
SERVICES AVAILABLE *to* VOTERS *with* SPECIAL NEEDS

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Secretary of State

POLLING PLACES IN TEXAS MUST BE ACCESSIBLE

State law requires that a polling place meet the following standards:

- 1. The voting area must be on the ground floor of the building which can be entered from the street; or accessible from the ground floor by an elevator with doors that open at least 30 inches wide.
- 2. Doors, entrances, and exits used to enter or leave the polling place must be at least 30 inches wide.
- 3. Any curb next to the main entrance of the polling place must have curb cuts or temporary non-slip ramps.
- 4. Any stairs used to enter or leave the polling place must have a handrail and a non-slip ramp.
- 5. The polling place cannot contain any barrier that would hinder the path of a disabled voter to the voting area.

ASSISTANCE AT THE POLLS

Some voters need assistance in order to vote. You are entitled to receive assistance if you:

- cannot read or write, or
- have a physical disability that prevents you from seeing or marking the ballot.

Tell the election official that you need assistance in voting. It is not necessary to present a doctor's certificate or other written proof of your disability in order to use the assistance procedure.

You may be assisted by:

- a friend, family member, or other person of your choice;
- two election officials on election day; or
- one election official during early voting.

You may NOT be assisted by:

- your employer;
- an agent of your employer; or
- an officer or agent of your union.

The person assisting you must read you the entire ballot, unless you ask to have only parts of the ballot read to you. The person assisting you is required to take an oath that they will not influence your decision and that they will prepare your ballot as you direct. If you choose to be assisted by election officials, a poll watcher or state inspector who is present may check your ballot to insure that it has been marked as you have directed. If you choose to be assisted by a person of your choice, then no one else may check your ballot.

It is illegal for a person assisting you to:

- attempt to influence your vote;
- mark your ballot in a way other than you have directed; or
- reveal to any other person how you have voted.

INTERPRETERS AT THE POLLS

If you are unable to communicate with election officials at the polling place because you speak a language other than English, including sign language, you are entitled to help from an interpreter to interpret communication between you and the election officials. You may select any registered voter of your county to act as your interpreter. If you are unable to read the language in which the ballot is printed, you may select your interpreter to assist you by translating the ballot for you in the voting booth.

CURBSIDE VOTING

If you cannot enter the polling place, a ballot may be brought to you in your car at the curb or entrance of the polling place and deposited in the ballot box for you after you have voted. If you bring someone with you, that person can select a ballot for you and deposit your voted ballot in the ballot box. If you need assistance in reading or marking your ballot, you can also use the assistance procedure described above.

TIP: If you plan to come alone to vote curbside, you may wish to call ahead to notify the election officials at the polling place to expect you.

special procedures for VOTING ON ELECTION DAY IN COUNTIES USING PUNCH CARD VOTING SYSTEMS

8 a.m. to 2 p.m. - at the main early voting place. The early voting clerk will provide you an application and an early-by-mail ballot. After you mark your ballot and seal it in the ballot envelope, the clerk will take the envelope and send it to the ballot board to be counted with the

other early ballots by mail. If you cannot enter the early voting polling place, you may vote in your car using the curbside voting procedure.

special procedures for VOTING ON ELECTION DAY IN COUNTIES USING LEVER MACHINES

7 a.m. to 7 p.m. - at the main early voting place. The early voting clerk will provide you an application and an early-by-mail ballot. After you mark your ballot and seal it in the ballot envelope, the clerk will take the envelope and send it to the ballot board to be counted with the other early ballots by mail. If you cannot enter the early voting polling place, you may vote in your car using the curbside voting procedure.

EARLY VOTING BY PERSONAL APPEARANCE

Any registered voter may vote early in person. The period for voting early in person in general elections begins on the 20th day before the election and ends on the fourth day before the election.

You may vote in person at the early voting clerk's office or any branch office during the early voting period. Curbside voting is available during early voting too!

TIP: The first week of early voting is typically the least crowded.

EARLY VOTING BY MAIL

To vote early by mail, you must meet one of the following qualifications:

- have a sickness or disability which keeps you from getting to the polls;
- be 65 years old or older on election day;
- expect to be absent from your county during early voting and on election day; or
- be confined in jail.

You may apply to receive an early ballot by mail on or after the 60th day before an election. The deadline for receiving applications is the seventh day before the election if that day is a regular business day. If the seventh day before the election is not a regular business day, the deadline for receiving applications is the next regular business day.

The clerk will send you a ballot after the 45th day before the election, as soon as the ballots are printed. Your mailed-in early ballot will be counted if it is received before 7:00 p.m. on election day.

EARLY VOTING BY MAIL APPLICATIONS

You may obtain application forms for voting by mail from the Office of the Secretary of State or from your early voting clerk. You do not have to use the preprinted application form, but the application you submit must meet certain requirements. It must:

- be in writing;
- be signed by you, the applicant (or by a witness if you cannot sign);
- include your name;
- include your address of permanent residence;
- include the address to which the ballot should be mailed;
- state the reason for voting early (NOTE: If the reason for voting early is expected absence from your county, you **MUST** give an out-of-county mailing address);
- give the type of election and the election date; and
- in a primary election, indicate which party's ballot you wish to receive.

REMEMBER: Your completed application must be **RECEIVED** by the early voting clerk not later than the seventh day before election day.

If you are voting early by mail you **MUST** send your application by regular mail or contract carrier. There are two exceptions to this rule if you will be outside of your county:

- 1. You may submit your application by fax if you are outside the county, and the early voting clerk has a fax machine.
- 2. You may apply in person for a ballot by mail before the first day of early voting in person (usually the 20th day before the election) if you will be absent from the county during the voting period.

If you are voting by mail, your ballot must be **MAILED**, by regular mail or contract carrier, to the early voting clerk. You may not deliver your mail ballot in person, **UNLESS** you have decided to cancel your mail ballot and vote in person.

EMERGENCY EARLY VOTING

If you:

become ill or disabled on or after the day before the final day for applying to vote by mail; and

you won't be able to go to the polling place on election day, you may send an application for an emergency early voting ballot by a representative who:

1. is 18 years or older;
2. is not employed by or related to any candidate on the ballot by blood or marriage; and
3. has not served in the election as a representative for another applicant.

The application must have all of the same information as a regular application for an early ballot. A certificate issued by a licensed doctor, chiropractor, or accredited Christian Science

Practitioner must also be included. The certificate must state that a sickness or disability happened on or after the day before the final day for submitting an application by mail. It must also state that the voter's condition will prevent his/her from appearing at the polling place on election day without needing assistance or possibly injuring his/her health.

If your application for an emergency early voting ballot is received by the clerk after the final day of the period for voting early in person and before 2 p.m. on election day, the clerk will give the representative a ballot to deliver to you. The ballot must be returned to the clerk in its carrier envelope before 7 p.m. on election day by the same representative.

Forms are available from the Secretary of State's Office or your early voting clerk.

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

Additional information is as close as your phone. Call the Secretary of State's Office toll-free at 1-800-252-VOTE(8683). Your local county clerk or elections administrator is also a valuable source of information. Contact these election officials or local volunteer agencies for information about possible transportation to your polling place.

If you require this brochure in: large print, audio (cassette) tape, or computer disk, please contact the Office of the Secretary of State regarding availability.

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Relay Texas service is available to you by calling:

1-800-735-2988 (VOICE) or 1-800-735-2989 (TDD/TTY)



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