

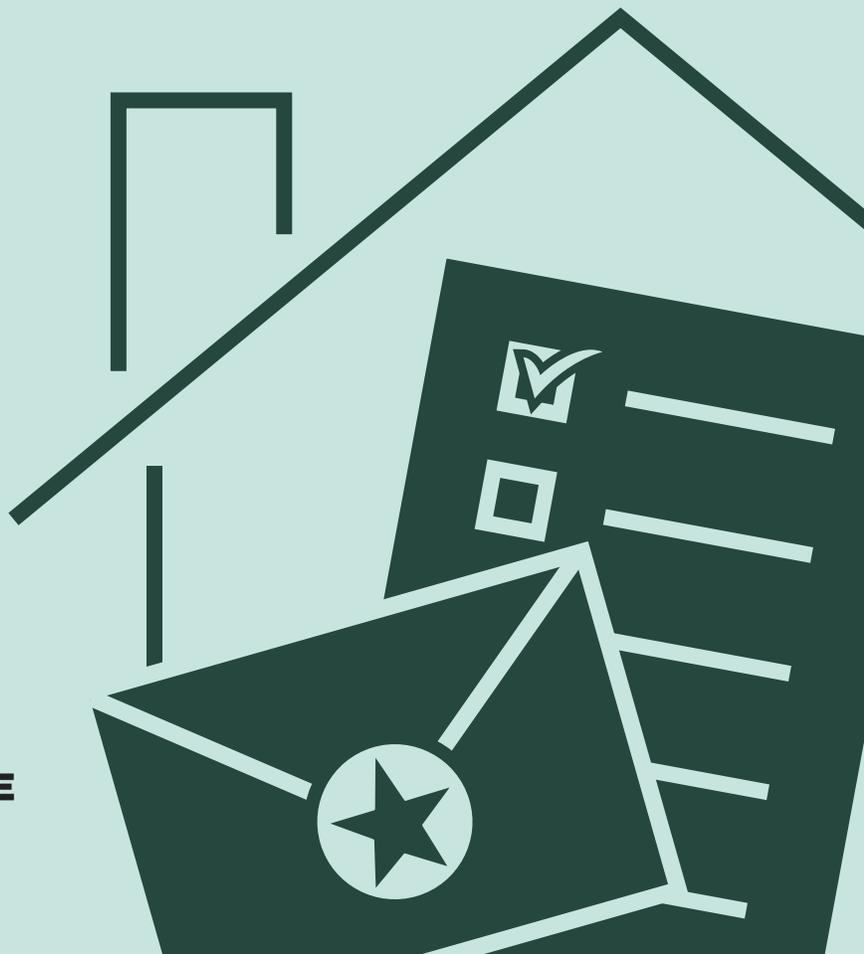


July, 2020

# Vote By Mail for Secure Elections in 2020 — and Beyond

## A Step-by-Step Guide for Colorado

In-depth materials and guidelines for local election administrators, secretaries of states, legislators, and advocates to help Colorado handle more mailed-out ballots.



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**VOTE at HOME**

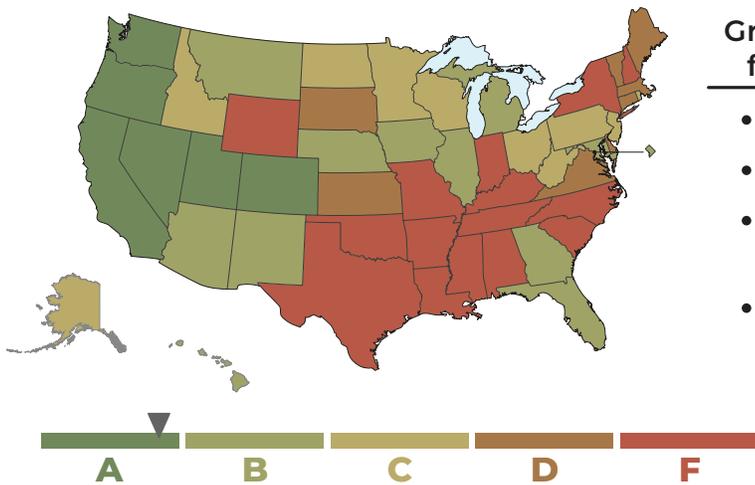
[www.Sightline.org/SecureElections2020](http://www.Sightline.org/SecureElections2020)

## Voting in Colorado



Colorado has nearly 4 million registered voters in 64 counties, ranging from 747 in San Juan County to 487,762 in Denver County. In 2018, 95 percent of Coloradans voted absentee, ranging from 88 percent in Pitkin County to almost 100 percent in Phillips County. Of that election's 4,378 poll workers, 46 percent were age 60 or older—an age group at a higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

Nearly 47 percent of registered voters cast ballots in the state's March 3 presidential primary. More than 97 percent of those voters returned their ballots by mail. Colorado already runs elections entirely by mail, so the pandemic did not impact voter turnout. In addition, Secretary of State Jena Griswold announced precautions her office is taking to protect elections officials by encouraging telework and social distancing in election offices.



### Grades based on 15 factors covering

- Ease of access
- Ballot security
- Election infrastructure
- Administrative efficiency

## Colorado's grade for Vote By Mail preparedness

A

## Ways in which Colorado is already prepared



- Ballot tracking required by state law.
- Gives voters sufficient opportunity to cure signature problems.
- Allows any voter to request an absentee ballot.
- Is a member of the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC).
- Offers voters a "single sign-up" option to permanently vote by mail.
- Uses voters' signatures to verify ballots.
- Allows county clerks to start processing ballots sufficiently early.
- Allows voters to register and request an absentee ballot online.
- Early in-person voting starting three weeks before Election Day.
- Allows anyone to return sealed ballots in person.
- Automatically registers voters and updates their address.

## Who We Are

Sightline is a nonpartisan nonprofit think tank with a 25-year history. We are based in the Pacific Northwest, where many states already conduct all-mail elections. We are grateful for feedback and research from many policy experts, elections officials, and leaders committed to safe, secure democracy, particularly the National Conference of State Legislators and the [National Vote at Home Institute](#).

## The Moment

American election officials face an urgent challenge to secure the 2020 elections. As poll workers and voters grapple with the coronavirus pandemic, many jurisdictions are already unable to find enough workers to run their usual polling places, and many Americans are seeking to cast their ballot from home, rather than risk contagion in a crowded polling place in November.

## About This Resource

We hope that Colorado election officials, advocates, and legislators will find this resource useful as they work to handle more Vote By Mail ballots in 2020 and beyond.

**Local election officials** and **secretaries of state** will find in-depth information including practical nuts-and-bolts advice, materials and guidelines from election administrators with experience in conducting all-mail elections, and information about vendors and costs.

**Legislators** will find tried-and-tested policies, along with sample language from states that have successfully implemented those policies. Even if Colorado lawmakers don't act in time for November 2020, the experience of hastily trying to secure elections this year may create a greater political appetite for reforms to strengthen democracy in Colorado beyond 2020.

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## For Local Election Officials

### 1. Coordinate with USPS®.

To ensure that the United States Postal Service (USPS) is able to process ballots in a timely manner, election administrators can [contact their local USPS](#) election mail coordinator to discuss the design, timing and volume of election materials.<sup>1</sup> USPS can review all materials to ensure that the design, wording, and colors meet their guidelines, and sign off on the printer's proofs. Election administrators can also discuss the date, time, and location for delivery of ballots to the post office to ensure that the post office is prepared. For example, before each election, King County, Washington, election administrators send a letter to USPS alerting them to the number, type, and timing of ballots they expect to deliver.<sup>2</sup>

USPS may also be able to help election administrators access the National Change of Address Linkage (NCOA) to update voters' addresses. Colorado is already a member of the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC), which uses NCOA data to help Colorado keep voter lists up to date. However, because voters may have moved since Colorado's last update, local officials can access NCOA for their voters' latest address information. Having the most up-to-date addresses will ensure that each ballot reaches the right voter, reducing the costs of re-mailing ballots.

### Resources

- To find a local point of contact at USPS: [Election/Political Mail Coordinators](#).<sup>3</sup>
- [USPS Election Mail Kit](#).<sup>4</sup>
- [USPS Election Mail guidelines](#).<sup>5</sup>
- To report problems to USPS: [electionmail.org](#).<sup>6</sup>
- Center for Tech and Civic Life's 2020 [webinar](#) on [best practices for tracking and reporting](#), and the [slides](#).<sup>7</sup>
- Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency's (CISA) guidance on [Managing an Increase in Outbound Ballots](#)<sup>8</sup>, pp. 67-70.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://about.usps.com/gov-services/election-mail/political-mail-map.htm>

<sup>2</sup> <https://aqua.kingcounty.gov/elections/docs/vbm/VBM-information.zip> (see "Ballot mailing" folder, "Example of USPS Notification Letter.pdf")

<sup>3</sup> <https://about.usps.com/gov-services/election-mail/political-mail-map.htm>

<sup>4</sup> <https://about.usps.com/kits/kit600.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://about.usps.com/gov-services/election-mail>

<sup>6</sup> <https://electionmail.org>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.techandciviclelife.org/vote-at-home>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.in.gov/sos/elections/files/COVID-19%20Election%20GUIDANCE%20ONLY.pdf#page=56>

- [Vote at Home Policy and Research Guide](#), p. 19.<sup>9</sup>

### Example Guidance Language

- Oregon [Vote by Mail Procedures Manual](#), pp. 26-30.<sup>10</sup>
- Municipality of Anchorage [Vote by Mail Project](#).<sup>11</sup>
- Ohio Secretary of State [Election Official Manual](#), pp. 5-22.<sup>12</sup>

## 2. Design ballots and envelopes that are easy to use.

Well-designed envelopes, ballots, forms, and instructions help voters fill out their ballots and return them without mistakes, decreasing processing time and minimizing the chance that ballots will be flagged, thrown out, or not counted. In contrast, poorly designed instructions or ballots may cause voters to fill out their ballot incorrectly or incompletely so that their vote is not counted.<sup>13</sup>

Ensure that election materials are easy so that voters who may be voting by mail for the first time don't make mistakes. For example, those who are new to mailing their ballots may not know that they need to sign the outside of their envelope, so putting their name under the signature line and providing simple and clear instructions to sign there can help prompt them and reduce the number of ballots that need extra processing time. (Also, pre-filling the absentee ballot request form can help voters complete it correctly.)

Color-coded envelopes can help USPS sort the mail quickly and accurately, and including space for voters' contact information can help election officials reach voters promptly in the event of a missing signature or discrepancy.

Another important way to assist voters is to design and distribute voter education booklets to help guide them through the process. (For example, when Anchorage, Alaska, moved to all-mail elections in 2018, in addition to a robust [community education campaign](#) and a [voter information flyer](#), the city extended an elections call center's hours in the month leading up to the election.) To reach all voters, make all voter materials and the elections

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.voteathome.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/VAH-Policy-and-Research-Guide.pdf#page=19>

<sup>10</sup> [https://sos.oregon.gov/elections/documents/vbm\\_manual.pdf#page=26](https://sos.oregon.gov/elections/documents/vbm_manual.pdf#page=26)

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.muni.org/departments/assembly/clerk/elections/documents/vote%20by%20mail%20project%20final%20report%20mas%201026%20annual%20report\\_030819.pdf#page=5](https://www.muni.org/departments/assembly/clerk/elections/documents/vote%20by%20mail%20project%20final%20report%20mas%201026%20annual%20report_030819.pdf#page=5)

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.ohiosos.gov/globalassets/elections/directives/2019/dir2019-11\\_eom.pdf#page=197](https://www.ohiosos.gov/globalassets/elections/directives/2019/dir2019-11_eom.pdf#page=197)

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/video/opinions/dont-let-mail-in-voting-be-thwarted-by-badly-designed-ballots/2020/05/18/1cce7c56-5312-44a8-afa9-fb813970f854\\_video.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/video/opinions/dont-let-mail-in-voting-be-thwarted-by-badly-designed-ballots/2020/05/18/1cce7c56-5312-44a8-afa9-fb813970f854_video.html)

website available in multiple languages. The Brennan Center for Justice estimates that the cost for voter education materials is between [\\$0.50 and \\$0.88 per person](#).

## Resources

- The Center for Civic Design’s<sup>14</sup> [design guidelines for election officials](#), based on solid research and best practices (includes resources on designing envelopes and forms, such as vote at home [envelopes and information](#), a field guide to [designing vote at home envelopes and ballots](#), Vote By Mail [envelope design](#), [writing ballot instructions voters can understand](#), and [creating forms that help voters take action](#).<sup>15</sup> Also see its guidelines for [designing voter education booklets and flyers](#), [creating accessible online information](#), and [providing materials in multiple languages](#).<sup>16</sup>
- Center for Tech and Civic Life’s 2020 [webinar](#) on [best practices for envelope design](#), and the [slides](#).<sup>17</sup>
- USPS guidance on [designing election mail](#).<sup>18</sup>
- Center for Tech and Civic Life’s 2020 [webinar](#) on [best practices for preparing supplementary materials](#), and the [slides](#).<sup>19</sup>
- CISA’s [Voter Education Guidance](#).<sup>20</sup>

## Example Legislative Language

**Revised Code of Washington [29A.40.091](#). Envelopes, declaration, and instructions—Voter’s oath—Overseas and service voters—Return of ballots—County auditor’s name.**<sup>21</sup>

Ballots and envelopes must have the election date printed on them. Return envelopes must have space for the voter’s telephone number so that the elections office can contact the voter if their signature does not match the one on file.

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<sup>14</sup> Jurisdictions in Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin have worked with the Center for Civic Design, and one in four voters have used their designs.

<sup>15</sup> <https://civicdesign.org/fieldguides>

<sup>16</sup> [ibid.](#)

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.techandciviclelife.org/vote-at-home>

<sup>18</sup> <https://about.usps.com/election-mail/design-election-mail.htm>

<sup>19</sup> <https://vimeo.com/393307242> and <https://www.techandciviclelife.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/PDF-VAH-Webinar-2-Preparing-helpful-supplementary-materials.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> [https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/election\\_education\\_outreach\\_absentee\\_508.pdf](https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/election_education_outreach_absentee_508.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> <http://lawfilesexternal.wa.gov/biennium/2019-20/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/House/1520-S.SL.pdf>

**Revised Code of Washington [29A.36](#). Ballots and other voting forms.<sup>22</sup>**

See code for detailed guidance on formatting, contracts with vendors, sample ballots, and instructions.

**Example Guidance Language**

- Washington State [Ballot Format Checklist](#) 2019.<sup>23</sup>
- Washington Administrative Code [434-230](#). Ballots.<sup>24</sup>
- Washington Administrative Code [434-230-010](#). Sample Ballots.<sup>25</sup>
- Colorado [Elections Division Policy and Procedure Manual](#), p. 26.<sup>26</sup>
- Oregon [Vote by Mail Procedures Manual](#), p. 23.<sup>27</sup>

### 3. Consider using a professional printer and ballot sorter.

Many election administrators use professional printers and ballot sorters, rather than printing ballots, stuffing envelopes, and sorting them in-house. This can save money and increase staff efficiency. It might also mitigate problems voters have experienced during their primaries, such as in Georgia,<sup>28</sup> where voters requested ballots but did not receive them, or in New York,<sup>29</sup> where ballots did not include a return envelope. Both states were relying on overworked workers who did not have much experience in printing, stuffing, and mailing ballot envelopes, rather than hiring a professional service that has printed, stuffed, and mailed ballot envelopes many times and has quality control practices in place.

According to the Brennan Center, printing costs per ballot ranges from [\\$0.21 to \\$0.35 cents per ballot](#). Volume efficiencies in moving to a Vote By Mail system result in lower per-voter printing costs. In Colorado, total printing costs declined from [\\$6.86 to \\$3.04 per voter](#) after implementing Vote By Mail.

**Resources**

- [K&H Integrated Print Solutions](#) for secure ballot and envelope printing.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> <https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=29A.36>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.sos.wa.gov/assets/elections/administrators/2019-ballot-format-checklist.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> <https://apps.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=434-230>

<sup>25</sup> <https://apps.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=434-230-010&pdf=true>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/policyManual/ElectionsPolicyManual.pdf#page=26>

<sup>27</sup> [https://sos.oregon.gov/elections/documents/vbm\\_manual.pdf#page=23](https://sos.oregon.gov/elections/documents/vbm_manual.pdf#page=23)

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.11alive.com/article/news/politics/elections/absentee-ballot/85-4bde08c8-97db-4736-b1de-45a03c29c330>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/19/us/politics/nyc-vote-by-mail.html>

<sup>30</sup> Many counties in the Pacific Northwest use this vendor. <http://www.khprint.com>

- [Runbeck Election Services](#) for election products and services.<sup>31</sup>
- Relia-Vote™ automated mail ballot solutions from [BlueCrest](#).<sup>32</sup>
- [Ryder Graphics](#) for ballot printing and mailing.<sup>33</sup>
- [Reprographics](#) for ballot printing and mailing.<sup>34</sup>
- [Phoenix Graphics](#) for ballot printing and mailing.<sup>35</sup>
- [Tritek](#) for ballot sorting and signature verification services.<sup>36</sup>

### Example Guidance Language

- Colorado Secretary of State [Elections Division Policy and Procedure Manual](#), p. 26.<sup>37</sup>
- Oregon [Vote by Mail Procedures Manual](#), p. 23.<sup>38</sup>

## 4. Include a postage-prepaid return envelope.

Seventeen states<sup>39</sup> require the state government to provide envelopes with prepaid return postage for absentee ballots. Twenty-two states<sup>40</sup> leave it up to counties whether they will pay for return postage, either by explicitly giving counties the option or by saying nothing in legislation about who pays postage. Providing prepaid return postage makes voting easier and can improve voter turnout because voters can focus on voting, not on locating stamps, weighing their ballot, or going to the post office to find out how much mailing the ballot will cost (which can vary from one stamp to three First-Class stamps, depending on the weight of the ballot).<sup>41</sup> Prepaid return postage costs around \$0.80 per voter.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Runbeck has the capacity to serve 10 percent of American voters. <https://runbeck.net>

<sup>32</sup> BlueCrest serves 30 counties. <https://www.bluecrestinc.com/solutions/vote-by-mail-relia-vote>

<sup>33</sup> Many Oregon counties use this vendor. <http://rydergraphics.net>

<sup>34</sup> Many Oregon counties use this vendor. <http://reproprinting.com>

<sup>35</sup> Some jurisdictions on the East Coast use this vendor.

<https://www.phoenix-graphics.com/absentee-mail>

<sup>36</sup> <https://tritektech.com>

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/policyManual/ElectionsPolicyManual.pdf#page=26>

<sup>38</sup> [https://sos.oregon.gov/elections/documents/vbm\\_manual.pdf#page=23](https://sos.oregon.gov/elections/documents/vbm_manual.pdf#page=23)

<sup>39</sup> Arizona, California, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Rhode Island, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin require prepaid return postage. <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/vopp-table-12-states-with-postage-paid-election-mail.aspx>

<sup>40</sup> Counties in Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island (some voters), South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, and Wyoming determine whether to provide prepaid return postage. <https://tracker.votingrightslab.org/issues/AbsenteeVoting>

<sup>41</sup> <https://qz.com/1433788/how-many-stamps-should-i-put-on-an-absentee-ballot>

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/estimated-costs-covid-19-election-resiliency-measures>

Just 10 states,<sup>43</sup> including Colorado, require *voters* to pay for postage, meaning that local officials are prohibited from providing prepaid return postage. The Colorado legislature would need to revise the law for election administrators to pay for return postage or at least give each county the option to do so.

## Resources

- USPS [fact sheet](#) on Business Reply Mail® (BRM) and Qualified Business Reply Mail™ (QBRM™).<sup>44</sup>

## Example Legislative Language

**Revised Code of Washington [29A.40.091](#). Envelopes, declaration, and instructions—Voter’s oath—Overseas and service voters—Return of ballots—County auditor’s name.**<sup>45</sup>

Return envelopes for all ballots must include prepaid postage.

## Example Guidance Language

- Arizona Secretary of State [2019 Elections Procedures Manual](#), p. 54.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Alaska, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Montana, Nebraska, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Texas require voters to pay postage for mail-in ballots.

<https://tracker.votingrightslab.org/issues/AbsenteeVoting>

<sup>44</sup> BRM and QBRM enable local election officials to pay the return postage for only the ballots returned to the elections office. <https://about.usps.com/kits/kit600.pdf#page=15>

<sup>45</sup> <https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=29A.40.091>

<sup>46</sup> [https://azsos.gov/sites/default/files/2019\\_ELECTIONS\\_PROCEDURES\\_MANUAL\\_APPROVED.pdf#page=68](https://azsos.gov/sites/default/files/2019_ELECTIONS_PROCEDURES_MANUAL_APPROVED.pdf#page=68)

## For Lawmakers

### 5. Account for voters with nontraditional addresses.

Native American voters living on tribal lands often have mailing addresses that don't adhere to USPS standards, making it difficult for them to register to vote and receive ballots in the mail. They may have many family members living at the same address, and some states may not allow them all to receive a ballot, in an attempt to protect against fraudulent ballot requests. Or these voters may use a USPS box to receive mail but live far from the nearest post office or election center, making it more difficult to receive and return their ballot in a timely fashion.<sup>47</sup> Eligible voters experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity also may not have a home address. Colorado should make sure these voters can receive a ballot and vote securely.

Colorado should allow multiple eligible voters to use the same mailing address. Living with others to save housing costs should not diminish any American's right to vote. Colorado can allow Native Americans to [designate a building on the Nation's land to receive their ballot](#). Especially in areas where people live far from a post office, election administrators can temporarily install drop boxes or vote centers on tribal lands to ensure that voters have viable options for returning their ballots.

Colorado can allow homeless community members to receive their ballots at a [shelter, park, motor home](#), or other identifiable location. As an alternative, homeless voters can list the county elections office as their mailing address and get their ballot in person there. They can then return their ballot to the elections office or a secure drop box.

### Example Legislative Language

#### Colorado Revised Statutes [1-2-102](#). Rules for determining residence.<sup>48</sup>

For voter registration residence, voters can identify a physical location in the county that they return to regularly, such as a shelter, services provider, park, campground, vacant lot, or business. If that location does not have an address, voters must also provide a mailing address.

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<sup>47</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/may/22/mail-in-voting-native-americans-election>

<sup>48</sup> [https://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/info\\_center/laws/Title1/Title1Article2.html](https://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/info_center/laws/Title1/Title1Article2.html)

**Oregon Revised Statutes [247.038](#). Registration of person who is homeless or resides in identifiable location.<sup>49</sup>**

Individuals who are homeless or reside in shelters, vehicles, marinas, or other identifiable locations cannot be denied the opportunity to register to vote. Residence addresses can be descriptions of the person's physical location or the office of the county clerk.

**Revised Code of Washington [29A.08.112](#). Voters without traditional residential addresses.<sup>50</sup>**

Voter registration accepts nontraditional addresses, defined as narrative descriptions of the voter's physical location. No person can be disqualified for lacking a traditional address. Voters must provide a mailing address. Tribes may designate a government building to serve as a mailing address for residents.

**Example Guidance Language**

- Oregon [Vote by Mail Procedures Manual](#) and Oregon secretary of state [website](#).<sup>51</sup>
- Colorado secretary of state [Foreclosure and Homeless Voters FAQs](#) and [Election Rules](#).<sup>52</sup>
- Washington Secretary of State Clearinghouse Elections Notice on [Voters without Traditional Addresses](#).<sup>53</sup>

## 6. Allow counties to accept ballots postmarked on Election Day.

In 2018 approximately 19,000 mailed-out ballots in Colorado were rejected. Of those, 12 percent were rejected due to late receipt. That is more than 2,200 Colorado voters whose votes weren't counted because they arrived too late. It's likely that more Coloradans will want to use absentee ballots in 2020, and a similar rejection rate for ballots received after Election Day could disenfranchise even more voters.

Thirteen states<sup>54</sup> accept ballots postmarked by Election Day and received within a certain period afterwards (usually around 10 days). This gives absentee voters the same freedom

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<sup>49</sup> [https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills\\_laws/ors/ors247.html](https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills_laws/ors/ors247.html)

<sup>50</sup> <https://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=29A.08.112>

<sup>51</sup> [https://sos.oregon.gov/elections/Documents/vbm\\_manual.pdf#page=19](https://sos.oregon.gov/elections/Documents/vbm_manual.pdf#page=19) and <https://sos.oregon.gov/voting/Pages/homeless-confidential.aspx>

<sup>52</sup> <https://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/FAQs/foreclosureHomelessFAQ.html> and [https://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/rule\\_making/CurrentRules/8CCR1505-1/Rule2.pdf#page=3](https://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/rule_making/CurrentRules/8CCR1505-1/Rule2.pdf#page=3)

<sup>53</sup> <https://www.sos.wa.gov/assets/elections/auditorsctp/19-04%20voters%20without%20traditional%20addresses.pdf>

<sup>54</sup> Alabama, Alaska, California, DC, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Texas, Washington, and West Virginia accept ballots postmarked on Election Day.

as in-person voters to mark their ballot and submit it on Election Day. It also avoids confusion because voters don't have to guess how many days it could take USPS to deliver their ballot. Allowing clerks to count ballots postmarked on Election Day and received within 10 days increases voter engagement and makes elections more representative of the people.

Since Colorado does not accept ballots received after Election Day, make this very clear to voters. In the ballot materials, instruct voters not to put their ballot in the mail any later than the Wednesday before Election Day. Run PSAs a few days before that Wednesday to remind voters of the practical cutoff date and that they may take their ballot to a secure drop box or a vote center up until the polls close on Election Day.

### Example Legislative Language

#### **Alaska Statutes § [15.20.081\(e\)](#). Absentee voting in general; applying for absentee ballot by mail or electronic transmission.<sup>55</sup>**

Ballots must be postmarked by Election Day and received by the close of business on the 10th day after the election.

#### **Illinois Compiled Statutes [10 § 5/19-8\(c\)](#). Time and place of counting ballots<sup>56</sup> and [10 § 5/18A-15](#). Validating and counting provisional ballots.<sup>57</sup>**

Ballots must be postmarked by Election Day. Ballots received after Election Day without the postmark shall be accepted if the certification date is on or before Election Day. Ballots must be received within 14 days after the election.

#### **Kansas Statute [25-1132](#). Advance voting; delivery of ballots; where; deadline for receiving ballots.<sup>58</sup>**

Absentee ballots can be received after polls close as long as they were postmarked before or on Election Day and are received within three days after the election. This second standard is not recommended, as USPS first-class standard has changed from one to three days but is now two to five days.

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<https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/vopp-table-11-receipt-and-postmark-deadlines-for-absentee-ballots.aspx>

<sup>55</sup> <http://www.akleg.gov/basis/statutes.asp#15.20.081>

<sup>56</sup> <http://ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/documents/001000050K19-8.htm>

<sup>57</sup> <http://ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/documents/001000050K18A-15.htm>

<sup>58</sup> [http://www.kslegislature.org/li/b2019\\_20/statute/025\\_000\\_0000\\_chapter/025\\_011\\_0000\\_article/025\\_011\\_0032\\_section/025\\_011\\_0032\\_k](http://www.kslegislature.org/li/b2019_20/statute/025_000_0000_chapter/025_011_0000_article/025_011_0032_section/025_011_0032_k)

**Nevada Revised Statutes § [293.317\(1\)\(b\), \(2\)](#). Procedure for timely returning absent ballot; treatment of absent ballot when postmark cannot be determined<sup>59</sup> and NRS [293.333\(2\)](#) Procedure for depositing absent ballots in ballot box; period for counting of absent ballots.<sup>60</sup>**

Ballots must be postmarked on or before the date of the election and received within seven days after the election. If a postmark is illegible but the ballot is received within three days of the election, it is considered valid.

**North Carolina General Statutes [163-231](#). Voting absentee ballots and transmitting them to the county board of elections.<sup>61</sup>**

Absentee ballots can be received after polls close as long as they were postmarked before or on Election Day and are received by three days after Election Day. This second standard is not recommended, as USPS first-class standard has changed from one to three days to two to five days.

### Example Guidance Language

- Alaska Administrative Code [25.560](#). Timeliness of absentee by-mail ballot.<sup>62</sup>

## 7. Allow voters to request replacement ballots online.

Occasionally, voters might lose, destroy, spoil, or never receive their ballot in the mail. These voters need to be able to quickly, conveniently, and securely request a replacement. To best accommodate voters, especially during the pandemic, county clerks can give voters the option to request a replacement ballot not only in person but also in writing, over the phone, or online.

To ensure security, election officials should only send replacement ballots once they confirm that the voter has not already voted. Unique barcodes on each ballot will ensure that only one ballot per voter is counted. Each voter will only be able to vote once; if an election official receives two ballots with the same unique barcode, only the first one received will be counted.

Printing and mailing ballots costs between \$1.26 and \$2.35. Colorado can reduce the need for replacement ballots by keeping voter records up to date and making it easy for voters to update their address online (see Recommendation 1).

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<sup>59</sup> <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/nrs/nrs-293.html#NRS293Sec317>

<sup>60</sup> <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/nrs/nrs-293.html#NRS293Sec333>

<sup>61</sup> [https://www.ncleg.net/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/HTML/ByChapter/Chapter\\_163.html](https://www.ncleg.net/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/HTML/ByChapter/Chapter_163.html)

<sup>62</sup> <http://www.akleg.gov/basis/aac.asp#6.25.560>

## Example Legislative Language

**Oregon Revised Statutes § [254.470 \(7\)](#). Procedures for conducting election by mail; rules.<sup>63</sup>**

Voters may obtain replacement ballots if the ballot is destroyed, lost, spoiled, or not received. Replacement ballots need not be mailed if within five days of Election Day. Instead, they will be available at the office of the county clerk.

**Revised Codes of Washington [29A.40.070](#). Date ballots mailed—Replacement ballots.<sup>64</sup>**

Registered voters may obtain replacement ballots if the ballot is destroyed, lost, spoiled or not received. The voter may request a replacement by telephone, mail, or email, online, or in person.

## Example Guidance Language

- Oregon [Vote by Mail Procedures Manual](#), p. 51.<sup>65</sup>
- Alaska Division of Elections instructions for [online ballot delivery](#).<sup>66</sup>
- Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State [2016 Absentee Voting Administration Guide](#), p. 30.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> [https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills\\_laws/ors/ors254.html](https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills_laws/ors/ors254.html)

<sup>64</sup> <https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=29A.40.070>

<sup>65</sup> [https://sos.oregon.gov/elections/documents/vbm\\_manual.pdf#page=51](https://sos.oregon.gov/elections/documents/vbm_manual.pdf#page=51)

<sup>66</sup> <http://www.elections.alaska.gov/Core/votingbyonline.php>

<sup>67</sup> <http://www.co.wadena.mn.us/DocumentCenter/View/904/absentee-voting-administration-guide#page=30>