

FAQs: Absentee Voting Rules and Procedure

Q: Does the 5 day requirement start the Friday after the election date?

A: Yes. The clock to send out notifications to calendar-year absentee voters who did not vote at an election starts after the Friday deadline has passed because you do not know they have not voted until then.

Q: Will the new online ballot system prevent military and overseas voters from getting a ballot online if the clerk has already mailed/emailed/faxed them a ballot?

A: No, the new online ballot system will not prevent a military or permanent overseas voter from getting a ballot online if the clerk has already mailed/emailed/faxed them a ballot. The new FVAP system will provide the option to cancel their application from mail/email/fax to online and then allow them to fill out an online ballot. In SVRS their previous absentee application is cancelled and the new one is setup. The clerk will get a notification this was done by the online system.

Q: Why is a new envelope required to be completed for incomplete absentee certificate envelopes, if the old incomplete envelope is discarded anyway?

A: The procedure needs to be uniform. The easiest way to make it uniform is to have the witness and the voter complete a new certificate, rather than have different procedures depending on whose signature is missing or other circumstances.

Q: When you refer to serial number, is this the sequential number (starting with 1 & up)?

A: Yes.

Q: Do the SVDs need to witness if someone is indefinitely confined to their home and live with an adult child who is their caretaker? Can the adult child sign the absentee envelope as witness?

A: SVDs do NOT go to private residences, only to licensed care facilities.

Q: I have received conflicting information regarding indefinitely confined voters. Please clarify who can be indefinitely confined. Do indefinitely confined need to request each year.

A: They do not need to reapply each year if they certify they are indefinitely confined. As for who can claim that status, it is any person who believes they are "indefinitely confined" due to their age, illness, physical infirmity or disability. It doesn't mean they never leave their place of residence.

Q: What is a "wet" signature?

A: An original signature, i.e. not a copy.

Q: If our polling place has voters in line all day, how can we process absentees without waiting till the end of the night?

A: If you are busy all day you may have to wait until after the polls close, yes. We serve the people who are waiting first and process absentees as we can throughout the day.

Q: Can the Clerk be the agent for a hospitalized elector, deliver the ballot?

A: Yes, but not required.

Q: Does the agent have to be appointed by someone ahead of time?

A: The agent is appointed on the absentee application.

Q: The postmark on certificate envelopes is almost impossible to read; Can that be changed?

A: We have updated the envelope and the most recent one on the website should allow adequate space for the postmark. If it is illegible, we presume it was postmarked timely unless we have other contrary evidence.

Q: is it ok to just mark an "A" on the back of the ballot so that when we count our ballots at the end of the night, and we can make sure our #'s are correct for absentees?

A: You cannot mark a ballot so that it is distinguishable as any individual's ballot, but if you are consistent and uniform in applying the "A", it should be acceptable.

Q: So from a previous question, we cannot have a poll worker take one absentee ballot and get in line to process it, even though that worker is a regular scheduled worker?

A: The election inspector does not need to stand in line to process absentee ballots.

Have the inspector(s) who is processing absentees sit at the table with the rest of the inspectors (preferably next to those manning the poll lists). The inspector reviews the envelope for sufficiency. If it sufficient, the inspector announces the name out loud. The inspectors manning the poll list, upon hearing the name, assign the next voter number to the absentee voter and write the number in the duplicate original poll books. The ballot is placed in the ballot box. The envelope is placed in the white envelope. (The inspector may accumulate a few ballots in a folder or envelope and deposit them at one time, making an announcement that they are depositing absentee ballots.

Q: On the Feb. 13, 2011 memo subject: Central count absentee guideline, on page 3 the 5th paragraph, it states "The municipal board of absentee ballot canvassers shall mark the voter number on the back of the ballot and on the poll list.

A: Correct, that is central count though, not what we are talking about as a general process.

Q: In a previous webinar we were told to mark the absentee voter # on the ballot, before placing it in the machine. Should we still mark the absentee # on the ballot? Or just on the Gab 122 envelope?

A: The voter # is only placed on the ballot in very specific situations (challenges, central count absentee, etc.)

Q: What is the Original Ballots Envelope?

A: I don't believe there is a specific form envelope for this; it is just an envelope you label for this purpose.

Q: If a voter is provided a presidential only ballot at the polling place do the poll workers need to count it by hand?

A: Or remake it to a machine-readable ballot. Just be consistent with whatever method you choose.

Q: If I have absentee ballots, can I start the first in-person voter with #501 to streamline the processing of absentee ballots and assigning them a voter number?

A: No.

Q: Can we conduct absentee early voting at our polling place and give notice of it with specific hours?

A: We do not have early voting in Wisconsin. We only have absentee voting with prescribed deadlines.

Q: Am I understanding you correctly that you can process them during the day - we do not have to wait until after the polls close.

A: Correct, but the ones that would be rejected (incomplete), you set aside until after 8pm to give that voter the opportunity to correct the deficiency.

Q: Are the remade ballots bundled with the originals and put in the envelope/ballot bag since they have the same serial number or what are done with them?

A: The original ballot is marked with a sequential number (e.g., original #1) and placed in the original ballots envelope. The remade ballot is marked with a sequential number (e.g. remade #1) and placed into the tabulator. Both the voted ballots from the tabulator and the original ballots envelope should be secured in ballot bags at the end of the night for return to the clerk.

Q: Does an agent for a hospitalized voter have to be a resident of the same municipality as the voter?

A: No

Q: How long do absentee voters have to respond to the letter sent to them within 5 days of not returning a ballot stating they want to remain on the absentee voter list for the year?

A: They don't have a time period to respond, it is simply a notice that they have been removed. If they want to reapply, they must do so by the applicable deadlines for their category.

Q: You say in the Clerk's Office by Thursday. What if the request is postmarked Thursday or prior and the request is received on Friday the 2nd?

A: It must be received by the respective deadline, not just postmarked.

Q: The purple box to the left (page 53) requires the witness to be present, correct?

A: Correct, if the new envelope is being issued at the polling place, the original witness must be present.

Q: If the voter who has an incomplete envelope shows up at the clerk's office, before Election Day to correct something, can they spoil the ballot and get a new ballot and the clerk can then be the witness?

A: If they request to spoil before their respective absentee request deadline, yes. Once we pass the Thursday/Friday before the election, they can only correct the error; they can't spoil anymore unless they are some special case that has until 5pm on Election Day to request.

Q: Does the County Clerk supply the Presidential Only Ballot? My County Clerk said they will not be supplying one and that the GAB should have one available online. Is that correct?

A: We have a paper Presidential-only, yes. It is in the Forms section, Ballots subsection:
<http://gab.wi.gov/node/2494>

Q: How are you supposed to process absentees throughout the day, not assign them a number ahead of time and not stand in line as an election inspector?

A: The election inspector can sit at the poll book table with a stack of absentee ballots, announce the name and address of the voter, if no challenge/problem with the envelope, open them, get a voter number and take the ballots to the voting equipment to be tabulated.

Q: Please review the out of state voters that can vote just for Presidential. How do we verify POR?

A: New Wisconsin residents from another state who have not established residency must provide Proof of Residence to use the GAB-141 to cast a Presidential-Only ballot. They are not considered registered and must fill out and submit a GAB-131 after they have established residency to vote in subsequent elections.

Q: Before Election Day, can a clerk issue voter numbers to electors who have submitted approved absentee certificate envelopes? This would help speed up absentee ballot processing at the polling place on Election Day.

A: Not recommended for a variety of reasons, but this is not prohibited.

Q: When a ballot is remade, does this require two inspectors to complete?

A: Yes.

Q: Do children of permanent overseas voters have to provide proof of naturalization?

A: No.

Q: Do the Clerks generate their own notices to send to absentee applicants that did not return ballots or is there an OFFICIAL notice?

A: There is a 30-day notice in SVRS, but clerks generate their own 5-day notices.

Q: For in-person voting at nursing homes, if a voter is not able to vote at that time, can the ballot be left with staff for voter to vote ballot later and mail back to clerk's office?

A: Special Voting Deputies must visit the nursing home twice if the voter is not there or unavailable. After two visits, the clerk can mail the voter the absentee ballot at the nursing home.

Q: Back to Regular AB - If a voter does not return a ballot for an election and they are removed from the AB list can they simply respond by phone or does the response have to be in writing?

A: For a regular voter, they are simply removed and have to reapply. An indefinitely confined elector can contact you via any method within 30 days to stay on the list.

Q: Can the witness deliver the corrected envelope?

A: The new envelope can be returned via any method, same restrictions apply as the first ballot (postmarked by Election Day and received by 4:00pm the Friday following or delivered in-person by Election Day)

Q: If an application is marked "military" or "overseas" and they have indicated they want one specific election, does that request override the fact they are military or overseas?

A: Yes, you send only the ballots they specifically request.

Q: Power of Attorney - If person's says they have POA for person and that person wants to register to vote. What documentation, if any, do we need to see?

A: No documentation is necessary; they should indicate where they sign that they are POA for X.