

The Ten X Initiative is a non-partisan effort by people from many faith and cultural traditions to increase social justice and address systemic racism.

Absentee Voting in the Georgia General Run-Off Election, January 5, 2021: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Eligibility and Safety of Absentee Voting

Q: I was not able to register to vote in the Georgia General Election on November 3rd. Can I still register to vote in the General Run-Off Election on January 5th?

A: Yes! If you meet all the other criteria to vote in Georgia (for example, you were born on or before January 5, 2003), you can register to vote in the General Run-Off Election on January 5th. If you are unsure about whether you are registered to vote in this election, you can check your registration status on the [Georgia.gov](https://www.ga.gov) website. **The deadline for registering to vote in the General Run-Off Election is December 7, 2020.**

Q: Who is eligible to vote absentee in Georgia?

A: All registered Georgia voters can vote absentee; you do NOT need an “excuse” to do so.

Q: Is it safe to vote absentee in Georgia?

A: Yes! Absentee voting has been done in Georgia and in other states for many years. Your completed ballot will only be handled by officials in your [County Board of Registrars Office](#) or by your Municipal Absentee Ballot Clerk (also known as your “local elections office” throughout the rest of this FAQ). Your votes will be recorded anonymously, along with those of all other absentee voters in Georgia. In addition, absentee voting allows you to complete your ballot where you live, and thus avoid standing in long lines at polling places.

Q: I have a disability and need help completing my ballot when I vote in person. Can someone help me with my absentee ballot too?

A: Yes. If you cannot fill out your application or ballot without help, you are allowed to have help. There is a space on the envelope you will use to submit your absentee ballot for the person who helped you to sign their name, so voting officials are aware that they helped you.

Q: I just moved away from the county where I am registered to vote two weeks ago. Can I still vote in my old precinct using my old address?

A: Yes. You are allowed to vote in your old precinct in the county where you used to live if your move occurred within 30 days of an election. This is true whether you moved within the same county or to another county.

However, **if you moved to another county more than 30 days prior to an election**, you are NOT eligible to vote in your prior county of residence, and **you must register in your new county of residence in order to be eligible to vote.**

Q: I am currently homeless; can I still vote in Georgia?

A: Yes, people who are homeless can vote in Georgia. You will still need to register to vote, and you will still need to provide a mailing address when you register. However, your mailing address could be a Post Office box, a shelter, or some other temporary address where you can receive mail.

Applying for An Absentee Ballot

Q: Will I automatically receive an absentee ballot?

A: No. Every registered voter must apply for an absentee ballot for every election – including primaries, run-offs, and general elections. Once your application for an absentee ballot is received and approved by your local elections office, your ballot will be mailed to you via the U.S. Postal Service (USPS). The only exception is if you applied for an absentee ballot earlier this year *and* indicated on your application that you would like to receive an absentee ballot for each of the upcoming elections during a given election cycle (e.g., 2020) by checking the eligibility requirement that applies to you (e.g., you are 65 years of age or older, have a disability, or are a member of the military). If you have done so, your local election office will automatically mail you an absentee ballot for the General Run-Off Election on January 5, 2021. Your [“My Voter Page”](#) on the Georgia Secretary of State’s website (<https://www.mvp.sos.ga.gov/MVP/mvp.do>) will also show that your application for an absentee ballot for this election has been received.

Q: How do I apply for an Absentee Ballot in Georgia?

A: You can apply on-line for an absentee ballot using the [new portal](#) that’s available on the Georgia Secretary of State’s website: <https://ballotrequest.sos.ga.gov/> Alternatively, you can access a [fillable Absentee Ballot application](#), which you can send or deliver to your [County Board of Registrars Office](#). In some cases, local election offices or civic organizations MAY also send out applications for absentee ballots to all eligible voters, and you can use those paper forms to request an Absentee Ballot as well.

Q: When can I apply for an Absentee Ballot for the General Run-Off Election on January 5, 2021?

A: NOW! The sooner you apply for an absentee ballot the better, so you have time to complete and submit your ballot in time to arrive at your [County Board of Registrars Office](#) by 7:00 pm on election day.

Q: How can I find out where my County Board of Registrar’s Office is located?

A: A list of [County Board of Registrars’ Offices](#) in Georgia, along with their contact information, is available on the Georgia Secretary of State’s website: <https://elections.sos.ga.gov/Elections/countyregistrars.do>.

Q: My application has a space for me to enter my voter registration number, but I do not know my number. Do I need to enter this number to receive an absentee ballot?

A: No. Voter registration numbers are NOT required to apply for an absentee ballot for 2020 elections in Georgia. Simply leave this space blank if you are uncertain of your voter registration number.

Q: Do I need to request a specific type of ballot (e.g., Democratic, Republican, or Non-Partisan) on my Georgia Absentee Ballot application for the General Run-Off Election on January 5, 2021?

A: No. In Georgia, it is not necessary to request a specific type of ballot for the General Run-Off Election on January 5, 2021.

Q: How do I get my Georgia Absentee Ballot application to my County Board of Registrars' office?

A: If you use the [new portal](#) that is available on the Georgia Secretary of State's website to apply for an absentee ballot, your ballot application will be submitted automatically. Otherwise, you can send a paper application to your [County Board of Registrars Office](#) by regular USPS mail or by e-mail; or take your paper application to your [County Board of Registrars Office](#). The County Registrars' Office will then send you your Absentee Ballot by regular USPS mail. (**Note:** If you are submitting your application by e-mail, you should check with your [County Board of Registrars Office](#) first to get their email address and to determine if they have any special instructions for submitting these applications by email, as these instructions can vary by county.)

Q: How do I know whether my Georgia Absentee Ballot application has been received, and whether my Absentee Ballot has been issued by my County Board of Registrars' office?

A: You can go to your ["My Voter Page"](#) on the Secretary of State's website, and click on "absentee ballot status" to learn when your request for an Absentee Ballot for an upcoming election was received; when your ballot was issued and received; and whether your ballot was accepted. In addition, you can now sign-up for a new free service called "[Ballottrax](#)" at <https://georgia.ballottrax.net/voter/> to receive a text, email, or phone call to let you know when your request for an absentee ballot was received; when your ballot was issued and received; and whether your ballot was accepted as well. If your Absentee Ballot application has NOT been received by your [County Board of Registrars Office](#) within 1-2 weeks of your either sending it or dropping it off, you should contact your [County Board of Registrars Office](#) and request a new application. Absentee ballots for the January 5, 2021 General Run-Off Election are currently being mailed to voters who have requested them.

Completing and Submitting an Absentee Ballot

Q: How do I complete my Absentee Ballot?

A: Select the candidate you prefer for each elected office on the ballot, and then color in the circle next to the candidate's name, using a blue or black pen or pencil. Be sure to completely fill in the circles next to the candidate's name, and avoid any stray markings on the ballot, so that your votes are accurately recorded. This also applies when you are voting on any special issues or ballot initiatives, though the response options in this case will be different (e.g., "yes" or "no").

Q: What if I make a mistake while completing my Georgia Absentee Ballot? Can I get a new one?

A: Yes, you can obtain a replacement ballot if you make an error on your original Absentee Ballot (e.g., you filled in the wrong circle), or if your ballot is otherwise damaged for some reason. However, you *must* contact your [County Board of Registrars Office](#) as soon as possible to obtain a replacement ballot. Otherwise, you may not receive your new Absentee Ballot in time to vote. You may also mark your Absentee Ballot as "spoiled", and take it with you to one of your county's early voting sites, or to your local precinct on election day, and tell the poll worker you want to vote in-person instead of absentee. Your poll worker will then take your spoiled Absentee Ballot and allow you to vote in-person.

Q: What if I never received my Georgia Absentee Ballot; lost my Absentee Ballot after I received it; or submitted my absentee ballot, but it never showed-up as having been received by my local election office? Can I still vote?

A: Yes! You may still vote in-person during the early voting period or on election day. However, you **MUST** tell the Poll Worker what happened (for example, that your Absentee Ballot was lost, or that it was submitted but NOT recorded). The Poll Worker will then confirm that your Absentee Ballot was not received, and they will give you a form (an affidavit) to sign that confirms your intent to vote in-person. Your in-person vote will then be your official vote, even if your Absentee Ballot arrives at your [County Board of Registrars Office](#) later on.

Q: I received my Georgia Absentee Ballot, but I would now prefer to vote in-person. Can I still do that?

A: Yes. You may still vote in-person during the early voting period or on election day if you have not submitted your Absentee Ballot. Just bring the Absentee Ballot with you to your polling place, tell a Poll Worker that you would prefer to vote in-person, and then give them your Absentee Ballot. You will also need to present an [acceptable photo ID](#) (for example, a Georgia Driver's License or other State ID; US Passport; Military ID; or Tribal ID) to verify your identity. If you do NOT have your Absentee Ballot with you when you go to vote in-person, you should still be able to vote, but you will need to follow the same steps as someone who never received their ballot or lost it, as described in a separate Q&A above.

Q: Now that I finished filling out the ballot, what do I do with it?

A: Your Absentee Ballot should come with 2 envelopes: A WHITE envelope – also known as a "secrecy envelope" – with "Official Absentee Ballot" on the front; and an envelope that is usually YELLOW, or has a yellow stripe on it, which is addressed to your [County Board of Registrars Office](#). This Yellow Envelope includes

an "OATH of the elector" on the back. **First**, put your completed ballot into the WHITE envelope and seal it. **Second**, put the WHITE envelope **with the ballot** INTO the YELLOW return envelope and seal it too. You **must** also mark and sign the "OATH of the elector" on the back of the YELLOW envelope. If you needed help in completing your ballot (for example, you needed help because of a disability), the person who assisted you also needs to sign the "OATH of Person Assisting the Elector" on the back of the YELLOW envelope. **If one or both of these lines are NOT signed, as appropriate, your ballot will be rejected.** (Note: You should be notified by your [County Board of Registrars Office](#) if your ballot is rejected. You can also track the status of your Absentee Ballot on your ["My Voter Page"](#), or sign-up to receive an automatic notification of the status of your Absentee Ballot using the ["Ballottrax"](#) system, as described below.)

Q: I have sealed the YELLOW envelope and signed the OATH, now what do I do?

A: There are a few different ways to submit your completed Absentee Ballot: 1) You can take your completed ballot, sealed within the WHITE and YELLOW envelopes as described above, to your local election office; 2) you can place your completed ballot in one of the other **official drop boxes** set-up in designated locations **in your county**; or 3) you can send your completed ballot to your County Registrar's Office by regular USPS mail (Note: The YELLOW envelop is already addressed to your local election office). **The use of drop boxes in your county is highly recommended.** A list of [drop box locations](#) is available at: <https://faq.georgiavoter.guide/en/article/absentee-ballot-drop-box-locations>. Please note that if you choose to send in your absentee ballot by regular mail, you MUST still put a USPS stamp(s) on the envelope (proper postage required) before mailing it, or it may not be delivered. However, whatever way you choose to submit your completed Absentee Ballot, **your vote will still be counted as long as your ballot arrives at your [County Board of Registrars Office](#) by 7:00 pm on election day, January 5, 2021.**

Q: If a friend or someone I do not know offers to take my Absentee Ballot to the Post Office or to a local drop-off box, is it OK for me to give it to them?

A: No! It is illegal for someone else to mail or drop off your ballot. The only exceptions to this are family members of the voter, other persons who live in the same household as the voter, or caregivers for a voter who is disabled. The Georgia Election Code also states that "In the case of an elector who is confined to a hospital on the day of the election, a family member or individual residing in the household of a disabled elector may personally deliver an absentee ballot on behalf of the disabled elector". If you need help getting to a Post Office or drop-off box in your neighborhood, see if there is a neighbor or friend who can give you a ride, so that you can either mail or drop-off your ballot yourself. Ridesharing, regardless of relationship, is perfectly legal too.

Q: How do I know whether my Absentee Ballot has been received and recorded by my local voting office?

A: You can go to your ["My Voter Page"](#) on the Georgia Secretary of State's website, and click on "absentee ballot status" to learn when your Absentee Ballot for an upcoming election was requested, issued, and received; and whether your ballot was accepted. You can also sign-up for a free service called ["Ballottrax"](#) to receive a text, email, or phone call to let you know when your request for an absentee ballot was received; when your ballot was issued and received; and whether your ballot was accepted as well.

Q: What if my Absentee Ballot is rejected because I did NOT sign the “Oath of the elector”, or the County Board of Registrars Office determines that my signature did NOT match the one they have on file? Is there something I can do to correct my Absentee Ballot, so that my vote will still be counted?

A: Yes! You can complete and sign a legal form or “affidavit” known as the [Georgia BallotCure19 Form](#), and then submit this signed form, along with a copy of an [acceptable photo ID](#) (for example, a Georgia Driver’s License), to your [County Board of Registrars Office](#). (Note: The [Georgia BallotCure19 Form](#) and a copy of your photo ID MUST arrive at your [County Board of Registrars Office](#) by 5:00 pm on Friday, January 8, 2021 for your vote to count.)

Q: I placed my Absentee Ballot directly into the YELLOW envelope without first putting it into the WHITE envelope, and then sent it to my County Registrar’s Office. Will my votes still be counted?

A: Yes. Absentee Ballots for the General Run-Off Election that are submitted without a WHITE envelope (also known as a privacy envelope) WILL still be counted as long as the ballot arrives at your [County Board of Registrars Office](#) by 7:00 pm on election day, January 5, 2021.

Q: I just moved to Georgia from another state and registered on-line to vote. I sent my Absentee Ballot to my County Registrar’s Office, but I was informed that I need to provide proper identification to verify my eligibility to vote. How do I do that, and what happens if I don’t?

You need to provide your [County Board of Registrars Office](#) with a copy of an [acceptable photo ID](#) (for example, a Georgia Driver’s License or other State ID). Your [County Board of Registrars Office](#) should provide you with instructions about how to do this. Until you provide this identification, your ballot will be treated as a “Provisional Ballot”. If you provide a copy of an [acceptable photo ID](#) before the polls close at 7:00 pm on Tuesday, January 5, 2021, your Absentee Ballot will be counted along with other Absentee Ballots that were received for the January 5, 2021 General Election. However, if you do NOT provide your [County Board of Registrars Office](#) with the required identification by that time, your ballot will remain a Provisional Absentee Ballot. You then MUST provide your [County Board of Registrars Office](#) with an [acceptable photo ID](#) by 5:00 pm on Friday, January 8, 2021 for your vote to count.

Additional Help with Absentee Voting

Q: Where can I go to get additional help with absentee voting in my county?

A: Additional help with Absentee Voting is available through your [County Board of Registrars Office](#).

Disclaimer: The information included in this FAQ is for educational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice on voting in Georgia. If you have specific questions about your eligibility to vote or voting procedures in Georgia, please contact the Georgia Secretary of State’s Office (<https://sos.ga.gov/index.php/elections>), or a legal professional.

Note: Information compiled by the Ten X Initiative is subject to change and will be updated as new information becomes available.

Sources of Information:

1. Georgia Secretary of State’s Election website. <https://sos.ga.gov/index.php/elections> Accessed December 1, 2020.
2. Georgia Secretary of State “Instructions for Preparing and Returning Official Absentee Ballots in Primaries and Elections”. (Form #ABI-Mo-19).
3. Indivisible. “Voting Absentee (By Mail)” Georgia Voter Guide. <https://faq.georgiavoter.guide/en/article/voting-absentee-by-mail> Accessed December 1, 2020.
4. League of Women Voters of Georgia website. <https://my.lwv.org/georgia> Accessed December 1, 2020.
5. National Conference of State Legislatures website. “Who Can Collect and Return an Absentee Ballot Other Than the Voter”. <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/vopp-table-10-who-can-collect-and-return-an-absentee-ballot-other-than-the-voter.aspx> Accessed December 1, 2020.
6. Georgia Comprehensive Rules and Regulations. Rule 183-1-14-.03 – Provisional Absentee Ballots. Casetext, Inc., San Francisco, CA.