FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Our FAQs address all of the important questions about mail-in ballots and other vote methods, voter and poll worker safety, ballot security, and more.

Voting in the 2020 Presidential General Election

To help voters better understand how the State of California and San Bernardino County are preparing for this Presidential General Election, we offer the following frequently asked questions and answers. Additional questions about voting and the elections process in San Bernardino County can be directed to Communications@SBCountyElections.com.

Why am I getting a vote-by-mail ballot for this year's Presidential General Election?

For the November 2020 Presidential General Election, there is a greater emphasis on the vote-by-mail option as a result of COVID-19 concerns with public gatherings. On June 18, 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom signed Assembly Bill 860, which mandates that each registered voter in the State of California will receive a vote-by-mail ballot for the November 3, 2020 election.

Voting by mail in California is not new. In the past, it has been referred to as an "absentee ballot." In fact, approximately 70 percent of San Bernardino County voters requested a mail-in ballot for the March 2020 Presidential Primary election.

In previous elections I voted by absentee ballot. Will I still be able to request an absentee ballot this year?

The new state mandates require that every active registered voter will receive a vote-by-mail ballot, which is the new term for "absentee ballot." During this election, there is no need to request your ballot to be mailed to you through "absentee." Everyone who is registered to vote will receive a vote-by-mail ballot.

When will vote-by-mail ballots be sent out?

Vote-by-mail ballots will be delivered to the United States Postal Service by October 5 to be mailed out to all existing registered voters. Eligible citizens who register to vote after that date will be mailed a ballot within five days. You can return your completed ballot in the prepaid postage envelope that is included in the voter packet. Ballots submitted by mail must be postmarked by Tuesday, November 3, 2020 in order to be counted.

How can I get a replacement mail ballot if I do not receive a ballot in the mail?

If you do not receive a mail ballot, call the Registrar of Voters at (909) 387-8300 up until October 27 to request that a replacement ballot be mailed to you and to confirm your address on file is current. Starting October 5, you may also visit the Registrar of Voters at 777 East Rialto Avenue, San Bernardino to pick up a replacement ballot. Additional locations throughout the county where you can get a replacement ballot will open from October 26 to 30. View a list of these Early Vote sites at www.sbcountyelections.com/Voting/Early.aspx. Note: The Registrar of Voters will suspend the mail ballot that you did not receive so that someone else cannot use it to vote.

I moved since the last time I voted, how do I make sure the Registrar of Voters has my current address?

To confirm the Registrar of Voters has your current address, you may use the My Elections Gateway tool on the Registrar of Voters website at www.SBCountyElections.com. Or you can also review your registration information on file with the Secretary of State at VoterStatus.sos.ca.gov.

If you need to update your address, you may re-register to vote at www.RegisterToVote.ca.gov. If you moved from one residence to another and stayed within San Bernardino County, you may also complete an In-County Change of Address Form. The form may be submitted to the Registrar of Voters by email to VoterRegistrations@SBCountyElections.com, mail, or in person.

What is an early vote site?

An early vote site is a location where a voter may pick up or vote a mail ballot. The Registrar of Voters office will operate as an early vote site beginning October 5. An additional five sites will be open from October 26 to 30.

Is vote-by-mail my only option?

No. Vote-by-mail is just one option. In addition to mailing in your ballot, you can take your voted ballot to a mail ballot drop-box location near you or vote in person at polling locations.

Vote-by-Mail. You will receive a ballot via mail for the November 3 election. Ballots will begin to be mailed on October 5, 2020. A prepaid-postage envelope will be included in which to return your ballot. Be sure to complete all required information on the envelope. Instructions about what color pen to use (blue or black ink; ballot scanners cannot see red ink), required signature, and dating the return envelope will be included. You can track when your ballot is mailed, received and counted through the Secretary of State's Where's My Ballot tracking system. You can sign up to receive notifications about the status of your mail ballot via email, text message, and/or telephone call.

Mail Ballot Drop-Box Locations. Voters can begin submitting completed ballots at mail ballot drop box locations [pdf] starting October 6. There will be at least 70 ballot drop-box locations countywide. A map of locations is posted on the Registrar of Voters website. Voted mail ballots may also be dropped off at the Registrar of Voters office, any early vote site and any polling place.

Polling Places. For voters who want to mark and cast their ballot in person, the County will have more than 200 polling locations available this election.

Will the County have "vote centers"?

No. The County operates "polling places". Each voter will be assigned to a neighborhood polling place.

Vote centers – where any voter in a county can cast a ballot – were authorized under the Voter's Choice Act. San Bernardino County did not adopt this model that became available to all counties in 2020, but the changes being made for this election to address COVID-19 align with the Voter's Choice Act model, including:

- A ballot will be mailed to every active registered voter in the county
- Every voter may still cast a ballot in-person
- At least one polling place for every 10,000 voters must be open for four days

- At least one secure ballot drop off location for every 15,000 voters will be available starting October 6

Can I be a poll worker?
Yes. You must be at least 18 years of age and a registered voter in the State of California, and read, write and understand English. You must commit to working four days (October 31 through November 3, 2020), attend a mandatory two-hour training session, and have transportation to the polling place. Poll workers in San Bernardino County are paid a stipend for each day worked.

How will mail-in ballots be managed?
Your official mail ballot envelope has a barcode that identifies it as yours. When you return your voted ballot to the Registrar of Voters, your mail ballot envelope is scanned on a mail sorting machine, capturing an image of your signature.

County staff will verify your signature on the mail ballot return envelope matches the signature on file with your voter registration before the ballot is removed from the envelope and counted with other mail ballots with high-speed, accurate scanners. How you vote is private as there is nothing on the ballot itself that identifies it as yours.

If you do not sign the envelope or staff determines the signatures do not match, you will be notified by letter at least eight days before the election is certified and be given until two days before certification to resolve the issue. The Registrar of Voters must certify the results of this election no later than December 1.

Double Voting. Attempting to vote more than once is a crime punishable by up to three years in prison. Elections Code section 18560(b). Voters who attempt to vote more than once in an election will be referred to the County District Attorney for investigation and potential prosecution.

If a voted mail ballot is returned after a voter has already voted at the Registrar of Voters office, an early vote site, or a polling place, **the mail sorter recognizes and rejects the second ballot.** If a voter attempts to vote in person after returning a voted mail ballot, election workers will check in the voter using an electronic roster (or Poll Pad) that will identify that the voter has already voted in the election. If the voter states he or she has not voted in this election, the voter may use a provisional ballot that is placed in an envelope and County staff will research the voter's participation in the election before rejecting or accepting the provisional ballot.

If my signature has changed since I first registered to vote will my ballot still be counted?
Your signature on the mail ballot return envelope and your signature on file with your voter registration do not need to be an exact match. County staff comparing your signature will look for identifiable similarities. If you believe your signature has significantly changed since you registered, you may re-registrar or provide a new signature.

Given COVID-19 concerns, what are you doing to protect poll workers and voters?
Creating a safe environment for voters and poll workers is a high priority. Poll workers will be provided with face masks, face shields, gloves, hand sanitizer, and cleaning supplies. High-touch surfaces will be cleaned throughout the day. If a face covering order is in effect, voters who arrive without a face mask will be offered one.

What is being done to protect my vote from a cyberattack?
Maintaining cybersecurity and the integrity of elections is always a top priority. We have brought in state and federal agencies to evaluate our systems, including prior to this election. As a result, we have implemented stronger cybersecurity measures and continually evaluate and upgrade our systems.

How will you keep ballot boxes secure?
Secure, accessible and locked ballot boxes will be made available for ballot drop-offs beginning October 6 through 8 p.m. on Election Day. Mail ballot drop boxes are bolted to concrete. Ballots will be picked up on a regular schedule that follows State requirements.

What technology will voters use to cast their votes?
At polling places, voters will be able to mark their choices on a paper ballot. Voters who cannot mark a paper ballot without assistance may use an accessible ballot marking device that will print the voter's ballot after the voter makes their choices. Either way, all votes will be cast on paper ballots.

Who verifies and counts mail-in ballots?
Registrar of Voters staff and temporary staff (hired for each election) are responsible for counting mail-in ballots. All personnel handling this process must pass background checks and receive training.

Under what conditions would a mail ballot be disqualified?
The most common reasons for mail ballots to be rejected are that the voter's signature did not match the voter's signature on file or the voter didn't sign the envelope. The Registrar of Voters will notify voters at least eight days before the election is certified and be given until two days before certification to resolve the issue. The Registrar of Voters must certify the results of this election no later than December 1.

Another common reason for ballots to be rejected is the ballot was received too late. Voters must return their voted ballot by 8 p.m. on November 3 at any polling location, mail ballot drop box or the Registrar of Voters. Ballots that are mailed must be postmarked on or before Election Day – November 3 – and received by November 20.

How do I know my votes were counted accurately?
The Registrar of Voters processes are transparent and open for observation, including:
- Testing of the voting system equipment used to count ballots prior to their use in the election
- Examination of signatures on the mail ballot return envelopes
- Removal of the ballots from the envelopes
- Counting of the ballots on high speed ballot scanners
- Hand counting of at least 1 percent of the ballots to audit the accuracy of the scanners
- Testing of the voting system equipment used to count ballots after their use in the election

Once you cast your ballot at a polling place or it is removed from your mail ballot return envelope, it cannot be identified as your specific ballot. The Registrar of Voters only tracks that you voted in the election and the method you used to cast your ballot. No one will know the votes you marked on your ballot for a candidate or measure.

When will the election results in California be "certified?"
The Registrar of Voters is required to certify the Presidential Election results by December 1, 2020.

Can I track the status of my ballot?
Yes. You can track when your ballot is mailed, received, and counted through the Secretary of State's Where's My Ballot tracking system. You can sign up to receive notifications about the status of your mail ballot via email, text message, and/or telephone call. Sign up at [Where's My Ballot](#).

What is the County doing to make sure voters are educated about their options?
Getting the word out to all voters about the different voting options is a top priority. A full public education campaign is being implemented by the County, working in collaboration with cities, the different political parties, local news media, and a variety of non-government organizations and nonprofits. Social media and traditional advertising will be used, and Registrar of Voters staff are available to deliver virtual webcasts to interested groups or organizations. To schedule a presentation or receive a toolkit of voter education materials, contact Communications@SBCountyElections.com.

What is the County of San Bernardino doing to ensure voters have language assistance?
Pursuant to State law for this election, the County is providing voter outreach materials on its website in the following languages: English, Spanish, Chinese, Mandarin, Cantonese, Vietnamese, Thai, Indonesian, Tagalog, and Korean.

What are important dates for voters to remember?
- October 5 - Vote-by-mail ballots delivered to the U.S. Postal Service to be mailed out to registered voters
- October 5 - Early voting begins at the Registrar of Voters office
- October 6 - Ballot drop-box locations open
- October 26-30 - Additional early vote sites open
- October 31 to November 3 - Polling places open