

WHY MAIL BALLOT ELECTIONS

1. **Voter turnout is greater.** – City election in last 12 years have averaged 19%
2. **Cost is the same or less** – With the increase in absentee voting, in a normal election we are in effect running three separate elections, polling place, and absentee and same day. With mail ballots we eliminate much of the cost of the polling place election.
3. **Control is greater** – With mail ballot, ballots are kept centralized.
4. **Voter satisfaction is increased** – studies have shown that voters are very happy with elections conducted by mail ballots
5. **Greater accessibility for elderly and disabled voters** – No longer do they need to fight long lines, poor parking spots or bad weather. With mail ballots, the ballot is mailed to the voter and they can complete the ballot in the comfort of their home and return it through the mail.
6. **With signature verification, integrity is protected.**
7. **Voter has opportunity to study the issues.** – With a polling place election if a voter has a question or does not understand an issue, they often have no resources available to obtain answers to their questions. With mail ballots they have the time to research the issue or contact the candidate and make a truly informed decision.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

As a registered voter, what do I have to do?

If your registration is current, your ballot packet will automatically be mailed to you. Inside the packet you will find the ballot, a secrecy envelope and a return envelope. Once you vote the ballot, place it in the secrecy envelope and seal it in the pre-addressed return envelope. Be sure to **sign** the return envelope on the appropriate line. After verifying that the return envelope has your name and current address, simply return the ballot either by mail or at a designated drop site.

When are the ballots mailed to the voters?

In Montana, ballots will be mailed any time between the 15th and 25th days before an election. This election we will mail all ballots on the 16th of October.

I will be out of town when ballots are mailed. How do I get a ballot?

Absentee ballots are available before the election. You may request an early absentee ballot from your county election official either in person, by mail, or by fax. You will need to include your name, residence address and, if different, your mailing address.

What if my ballot doesn't come?

If you have not received your ballot within a week after they are mailed, call your county election office. They will check that your voter registration is current. If it is, you will need to complete an affidavit requesting a replacement ballot and when that is received, they will mail you a replacement ballot.

What if I have moved and have not updated my registration?

If your ballot is returned as undeliverable, you may come into the election office and after you have updated your registration it will be provided to you.

What if I make a mistake?

If you make a mistake, you may call your county election office and request a replacement ballot. One will be mailed to you, upon receipt of an affidavit requesting a replacement ballot, provided the request is received with sufficient time for mailing. Otherwise, you may pick up a replacement ballot in person at your county election office.

Do I have to return my ballot by mail?

You have the choice of mailing your ballot or returning it to any county election office or any designated drop site in the county. The times and locations of drop sites are published by and available from your county election official.

How much postage is required to mail my ballot back?

Your voted ballot can usually be returned without extra postage. In those instances where additional postage is necessary, it will be clearly indicated on the ballot materials.

When must the voted ballot be returned?

The voted ballot must be **received** in any county election office or designated drop site by 8pm on election night. **Postmarks do not count.**

How do I know if my ballot is received?

You may call your county election office and ask if they received your ballot. A record is kept showing each voter whose ballot has been returned.

Can anyone find out how I've voted once I mail my ballot?

No. All ballots are separated from the return envelope before the ballots are inspected. This process ensures confidentiality.

Will my vote still count if I forget to put my ballot into the secrecy envelope?

Yes, the ballot will still be counted.

Can the public watch the election process?

All steps of the process are open to observation by the public. The major steps include:

- Preparation for mailing (about one month before the election).
- Ballot reception and signature verification (during the three weeks before the election).
- Opening envelopes and preparing ballots to be counted (usually starts the morning of election)
- Counting ballots (election day).

When will election results be known?

Ballot counting cannot begin until Election Day. Initial results are released at 8pm election night and will continue to be updated through the evening until all ballots have been counted.

What if I have more questions?

Call the Yellowstone County Elections office at 256-2740 and we will be happy to assist you.

Will Late Registration be available?

Yes. If a voter misses the regular close of registration, October 9th, they may come into the Election office, register to vote and be issued a ballot. Late registration begins the day after the close of regular registration, cuts off from noon to 5:00 pm the day before the election and then and continues through 8:00 pm on Election night.