

Wisconsin Elections Commission

State of Wisconsin

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Absentee Ballot Requests for April 7 Exceed 550,000

MADISON, WI – Wisconsin voters continue requesting absentee ballots at a record pace with concerns about Coronavirus COVID-19, according to the Wisconsin Elections Commission.

As of Tuesday morning, 554,116 absentee applications have been received by Wisconsin municipal clerks, compared to 482,740 on Monday and 134,556 the previous Monday one week earlier. More than 520,000 absentee ballots have already been issued, mostly by mail. It's important to note that this number does not include absentee ballot requests that have not yet been entered into the state system by clerks, such as emailed requests, mailed requests, or requests by voters that require the clerk to approve the photo ID, meaning the number of requests may be much higher.

Daily absentee ballot reports, including county-by-county numbers, are being posted here: <https://elections.wi.gov/publications/statistics/absentee>. (See additional absentee ballot statistics below.)

“We remain encouraged that so many voters are requesting absentee ballots already, especially through the MyVote Wisconsin website,” said Meagan Wolfe, Wisconsin’s chief elections official. She urged anyone who wants to vote absentee for April 7 to act immediately.

“We want everyone who is eligible and who wants to vote to be able to do so safely,” she said. “Absentee voting will also greatly reduce crowds at polling places on Election Day, which will make social distancing much easier.”

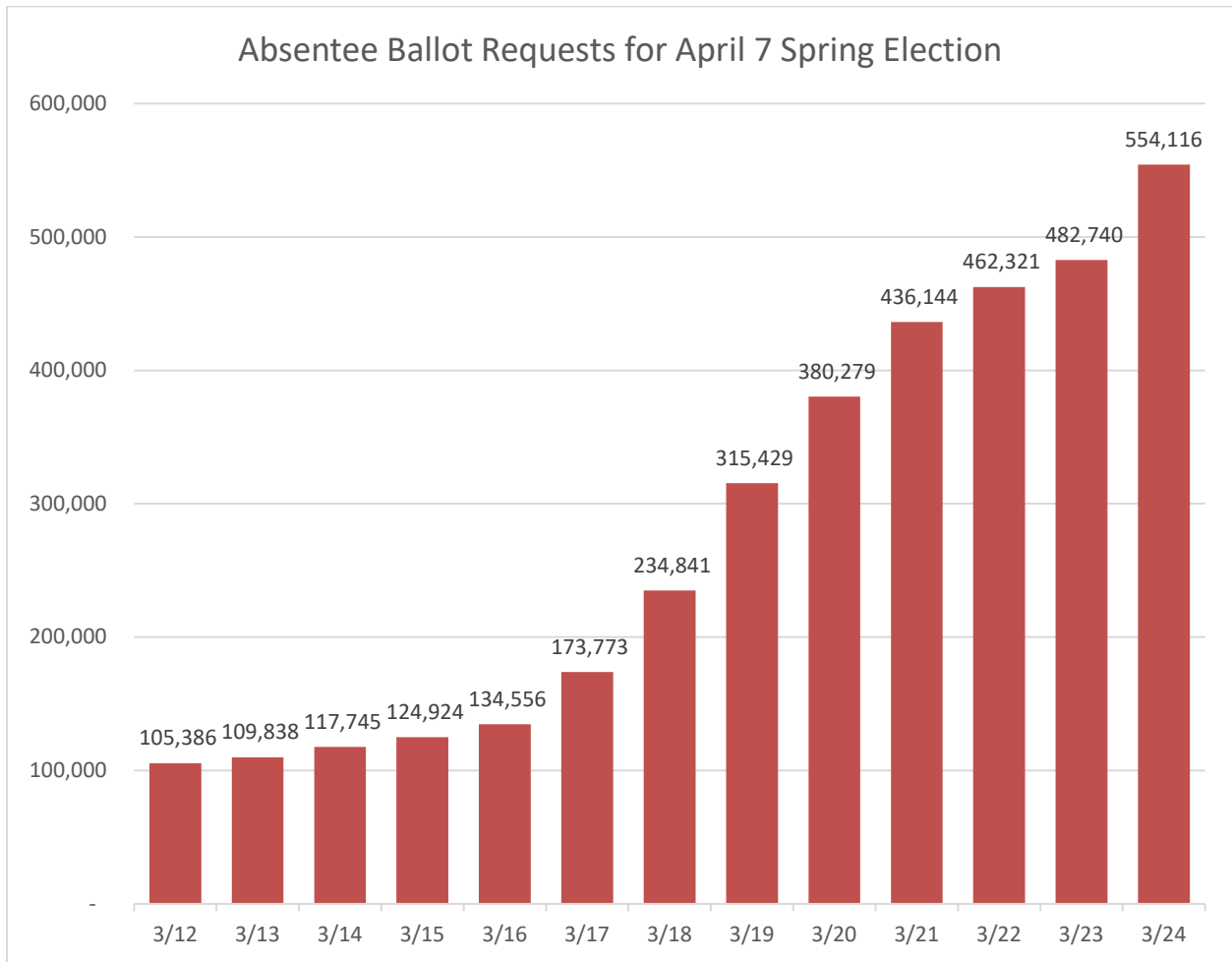
Online Registration Returning Soon

WEC is working as quickly as it can to reinstate online voter registration at MyVote Wisconsin following a federal court order late Friday requiring the WEC to reopen it until March 30, Wolfe said.

“We will reopen registration online as soon as we can make and test the changes to our systems,” Wolfe said. “This is not as simple as reposting an online form or flipping a switch. With the election underway, we need to be very careful to test this change to ensure it does not adversely affect other functions, including absentee ballot requests. We will update the public and local election officials as soon as we know when MyVote Wisconsin will be ready.”

WEC is also working to ensure clerks have enough absentee envelopes to fill demand. The agency has ordered 1.2 million envelopes (600,000 each of the inner and outer envelopes), which are scheduled for delivery mid-week. These will be express shipped to county clerks, who will distribute them to municipal clerks who need them.

Absentee Ballot Requests Pouring In



These numbers from past Spring Elections put the 2020 requests into perspective:

Spring Election	Absentee issued total	Total Ballots Cast	Turnout	Percent Absentee
2016	249,503	2,113,544	47.38%	11.80%
2017	103,533	708,711	15.86%	14.61%
2018	130,041	997,485	22.32%	13.04%
2019	170,121	1224303	27.22%	13.90%
2020-To Date	554,116	NA	NA	NA

In comparison, there were 819,316 absentee ballots cast in the November 2016 Presidential Election. The 2016 Spring Election and Presidential Preference Primary was a particularly high turnout election, due to both major political parties having competitive nomination races. In 2020, only one major party has a contested race for President on the ballot in Wisconsin. Increased absentee ballots do not necessarily predict higher voter turnout as more voters may simply be voting prior to Election Day.

How to Request an Absentee Ballot

There are several ways registered voters can request absentee ballots. If they have internet access, the easiest way is to sign up at MyVote Wisconsin, <https://myvote.wi.gov>.

Just look for the “Vote Absentee” button near the top of the page. On a mobile phone, use the menu button in the upper right corner of the website. There is a three-step process that starts with putting in your name and date of birth, followed by requesting your ballot. If you don’t already have a photo ID on file with your clerk’s office, you can upload a copy. Mobile phone users can take a picture and upload it to MyVote. Absentee ballot requests submitted this way go directly to your clerk’s office, and you can track your ballot by returning to the website.

Voters can also request absentee ballots by mailing, emailing or faxing their municipal clerk’s office. You can find your clerk’s contact information on MyVote Wisconsin. These requests must be accompanied by a copy of your photo ID. If you already have a photo ID on file from previous absentee requests under your current registration, you will not need to provide it again.

Voters who are indefinitely confined, meaning they may have difficulty getting to the polls for reason of age, illness, infirmity, or disability are not required to provide a photo ID. Voters in care facilities can have a representative of the facility confirm the resident's identity instead of providing a photo ID. More information on photo ID and exemptions can be found at bringit.wi.gov.

The deadline for registered voters to request an absentee ballot be mailed to you is the Thursday before the election, April 2. However, the WEC urges voters not to wait, due to possible delays in mail delivery. If you get an absentee ballot mailed to you, you can still decide to vote at the polls on Election Day if you haven’t returned it.

Your absentee ballot must be received in your clerk’s office or at your polling place by 8 p.m. on Election Day. Again, the WEC urges voters to request and return ballots as soon as possible. The US Postal service advises ballots may take up to a week to reach voters and a week to be returned to your municipal clerk.

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The Wisconsin Elections Commission is responsible for administration and enforcement of election laws in Wisconsin. The Commission is made up of six Commissioners – four appointed directly by the State Senate Majority Leader, Speaker of the Assembly and the Minority Leaders in the State Senate and Assembly. The remaining two Commissioners are appointed by the Governor with confirmation by the State Senate from lists of former municipal and county clerks submitted by the legislative leadership in each party.