

CONNECTICUT



Vote Absentee To Stay Safe

More Connecticut voters can cast their ballots safely amid the coronavirus pandemic, thanks to a new law that temporarily eases absentee-voting restrictions.

People could already vote absentee because of illness, but a measure that state lawmakers passed in July broadens that excuse for the 2020 general election to include fear of contracting COVID-19. It mirrors an executive order Gov. Ned Lamont (D) issued for the Aug. 11 primary—a move that AARP supported.

“People shouldn’t have to choose between their health and safety and their constitutional right to their franchise,” said John Erlingheuser, AARP Connecticut’s advocacy and outreach director.

The state will mail out absentee ballot applications to all registered voters, who may submit them by mail or at a secure drop box in their city or town. Applications can also be downloaded at MyVote.ct.gov.

AARP continues to push for expanded voting options in the Constitution State, such as early voting and no-excuse absentee ballots,

which are standard practice in a number of other states.

Alternatives to in-person voting are even more crucial during a pandemic, Erlingheuser said.

The majority of the state’s poll workers are older and at high risk for complications from COVID-19, he said. And in a presidential election year, expected high voter turnout could lead to long lines and crowded polling sites—furthering the risk of spreading the coronavirus.

“We don’t want someone bringing the virus home to their family members who are older or have underlying conditions,” he said.

Erlingheuser emphasized that absentee voting is secure.

The state has also worked with cities and towns to develop safety plans for in-person voting at polling sites on Election Day, Tuesday, Nov. 3.

It has doled out hundreds of thousands of dollars in federal CARES Act funds to buy personal protective equipment for poll workers and cleaning supplies, as well as to hire and train more poll workers as needed.

“We are facing an illness without precedent in our lifetimes,” Secretary of the State Denise Merrill (D) said. “Our election system has to adapt to meet its challenge.”

Visit MyVote.ct.gov and aarp.org/CTvotes for more information. —*Natalie Missakian*

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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

IMPORTANT DATES

Oct. 27: Deadline to postmark or drop off voter registration forms

Nov. 3: General election, deadline for absentee ballots, Election Day voter registration at certain locations

VOTING RULES AND OPTIONS

- Residents can register at MyVote.ct.gov if they have a Connecticut driver’s license or other state-issued ID, or mail or deliver a form to their town clerk’s office.
- There is no in-person early voting.
- For the Nov. 3 election, voters can cite fear of contracting COVID-19 when requesting an absentee ballot.
- The state plans to mail absentee ballot applications to all registered voters, but you can also download an application at MyVote.ct.gov.
- Ballots can be returned by mail or in person to your town clerk’s office or in secure drop boxes in each municipality. Ask your town clerk’s office where to find these boxes.
- An ID is not required to vote, but it’s a good idea to bring a driver’s license, Social Security card or government-issued ID. Voters without proper ID must sign an affidavit affirming their identity.
- Voters should be able to go to their usual polling locations. Look up your polling site at MyVote.ct.gov.
- In response to COVID-19, polling places will be sanitized, and additional workers hired and trained as needed.
- Polls will be open from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 3.

RESOURCES

- Go to MyVote.ct.gov for voter information, election results and more.
- For AARP Connecticut updates, go to aarp.org/CTvotes.
- Get more election coverage at aarp.org/election2020.

FOCUS ON DECISION DAY

U.S. House: All 5 seats

State House: All 151 seats

State Senate: All 36 seats

Prescription drugs: AARP urges lawmakers to act to curb rising drug costs.

Experienced workers: AARP supports action to combat ageism in the workplace, especially given the high unemployment rate due to COVID-19.

In the 2016 presidential election, **65 percent** of those eligible to vote in Connecticut turned out. That’s compared with **60 percent** turnout nationally.