

Early Voting

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February 1, 2023 | 2023-R-0018

Issue

Describe early voting, including the types of early voting available in states that offer it and the length of their early voting period. This updates OLR Report [2021-R-0098](#).

Summary

Forty-six states and Washington D.C. allow all registered voters to cast a ballot in-person before Election Day (Connecticut adopted a constitutional amendment in 2022 to allow for early voting, but the legislature has currently not implemented early voting legislation). Under these “early voting” laws, voters do not need to provide a reason for voting before Election Day and can cast their ballot in person—usually at an election official’s office or at a satellite voting location.

Under the other main form of pre-Election Day voting, regular absentee voting, voters must provide a valid reason for why they are unable to vote on the day of the election. Only Alabama, Mississippi, and New Hampshire do not allow registered voters to cast a ballot in-person before Election Day without providing a valid reason.

State laws vary on their early voting policies and the terminology used to describe them, and as a result there is no universal definition of “early voting.” Nonetheless, election experts typically group these laws as follows: (1) early in-person voting; (2) in-person, no-excuse absentee voting; and (3) all-mail voting (often known as vote-by-mail).

Generally, early in-person voting is when voters appear in person at one or more designated locations to vote before Election Day. Voters follow the same process as they would on Election Day (i.e., arrive at a polling location, receive a ballot, fill it out, and deposit it) and ballots are generally stored until Election Day and then processed with all the other ballots cast.

In-person, no-excuse absentee voting is when voters cast absentee ballots in-person, rather than by mail, before Election Day. In-person absentee ballots are usually subject to counting procedures applicable to absentee ballots, such as signature verification.

Finally, vote-by-mail is when every registered voter automatically receives a ballot by mail before Election Day. Because voters generally have the option of casting their ballot early and in-person at a voting center or returning it at a designated drop-off location, election experts often describe these states as states with an early voting option.

Some states offer more than one type of early voting. Alaska, for example, offers both early in-person voting and in-person absentee voting. California offers in-person absentee voting to every registered voter; some counties additionally offer early in-person voting. The table below highlights the most expansive option the state offers.

Early Voting Laws and Periods

States' early voting periods range from three to 45 days; they begin as early as 46 days before the election and as late as the Thursday before it. Twenty-three states and Washington D.C. offer early voting on Saturdays or Sundays, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures ([NCSL](#)). Seven states authorize local election officials, such as county clerks, to decide whether to offer early voting on Saturdays or Sundays.

Table 1 identifies each state's primary form of early voting, as well as the general start and end dates of its early in-person voting period. Early voting may not span the entire duration of the designated period. For example, within a given state, hours and days may vary by county. In other states, polling locations may not be open on weekend days.

The information in Table 1 applies to statewide general elections; early voting periods for primaries or local elections may differ. Concerning absentee voting, the table applies only to no-excuse absentee voting; it does not apply to regular absentee voting, which, as described above, requires voters to provide a reason, or "excuse," to vote early.

Table 1: Early Voting Laws and Periods

State	Form of Voting	Period Starts	Period Ends
Alaska Alaska Stat. §§ 15.20.061, 15.20.064, and Alaska Admin. Code tit. 6, § 25.500	Early in-person voting	15 days before the election	Day of election
Arizona Ariz. Rev. Stat. §§ 16-541 and 16-542	Early in-person voting	27 days before the election	Friday before the election
Arkansas Ark. Code Ann. § 7-5-418	Early in-person voting	15 days before the election	Monday before the election
California Cal. Elec. Code §§ 3000.5 and 3018	All-mail voting (with early in-person voting option)	As early as 29 days before the election (according to the Secretary of State's Office, in practice, most counties offer it for 14 days before the election)	Day of election
Colorado Colo. Rev. Stat. §§ 1-5-102.9 and 1-7.5-104	All-mail voting (with early in-person voting option)	Voter service and polling centers (VSPCs) must be open for the 15 days before an election, for dropping off ballots or voting in person; VSPCs are not required to be open on Sundays	Day of election
Connecticut¹	Early in-person voting	N/A	N/A
Delaware Del. Code Ann. tit. 15, § 5401 et seq.	Early in-person voting	At least 10 days before the election	Sunday before the election
Florida Fla. Stat. § 101.657	Early in-person voting	10 days before the election (may begin 11 to 15 days before a state or federal election, at the discretion of the county elections supervisor)	Three days before the election (may end two days before a state or federal election, at the discretion of the county elections supervisor)

¹ Connecticut has not yet adopted legislation establish an early voting period.

Table 1 (continued)

State	Form of Voting	Period Starts	Period Ends
Georgia Ga. Code §§ 21-2-380 and 21-2-385	Early in-person voting	Fourth Monday before the election	Friday before the election
Hawaii Haw. Rev. Stat. § 11-101 et seq.	All-mail voting (with early in-person voting option)	10 business days before the election	Day of election
Idaho Idaho Code § 34-1001 et seq.	In-person absentee voting (may vary by county)	On or before the third Monday before the election	Friday before the election
Illinois 10 Ill. Comp. Stat. 5/19A-5 et seq.	Early in-person voting	40 days before the election for temporary locations; permanent early voting locations must be open at least 15 days before the election	Day before the election
Indiana Ind. Code §§ 3-11-4-1 and 3-11-10-26	In-person absentee	28 days before the election	Day before the election
Iowa Iowa Code §§ 53.10 and 53.11	In-person absentee	20 days before the election	Day before the election
Kansas Kan. Stat. Ann. §§ 25-1122a and 25-1123	Early in-person voting	Tuesday before the election, or up 20 days before the election (varies by county)	Day before the election
Kentucky Ky. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 117.085	In-person absentee voting	Thursday before the election	Saturday before the election
Louisiana La. Rev. Stat. §§ 18:1303 and 18:1309	Early in-person voting	14 days before the election	Seven days before the election

Table 1 (continued)

State	Form of Voting	Period Starts	Period Ends
Maine Me. Rev. Stat. tit. 21-A, §§ 751, 753B(2) and 753-B(8)	In-person absentee voting	As soon as absentee ballots are ready (30-45 days before the election)	Three business days before the election, unless the voter has an acceptable excuse
Maryland Md. Code, Elec. Law § 10-301.1	Early in-person voting	Second Thursday before the election	Thursday before the election
Massachusetts Mass. Gen. Laws Ann. ch. 54, § 25B	Early in-person voting	17 business days before the election	Four days before the election
Michigan Mich. Const. art. II, § 4	In-person absentee voting	40 days before the election	Day before the election
Minnesota Minn. Stat. Ann. §§ 203B.081 and 203B.085	In-person absentee voting	46 days before the election	Day before the election
Missouri Mo. Rev. State § 115.277	In-person absentee voting	Second Tuesday before the election	Not specified in statute
Montana Mont. Code Ann. §§ 13-13-205 and 13-13-222	In-person absentee voting	30 days before the election	Day before the election
Nebraska Neb. Rev. Stat. §§ 32-808 and 32-938	In-person absentee voting	30 days before the election	Election Day
Nevada Nev. Rev. Stat. § 293.356 et seq.	All-mail voting (with early in-person voting option)	Third Saturday before the election	Friday before the election

Table 1 (continued)

State	Form of Voting	Period Starts	Period Ends
New Jersey N.J. Stat. Ann. § 19:63-1 et seq.	Early in-person voting	45 days before the election	Sunday before the election
New Mexico N.M. Stat. Ann. §§ 1-6-5.7 and 1-6-5(F)	Early in-person voting	Third Saturday before the election for early voting; 28 days before the election for in-person absentee voting	Saturday before the election
New York N. Y. Elec. Law Title VI, § 8-600	Early in-person voting	10 days before the election	Two days before the election
North Carolina N.C. Gen. Stat. Ann. § 163-227.2	Early in-person voting	Third Thursday before the election	Saturday before the election
North Dakota N.D. Cent. Code § 16.1-07-15	Early in-person voting	15 days before the election	Day before the election
Ohio Ohio Rev. Code §§ 3509.01 et seq.	In-person absentee voting	Day after the close of voter registration	Day before the election
Oklahoma Okla. Stat. Ann. tit. 26, § 14-115.4	In-person absentee voting	Wednesday before the election	Saturday before the election
Oregon Or. Rev. Stat. § 254.470, Secretary of State Rules	All mail voting (with early in-person voting option)	Drop sites must open the Friday before an election but may open as soon as ballots are available (18 days before)	Day of election
Pennsylvania 25. Pa. Cons. Stat. § 3146.1 et seq.	In-person absentee voting	50 days before the election	Tuesday before the election

Table 1 (continued)

State	Form of Voting	Period Starts	Period Ends
Rhode Island R.I. Gen. Laws § 17-20-2	In-person absentee voting ²	20 days before the election	Day of election
South Carolina S.C. Code § 7-13-25	Early in-person voting	15 days before the election	Day before the election
South Dakota S.D. Codified Laws §§ 12-19-1.2 and 12-19-2.1	In-person absentee voting	46 days before the election	Day before the election
Tennessee Tenn. Code Ann. § 2-6-102	Early in-person voting	20 days before the election	Five days before the election
Texas Tex. Elec. Code §§ 85.001 and 85.002	Early in-person voting	17 days before the election	Four days before the election
Utah Utah Code Ann. § 20A-3a-601 et seq.	All mail voting (with early in-person voting option)	14 days before the election	Friday before the election; election officials may extend the early voting period to the day before the election after providing the required notice
Vermont Vt. Stat. Ann. tit. 17, §§ 2531 to 2537	All-mail voting (with early in-person voting option)	45 days before the election	Day before the election
Virginia VA Code Ann. §§ 24.2-700 and 24.2-701.1	In-person absentee voting	45 days before the election	Saturday before the election
Washington Wash. Rev. Code §§ 29A.40.010 and 29A.40.160	All mail voting (with early in-person voting option)	Vote centers must open 18 days before the election	Day of election

² On Rhode Island's mail ballot application, a voter may indicate that he or she "may not be able to vote" at his or her polling place on the day of the election; the State Board of Elections [website](#) indicates that this is no-excuse absentee voting.

Table 1 (continued)

State	Form of Voting	Period Starts	Period Ends
West Virginia W. Va. Code § 3-3-3	Early in-person voting	13 days before the election	Three days before the election
Wisconsin Wis. Stat. Ann. § 6.86	In-person absentee voting	14 days before the election	Sunday before the election
Wyoming Wyo. Stat. § 22-9-101 et seq.	In-person absentee voting	40 days before the election	Day of election

Sources: [NCSL](#), [U.S. Vote Foundation](#), and Secretaries of State

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