

**County Clerk's Best Practices Document**  
**COUNTING THE ABSENTEE BALLOT PROCESS**  
**2024**

In Wyoming, a voter may elect to vote by absentee ballot without an excuse. The process to get an absentee ballot is very easy and the options are listed below:

1. The voter contacts their County Clerk (phone, email, mail or in person) and lets them know which elections (or all elections in a single year) they wish to receive a ballot for. The County Clerk staff will ask for the following information:
  - a. Legal Name
  - b. Date of Birth
  - c. Current Residential Address
  - d. Last 4 of the Social Security number of the voter (optional)
  - e. Political Party (in the Primary—so they get that ballot as they choose)
    - i. If the Political Party requested from the voter is different from the party reflected on their voter registration record, the voter must fill out and return to the clerk's office a voter registration application and change form with the same party as they chose to receive a primary ballot.  
Note: this MUST be notarized by a notarial officer or election registry clerk.
  - f. Mailing address to where the ballot is to be mailed to.
  - g. Who is requesting this ballot and their relationship to the voter and a phone number.
    - i. Reminder to get written permission slip from the voter who is picking up a ballot for another person.
    - ii. Might accept a text message from the spouse if you can verify the signature.
    - iii. If they don't have a permission slip, you may send the ballot in the mail to the spouse if they desire.
  - h. Are they active military.
2. The County Clerk staff checks this information for correctness and when that is complete, they will enter the request into Election Database system and supply the voter with a ballot in one of the following ways:
  - a. If the voter calls the Clerk's Office, the ballot will be mailed to the voter.
  - b. If someone else calls the Clerk's Office on behalf of the voter, they must supply all of the information about the voter listed in #1 above and the ballot will only go to the mailing address given for the voter.
  - c. If a voter arrives in person at the County Clerk's Office and it is within 45 days prior to the election, the voter may do one of the following:
    - i. Get a paper ballot with instructions and a return envelope given to them to take home to vote and return it either by mail, to the County Clerk's Office or by drop box (if the county provides a drop box at the courthouse).
    - ii. If the county has an absentee early polling place, they may vote their ballot onsite and run the ballot through the voting machine manned by Clerk staff/election judges.
    - iii. In some counties, even if the voter arrives in person, their choices are to vote through the early absentee process or the ballot will be mailed to them.
  - d. If a person arrives wanting to take another person's ballot to them, the voter's written authorization must be provided.

Voters may request a replacement ballot for a variety of reasons, some of which may include; losing their ballot, making a mistake, never received their ballot, wanted a different party ballot, among others. If a voter contacts the County Clerk's Election office requesting another ballot, consider the following steps:

1. The Voter should call immediately (or bring it back into the office).
  - a. If the voter's address has changed, staff should take the ballot back and have the voter fill out a new voter registration card and then issue a corrective ballot. Track the changes in Election Database System and spoil the absentee ballot sent to the voter.
  - b. If the voter made an error, they should return the ballot and staff should reissue the ballot which is also tracked in the Election Database System. The ballot should be kept in a secured spoiled ballot envelope.

- c. If the voter loses or never receives a ballot that was mailed, they may have a ballot reissued to them which is also tracked in the Election Database System.
- d. IN ALL CASES, THE FIRST BALLOT RETURNED PER VOTER WILL BE THE ONLY BALLOT COUNTED. W.S. 22-9-123.

#### Process of the Early processing

- 1. Contact the Secretary of State of early date and time
- 2. Contact the Parties of date and time and information on process
- 1. No candidates or candidate committee chairman or treasurer may be present (includes the County Clerk)
- 2. No results shall be made known or release be made to anyone.
- 3. Processing of the ballots is defined as
  - a. Checking the list of absentee ballots to the registration list
  - b. Checking for signatures on the absentee ballot
  - c. Opening the envelope and dividing the ballot from the envelope
  - d. Reconciling the number of ballots to envelopes
  - e. Running the ballots through a DS200 or DS450/850—no results shall be printed or known.
- 4. No personal communication device within 10 feet of the absentee processing area (personal medical devices are exempt)

SOS Rules are to be followed.

#### Returned Absentee Ballot

- 1. The Voter **MUST** place their voted ballot in the return envelope and **MUST** sign their name on that envelope for the absentee election judges to be able to count that ballot.
- 2. The Voter must send the ballot by mail, hand deliver to the County Clerk's Office, or by dropping them into a secure drop box (if the county supplies a drop box at the courthouse) **to be counted and it MUST ARRIVE NO LATER THAN 7 P.M. on Election Day. Note: Statutes only allow 1 drop box in the county and that must be at the county courthouse.**
- 3. County Clerk staff then makes sure the ballot envelope is signed by the voter. Attempts to contact the voter to sign can be done and if there is no response, we are required to include the ballot in the list for the absentee judges to determine if it should be voted or not. The Absentee Counting Board will make this determination based on training.
- 4. County Clerk staff will date stamp each ballot envelope with the date and time it arrives into the County Clerk's Office.
- 5. County Clerk staff then records the returned ballot into the Election Database system under the voter's name and ensures the appropriate return method has been selected (mailing, office walk-in, drop box, or absentee polling place).
- 6. The county secures the returned absentee ballots until election day.
- 7. Reconciliation should be done at the end of each day to continually verify that all absentee ballots are accounted for.
- 8. The poll list that will go to the Vote Centers will indicate if a person has fully voted their absentee and therefore may not vote at the polls. The list also notes that an absentee ballot has been applied for and sent to the voter, but has not been returned. If a voter arrives at the polling place, and the poll list indicates an absentee ballot has been sent, the judge will contact the County Clerk for confirmation that the ballot has not been received at the Clerk's Office before the voter is allowed to vote in person at the polls. The voter will also be asked to surrender their absentee ballot.
- 9. The absentee ballots that have been run through the absentee early voting machine for the days and weeks leading up to the election will remain locked. No results are tabulated until after 7 p.m. on Election Day when the results are uploaded into the Election Results computer. **The compartment where the results tape is printed remains locked with a numerical seal from the day of the machine certification until after 7 P.M. on Election Day, ensuring no tapes can be printed early.**
- 10. The absentee ballots that are in their secured boxes will again be checked against the list in the Election Database System and said list will be put in with the returned absentee ballots and placed in another locked and sealed container to be delivered to the Absentee Counting Board on election day.

- 11.** On Election Day, the absentee ballot election judges will (in teams of no less than two (2), comprised of a combination of Republican and Democratic voters generally, but a judge of another party or unaffiliated can be teamed):
- a.** Open the secured container of ballots. (they will check the seal number against a list provided)
  - b.** Confirm that each returned absentee ballot envelope has a signature of the voter on it. (Instructions in training is that if the ballot envelope is not signed, they are to reject that ballot without opening it and write on the outside “rejected, no signature”).
  - c.** Mark a sequential number by each voter’s name in the poll list.
  - d.** One judge will then open the envelope and simultaneously, remove the ballot away from the envelope. The ballot envelope and the ballot shall be separated to protect the secrecy of the vote.
  - e.** Judges should take care to make sure only one ballot is included in the envelope. If there are more ballots than one, stop and place the ballots and envelope (together) aside as they should be rejected. (In training, they will learn that they should mark “rejected, more than one ballot in envelope).
  - f.** Judges will count the absentee envelopes to be sure the number of envelopes matches the number of voters on the poll list.
  - g.** Judges will straighten out the ballots to be run into the machine.
  - h.** Judges will then count the number of ballots to make sure the number matches the list and the number of envelopes.
  - i.** The Judges will take the ballots to the Judge in charge of running the ballots through the machine.
  - j.** After ballots are run through the machine, all ballots that fall into another bin indicating that that ballot was not sufficient to be counted will be reviewed to determine why they did not go through the machine. If necessary, three (3) judges (one from each party, if possible) will begin the process of duplicating the ballot. They will get a new ballot and one will read the voter’s selections from the voter’s ballot and the second judge will mark the same selections on the new ballot. The third judge will observe both judges to ensure the right selections are read and marked. The duplicated ballot shall now be run through the machine. The top of the original ballot shall say “Original #1 or #2 etc” and the Duplicate shall say “Duplicate #1 or #2 etc”. The original shall be placed in a Duplicated Ballot envelope.
  - k.** The poll list, the envelopes, the ballots run through the machine and the balancing sheet shall all be returned to that precinct’s secure container. In some counties, the ballots will remain in the sealed ballot bin until after 7 P.M. on the day of the Election.
  - l.** If other ballots arrive during the day, this procedure will be done again and these ballots will be added to the appropriate precinct’s container.
    - i.** If using the e-poll book system, the ballots (as they arrive) will be entered into the county’s central e-poll book which goes out to the Vote Centers and updates their systems so they know a voter has already voted by absentee and may not vote at the Vote Center.
    - ii.** If using the State’s EPB application, the ballots (as they arrive) shall be entered into the Election Database System as outlined in Step 5 above. Additional processing shall occur as outlined above.
  - m.** Results of the absentee balloting process are combined with the other ballot results after the polls are closed.