



# NASS

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of Secretaries of State

## **2022 Election Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

The answers within these FAQs are meant to describe answers to common elections and voting questions overall, however, they may not perfectly describe your state-specific voting methods, rules, or situation. For this reason, it is important to get your election information directly from your state and local election officials.

### **1. How do I register to vote or find out if I'm currently registered?**

In all states except North Dakota, you need to be registered to vote to participate in an upcoming election. Eligibility requirements vary by state, but generally you must be a U.S. citizen who will be at least 18 years old by Election Day and meet state residency requirements. You can register to vote in-person, by mail, and in many states online. If you are not already registered or need to update your registration, make sure to do so by your state's [deadline](#). [Several states](#) also allow voters to register on Election Day.

If you are already registered to vote, please check to make sure your voter registration information is current and accurate, especially if you have recently moved or changed your name.

For information on the voter registration process in each state or to check your voter registration status visit [canivote.org](http://canivote.org).

### **2. How do I vote in person on Election Day?**

All states offer options for voters to cast their ballot in person on Election Day. Visit [canivote.org](http://canivote.org) for information on your polling place location and hours, as well as an election official directory for questions.

### **3. What is early voting and how do I vote early?**

Many states allow people to vote in-person prior to Election Day without providing a reason or excuse. In some states early voting may involve casting a ballot at the local election office, while in others you may be voting at a library, community center, or other location in a manner similar to voting at the polling place on Election Day.

For information on how to vote early in each state, visit [canivote.org](http://canivote.org).

For an overview of early voting timeframes/deadlines in each state, see the NASS [early and absentee voting dates page](#).

For an overview of state laws on early voting, see the National Conference of State Legislatures' [early voting page](#).

### **4. What is absentee voting?**

Absentee voting provides an alternative to voting at the polling place on Election Day. Generally, there are two forms of absentee voting: absentee voting by mail and absentee



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voting in-person.

Some states require voters to designate a specific reason for voting absentee. Examples include a planned absence from the local jurisdiction on Election Day, an illness or disability, caregiver responsibilities, etc.

Other states allow people to vote absentee (either by-mail or in-person) without providing an excuse.

In most states, a voter must submit a request to receive a ballot by mail.

For an overview of state absentee/mail voting dates and deadlines, see the NASS [early and absentee voting dates page](#).

For an overview of state laws on absentee/mail voting, see the [National Conference of State Legislatures voting outside the polling place page](#).

## 5. How do I vote by mail?

As noted in FAQ #4, most states require voters to request a mail ballot, while several states automatically send a ballot to all registered voters. Detailed instructions will be included with the mail ballot. Each state has specific procedures for voting and returning mail ballots, along with verification methods before processing these ballots. Most states require mail ballots to be returned by the close of polls on Election Day, either by mail or in-person at a ballot drop-box, local election office or other designated secure location. However, some states allow additional time for mail absentee ballots to arrive, provided the ballot is postmarked by Election Day.

Voters should request and return their mail ballot **as soon as possible** to ensure it arrives in time to be counted.

It is very important to follow the instructions for how to fill out the ballot and include any signature or identification requirements. If you make a mistake and need to request a new ballot, you will need to contact your local election office immediately to ensure you are able to receive and return the ballot in time for the ballot to be counted.

Voters in many states and localities can track the status of their mail ballot through an online tracking system. If your jurisdiction does not have a ballot tracking system, you should contact your local election official to find out if your ballot was received and what to do if it was not.

For information on how to vote by mail in each state visit [canivote.org](http://canivote.org).

For information on U.S. Postal Service handling of mail ballots see the [USPS election mail page](#).



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## 6. How do states process mail ballots?

Mail ballot processing methods and timelines vary by state, according to state laws. Some states allow election officials to begin some form of processing mail ballots prior to Election Day. This may include signature verification procedures, opening the envelopes to prepare the ballots for counting, or scanning the ballots, etc. The results of mail ballot counting will not be released until after the polls close on Election Day.

For an overview of state laws on mail ballot processing see the National Conference of State Legislatures' [voting outside the polling place page](#).

For information on when states begin processing absentee ballots, see the National Conference of State Legislatures' [page on when absentee/mail ballot processing and counting can begin](#).

## 7. How are election results compiled and when will they be available for the November 8, 2022, election?

Local jurisdictions in each state report unofficial/preliminary election results to state election officials after the polls close on Election Day. Many states make these early unofficial results available through an Election Night Reporting (ENR) website.

While most states will report some unofficial results on election night, it is also important to remember states have varying mail ballot deadlines. Some require all ballots be received by Election Day; others require they be postmarked by Election Day and arrive within a specified timeframe after the election. Additionally, ballots from military and overseas voters may arrive after Election Day. Because state laws require specific timelines and verification methods, it often takes election workers longer to process and tabulate mail ballots. **This is a normal process and not indicative of malicious activity.**

Election results are not official until they are canvassed (reviewed by state and local election officials) and certified by the relevant election officials. Generally, each local jurisdiction canvasses and certifies results from that jurisdiction on or by a certain date following the election. For statewide and federal races, the certified results from all local jurisdictions are then canvassed and certified by state officials (often a State Canvassing Board) on or by a certain date. This process is standard and occurs for every election.

For more information on the canvassing and certification process, see the [NASS resource on state election canvassing timeframes](#).

## 8. How do I find voting information I can trust?

Voters often receive election information through a variety of non-official, third-party sources, including websites, social media, emails, text messages, automated calls, and mailings. Whether intentional or unintentional, sometimes information may be incorrect,



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incomplete, or misleading.

Nearly 40 [members of NASS](#) serve as their state's Chief Election Official, and along with other election officials, are continuously working to inform Americans about the elections process, including voter registration, state election laws, voting and much more. Learn about NASS's [#TrustedInfo2022 initiative](#) to highlight them as the trusted sources for timely and accurate election information. The [#TrustedInfo2022 page](#) also features links to state-specific FAQs and other helpful information.

You can visit [canivote.org](http://canivote.org), which links directly to the official websites for state election officials and includes a roster of local election officials across the country. Also, voters can follow the verified social media pages of their state and local election officials.

## 9. How are election officials protecting the integrity of the election and how can I help?

Election officials take seriously their role as guardians of democracy. Although election laws and practices vary greatly by state, one constant across the U.S. is that every voter has the right to cast their vote in each election for which they are eligible. Individuals are prohibited by law from casting more than one ballot in any election, no matter what method of voting the voter utilizes.

States and localities have also implemented a variety of measures to protect elections from cyber and physical security threats as well as other threats to their integrity. Examples include cybersecurity measures such as multi-factor authentication, election equipment and software upgrades, chain of custody protocols for ballot security, signature verification, and physical security measures such as continuous surveillance of storage locations and ballot drop boxes.

Election officials regularly share information about the measures they are implementing to protect elections. Further, election officials provide transparency through practices such as allowing the public to observe pre-election testing of election technology and the canvass of election results. Visit the [websites](#) of your state and local election officials to learn more about security protocols specific to your location and its election processes and about opportunities for public observation.

Individual voters can help protect the integrity of elections by getting their election information from state and local election officials and carefully following instructions for registering to vote and voting. The most important thing voters can do is participate in the election. If you'd like to do more, [apply to serve as a poll worker](#) or temporary election worker – our elections rely on this temporary work force to run smoothly.



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## 10. What does a poll worker do and how do I volunteer?

Poll workers help carry out the election by performing a variety of duties at the polling place. This may include setting up the polling place, welcoming and checking in voters, issuing ballots, monitoring voting equipment, closing the polling place, and processing initial results to be sent to the local elections office.

In states where mail balloting is prevalent, temporary election workers are often hired to help to process mail ballots.

Poll and election workers are generally hired at the local level. Eligibility requirements, compensation, training requirements, and specific duties vary among jurisdictions.

For information on becoming a poll worker in your state visit [canivote.org](http://canivote.org).