

Wisconsin Elections Commission: Absentee ballot requests for April 7 exceed 1 million

Posted on Wednesday, Apr 1, 2020

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MADISON, WI – Wisconsin voters have requested well in excess of 1 million absentee ballots as the state prepares to hold the April 7 election, according to the Wisconsin Elections Commission.

As of Wednesday morning, 1,053,556 absentee applications have been received by Wisconsin municipal clerks, with 1,028,734 sent and 387,833 returned so far. It's important to note that this number does not include absentee ballot requests that have not yet been entered into the state system by clerks, such as emailed requests, mailed requests, or requests by voters that require the clerk to approve the photo ID, meaning the number of requests may be much higher.

“We remain encouraged that so many voters have requested absentee ballots, especially through the MyVote Wisconsin website,” said Meagan Wolfe, Wisconsin’s chief elections official. “We want everyone who is eligible and who wants to vote to be able to do so safely. Absentee voting will also greatly reduce crowds at polling places on Election Day, which will make social distancing much easier.”

Daily absentee ballot reports, including county-by-county numbers, are being

posted here: <https://elections.wi.gov/publications/statistics/absentee>.

These absentee ballot numbers from past Spring Elections put the 2020 numbers into perspective:

Spring Election	Total Absentee Ballots Issued	Total Ballots Cast	Turnout	Percent Absentee
2016	249,503	2,113,544	47.38%	11.80%
2017	103,533	708,711	15.86%	14.61%
2018	130,041	997,485	22.32%	13.04%
2019	170,121	1,224,303	27.22%	13.90%
2020-To Date	1,028,734	NA	NA	NA

In comparison, there were 819,316 absentee ballots cast in the November 2016 Presidential Election. The 2016 Spring Election and Presidential Preference Primary was a particularly high turnout election, due to both major political parties having competitive nomination races. In 2020, only one major party has a contested race for President on the ballot in Wisconsin. Increased absentee ballots do not necessarily predict higher voter turnout as more voters may simply be voting prior to Election Day.

Absentee Ballot Request Deadline Nears

The deadline for registered voters to request an absentee ballot be mailed to you is at 5 p.m. the Thursday before the election, April 2. However, the WEC urges voters not to wait, due to possible delays in mail delivery. If you request an absentee

ballot be mailed to you, you can still decide to vote at the polls on Election Day if it did not arrive or if you did not return it. You can also drop your absentee ballot off on Election Day at your polling place or the municipal clerk's office. Many municipalities are also setting up secure drop boxes and drive-up lanes for dropping off absentee ballots.

There are several ways registered voters can request absentee ballots. If they have internet access, the easiest way is to sign up at MyVote Wisconsin, <https://myvote.wi.gov>.

Just look for the "Vote Absentee" button near the top of the page. On a mobile phone, use the menu button in the upper right corner of the website. There is a three-step process that starts with putting in your name and date of birth, followed by requesting your ballot. If you don't already have a photo ID on file with your clerk's office, you can upload a copy. Mobile phone users can take a picture and upload it to MyVote. Absentee ballot requests submitted this way go directly to your clerk's office, and you can track your ballot by returning to the website.

Voters can also request absentee ballots by mailing, emailing or faxing their municipal clerk's office. You can find your clerk's contact information on MyVote Wisconsin. These requests must be accompanied by a copy of your photo ID. If you already have a photo ID on file from previous absentee requests under your current registration, you will not need to provide it again.

Voters who are indefinitely confined, meaning they may have difficulty getting to the polls for reason of age, illness, infirmity, or disability are not required to provide a photo ID. Voters in care facilities can have a representative of the facility confirm the resident's identity instead of providing a photo ID. More information on photo ID and exemptions can be found at bringit.wi.gov.

Your absentee ballot must be received in your clerk's office or at your polling place by 8 p.m. on Election Day. Again, the WEC urges voters to request and return

ballots as soon as possible. The US Postal service advises ballots may take up to a week to reach voters and a week to be returned to your municipal clerk.