

Absentee Voting Process and Voter Identification Requirements

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Issue

What voter identification requirements exist as part of the absentee voting process?

Summary

Connecticut requires voters to present an acceptable form of identification, including when registering to vote. Acceptable forms of identification include a driver's license, a social security card, or the testimony of another elector, among other things. (According to a search conducted by the Legislative Library, the state has never had a strict photo identification requirement for voting in person.) Generally, if a voter provides satisfactory identification during the registration process or has previously done so with another state agency (such as when applying for a driver's license at the Department of Motor Vehicles ([CGS § 9-19h](#))), the voter will not need to provide identification when casting an absentee ballot. However, a voter will still need to comply with absentee balloting laws, including being on the voter registry list, attesting that they are in fact the voter casting the ballot, or personally requesting a replacement ballot.

If a voter registers by mail and does not meet federal identification requirements, the voter must supply identification the first time the voter seeks to vote absentee. Acceptable forms of identification include certain documents with the voter's name and address (such as bank statements or utility bills) or valid photo identification with the voter's name and address ([CGS §§ 9-23r](#) and [9-261\(a\)](#)).

Identification Requirements for Registering to Vote

Connecticut law establishes three methods by which a person may register to vote: in person, by mail, or online ([CGS §§ 9-19j\(d\), 9-19k, 9-20, 9-23g, and 9-23r](#)). For all three methods, applicants must affirm under penalty of perjury that they are eligible to become an elector. By law, perjury is a class D felony, punishable by up to five years in prison, a fine of up to \$5,000, or both ([CGS § 53a-156](#)).

Registration In Person

In order to register in person, whether prior to or on election day, a person must complete the secretary of the state's (SOTS) form and provide the person's name, bona fide residence, birthdate, U.S. citizenship, whether electoral privileges have been forfeited due to committing a crime, and whether the person has been admitted previously as a voter anywhere else. The applicant must present either a birth certificate, driver's license, or Social Security card for inspection. Applicants who do not have one of these forms of identification may provide proof of identity through the testimony of another elector or by presenting other satisfactory proof to the local admitting official ([CGS § 9-20](#)).

If an applicant is applying through election-day registration and his or her information does not include proof of residential address, he or she must also submit another form of identification showing the address. The additional ID may include a motor vehicle learner's permit; utility bill due no later than 30 days after the election; lease; library card; paycheck; property tax bill; naturalization documents; recent passport; or, for a college or university student, a current college or university registration or fee statement. The law allows college and university students to present a current photo identification issued by their higher education institution in place of the other identification requirements for election-day registration ([CGS § 9-19j\(d\)](#)).

Registration by Mail

People who register to vote for the first time in Connecticut by mail after January 1, 2003, have the option of submitting supplemental information with their mail-in registrations. Specifically, under both state law and the federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA) ([P.L. 107-252](#)), these applicants may submit any of the following:

1. a copy of a current and valid photo identification;
2. a copy of a current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck, or government document that shows the applicant's name and address;
3. a valid Connecticut driver's license number; or

4. the last four digits of a Social Security card number (SSN).

If applicants include one of the above forms of supplemental identification, or submit a driver's license number or SSN that registrars of voters can match with an existing Connecticut record, then the applicant is not required to produce identification at the polls. If applicants do not include supplemental information, admitting officials put a "mark" next to their names on the official registry list, signaling that they must produce it at the polls if federal candidates are on the ballot, or cast a provisional ballot ([CGS § 9-23r](#)).

Online Registration

A person may register online through a portal established by SOTS. In order to do so, the applicant's registration information must be verifiable through information provided to SOTS for maintaining the online voter registration system. This includes any state agency's database, a database administered by the federal government, or any other state's voter registration database.

Additionally, the applicant's signature must be available to the secretary for import into Connecticut's voter registration system and the applicant must authorize the signature's import into the system in order for the application to be considered signed by the applicant ([CGS § 9-19k](#)).

Absentee Voting Process and Identification Requirements

Eligibility

In order to vote absentee, a voter must be active and registered and be unable to appear at the person's designated polling place due to (1) active service in the U.S. Armed Forces, (2) absence from town during all voting hours, (3) sickness or physical disability, (4) religious beliefs that prohibit the person from participating in secular activity, or (5) service as an election worker at a polling place other than the person's designated voting location ([CGS § 9-135](#)).

Requesting an Application

Generally. A voter may generally receive an absentee ballot application either by downloading it from SOTS' website or by picking up a paper copy from the town clerk.

Permanent Absentee Ballot Status. Under state law, any voter who is either permanently physically disabled or suffering a long-term illness and unable to appear at a polling place on election day may apply to receive permanent absentee ballot status and to automatically be sent an absentee ballot for each election, primary, and referendum. A voter may receive such a designation by filing a certification from a primary care provider indicating that the voter has a

qualifying condition along with an absentee ballot application ([CGS § 9-140e](#), as amended by [PA 24-148](#)).

Late-Occurring Illness, Disability, or Hospitalization. Nursing home and hospital patients may apply for an absentee ballot within six days before the polls close at an election, primary, or referendum and appoint someone who will bring the applicant the ballot. The application must include the (1) name and address of the nursing home or hospital where the applicant is a patient; (2) name, address, and category of the designated person; and (3) designated person's authorization to deliver the completed ballot.

The designated person must (1) sign a statement on the application consenting to be the designee and agreeing not to tamper with the ballot and (2) personally submit the application to the town clerk ([CGS § 9-150c](#), as amended by [PA 24-148](#)).

Submission of Application

In Person or by Mail. After completing an absentee ballot application, the voter must sign it under penalty of false statement ([CGS §§ 9-139a & 9-140](#)). By law, false statement is a class A misdemeanor, punishable by up to 364 days in prison, a fine of up to \$2,000, or both ([CGS § 53a-157b](#)). If the application is being mailed, the applicant must provide a bona fide mailing address where the applicant would like to receive the ballot.

A voter must sign the inner envelope acknowledging the voter is eligible to vote absentee for one of the reasons allowed by state law (see above) and insert the completed ballot into the inner envelope ([CGS §§ 9-137 & 9-140a](#)). Once signed, the voter must insert the inner envelope into the outer envelope. If federal law requires submission of identification with the absentee ballot (see below), it must be placed into the outer envelope so it can be viewed without opening the inner envelope ([CGS § 9-140a](#)).

If a voter did not complete the identification requirements when he or she registered to vote through the mail, HAVA requires the following:

1. if applying by mail, the voter must include a copy of a current and valid photo identification or a copy of a current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck, or other government document that shows the voter's name and address or
2. if applying in person, the voter must present a current or valid photo identification or a copy of one of the documents listed above ([52 U.S.C. 21083\(b\)\(2\)](#)).

If identification is required but not supplied, the person cannot cast an absentee ballot ([CGS § 9-140b](#)).

Online. A voter may also apply for an absentee ballot online through SOTS' online system. Applicants using the online system must have a signature on file with a state agency, a federally-administered database, another state's voter registration system, or SOTS' electronic signature system, which the online system may import. SOTS must then transmit the application to the applicable town clerk within 24 hours of receiving the application.

The clerk must check the applicant's name against the last-completed registry list and any updated lists they possess. If the applicant appears on the list, the clerk must send the voter an absentee voting set. The clerk must send a notice to the applicant if the applicant does not appear on the registry list and the applicant must be admitted or restored as an elector before an absentee voting set may be sent to him or her ([CGS § 9-140](#)).

Requesting Additional (Replacement) Ballots

Voters may apply for a new absentee ballot after one has already been issued to them for various reasons (such as when the previous ballot became unusable). The voter must note the reason for requesting a new ballot when applying for it. The request must be made by the voter personally either by (1) doing so in person or (2) applying for a new ballot through the mail and having it directly mailed to the voter at a bona fide address he or she designates.

The voter must also return the original absentee ballot if possible. If it is not possible, the voter must include a signed statement (under the penalty of false statement) as to why the ballot cannot be returned, along with the new application. If a voter fails to return the original ballot and does not include a statement, the voter cannot be issued a new ballot ([CGS 9-153b](#), as amended by [PA 24-148](#)).

Absentee Ballot Issuance

Absentee voting sets must generally be issued beginning 31 days before a general election or 21 days before a primary. Absentee ballots cannot be issued on the day of an election or primary except due to unforeseen illness or disability, or when requesting presidential or overseas ballots ([CGS § 9-140](#)).

Submitting an Absentee Ballot

Under state law, a completed absentee ballot can be returned by mail (which includes depositing in a drop box) by the voter, the voter's designee (if the voter is voting by absentee ballot due to illness or physical disability), or the voter's immediate family member (if the voter is a student).

Alternatively, a voter's absentee ballot can be returned in person by the voter, the designee of an ill or physically disabled applicant or an immediate family member. In the case of a designee or family member delivering the ballot on a voter's behalf, they must present identification and sign the outer envelope in the presence of the town clerk and indicate his or her address, relationship to the voter, and the date and time of delivering the ballot ([CGS § 9-140b](#)).

Receipt of Absentee Ballot

When the clerk receives a completed ballot, he or she must endorse it with his or her signature and the date and time of receipt without opening the outer envelope. The clerk must keep a list of applicants who return absentee ballots. Additionally, the clerk must execute an affidavit attesting to the accuracy of the endorsement, which must accompany the ballots throughout the election process ([CGS § 9-140c\(a\)](#)). For more information on how absentee ballots are processed and counted, see OLR Report [2022-R-0022](#).

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