

Elections Commission: Important things voters should know for Election Day

Posted on Monday, Mar 22, 2021

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MADISON, WI - The Wisconsin Elections Commission today released its list of the top things Wisconsin voters should know for the Spring Election on Tuesday, April 6, 2021.

1. The Wisconsin Elections Commission continues to recommend all voters wear face coverings for voting on Election Day, but they are not required.

The WEC has developed public health guidance with the assistance of public health officials from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services that face coverings are recommended for use by voters, poll workers and observers on Election Day. Voters cannot be refused a ballot for not wearing a face covering at the polls on Election Day.

“Even though people are being vaccinated now, we still ask voters to observe social distancing inside and outside of polling places, and not to create disturbances about wearing or not wearing face coverings,” said Meagan Wolfe, Wisconsin’s chief elections official.

2. Wisconsin polling places are prepared for voting during the pandemic.

Things may look a little different when you go vote and voters will be asked to wash or sanitize their hands before and after voting. Social distancing is essential even at polling places on Election Day. There will be procedures in place to allow for six feet between voters, poll workers, and observers to ensure a safe voting experience for everyone. For more information about voting during the pandemic, please visit the WEC's COVID-19 information page: <https://elections.wi.gov/covid-19>.

3. In-person absentee voting starts Tuesday, March 23

The first day that clerks may offer in-person absentee voting in their offices and other designated locations is Tuesday, March 23. The last possible day for in-person absentee voting is Sunday, April 4. To learn where and when you can vote absentee in-person your municipality, please visit <https://MyVote.WI.gov>. In some smaller communities, voters may need to make appointments with their municipal clerk's office.

4. Voters who received their absentee by mail should make plans to return ballots to their clerk's office as soon as possible, including arrangements to drop them off by Election Day.

USPS advises that it can take up to one week for mail to be delivered, so voters who still need to return absentee ballots should drop them off at their municipal clerk's office as soon as possible, Wolfe said. Some municipalities offer secure drop boxes, and voters can find locations by visiting <https://MyVote.wi.gov>, by using the absentee tracking feature and the Find My Local Absentee Options on their personal voter information page.

On Election Day, most voters may deliver their absentee ballots directly to their normal polling place, but it must arrive before polls close at 8 p.m. Voters in 39 cities, villages or towns that count absentee ballots at a central location must return ballots to their clerk's office or the central count location. Please follow the return instructions that came with your absentee ballot. Voters who return absentee ballots to their clerk's office or a municipal drop box on Election Day should do so as early as possible, because the ballot must be picked up and delivered to the polling place by 8 p.m.

Any voter who has not returned their absentee ballot is still eligible to vote in person on election day.

5. You need an acceptable photo ID to vote, but your ID for voting does not need to show your current address or have a star on it.

Your acceptable photo ID for voting does not need to show your current address. Wolfe said most voters already have the photo ID they need to vote, such as a Wisconsin Driver License or ID, and urged anyone with questions to visit the Bring It to the Ballot website (<https://bringit.wi.gov>) or call 1-866-VOTE-WIS for information. A voter who does not have an acceptable photo ID must be offered a provisional ballot and the opportunity to submit a photo ID within three days after the election.

Voters without an acceptable photo ID can get one for free with one visit to their local Wisconsin Division of Motor Vehicles office. For more information, call 608-266-1069.

Wisconsin voters with a driver license or state ID card do not need to worry about whether their ID has a "REAL ID" star in the corner to be used as photo ID for voting. A photo ID with the star may be needed to board an airplane or enter federal buildings, but it is not required for voting.

Also, voters over the age of 60 who use a Wisconsin driver license do not need to worry if they have not been able to renew their ID due to the pandemic. The DMV has extended the expiration date for people 60 and over whose driver license expired after March 12, 2020, until May 21, 2021. That means voters can still use their Wisconsin driver license for photo ID as it's not technically expired.

6. Voters can find their polling place on the mobile-friendly MyVote Wisconsin website.

Your polling place may have changed from the location you voted at previously. Some local election officials have chosen larger spaces to better accomplish social distancing or have consolidated wards for the lower turnout spring elections. The Wisconsin Elections Commission's popular MyVote Wisconsin website, <https://myvote.wi.gov>, allows you to verify your polling place and provides directions to every polling place in the state, as well as information about what will be on voters' ballots when they get there.

Voters can also check whether their registration is current. If it's not, they can start the voter registration process online, print their filled-out voter registration form and bring it to the polls with them on Election Day so they can sign it in front of a poll worker. Voters can also complete a paper registration form at their polling place on Election Day. If you are registering to vote, remember you will need to show a proof of residence document with your current name and address on it. Proof of residence can be a government document, like a Wisconsin ID card, or a document like a bank statement or utility bill. You can show your proof of residence document either in paper form, or electronically on your phone or mobile device. For details, check out the Voter Registration Guide: <https://elections.wi.gov/voters/first-time-registration-guide>.

7. Your vote is secure.

Wisconsin's election systems are secure thanks to the Wisconsin Elections Commission's strong partnerships with federal and state agencies and local election officials.

"The WEC has found no evidence that Wisconsin's election systems have ever been compromised," said Wolfe. "We have taken extraordinary steps to ensure that our voter registration and vote counting systems are secure and have many redundancies to protect and backup voter data."

Rumors, or misleading information about elections security are prevalent. Voters should ensure that they are getting the facts about elections from the official source- your local and state election official.

Voters with questions about election security can read more about the WEC's efforts here: <https://elections.wi.gov/elections-voting/security> and <https://elections.wi.gov/absentee>.

Other Basics:

Polls open at 7 a.m. and close at 8 p.m. on Tuesday, April 6.

Turnout for a Spring Election in April is typically about 20% to 25% of voting-age adults. This does not include the years with Presidential Preference Primaries. More information about voter turnout is available here:

<https://elections.wi.gov/elections-voting/statistics>.