

Voting During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 peacetime emergency in Minnesota may still be in effect during upcoming elections. Also, the restrictions and recommendations that are in place because of COVID-19 will probably affect the voting process for many Minnesotans later this year.

What is different in the upcoming 2020 Elections?

There is a Primary Election on August 11th and a General Election on November 3rd.

There is a change to Minnesota state election law that help these elections be safer. The main part of the bill focuses on absentee voting. The bill provides money to promote using absentee ballots so people can vote from home. This means less people going to polling places. There is also money that can be used to sanitize polling places and install plexiglass protection for workers. The bill also says that some polling places can be closed, especially ones that are close to vulnerable populations like nursing homes.

Because of fears over COVID-19, there is worry that it might be hard to staff polling places. Social distancing requirements may still be in effect, causing long lines. The lines could extend outdoors, and if the weather is bad, this might create hardships for some Minnesotans with disabilities.

What Voting Options do I Have?

- Vote Early by Mail

In Minnesota, you can vote early by mail with an absentee ballot starting 46 days before Election Day.

- starting **June 26th** for the Primary Election and
- starting **September 18th** for the General Election

You can apply for a ballot any time during the year, except on the day of the election. You can ask that it be mailed to you by:

- going online to the Minnesota Secretary of State's website at: www.sos.state.mn.us. or
- calling 1-877-600-VOTE (8683) or
- calling your county election office. You can find your county election office information online at www.sos.state.mn.us/elections-voting/find-county-election-office/

If you decide to vote using an absentee ballot, make sure you leave enough time for them to mail your ballot to you and for you to return it on or before Election Day. If you are not already registered to vote, you can register online or on paper forms you can get at the Minnesota Secretary of State's website. If you need help registering, you can call 1-877-600- VOTE (8683).

- Vote Early in Person

In Minnesota, you can vote early in person with an absentee ballot at your local election office. Go to your county election office during normal business hours starting 46 days before Election Day.

- starting **June 26th** for the Primary Election and
- starting **September 18th** for the General Election

If you are not registered to vote, you can fill out a registration form in person when you go to vote. You need to show proof of residence. Some local jurisdictions may have extra absentee voting days or hours beyond the days and times set by law. Call your county election office for more information. You can find your county election office information online at www.sos.state.mn.us/elections-voting/find-county-election-office/

- Vote in Person on Election Day

If you want to go to the polls on election day, you have that option. Before you go, make sure that your polling place is still open. You can check that on the Minnesota Secretary of State's website at www.sos.state.mn.us or contact your county election office. Be ready for the possibility of longer-than-normal lines, remember to social distance and consider wearing a mask. There should be other safety measures in place like plexiglass protection for workers and hand sanitizer dispensers.

In spite of COVID-19-related voting changes or issues, people with disabilities still have the voting rights mandated by the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) and Minnesota law.

These rights include:

- Accessible polling places
- Accessible ballot
- Independence and privacy while voting
- Protection and advocacy systems to ensure HAVA compliance
- Help for people with disabilities at voting polls
- Curbside voting

What If I Have Problems or Can't Cast My Vote?

- Contact the Minnesota Disability Law Center at 1-800-292-4150
- Contact the Minnesota Secretary of State's Office 1-877-600-VOTE (8683)
- Contact your County Election Office

For up to date information on COVID-19 and Elections, please visit

www.sos.state.mn.us/election-administration-campaigns/elections-calendar/2020-elections-and-covid-19/