to certify your disability each time and your ballot need not be notarized.

If you are **temporarily physically disabled**, you may apply for an absentee ballot attesting under the penalties of perjury that you are disabled. An absentee ballot, which must be notarized, will be sent to you.

Applying to vote absentee if you are living outside of the country or are in the federal service

If you are a United States citizen living out of the country, or are in the federal service or an accompanying spouse or dependent, you may have a relative apply in person for your ballot or you may apply yourself in writing.

SAMPLE APPLICATION FOR ABSENTEE BALLOT

Mail your application to:

City or Town Clerk
City or Town Hall
_____, Massachusetts _____
City or Town _____ Zip _____

I would like to apply for an absentee ballot because:

- I will be out of town during the hours the polls are open.
- I am disabled and cannot get to the polls.
- My religious beliefs prevent me from voting on election day.

Name

Address where registered

Ward and precinct (if known)

Send ballot to

Party, if primary

Signature