

2016

Poll Worker Training: Absentee Ballot Canvassing Officials



Provided by the:
State Board of Election Commissioners
501 Woodlane, Suite 401N
Little Rock, AR 72201
501-682-1834
1-800-411-6996

Absentee Ballot Canvassing Officials

- ▶ This presentation is for those election officials responsible for opening, processing, and canvassing absentee ballots. This section includes topics that may not apply to every poll worker.
- ▶ Specifically we will cover:
 - Opening & processing absentee ballots
 - Evaluating the validity of absentee ballots
 - Provisional absentee ballots
 - Counting absentee ballots generally
- ▶ **Remember:** Absentee Ballot Canvassing Officials (or absentee clerks) are election officials and must take the oath of an election official.

Opening & Processing Absentee Ballots

- ▶ Conducted by election officials ***BEFORE*** the polls close on election day
- ▶ Clerk 1, while observed by another election official, opens the return (outer) envelope and verifies that the voter statement, ID (if the ballot is from a flagged voter) and the ballot (inner) envelope have been properly placed in the return envelope.
- ▶ If everything is in order:
 - Clerk 1 reads aloud the voter's name and precinct from the voter statement.
 - Clerk 2 lists in duplicate the name and precinct of the voter. The duplicated list can be a carbon copy, photo copy, or hand-written copy of the original list.
 - The election officials compare the name, address, DOB and signature on the absentee ballot application against the voter statement.
 - The election officials compare the name and address of the bearer, agent or administrator written on the absentee ballot return envelope with the information on the voter statement.
- ▶ Place the unopened inner "Ballot Only" envelope into the absentee ballot box.

Opening & Processing Absentee Ballots

- ▶ If the voter statement and/or ID (if the ballot is from a flagged voter) are **NOT** in the return envelope separate from the inner “Ballot Only” envelope:
 - Clerk 1 removes the inner “Ballot Only” envelope from the outer return envelope and hands it to Clerk 2.
 - Clerk 2 inspects the inner “Ballot Only” envelope while being observed by clerk 1 and,
 - Removes the voter statement and/or ID documents, if found there, from the inner “Ballot Only” envelope and hands them to Clerk 1.
 - Clerk 2 returns the inner “Ballot Only” envelope and any found voter statement/ID documents to Clerk 1 and Clerk 1 places the inner “Ballot Only” envelope back into the outer return envelope.
 - Clerk 1 reads aloud from the voter statement, and regular processing procedures (see previous slide) are followed.

Validity of Absentee Ballots

- ▶ A name on a voter statement that is slightly different from the way the name is stated on the absentee ballot application (John A. Doe on one; John Doe on the other, for instance) “compares” if **all** the other information (DOB, address, signature) demonstrates that it is the same person.
- ▶ Dates of birth must match.
 - 4-11-1953 does not match 11-4-1953, for instance.
- ▶ Addresses must match.
 - 102 Main Street and 201 Main Street do not match, for instance.
- ▶ Election officials are not handwriting experts. Reject a ballot on the basis that the signatures do not compare **only** if there is a distinct and easily recognizable difference between the signature on the absentee ballot application and the voter statement.
- ▶ Certain voters may be "flagged" with a "must show ID" notation on the PVR list. If voting by absentee ballot, these "flagged" voters must include in the return envelope a copy of a **current and valid** photo identification or a copy of a **current** utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck, or other government document that shows the **name and address of** the voter. If identification is not present, the ballot is considered a **provisional** ballot.
- ▶ If there is any doubt about the validity of a ballot, set it aside for the election commission to review.

Provisional Absentee Ballots

- ▶ Poll watcher challenges;
- ▶ Flagged voters; and
- ▶ Absentee ballots delivered by a bearer/agent/administrator for which the name and address of the bearer/agent/administrator written by the county clerk on the return envelope **does not match** the information contained in the voter statement.
- ▶ When an absentee ballot becomes provisional, the absentee ballot clerk should:
 - Place the absentee voter package (the return envelope and everything that is inside it) into a provisional voter envelope;
 - Record on the provisional voter envelope the reason the absentee ballot was made provisional, including the reason the ballot was challenged, if any; and
 - Set the provisional ballots aside for consideration by the election commission.

Counting Absentee Ballots

- ▶ After processing all the absentee ballots, the absentee ballot election officials shake the ballot box containing the inner “Ballot Only” envelopes thoroughly to mix the ballots.
- ▶ **When it is time to count the ballots, election officials must:**
 - Open the inner “Ballot Only” envelopes;
 - Count any write-in votes first; and
 - Count the remaining ballots by hand or electronic tabulating device at the discretion of the election commission.
- ▶ **Reject any ballot if:**
 - It comes in a bulk mailing from someone other than an administrator of a long-term care facility;
 - No voter statement is found in the return envelope or the ballot envelope;
 - If the election commission finds that the name, date of birth, address or signature on the voter statement do not compare to the corresponding information on the absentee ballot application;
 - The absentee ballot was cast by a voter who dies before the polls open on election day if it is postmarked, delivered by a bearer, agent or administrator, or, in the case of an active duty “armed services” voter, executed *after* the date the voter died;
 - If the return envelope indicates the ballot was returned by a bearer, agent or administrator but the voter has not authorized a bearer/agent/administrator on the voter statement.

And Remember:

- ▶ Absentee ballots on hand (and early votes) must be counted before the polls close on election day and the initial count reported to the Secretary of State no later than **30 minutes** after the polls close.
- ▶ Processing of absentee ballots may not begin prior to **8:30 a.m.** on election day.

