

OVERVIEW OF THE VOTE BY MAIL (ABSENTEE) BALLOT SECTION

The Vote by Mail Ballot Section issues mail ballots to voters who choose the option of voting by mail instead of going to the polls. Ballots are automatically issued to the declared and permanent vote by mail status voters. Voted ballots are received, identification envelopes are signature checked, and ballots are separated from envelopes and processed for computer tabulation.

I. CATEGORIES OF VOTE BY MAIL BALLOT VOTERS:

A. Declared Mail Ballot (vote by mail precincts)

1. Declared voters do not have an assigned polling place.
2. Declared voters must vote by Vote by Mail/Absentee Ballot.
3. Declared voters are coded "VBM".

B. Permanent Mail Ballot (any registered voters)

1. Permanent vote by mail ballot voters must complete an application for permanent status. A ballot is automatically mailed to them each time their precinct is in an election.
2. Voters with permanent vote by mail status who do not vote their mail ballot in two consecutive statewide general elections will have the permanent vote by mail status removed from their record. (They will not be canceled off the voter file.)
3. Voters with permanent vote by mail status are coded "PERM," "PERM-AIRMAIL", PERM-OUT COUNTY, depending on the address where the ballot is to be mailed.

C. Requested (applied) Voters

1. Voters applying for a vote by mail ballot and having it mailed to an address in San Diego County are coded "R" and sent by non-profit mail if over 500 pieces.
2. Voters applying for a mail ballot and are having it mailed to an address out of San Diego County are coded "C" and sent first class.
3. Voters having their mail ballot mailed outside of the U.S. (includes Alaska and Hawaii) are coded "A" and sent via airmail.

D. Military-Overseas Voters/VBM(Absentee) Voters: These are requested but have different categories and are processed separately. These voters are in extremely isolated areas, who know before the election that they will be unable to use their state's regular vote by mail voting procedures due to lack of regular mail service and cannot vote a vote by mail/absentee ballot during the normal vote by mail voting period because of military obligations or other contingencies, which preclude normal mail delivery. All vote by mail/absentee ballots are sent airmail. All military/overseas voters who are covered under the UOCAVA will be mailed out or emailed at E-(45) days before an election.

1. A voter applying for a vote by mail ballot using a regular application and is having it mailed outside of the U.S. is coded "A," and includes Mexico, Canada, Hawaii, and Alaska.
2. A voter applying for a vote by mail ballot using a Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) and registered in San Diego County is coded "G" (good registration). (Federal Post Card Applications are for military personnel, their dependents, or persons residing outside of the U.S; those residing inside the U.S. should use a regular affidavit of registration form.)
3. A voter applying for a vote by mail ballot using an FPCA and is not registered in San Diego County is coded "D" (dummy affidavit).

- Before processing an FPCA to receive a vote by mail ballot, the voter's FPCA registration form/mail ballot application must be entered into the voter file with a dummy affidavit number. Consecutive numbers are used beginning with the letters FPC and year of application (i.e., FPC20100001).
 - The FPCA is a temporary registration, good for one Federal General Election and must be kept on file.
4. An Overseas/Federal Voter is a U.S. citizen living out of the country on a permanent basis and is uncertain when or if they will return. They can vote a full ballot and are coded "F" (Federal). They apply using the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA).
- Before processing to receive a vote by mail ballot, an Overseas/Federal voter's registration must be entered into the voter file with a dummy affidavit number. Consecutive numbers are used beginning with letters FED and year of application (i.e., FED20100001).
 - These registrations are valid for the Primary and General Elections and are given (coded) permanent vote by mail ballot stats.

E. Office Voting:

1. Beginning 29 days before an election through Election Day, voters may come into the Registrar of Voters office (Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) and vote their ballot or pick up their ballot and take it with them.
 - "T" Take out ballot
 - "V" Vote ballot in office (regular paper ballot)
 - "TSEV" Early Voting using touch screen electronic voting
2. The six days before Election Day is emergency voting. If the voter is taking the ballot with him/her or voting here in the office, an emergency application must be completed.
3. During emergency voting a voter may authorize (in writing) another person to pick up a ballot for him/her.
4. A ballot issued during emergency voting cannot be returned by mail. The voter or a person authorized by the voter must return the ballot to our office or to a polls location on Election Day.

F. Hospital Voting:

1. During the emergency voting period, representatives from hospitals come in with applications from patients.
 - The Absentee/Vote by Mail Ballot Section mails the emergency applications to the hospitals approximately four weeks before the election along with a cover letter.
 - Hospital representatives normally come in the day before and on Election Day.
2. The Vote by Mail Ballot Section issues individual ballot packets for each patient who is eligible to vote. These are coded "H" (hospital).

3. The hospital representative takes the ballot packets to the patients for them to vote. After the patients have voted their ballots and signed the return/identification envelopes, the representative returns the ballots to our office or to any polls location on Election Day.
 - To return the ballots, the hospital representative is given a large envelope with the hospital name on it.

II. STEPS FOR PROCESSING VOTE BY MAIL BALLOT APPLICATIONS:

A. Applications are received by mail or hand carried to our office. We receive different types of applications that are processed differently.

1. Types of applications are:

- Sample ballot applications
- Registrar of Voters applications
- Secretary of State applications (campaigns)
- Federal Post Card Application forms
- Letters
- Faxes

2. Applications must be screened before they are entered into the Vote by Mail/Absentee file (envelope).

3. Applications are entered into the Vote by Mail/Absentee file by manual entry on terminal or by Wanda.

B. Upload data and reports are run by Vote by Mail Ballot Section to process the ballot packet.

1. Reports and envelopes are separated.

2. Envelopes are inkjetted.

3. Official ballots and sample ballots are pulled for the ballot packet.

4. Ballot packets are assembled.

5. Envelopes are sealed by hand or by using the sealing machine.

6. Ballot packets are sorted for mailing.

- Military
- First-class
- Non Profit

III. STEPS FOR PROCESSING VOTED ABSENTEE/VOTE BY MAIL BALLOTS:

A. Voted ballots enclosed in return/identification envelopes are returned by mail, hand carried to the Registrar of Voters Office, or delivered to the polls on Election Day.

1. Voted ballots are screened, counted, and batched for scanning and Wanda.

2. Voted ballots are scanned or wanted to give voting credit.

3. Voted ballots are signature checked.
- B. Seven business days before the election, the Vote by Mail/Absentee Section begins the opening process of voted ballots for computer count (*new law in 2008*).
1. Sort return/identification envelopes containing voted ballots by sequence number (precinct district). This process is done in the Mail Ballot Sorting Room.
 2. Slice return/identification envelopes, opening one sequence/precinct at a time.
 3. Separate ballots from envelopes.
 4. Check ballots for tears, tape, identifiable marks, and write-ins.
 - Write-ins go to the write-in board.
 - Damaged ballots go to the remake board.
 - Identifiable ballots are placed in an envelope.
 5. Ballots ready for counting are filed in boxes and locked in security cage.
 6. Empty envelopes are peeked to make sure no ballots were missed.
 7. On Election night, ballots are taken to the computer room to be counted.
 8. Vote by mail/Absentee ballots and provisional ballots from the polls are processed the day after the election.
 9. Vote by Mail/Absentee Canvass:
 - Balance the computer count to the Vote by Mail/Absentee statistics count.
 - Balance the ballots received, issued, and remaining.

IV. IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

- A. Mail ballot requests are taken over the phone and/or application to issue a ballot.
 1. The application must have the signature of person applying for the ballot.
 2. The application must have the voter's registered address.
- B. All laws that apply for voting at the polls apply for vote by mail/absentee voting
- C. Military voters may maintain their residency at an address even though they do not live there. It is their choice where they maintain residency.
 1. They can maintain only one residence for voting purposes.
 2. They may be liable for state taxes and should contact the Franchise Tax Board if they have any questions regarding taxes.
- D. Dummy affidavits are processed until 15 days (closed of registration) before an election for the ballot to be mailed. If they are voting in office, we process them through Election Day.

- E. A spouse or a parent of an unmarried child may pick up a ballot for a voter by signing an authorization form. A child must be 16 years of age to pick up a ballot for a parent. During the emergency voting, anyone may pick up a ballot for a voter, but must have written authorization from the voter, including spouse and parent.
- F. Vote by Mail/Absentee Provisional Ballots:
 - 1. If the voter's name is on the vote by mail/absentee list and he/she comes in to vote at the polls but does not have his/her vote by mail/absentee ballot to surrender, a provisional ballot must be voted. A poll officer does not have to call us.
 - 2. If the voter has a vote by mail/absentee ballot, but does not have the return/identification envelope, the inspector will give the voter a replacement (yellow) envelope. The envelope must be signed for the ballot to be counted.

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