

Wisconsin Elections Commission

State of Wisconsin

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Absentee Voting Deadlines Quickly Approaching for November 2020

MADISON, WI – Wisconsin voters who are voting absentee by mail must act soon, according to the Wisconsin Elections Commission.

“More than 1.4 million Wisconsin voters have requested absentee ballots by mail, but only 1 million have been recorded as returned,” said Meagan Wolfe, administrator for the Wisconsin Elections Commission. “Your ballot must arrive by Election Day to be counted and the US Postal Service says it can take up to seven days for a letter to arrive, so if you’re planning to mail your ballot back, you should mail it back as soon as possible.”

Voters who still need to request an absentee ballot by mail should also act immediately, Wolfe said. Registered voters can make their requests online at <https://myvote.wi.gov>.

“Please do not wait for the legal deadline – which is 5 p.m. on Thursday, October 29 – for your clerk to receive your request for an absentee ballot by mail,” Wolfe said. “If you wait until the deadline, you risk not getting your ballot in time to vote it and return it by 8 p.m. on Election Day.”

“The absentee by mail deadlines in law don’t correspond with the amount of time it may take to receive and return your ballot by mail,” Wolfe said. Wolfe said. “That is why the Wisconsin Elections Commission since the start of the pandemic earlier this year has been urging voters who wish to vote absentee by mail to request them as soon as possible.”

Voters running up against absentee voting by-mail deadlines have the option of voting absentee in-person in their clerk’s office or a satellite voting location.

“We want citizens to choose the option for voting that works best for them, but time is running out. For voters who choose to vote absentee by mail, we want to be sure they have the information they need to navigate that process,” said Wolfe. “Of course, every voter who is eligible to vote in the state can also vote early or in person on election day.”

Typical turnout for a presidential election in Wisconsin is about 3 million voters. Absentee voting in the clerk’s office or other satellite locations is also going strong, with nearly 290,000 ballots voted.

Here are some key deadlines and facts to remember for the upcoming Presidential Election on November 3, 2020 – whether you’re voting by absentee ballot or in-person.

Tuesday, October 27, 2020: Practical deadline for voters to return their mail absentee ballots to their municipal clerk's office. The US Postal Service recommends allowing one week for your completed absentee ballot to be delivered to your municipal clerk's office.

After this date, voters should find other options for returning their absentee ballot, which include delivering it to their municipal clerk's office or a secure drop box if one is provided by their clerk. Visit <https://myvote.wi.gov> to find out if your clerk offers drop box. Most voters can also deliver their ballot to their polling place by 8 p.m. on Election Day, but there are some exceptions. (See below.)

Tuesday is also the first day that hospitalized voters may appoint an agent to retrieve and deliver an absentee ballot from their municipal clerk's office. The deadline for hospitalized voters to request and return their ballot is Election Day. More information is available here: <https://elections.wi.gov/publications/brochures/voter-guides/hospitalized-electors>.

Thursday, October 29, 2020: The legal deadline for most voters to request an absentee ballot by mail. Wolfe said it is unrealistic for any voter to wait this late to request an absentee ballot and expect to receive it in time to return it by Election Day to be counted.

Friday is also the legal deadline for indefinitely confined voters to request to become permanent absentee voters, but Wolfe urged anyone needing this service not to wait.

Friday, October 30, 2020: Final day to register to vote at your municipal clerk's office. Visit <https://myvote.wi.gov> to find your local clerk's contact information and hours of operation.

Sunday, November 1, 2020: The last day that municipal clerks may offer in-person absentee voting in their office or a satellite location. Most clerks only offer absentee voting in their office until Friday, October 30, and office hours vary by municipality. Please visit <https://myvote.wi.gov> to find your municipal clerk office's contact information and learn more about absentee voting in-person for the upcoming election.

Tuesday, November 3, 2020: Election Day. Polls are open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m., and voters who are returning an absentee ballot to their polling place must get it there by 8 p.m. Voters returning their ballot to the clerk's office or a drop box should do so early in the day, so the clerk has enough time to send ballots to the proper location for counting by the 8 p.m. deadline.

There are 39 municipalities including Milwaukee and Green Bay that count absentee ballots at a central location. Voters in those cities, villages and towns should check with their municipal clerk about where to return their ballots on Election Day. A list of central count municipalities is available here: <https://elections.wi.gov/clerks/guidance/central-count-absentee>.

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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 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.