

Wisconsin Elections Commission

State of Wisconsin

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Time Running out for Voters to Return Absentee Ballots

MADISON, WI – The Wisconsin Elections Commission reminds voters that if they have an absentee ballot, it should be mailed or returned directly to their municipal clerk’s office right away.

“The law has changed and absentee ballots must be delivered to the municipal clerk’s office by Election Day or they will not be counted,” said Michael Haas, administrator of the Wisconsin Elections Commission. “To give USPS enough time to do its job, we are urging absentee voters to put their ballots in the mail one week before Election Day.”

“If you are not sure if your ballot will arrive in time, you can still deliver your absentee ballot to your municipal clerk’s office or the polling place on Election Day,” said Haas, Wisconsin’s chief elections official.

Thursday, November 3 is technically the last day for most people to request to have an absentee ballot sent by mail, email or fax from their municipal clerk’s office. But because of the change in the law that requires absentee ballots be returned to the municipal clerk by Election Day, anyone who cannot get to the polls on Election Day should consider voting absentee in the clerk’s office instead of requesting a ballot to be sent to them. Absentee voters who are in the military, hospitalized or serving jury duty have later deadlines, and should contact their municipal clerk for details.

Most municipal clerks have in-person absentee voting in their offices through Friday, November 4, and a few may have office hours over the weekend. Voters must be registered before they can request an absentee ballot. The last day to register to vote in the municipal clerk’s office is Friday, November 4. There is no voter registration on the Saturday, Sunday, or Monday before the Election. Voters may also register to vote at their polling place on Election Day. For help finding your municipal clerk, visit www.myvote.wi.gov or call 1-866-VOTE-WIS.

Several media outlets have published stories this year about the ability of Wisconsin voters to change their absentee ballot before the election. Haas said that despite the media interest in this angle, it is something that very few voters actually do. In an effort to clear up any misinformation, Haas outlined the steps a voter can take to spoil his or her ballot:

- Once you have been issued a ballot, whether at the polling place, at the clerk’s office or by mail, you can ask to spoil your ballot as long as the ballot has not been cast and get a new one in the event you make a mistake or change your mind. A voter can get up to three ballots (the first two are spoiled). This has been the law in Wisconsin for many, many years.
- When voting at the polling place or casting an in-person absentee ballot at the clerk’s office, spoiling a ballot is relatively easy to do because the voter is interacting with the poll workers or clerk’s staff.

- When voting by mail, spoiling your ballot requires contacting the clerk's office and requesting a new ballot be sent to you. The deadline for most voters to do this is Thursday, November 3.
- This close to the election, anyone relying on the mail runs the risk of having their first ballot spoiled and then not getting the new ballot in time to vote and mail it back to the clerk by Election Day.
- Voters who have already mailed absentee ballots back to the municipal clerk's office could go to the clerk's office and make the request for a new ballot in person. The deadline to request a new absentee ballot would be the last day the clerk offers in-person absentee voting. For most clerks that is Friday, November 4, but voters should contact their municipal clerk for scheduled hours.
- Absentee voters cannot spoil their ballot at their polling place on Election Day. [2011 Wisconsin Act 227](#) changed the law and that option is no longer permitted.

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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.