

No-Excuse Absentee Voting

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Issue

This report answers a series of questions on no-excuse absentee voting laws in Connecticut and other states.

1) What is no-excuse absentee voting?

Under “no excuse” absentee voting, any qualified voter (i.e., elector) may apply for and vote by absentee ballot, before the day of an election. In contrast to regular absentee voting, the voter is not required to provide a reason for why he or she wants to vote by absentee ballot.

2) Which states offer no-excuse absentee voting?

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures ([NCSL](http://www.ncsl.org)), 27 states and Washington D.C. offer no-excuse absentee voting. Twenty states require voters to offer a valid reason in order to vote by absentee ballot. The three remaining states (Colorado, Oregon, and Washington), conduct all-mail elections in which ballots are mailed automatically to every registered voter before the day of an election, and traditional in-person voting polling places are generally not available.

Table 1 lists the 27 states that offer no-excuse absentee voting.

Table 1: No-Excuse Absentee Voting States

Alaska	Kansas	North Carolina
Arizona	Maine	North Dakota
California	Maryland	Ohio
Florida	Minnesota	Oklahoma
Georgia	Montana	South Dakota
Hawaii	Nebraska	Utah
Idaho	Nevada	Vermont
Illinois	New Jersey	Wisconsin
Iowa	New Mexico	Wyoming

3) What is “permanent absentee voting” and which states offer it?

According to NCSL, Washington D.C. and the following eight states offer permanent no-excuse absentee voting to any qualified voter: Arizona, California, Hawaii, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New Jersey, and Utah. In all but one, voters who choose to apply for this status automatically receive an absentee ballot for subsequent 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.

At least nine other states, including Connecticut, offer permanent absentee voting but limit its availability to certain individuals, such as those who have a physical disability. Table 2 lists the nine states and the reasons for which a voter may qualify for permanent absentee status.

Table 2: States Offering Permanent Absentee Voting to Certain Voters

State	Eligibility
Alaska (6 AAC § 25.650)	Qualified voters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ residing in a remote area where distance, terrain, or other natural conditions deny reasonable polling place access ▪ permanently residing in an institution serving the elderly or individuals with disabilities or ▪ with a disability
Connecticut (CGS § 9-140e)	Qualified voters with a permanent physical disability

Table 2 (continued)

State	Eligibility
Delaware (15 DCA § 5503(k))	Qualified voters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ with a physical disability or illness ▪ providing care to a dependent family member who lives at home and requires constant care due to illness or disability ▪ who are members of the military or residing overseas, and their spouses and dependents or ▪ otherwise authorized by federal law to vote by absentee ballot
Kansas (KSA § 25-1122(h))	Qualified voters with a permanent disability or an illness diagnosed as permanent
Massachusetts (Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 54, § 86)	Qualified voters with a permanent physical disability
Mississippi (Miss. Code Ann. § 23-15-629)	Qualified voters with a permanent physical disability
Missouri (Mo. Rev. Stat. § 115.284)	Qualified voters with a permanent physical disability
New York (NY Election Law § 8-400(4))	Qualified voters with a permanent physical disability or illness
West Virginia (W. Va. Code § 3-3-2(b))	Qualified voters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ with a permanent and total disability or ▪ participating in the state's Address Confidentiality Program

4) How does no-excuse absentee voting affect voter turnout?

Research on the impact of no-excuse absentee voting on voter turnout has produced mixed results, as discussed in a June 2016 report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) ([GAE-16-630](#), *Issues Related to Registering Voters and Administering Elections*). In its report, GAO examined the effects of selected election administration policies on voter turnout by reviewing and analyzing 18 studies from 12 publications, and interviewing election officials in five states. The studies reported varied findings, ranging from a voter turnout increase of 3.2% to a decrease of 4.0%, due to no-excuse absentee voting. Ten studies reported mixed or statistically insignificant results.

According to GAO, isolating the effects of no-excuse absentee voting, or any public policy, on voter turnout is challenging. Various factors have the potential to influence turnout, including differing demographic factors; the implementation of other election policies; or unobserved or unmeasured factors, such as mobilization campaigns or media coverage. Because voter turnout evaluations are generally conducted in non-experimental settings, even sound analyses cannot account for how these variables impact participation levels, likely accounting for the varying results in GAO's report.

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