



STATES OFFERING NO-EXCUSE PERMANENT ABSENTEE VOTING

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PERMANENT ABSENTEE VOTING

Seven states allow registered voters to join a permanent absentee voting list without providing a reason for requesting such status:

- Arizona
- California
- Hawaii
- Minnesota
- Montana
- New Jersey
- Utah

At least seven other states offer permanent absentee ballot status to voters who provide a reason acceptable under state law:

- Alaska
- Connecticut
- Delaware
- Kansas
- Massachusetts
- Missouri
- West Virginia

ISSUE

How many states allow any voter to apply for no-excuse permanent absentee voting status, and in those that do, what percentage of voters have the status?

SUMMARY

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, seven states (Arizona, California, Hawaii, Minnesota, Montana, New Jersey, and Utah) permit any voter (i.e., elector) to join a permanent absentee voting list without providing a reason for their desire to vote absentee. In all but one, Minnesota, voters who choose to apply for this status automatically receive an absentee ballot for all future elections. In Minnesota, voters with the status are automatically sent an absentee ballot application prior to each election, which they must complete in order to receive a ballot.

OLR surveyed the seven states offering no-excuse permanent absentee ballot status to determine the percentage of voters who have opted to join the lists. The results vary significantly, ranging from a low of 0.002% (Minnesota and New Jersey) to a high of 56% (Arizona).

SURVEY RESULTS

For each state offering no-excuse permanent absentee voting status to any voter, we used data provided directly by each state's lead agency responsible for tracking it (usually the Office of the Secretary of the State). Table 1 briefly (1) describes how a voter maintains the status and (2) lists the approximate percentage of voters who hold it, as of the most recent general election for which data is available.

Table 1: States Offering Permanent Absentee Voting Status

States	Year Legislature Passed Permanent Absentee Voting Law	Maintaining Permanent Absentee Status	Percentage of Registered Voters with Permanent Absentee Status
Arizona	2007	<p>A voter who requests to be included on the permanent absentee voting list is automatically sent a ballot by the county recorder, unless the:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. voter requests in writing to be removed from the list, 2. voter's registration or registration eligibility is moved to inactive status or canceled, or 3. pre-election absentee ballot notice mailed to the voter's address is returned undeliverable to the county recorder's office (ARS § 16-544) . 	<p>56%</p> <p>(through 2014 general election)</p>
California	2001	<p>A voter whose name appears on the permanent vote-by-mail voter list must remain on the list and must be mailed a ballot for each election conducted within his or her precinct.</p> <p>The voter's name must be deleted from the list after failing to return a ballot in four consecutive statewide general elections (Cal. Elec. Code § 3206).</p>	<p>43%</p> <p>(through 2012 general election)</p>
Hawaii	2008	<p>After receiving a request for permanent absentee voter status, the county clerk must mail the requesting voter an absentee ballot for all subsequent elections conducted in the precinct.</p> <p>The status must be terminated if the voter:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. requests its termination in writing; 2. dies, loses voting rights, registers to vote in another jurisdiction, or is disqualified from voting; 3. has his or her absentee ballot, voter notification postcard, or any other election mail returned to the clerk as undeliverable for any reason; or 4. does not return a ballot by 6 p.m. on election day in both the primary and general election of an election year (HRS § 15-4). 	<p>24%</p> <p>(through 2014 general election)</p>

Table 1 (cont.)

States	Year Legislature Passed Permanent Absentee Voting Law	Maintaining Permanent Absentee Status	Percentage of Registered Voters with Permanent Absentee Status
Minnesota	2013	<p>A voter may apply to a county auditor or municipal clerk to automatically receive an absentee ballot application before each election.</p> <p>A voter's permanent absentee status ends and automatic ballot application delivery must be terminated on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the voter's request, 2. the voter's death, 3. return of an absentee ballot as undeliverable, or 4. a change in the voter's status to "challenged" or "inactive" in the statewide voter registration system (MSA § 203B.04). 	<p>0.002%</p> <p>(through 2014 general election)</p>
Montana	2005	<p>A voter may request to be mailed an absentee ballot for each subsequent election in which he or she is eligible to vote. The election administrator must biennially mail a forwardable address confirmation form to each voter making this request. The voter must sign the form, indicate the address where the absentee ballot must be sent, and return the form.</p> <p>The election administrator must remove the voter from the biennial absentee ballot list if the voter:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. does not return the address confirmation form or 2. requests in writing to be removed from the list for subsequent elections (MCA 13-13-212). 	<p>35%</p> <p>(through 2014 general election)</p>
New Jersey	2009	<p>A voter may apply to the county clerk to automatically receive an absentee ballot to vote in (1) all future general elections without further request or (2) each election remaining in the calendar year.</p> <p>If the voter does not complete and return a ballot for four consecutive general elections, the clerk must send the voter a notice to ascertain whether he or she still lives at that address and continues to be eligible to vote. The voter must complete and return the notice before the 40th day prior to the next general election to continue to receive ballots (NJSA 19:63-3).</p>	<p>0.002%</p> <p>(through 2014 general election)</p>
Utah	1996	<p>State law allows, but does not require, a county clerk to establish a permanent absentee voter list. (According to the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, in practice each county maintains one.) The clerk must place on the list the name of anyone who requests permanent absentee voter status and meets absentee voting requirements. The clerk must annually mail a questionnaire to each voter on the list to verify residency.</p> <p>The clerk may remove a voter's name from the list if the voter:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. is no longer listed in the official register or 2. fails to verify the voter's residence and absentee status (UCA § 20A-3-304). 	<p>18%</p> <p>(through 2014 general election)</p>

Sources: Office of the Secretary of State and/or county clerks for the respective states

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