

No-Excuse Absentee Voting in Connecticut

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Issue

This report summarizes the law on no-excuse absentee voting in Connecticut after the adoption of [PA 26-42](#), focusing on procedures for voters.

Summary

In 2026, following the adoption of the 2024 constitutional amendment, the General Assembly adopted no-excuse absentee voting, allowing all eligible Connecticut voters to cast absentee ballots, instead of just those with a reason.

Relatedly, the legislature made various changes to the state's absentee balloting laws, including (1) modifying the contents of absentee balloting sets, such as including a privacy sleeve; (2) creating procedures for voters to automatically receive absentee ballot applications; (3) allowing voters with permanent absentee ballot status to request to receive absentee ballots electronically; (4) eliminating the ability of voters to revoke and replace their absentee ballot once submitted; (5) establishing procedures for curing absentee ballots for voters that failed to sign the return envelope; and (6) requiring the secretary of the state (SOTS) to adopt absentee ballot tracking software.

With these changes in mind, this report outlines (1) voter eligibility for absentee ballots, (2) the materials in absentee ballot sets, (3) application procedures for absentee ballots, (4) the means for receiving and returning absentee ballots, and (5) supervised absentee balloting procedures.

This report does not cover mail-in voting for overseas voters or military personnel, presidential ballots, or any of the processing or alternate procedures for them.

Eligibility

General Eligibility

State law now allows any eligible voter to vote by absentee ballot after completing an absentee ballot application for that election contest ([CGS § 9-135](#), as amended by [PA 26-42](#), § 1).

By law, a person is generally eligible to register to vote if he or she is (1) a U.S. citizen, (2) age 18 or older, and (3) a bona fide resident of the municipality in which he or she applies for admission as an elector ([CGS § 9-12](#)). However, the state constitution allows citizens who are 17 years old and will be 18 years old before election day to register to vote, if they are otherwise qualified as electors. State statute specifies that these voters may also vote by absentee ballot for that election ([PA 26-42](#), § 40).

Permanent Absentee Ballot Status

By law, electors who are permanently physically disabled or suffering from a long-term illness may apply to their registrars of voters for permanent absentee ballot status, which allows voters to automatically receive an absentee ballot for each election, primary, and referendum in the municipality in which they are eligible to vote. To be eligible, an elector must file an absentee ballot application together with a doctor's certificate stating that he or she has a permanent disability or long-term illness and cannot appear in person at his or her polling place.

Once an elector obtains permanent absentee ballot status, the elector retains it until he or she (1) is removed from the municipality's official registry list (see OLR Report [2016-R-0079](#) for additional information) or (2) requests to have the status removed. Additionally, registrars of voters must send an annual notice in January to determine whether such an elector continues to reside at the address on the application. If the notice is returned as undeliverable, the registrars must remove the elector from permanent absentee ballot status. However, failing to return the notice if it was delivered is not grounds for removal from this status ([CGS § 9-140e](#)).

Materials

By law, an absentee ballot voting set may generally only contain (1) a mailing envelope containing all other items in the set, (2) an absentee ballot, (3) a privacy sleeve for the ballot, (4) a return envelope, (5) instructions for using the ballot and privacy sleeve, and (6) any applicable explanatory texts for ballot questions. The law makes exceptions for alternate applications for military personnel or overseas voters, when necessary to correct errors or omissions, and certain voting information SOTS requires (which cannot promote the success or defeat of a candidate or ballot question) ([CGS § 9-140\(d\)](#), as amended by [PA 26-42](#), § 4).

Application

General

Voters may get a physical absentee ballot application [by downloading it](#), picking it up at the town clerk's office, or receiving one from another person. Voters can also request that the town clerk send them the application electronically or can [complete an online application](#) through a portal created by SOTS.

Voters can submit their application by dropping it off at the town clerk's office or mailing it to them (unless they submitted it when completing the online application). Alternatively, voters can electronically transmit their application to the clerk, but must still mail the original application as well. If the clerk does not receive the physical application by the close of the polls, then the voter's ballot cannot be counted.

Among other requirements, the application must have the (1) current year marked on it for use in an upcoming election, primary, or referendum that year; (2) mailing address for receiving the ballot if needed; and (3) signature and certain information of any person who assisted the voter in completing the application, if applicable. However, failing to include the assistant's name is not grounds for invalidating the application ([CGS § 9-140\(a\) & \(b\)](#), as amended by [PA 26-42](#), § 4).

Automatic

Starting July 1, 2027, voters may apply to their local town clerk, in a form and manner set by SOTS, to automatically receive absentee ballot applications for all elections, primaries, and referenda they are eligible to vote in. The town clerk must issue an absentee ballot application for applicable election contests to each active voter who submits a request by the earlier of (1) 90 days before the election contest or (2) as soon as practicable. The application must have the voter's information already filled in (but the information of a person helping the voter with the application does not need to be prefilled).

Before issuing automatic applications, the registrars of voters and the town clerk must compare the list of voters that will receive automatic applications from the clerk against the municipality's official active registry (list of active voters in the town). They must do so in order to (1) identify voters that are scheduled to receive automatic applications but are no longer active voters in the town and (2) remove them from automatic absentee ballot status.

Additionally, voters must lose their automatic status if (1) they notify the clerk in writing that they no longer want automatic applications; (2) an automatic absentee ballot application sent to them is

returned as undeliverable; or (3) they are placed on the inactive registry list ([PA 26-42](#), § 9, as amended by [PA 26-76](#), §§ 37 & 38, effective July 1, 2027).

Receiving a Ballot

Town clerks must begin issuing absentee ballots to voters 31 days before an election or 21 days before a primary (or if that date is a weekend or holiday, on the prior business day), up until the day before the election contest (unless there is an unforeseen illness or disability, see [CGS § 9-150c](#)). If a mailed application is received after this period begins, the clerk must mail the voting set within 24 hours of receiving it. If the application is delivered in person and the person requests a voting set immediately, the clerk must provide it then.

Voters with permanent absentee voting status and uniformed and overseas voters may request that their ballot be delivered to them electronically ([CGS § 9-140\(f\)-\(h\)](#)), as amended by [PA 25-168](#), § 290 & [PA 26-42](#), § 4, and [CGS §§ 9-153e](#), [-153f](#), [-158e](#) & [-158f](#), as amended by [PA 26-42](#), §§ 14-17).

A voter may apply for an additional (replacement) absentee ballot set of materials if he or she notes the reason for the request and either (1) returns the current absentee ballot set or (2) if unable to do so, includes a sworn signed statement about why they cannot. If the voter does not do either, a replacement set cannot be issued. The voter must personally request the additional set, and the new set must either be provided to the voter in person or be directly mailed to them at his or her designated mailing address ([CGS § 9-153b\(a\)](#)).

Returning a Ballot

Casting

A voter can return an absentee ballot in one of three ways: (1) give it to the town clerk in-person, (2) mail it to the town clerk, or (3) drop it off at a designated absentee ballot drop box. An absentee ballot is deemed cast if the return envelope is signed by the voter and the ballot is received and accepted by the municipal clerk (which also means it cannot be revoked once this occurs).

In-Person. A voter may deliver their completed absentee ballot to the town clerk any day before the applicable primary, election, or referendum. Alternatively, a voter's immediate family member or the designee of an ill or physically disabled voter may also deliver the ballot to the town clerk on the voter's behalf by the close of the polls.

Under state law, a “designee” must be a (1) person caring for the voter because of the voter’s illness or physical disability (including licensed doctors and nurses), (2) designated family member of the voter who accepts the role, or (3) police officer or registrar of voters (including deputies and assistants) in the voter’s town. “Immediate family” means a dependent relative who lives in the voter’s household or the voter’s spouse, children, parents, or siblings. Designees or immediate family members returning a ballot on a voter’s behalf in person must show identification, sign the return envelope in the clerk’s presence, and indicate their address, relationship to the applicant, and the date and time they delivered the ballot.

By Mail. A ballot may be mailed to the town clerk by (1) the voter, (2) an immediate family member of a voter who is a student, or (3) a designee of a voter who applied for an absentee ballot due to illness or physical disability. The ballot must be received by the close of the polls.

By Drop Box. Under state law, any person who can mail an absentee ballot may also deposit it into a designated drop box. Town clerks are required to check and retrieve ballots from these drop boxes each business day during the absentee voting period, including at the close of the polls ([CGS § 9-140b](#), as amended by [PA 26-1](#), § 88 and [PA 26-42](#), § 6).

Curing

When completing their ballot, the voter must sign a statement on the return envelope swearing that they are eligible to vote in the applicable election ([CGS §§ 9-137 & 9-140a](#), as amended by [PA 26-42](#), §§ 2 & 5). If a voter failed to sign this statement, by law the ballot cannot be counted ([CGS § 9-150a\(d\)](#), as amended by [PA 26-1](#), § 90 and [PA 26-42](#), § 10). However, the voter may “cure” this mistake by showing up in-person at the town clerk’s office anytime from the beginning of the absentee voting period until the close of the polls on election day.

Town clerks must make their best efforts to contact a voter who failed to sign the envelope as soon as possible, but generally not later than 24 hours after receiving the voter’s ballot. For ballots received within 24 hours before the polls close, the town clerk must start using best efforts immediately after receiving the ballot. “Best efforts” includes trying to contact the voter through the phone numbers and email addresses he or she provided on the absentee ballot application and voter registration. If this information was not provided, the clerk may exercise discretion in contacting the voter through other means ([CGS § 9-140c](#), as amended by [PA 26-42](#), § 7).

Tracking

Under [PA 26-42](#), SOTS must develop and install absentee ballot-tracking software that is integrated with Connecticut’s Centralized Voter Registration System. At a minimum, the software must allow a

voter to track (1) when his or her absentee ballot application is received and accepted by the town clerk; (2) when the ballot is mailed out by the clerk or delivered to the applicant; (3) when the completed ballot is delivered to the clerk; and (4) whether the ballot was accepted, requires curing, or is rejected ([PA 26-42](#), § 8).

Supervised Absentee Voting

The law also allows, and sometimes requires, registrars to conduct supervised absentee voting events at certain health care institutions (such as residential care homes, nursing homes, alcohol or drug treatment facilities, or veterans' health care facilities). If an institution has 20 or more voters, the registrars are generally required to hold a supervised event (SOTS may suspend this requirement in limited circumstances). If an institution has less than 20 voters, either of the town's registrars or the institution's administrator may request to have a supervised absentee voting event.

Generally, if an event is not required to be held at an institution, the requestor must suggest dates and times the registrars may select. Registrars may refuse an administrator's request if they think it is unnecessary. If an event is required by law, the administrator and the registrars must mutually agree on the event's date and time.

For absentee ballot applications submitted by voters at that institution, the town clerk must process them as required by law and give their ballots to the registrars on the day of the event. If an absentee ballot application is received by the town clerk from a voter at an institution that has already conducted an event, either registrar may request to hold another event at that institution ([CGS §§ 9-159q\(b\)-\(f\)](#) & [-159r](#)).

On event day, the registrars or their appointed designees (the supervisors), must deliver the ballots to the applicants at the institution and jointly supervise while the ballots are completed. Once a voter completes their ballot, they must insert it into the ballot envelope and give it to the supervisors. If a voter requests assistance, two supervisors of different political parties (or two different candidates in the case of a primary) may help in any way they feel is necessary and appropriate so the voter can cast his or her ballot. The registrars or their designees can reject a ballot and mark the rejection on the ballot envelope if (1) the voter chooses not to vote or (2) they cannot determine how a voter receiving their assistance wants to vote. Once all ballots are either voted or rejected, the supervisors must deliver or mail the ballots to the town clerk to be retained as required by law ([CGS § 9-159q\(g\)-\(i\)](#), as amended by [PA 26-42](#), § 21).

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