# ABSENTEE BALLOT ROAD MAP

## During Covid 19

### Abstract

A detailed description of how absentee ballots will be administered for the August 11, 2020 Primary Elections.

Office of the Secretary of the State

Rev. 6/8/2020

## EXTENDING THE USE OF ABSENTEE BALLOTS

CGS 9-135 Conn Const Art. 6 Sec. 7

Connecticut law allows you to receive an absentee ballot if you cannot appear at your assigned polling place on primary day because of active service in the Armed Forces of the United States, absence from the town during all of the hours of voting, illness, religious tenets forbid secular activity on the day of the primary, duties as a primary official at a polling place other than your own during all of the hours of voting, or physical disability.

The Centers for Disease Control have identified countless pre-existing illnesses that put certain individuals at increased risk when exposed to the COVID-19 virus.

- People of all ages with underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well controlled, including:
- People with chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma
- People who have serious heart conditions
- People who are immunocompromised - including cancer treatment, smoking, bone marrow or organ transplantation, immune deficiencies, poorly controlled HIV or AIDS, and prolonged use of corticosteroids and other immune weakening medications
- People with severe obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 40 or higher)
- People with diabetes
- People with chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis
- People with liver disease

The State of Connecticut has determined that any registered voter who has such pre-existing illnesses can vote by absentee ballot because your illness would prevent you from appearing at your designed polling place safely or if a voter does not have a pre-existing illness, and there is not a widely available vaccine, the existence of the COVID-19 virus allows a voter to vote by absentee ballot if they so choose for your own safety.

Knowing an extended use of absentee ballots will increase the number of ballots the following additional procedures will be used:

- Town Clerks will be provided additional resources to allow for the hiring of additional officials to further the administration of a larger pool of absentee ballot voters. (Emergency plan)
  - Cities and towns must submit emergency plan to be eligible for reimbursement.
  - Town Clerks will receive PPEs from the supply provided to ROVs for the polls.
  - For offices that don't allow 6' of separation. Establish a contingency plan (i.e. work staggered shifts or use the ROV's office that has an existing connection to CVRS.)
- We will use Cathedral Corporation (mail house) to facilitate the mailing of both the revamped absentee ballot application and the actual absentee ballot. The mail house will not have direct access to the CVRS system. We anticipate that absentee ballot applications will be mailed out by the end of June. Applications will be staggered to that they will not arrive on the same day for each municipality. Applications will have a pre-paid return envelope with a return address of each town clerk office.

- A one-time data extract of the Centralized Voter Registration System will be sent to the mail house.
- Using this list, each eligible voter (Democrat and Republican only) will be sent an application for absentee ballot that is pre-populated with the voter's personal information. This application will explain that due to COVID-19 they are eligible to vote using an absentee ballot as long as they return the application to their local town clerk.
- Applications will be printed with a bar code unique to that voter that will allow the town clerks to search for the voter within the Centralized Voter Registration System more efficiently.
- CVRS will have multiple functionalities to process absentee ballot applications. In the main Navigation Menu under "Activities" the "Elections" tab will have two (2) options for processing absentee ballot applications. The first option, "Absentee Ballot," will allow the town clerk to process absentee applications (ED-3) with **no** barcode or Voter ID number as they have normally done in the past. The second option, "Absentee Ballot with Barcode" will allow the town clerk to process any application that has a pre-printed barcode or Voter ID number on the application.

## PROCESSING APPLICATIONS SENT TO THE VOTER WITH A BARCODE OR VOTER ID NUMBER

- Once the application is returned, the town clerk will enter the return information into the Centralized Voter Registration System.
- The Town Clerk will scan the bar code or type the Voter ID Number on the application.
- The first entry for each session will require the Town Clerk to select their default values common to each application, such as the election date. Once those are selected, the selected values will remain for the entirety of the session.
- If there is a mailing address different from the voter's residence address, the Town Clerk will need to manually select the 'Ballot Mailing Address' option. If the ballot is being mailed to the voter's residence address, CVRS will auto populate the address.
- The 'Serial Number' will be generated automatically and updated in the database. The serial number will be unique and easily identifiable to each specific city or town. CVRS is programmed to assign a serial that begins with your town code and then sequential number (i.e. 164-00101, 164-00102, etc.) The town clerk will handwrite the serial number onto the voter's application.
- Once updated, a new data file extract will be exported to the mail house at the end of each day (12 midnight). This file will only include those voters who have properly applied for an absentee ballot and the town clerk processed their application in CVRS. Based upon this file, the mail house will mail a complete absentee ballot package to each voter who has applied.
- Ballots may be mailed 8.5" X 11" not folded, with an inner envelope. (ballots may still be folded, this decision has yet to be finalized).
- Additionally, town clerks will receive a confirmation report from the mail house stating the ballots that were sent out on their behalf.

- Each absentee ballot package will include the required information regarding the voter and will also include a bar code that will include the Voter ID so that those returned ballots can be processed using the existing CVRS Batch Return Function.

**PROCESSING ABSENTEE BALLOT APPLICATIONS WITHOUT THE BARCODE OR VOTER ID**

- Any absentee ballot application (ED-3) that does **not** have a barcode to scan must be manually entered into the "Absentee Ballot" screen. This process has not changed from past practice. Town Clerks should use this screen to process previously received absentee ballot applications, Emergency Ballot applications, Military/Overseas Ballots, requests for replacement ballots or any voter that comes to town hall to vote but did not bring the application that was automatically sent to the voter. (Please see the section below titled, 'Before July 21st' for exceptions.)
- This is a reminder of the current procedure for the "Absentee Ballot" process:
  - The town clerk will search for the voter by name, DOB, or street. On the Select page, select the voter by clicking the radio button displayed next to the correct voter's name and click on "Select" button. This will navigate the town clerk to the "Add Absentee Ballot" screen.
  - To insert an absentee ballot application into CVRS, click on "Insert" button.
  - Click on the "Select" radio button and provide the required information in the fields for Election Date, Election Code, etc.
  - To mail the ballot to the voter's residential address, click on the "Use Residence Address" radio button. CVRS will automatically populate the residential address.
  - To mail the ballot to an address other than their residential address, click on the "Use Mailing Address" radio button and enter in the mailing address.
  - The town clerk will utilize the serial number on the Ed-8 serial numbered envelope.
  - Click on the "Update" button to save the information.
  - Click on the "Generate Labels" button to print the electoral label for the serial numbered envelope and, if needed, the mailing label to mail the absentee ballot.
- Please Note: The mail house will **not** issue a military, additional or emergency ballot entered using this screen. You must issue and the mail the ballot from your office. (Please see the section below titled, 'Before July 21st' for exceptions.)

*Note: The mailing cost for both the application and the ballot will be paid for by the Secretary of the State. Ballots will be printed and paid for by each municipality as currently required by law.*

*Note: The mail house may receive unfolded ballots directly from the printer and each town clerk will receive folded ballots to process "in-office" voters as you normally would do. We recommend ordering absentee ballots in the amount of 80% of your eligible voters (Democrats and Republicans) and of that 80% send 20% to your office and 80% to the mail house.*

*Using the Centralized Voter Registration System will also automatically update the Secretary of the State's voter look-up page. The voter will receive a user-friendly web address that will direct*

*the voter to the correct page.  This will allow a voter to track their absentee ballot so that town clerks are not burdened with this inquiry.*

- Once the voter has completed their absentee ballot, they would be able to return their ballot in one of three ways.  (1) return their ballot using the US Mail, (2) return their ballot directly to the town clerk's office in person, or (3) return their ballot using the drop box location at the local town hall.  Any ballot deposited in the drop box shall be considered 'returned by mail.'  This will prevent ballots from being rejected if the designee section is not filled out.
- Once the ballot is returned by the voter, the normal processing and counting of the ballots will occur within the municipality.  Each municipality will count their absentee ballots during the normal statutory timeframe.
- In addition, in an effort to streamline the reporting of election results, we will format the Election Management System to allow for the report of just a single total for each municipality holding the Presidential Preference Primary ONLY.  The only exception will be those municipalities that contain a split congressional district.  Those municipalities will need to provide vote totals for each congressional district (i.e. two congressional districts will require two totals – one for each congressional district).
- For those municipalities that will hold BOTH a Presidential Preference Primary and a State or Federal Primary, the reporting of election results must be reported by the voting districts located within the Assembly or Senatorial District as necessary.
- The reporting deadline for each municipality will also be relaxed.  As opposed to a midnight deadline for results, the deadline will be extended.

In a circumstance where an additional ballot is requested, the town clerk will still process these requests.  Using existing process, the voter will use an ED-3A and submit the application to the town clerk.  The town clerk will automatically reject the first ballot issued, issue a second ballot to the voter and count such ballot if it is filed by the close of the polls on primary day.  This process will be handled within your office as opposed to using the mail house.

*Prior to July 21st:*

With exception of Military/Overseas ballots, any application (ED-3) that was entered into CVRS by means of the "Absentee Ballot" screen will be captured in the **first** data extract that will be exported to the mail house.  This includes Permanent Absentee ballots.  The mail house will mail the ballots directly to the voter on July 21st.

Town clerks will manually enter into the "Absentee Ballot" screen the serial number from the ED-8 envelope.  The envelope will **not** be used to mail the absentee ballot to the voter.  The mail house will print the envelopes on-demand.  The serial number, whether it is automatically generated by CVRS or manually entered into CVRS by the town clerk, is simply a data set that will be extracted and printed onto the envelope by the mail house.

*On or after July 21<sup>st</sup>:*

Any application (ED-3) entered by means of the "Absentee Ballot" screen is the responsibility of the town clerk to mail the ballot directly to the voter.

Any application with a barcode or written voter ID processed through the "Absentee Ballot with Barcode" screen will be captured in the nightly data export to the mail house. The mail house will fulfill the mailing of the ballot to the voter.

**SPECIAL SITUATIONS**

Permanent Absentee Ballots – The town clerk should input Permanent Absentee Ballots into CVRS in advance. Any applications that are entered into CVRS up until July 20th, the mail house will mail the ballot on the first day ballots are available.

Absentee Ballots applications presently on file – Town Clerks should input these applications into CVRS in advance. Any applications that are entered into CVRS up until July 20th, the mail house will mail the ballot on the first day ballots are available.

Military/Overseas Ballots – Town Clerks shall continue to process new applications for military ballots and overseas ballots as they normally would do. 45 days before the August 11, 2020 primary is June 27, 2020.

Emergency Ballots – Town clerks shall continue to process Emergency Ballots as they have done so in the past.