

ALTERNATIVE VOTING OPTIONS

What other ways can I vote besides going to the polling place on Election Day?

In some cases, you can (1) vote by mail, (2) vote early in person, or (3) vote from your car through curbside voting.

VOTE BY MAIL

What is vote by mail?

Vote by mail means that you can get a ballot mailed to you, mark it, and mail it in to be counted.

Who is eligible to vote by mail?

Anyone who is a registered voter and who is:

- Going to be away from your county on Election Day and during early voting;
- Sick or has a disability;
- 65 years of age or older on Election Day; or
- Confined in jail but is still eligible to vote.

How do I obtain a vote by mail ballot?

- Send in a vote by mail application to your county's early voting clerk. To get the name and address of the early voting clerk, you can contact the Secretary of State's office at 1-800-252-8683.
- You can send in a vote by mail application by mail, delivery service, or in some cases, by FAX (if your county voting clerk's office has a FAX machine and if you are submitting your application from outside the county).
- Also, if you are voting early because you will be gone on Election Day, you can apply in person at the county election official's office to get a vote by mail ballot. You must do this in person, and before the first day of early voting (usually the 17th day before the election).

How do I get a vote by mail application?

Get an official application from the Early Voting Clerk in your county, or from the Secretary of State's office. You can also call those offices and have an application mailed to you. You can also download one at: <http://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/voter/reqabbm.shtml>.

Do I need to use the official application form?

No. You can send in a letter asking for a vote by mail ballot, as long as the letter is in writing, and includes:

- Your signature (or a witness' signature if you cannot sign);
- Your name;
- The address where you are registered to vote;

- The address where you want the ballot mailed to (see below);
- The election date you want the ballot for;
- Which election you want the ballot for (and if it is a primary election, you must state the political party's primary in which you wish to vote); and
- The reason why you are eligible to vote early by mail.

Can I have the ballot mailed to a different address than my home address?

Maybe. The general rule is that a ballot must be mailed to the address where you are registered to vote. However, if you say in your application that you are going to be away from your county on Election Day, you can ask that it be mailed to another address. Also, if you are age 65 or older, or have a physical disability, you can have your ballot mailed to a hospital, nursing home, long-term care facility, retirement center, or relative, but you must check the blank on the application form that says which address you are providing.

Can I ask someone to help me fill out the application?

Yes. If you need help filling out the form or mailing it, ask someone you trust. If someone helps you fill out the application, you must write that person's name and address next to your signature on the application. The person helping you must also sign the application.

When do I apply for a vote by mail ballot?

You must submit your application to the early voting clerk at least seven (7) days, and no more than 60 days, before Election Day. If the seventh (7th) day before Election Day is on a weekend, the last day to submit an application is the Friday before that. It is a good idea to send in your application 50 or 60 days before Election Day. That way, you will have plenty of time to get your ballot, and if, for some reason, you don't get your ballot, you will have time to request a replacement ballot.

What if my ballot doesn't come?

If you are registered to vote and do not receive a ballot, call your county elections office. They will check that your voter registration is current. If it is, they will mail you a replacement ballot.

What is the deadline to return a vote by mail ballot?

The early voting clerk must receive your marked ballot by **7 p.m. on Election Day**.
EXCEPTION: If you are mailing your ballot from outside the United States, the early voting clerk must receive your ballot by the 5th day after Election Day, and you must mail it no later than 7:00 p.m. on Election Day.

How do I know if my ballot is received?

You may call your county election office and ask if they received your ballot. A record is kept showing each voter whose ballot has been returned.

When will election results be known?

Ballot counting will not begin until Election Day.

VOTE EARLY IN PERSON

Who is eligible to vote early in person?

Any registered voter can vote early in person, for any reason.

When is the early voting period?

You may vote during the early voting period which begins 17 days before Election Day and ends 4 days before Election Day.

Where can I vote early?

During the early voting period, you can vote at any early voting site that is convenient to you within your county. You don't have to vote in your precinct.

How Do I Find out Where the Early Voting Polling Places Are Located?

- Call your county's early voting clerk.
- You can get the telephone number by looking in the government section of your telephone directory or by calling directory assistance.
- You can also call the Secretary of State's office at 1.800.252.8683, or look on the internet at: www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/voter/county.

CURBSIDE VOTING

How does curbside voting work?

If you are physically unable to enter the polling place, you can ask that an election officer bring a ballot to your car at the curbside, or to you at the entrance of the polling place. After you mark the ballot, give it to the election officer who will put it in the ballot box. Or, at your request, a companion may hand you a ballot and deposit it for you.

Should I call ahead?

It is a good idea to call ahead if you plan to go alone so the election official will be expecting you. If you can't drive, think about having a friend or relative drive you to the polling station. Call your County Election Official and let them know you would like to vote early and your precinct number. The county official will notify the poll workers. You can find your County Election Official by calling the Secretary of State's office at 1.800.252.8683, or look on the internet at: www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/voter/county.

Who is eligible for curbside voting?

Any voter who:

- Has a disability;
- Is 65 or older; and
- Cannot enter the polling place in which he is registered to vote; or is unable to stand in line to vote

Exactly where do I vote from?

You can vote outside your polling place in the closest available parking area from the car you rode to the polling place in.

When can I vote curbside?

It is available during early voting and on Election Day at every polling place.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- 60 days before Election Day – first day to send in your application to vote by mail
- 17 days before Election Day – first day to vote early in person
- 7 days before Election Day – last day to send in your application for a vote by mail ballot
- 4 days before Election Day – last day to vote early in person
- Election Day – 7 p.m. is the deadline for vote-by-mail ballots to be received, or if mailed from outside the U.S., 7 p.m. is the deadline to mail them.
- Texas law requires all early and Election Day polling locations to be physically accessible to voters with disabilities.
- For the name phone number, fax number or address of the early voting clerk in your county, go to <http://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/voter/county.shtml>
- For the dates and deadlines for most elections, go to <http://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/voter/2004dates.shtml>
- To get a vote-by-mail application:
<http://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/voter/reqabbm.shtml>

For additional information, contact:

Secretary of State Elections Division

P.O. Box 12060

Austin, Texas 78711-2060

(512) 463-5650 or (800)-252-VOTE (8683) Fax: (512) 475-2811; TTY: 7-1-1

www.sos.state.tx.us

If you need assistance in registering to vote, if you have questions regarding voting, or if you feel that any of your voting rights have been violated, please contact Disability Rights Texas at 1-888-796-VOTE (8683) or e-mail info@disabilityrightstx.org.

Disability Rights Texas' goal is to make each handout understandable by and useful to the general public. If you have suggestions on how this handout can be improved, please contact Disability Rights Texas at info@disabilityrightstx.org. Thank you for your assistance. This handout is available in Braille and/or on audio tape upon request.

Disability Rights Texas strives to update its materials on an annual basis, and this handout is based upon the law at the time it was written. The law changes frequently and is subject to various interpretations by different courts. Future changes in the law may make some information in this handout inaccurate. The handout is not intended to and does not replace an attorney's advice or assistance based on your particular situation.