



## **Absentee Voting From State-to-State: Common Deadlines**

Nebraskans for Civic Reform gathered information on states early voting procedures, specifically the deadlines for mail application, deadline for returned ballot by mail, and deadline for returned ballot in person. NCR paid particular attention to those states that share a similar early voting structure to Nebraska, commonly known as “No-Excuse early voting”. These results can be found on the attached appendix. In some states a bifurcation in statute existed for the method of delivery, in others, like Nebraska, a single deadline was outlined in statute. Those states that conduct elections via all-mail voting were included for comparison to Nebraska all-mail precincts, all-mail special elections, and as a point of comparison with states that handle higher volumes of returned ballots.

Twenty-seven states and the District of Columbia currently allow absentee voting without requiring an excuse or justification.<sup>1</sup> Twenty states require an excuse when requesting an absentee ballot.<sup>2</sup> The states of Colorado, Washington, and Oregon employ all-mail voting, in which no application or request is required and the state mails all eligible voters ballots, which are then mailed back. In seven states and the District of Columbia a voter can request to be put on a permanent absentee status.<sup>3</sup>

The deadline for which an individual must request an absentee ballot varies from state to state. Most states require that individuals request an absentee ballot by mail 5-7 days prior to Election Day. Eight states have no specific deadline listed, but strongly recommend that voters request absentee ballots a month or more in advance.<sup>4</sup> States such as Alabama and Rhode Island have more stringent requirements, Alabama requiring absentee ballot requests to be postmarked 15 days before the election and Rhode Island requiring absentee ballot requests to be received the 21<sup>st</sup> day before an election.

The return dates for ballots vary based on whether an individual turns their ballot in via mail or in person. If done via mail the common practice in most states is that the ballot be either postmarked the day before Election Day, or on Election Day by a certain time (typically within business hours or until the polls are closed). The date on which a ballot is received is significant, as in some states all absentee ballots must

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<sup>1</sup> AK, AZ, CA, FL, GA, HI, ID, IL, IA, KS, ME, MD, MN, MT, NE, NV, NJ, NM, NC, ND, OH, OK, SD, UT, VT, WI, WY

<sup>2</sup> AL, AR, CT, DE, IN, KY, LA, MA, MI, MS, MO, NH, NY, PA, RI, SC, TN, TX, VA, WV

<sup>3</sup> AZ, CA, HI, MN, MT, NJ, UT

<sup>4</sup> CT, GA, MS, MN, NH, ND, OR, WA, WY

be received by election officials in an average time of 3-10 days; otherwise the ballot will not be counted. If returning an absentee ballot in person there are 7 states in which an absentee ballot must be turned in the day before Election Day.<sup>5</sup> The remainder of states require that an absentee ballot be turned in no later than Election Day from 5:00 PM to the time that polls close, depending on the state.

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<sup>5</sup> AL, AR, CT, DE, ID, LA, NH