

Wisconsin Elections Commission

State of Wisconsin

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More Than 93,000 Absentee Ballots Requested for May 12 Special Election

MADISON, WI – More than 93,000 voters in Wisconsin’s 7th Congressional District have requested absentee ballots for the Special Election on May 12, according to the Wisconsin Elections Commission.

As of Thursday morning, 93,207 absentee ballot applications have been reported received by Wisconsin municipal clerks. Those clerks report sending 87,673 ballots and receiving 40,554 back.

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 actual number of requests is higher. Because of the rural nature of the 7th CD, there may also be some delays in data entry in the state’s system because many small-town clerks rely on their county clerks for this task.

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

Meagan Wolfe, Wisconsin’s chief elections official, urged anyone who wants to vote absentee for May 12 to act immediately. “We want everyone who is eligible and who wants to vote to be able to do so safely,” she said. “At the Spring Election we saw that voters who requested a ballot within a week of the election did not always receive their ballot in time to return it by the deadline for it to count. Absentee voting will also greatly reduce crowds at polling places on Election Day, which will make social distancing much easier.”

Wolfe said it is difficult to know what these absentee ballot reports might indicate about turnout in the May 12 Special Election. “We normally estimate turnout by looking at recent similar elections, but in this case, there are few good comparisons available,” she said.

Congressional District 7 has approximately 420,500 registered voters, meaning about 22% of registered voters have requested absentee ballots so far. For April 7, approximately 1.23 million requests were made by the state’s 3.38 million registered voters, or 36%.

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 of their photo ID (not a selfie) 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 <https://bringit.wi.gov>.

The deadline for registered voters to request an absentee ballot be mailed to you is the Thursday before the election, May 7. 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.

Wednesday, April 22 was the deadline for electors to register to vote by mail or online for the May 12 Special Election. After this date, electors must register in person in the municipal clerk's office or at the polling place. Contact your municipal clerk for office hours, which may be reduced due to the pandemic

Voters can still fill out a voter registration form online at <https://myvote.wi.gov>; however, the form must be printed, signed and hand-delivered to your municipal clerk's office by Friday, May 8, or to the polling place on Tuesday, May 12. You must also present a proof-of-residence document, which can be a Wisconsin driver license or state ID card if your address is current. Otherwise, documents such as bank statements, utility bills, tax bills, residential leases or any correspondence from a government agency with your name and address on it will work.

Voter registration forms that can be printed and filled out by hand are also available here in English: <https://elections.wi.gov/forms/el-131-fillable>

Voter registration forms that can be printed and filled out by hand are also available here in Spanish: <https://elections.wi.gov/forms/el-131-spanish>

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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.