Frequently Asked Questions (Request your Mail-In Ballot)

The following section contains a list of Frequently Asked Questions. Please review the questions below before you contact DC Board of Elections (DCBOE or the Board).

Election Change Decision

Q: How long has DCBOE been considering this change in the election process?
A: The Board has been considering this change since the beginning of March 2020.

Q: What factors aside from COVID-19 were taken into consideration?
A: DCBOE has made an accommodation to allow for social distancing, but the agency has a functioning system that has successfully handled other types of challenges in the past. No additional factors were found during the agency’s risk assessment as requiring immediate action outside of our normal processes.

Q: Who were the decision makers in this process?
A: The Board Chair and Executive Director of DCBOE were the primary decision makers, with support and consultation from District of Columbia and federal advisors.

Q: What role did the Mayor's office play in facilitating this change?
A: DCBOE is an independent agency. Elected officials have an advisory and oversight role, not a decision-making role. However, the Board has reached out to the Mayor and the D.C. Council and greatly appreciates their support and shared concern for the safety of voters and election workers.

Q: What role did current elected officials have in this decision?
A: None.

Q: Will mail-in voting become permanent and replace in-person voting as a result of this crisis?
A: No, but DCBOE is prepared for its COVID-19 response measures to continue through the November election if needed. DCBOE is ready and prepared for both the June 2, 2020 Primary and the June 16, 2020 Ward 2 Special Elections.

Q: Will this change affect the November election as well?
A: DCBOE cannot say at this time. Decisions will be made in close consultation with the CDC and other experts. When the COVID-19 crisis ends, DCBOE plans to return to the traditional way voting has occurred in the past.

Q: Is DCBOE beginning to implement vote-by-mail in the District of Columbia?

A: At this time, no decision has been made to implement a vote-by-mail system for the District of Columbia.

Q: Will you expand voting sites if COVID-19 subsides?

A: No, for the District of Columbia June 2, 2020 Primary and the June 16, 2020 Ward 2 DCBOE will not change back to the regular voting system regardless of when the COVID-19 response measures are relaxed.

Q: Will you cancel the election if the COVID-19 pandemic gets worse?

A: No, DCBOE is not planning to cancel the June elections. DCBOE is committed to one of the most important American civic rights -voting- remaining available to everyone who wishes to participate in the electoral process.

Q: Have campaigns and/or candidates been informed of these changes?

A: No, as an independent agency, DCBOE does not consult with campaigns. The DCBOE’s focus is elections and to ensure that every vote is counted, and every voter and election worker is safe.

Q: Has the Board finalized a process for administering ballots?

A: The Board will administer ballots according to the normal absentee processes and procedures.

Q: What about voting or provisional ballot challenges?

A: Policies will not change. The Board will still institute the same highly-effective process used successfully in the past.

Q: How up-to-date is the DC voter database and can DCBOE ensure people will understand this new change this quickly?

A: The Board will communicate the new changes as part of a public information campaign with advertising, a press conference, social media posts and emails. The plan is designed to reach people online and offline. Residents are always encouraged to contact the Board at (202) 741-5283 if they have questions.

Q: How will the system handle the influx of requests for mail-in ballots?

A: The Board will have to modify operations to receive and process the increase of mail-in ballots.

Q: Are you using a direct mail services company to assist with processing the additional ballots?

A: No, DCBOE will handle all processing. The Board believes this is the best way to ensure the
integrity of the election.

Q: Does the Board have a plan in place to copy other cities across the nation?
A: No. All election officials work closely together, and DCBOE has been in close communication with other jurisdictions since all are facing the same challenge. Each jurisdiction will be able to support their process, according to the requirements and needs of their voters.

Mail-In/Election Process

Organization

Q: How can I request a mail-in ballot?
A: Before you can receive your mail-in ballot, you must fill out a ballot request form (application). This form is called an Absentee Ballot Request form. You can request a mail-in ballot in a variety of ways, see here. Once you have requested it, your ballot will be sent to you, you complete it, sign it and return it via mail in the pre-paid envelope provided.

Q: What happens if I forget to sign my mail-in ballot?
A: Please do not forget to sign your mail-in ballot before mailing it or dropping it off. However, if you did forget to sign, you can still "cure" your ballot. Please contact DCBOE at 202-741-5283.

Q: What is the week-of and day-of election process?
A: DCBOE offers Early Voting for the June 2, 2020 Primary Election from Friday, May 22, 2020 through Monday, June 1, 2020 at 20 early Vote Centers throughout the District.

Q: Can a mail-in ballot received by mail delivered to a Vote Center to cast a vote instead of mailing it in?
A: Yes, you can drop off any mail-in ballot at a Vote Center until Election Day, however, we would encourage voters to mail their ballots for their safety and the safety of our election workers.

Q: Is the postage pre-paid for the mail-in ballot?
A: Yes, postage is paid for your mail-in ballot. Just fill out your ballot, return it to the envelope, seal and mail.

Q: Where can I get a sticker for having voted?
A: A sticker will be included with your ballot. This year the Board will have a special Frederick Douglass design, commemorating the great abolitionist leader.

Q: When will the Voter Guide be mailed to voters in the District?
A: We expect to mail the Voter Guide at the end of April or early May 2020.
Q: Will there be a copy of the mail-in ballot request form in the Voter Guide?

A: Yes, the Voter Guide will contain two ballot request forms (or applications). The forms are called Absentee Ballot request forms. However, to assure your mail-in ballot arrives earlier, we encourage you to download a ballot request form as soon as possible. You can find it here.

Q: If the Voter Guide contains a mail-in ballot request form, why should I request it separately?

A: Requesting your mail-in ballot now will assure that you will receive your ballot as soon as you can, making sure you have enough time to mail in your ballot before the election.

A: Will the method for counting ballots change as a result of increased voting by mail?

Q: No. DCBOE has a tested, proven system that can easily absorb the changes the agency is making to protect the public and election workers while ensuring every vote is counted.

Q: In the app, the language says “Request an Absentee Ballot” instead of “Request a Mail-in Ballot” – will this be changed?

A: Because we are using the absentee ballot process, we have decided to not change the terminology for this effort. All links and forms will continue to say “Request an Absentee Ballot” / “Absentee Ballot Request Form” and the like – this is the process through which we will be conducting the mail-in ballot request process for the 2020 Primary Election on June 2, 2020 and the Ward 2 Special Election on June 16, 2020. Please be assured that even though it says “absentee,” your request will be processed accurately for the June 2020 elections.

Q: Will the Board mail a ballot to every registered voter?

A: DCBOE seriously considered the option of mailing a ballot to every registered voter, (nationally referred to as Vote-by-Mail) but decided against it, despite the enhanced safety given the spread of COVID-19. The information that was provided to the Board regarding implementation of a “Vote-by-Mail” (VBM) process suggested that the Board is far from being prepared to undertake such a challenging process with success in under two months. The information involved high level review of data and continuous conversations with other State Elections Officials, Secretaries of State, and our federal partners that are currently operating or supporting VBM as a customary practice within their jurisdictions. The intricacies associated with successfully mailing every qualified voter a ballot, are numerous, and the Board was strongly advised against attempting such a massive undertaking for the June Elections. Such practices take years to develop and even longer to perfect. While the Board is prepared to offer ballots by mail to any voter who makes the request, the Board alone is best able to complete this request, absent extensive training and preparation with a mailing house, which would undoubtedly require more than three months of work. During this uncertain time, DCBOE remains committed to enfranchising all voters, and with 35 different ballots styles and 144 voting precincts, only the Board can ensure that each voter receives their correct ballot. Also, it is clear that exclusive VBM minimizes the opportunity to provide in-person voting, which may be required to provide a reasonable accommodation for voters with disabilities.

For this reason, DCBOE encourages each voter to request their mail-in ballot as soon as possible, and to return it to DCBOE quickly once received. DCBOE is prepared to accommodate every voter who makes such a request.

DCBOE will continue to explore the requirements and examine the details that are needed to
develop a successful VBM program. It is the Board’s hope to be able to offer full scale VBM in the future and also provide an accessible voting option.

Timing and Deadlines

Q: When are the 2020 Primary Election and Ward 2 Special Election taking place?

A: The 2020 June Primary Election takes place on June 2, 2020. Twenty (20) Vote Centers will be open for 11 days (Vote Centers will be closed on Memorial Day), including the June 2, 2020 Primary Election Day. Voting via mail-in ballots is strongly encouraged but is not required.

The 2020 Ward 2 Special Election takes place on June 16, 2020. Two (2) Vote Centers will be open for 5 days including Election Day in Ward 2 to enable residents to vote. Mail-in ballots are strongly encouraged, but not required.

Q: What is the last day to request a mail-in ballot for the 2020 June elections?

A: The last day to request a mail-in ballot for the June 2020 Election is May 26, 2020. If you submitted your request by mail, your application must be post-marked on May 26, 2020.

Q: When does DCBOE need to receive my ballot for the 2020 Primary Election on June 2, 2020?

A: Mail-in ballots must be postmarked no later than Election Day and received no later than 7 days after election day in order to be counted. Be sure to mail your ballot for arrival before or on June 9, 2020.

Q: Can you track whether your absentee ballot request application has been received?

A: Unfortunately, we don’t have technology in place for tracking applications. However, DCBOE processes applications on a rolling basis, so you should request your mail-in ballot as soon as possible to assure timely delivery of your ballot.

Q: Can I still register to vote for the 2020 Primary Election on June 2, 2020 and the Ward 2 Special Election on June 16, 2020?

A: Yes, you can still register to vote online/by mobile app or by mail up to 21 days before the election in which you plan to vote. You can also register at any of our Vote Centers on or before Election Day, but you must provide proof of residence. Details can be found here.

Q: What if a registered voter requests a mail-in ballot and does not receive it by the deadline?

A: The voter can notify the Board by calling (202) 741-5283. However, early Vote Centers will be open through 8:00 pm on Election Day, so even if there is an issue with a mailed ballot, your right to vote will not be taken from you.

Q: Will the city extend any timelines to accommodate people who may miss the deadlines?
A: The Board is moving as fast as safely possible to inform the public of changes and provide them ample time to adjust how they vote in light of COVID-19 safety precautions. The deadlines and election days will not change. Please request your ballot early and mail it as soon as you are ready. You are helping the community and elections workers by doing so. It's simple, it's secure, and it helps prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Q: Can I submit my vote via email?

A: No, you must submit your mail-in ballot via mail or by dropping it off at a Vote Center. You can, however, send us an email to request your ballot by sending an email to DCabsentee@dcboe.org and attaching your mail-in ballot request form (Absentee Ballot Request form).

Q: DCBOE allows for same-day voter registration. What processes have you implemented to allow voters to register to vote up until, and the day of, the election?

A: The same process as during previous voting periods is in effect. Voters can register online at www.dcboe.org or by using the Vote 4 DC mobile app. They can also register on the same day during early voting and on Election Day. Voters should be prepared to bring acceptable proofs of identification and residency, as required in previous voting periods.

Q: Exactly which elections are affected? Primary, Special, and General Election?

A: For now, only the June 2, 2020 Primary Election and the June 16, 2020 Ward 2 Special Election are affected. At this time, the Board does not know if the November 3, 2020 General Election will be conducted in the same way.

Technical Issues

Q: There were problems with downloading the Android app. Has this been resolved?

A: Repairs to the app have been completed so that it may be used on Android or iPhone platforms. Please be patient as you wait for emailed confirmation – this may take up to 72 hours. If the app does not work on your device for any reason, please consider an alternative method for requesting your absentee ballot.

Q: Has the email confirmation issue been resolved for voters requesting a mail-in ballot through the app or emailed requests?

A: DCBOE is working to resolve this issue. We are aware that there is a delay between voters requesting a mail-in ballot request form and receiving a confirmation. Please be patient and rest assured that applications are being received and processed. If you have questions about the receipt of your application, feel free to call our office at (202) 727-2525.

Q: I requested a mail-in ballot by submitting a ballot request form (application). I never received a confirmation. Should I make a second request, or can I expect that my request was registered even if I did not receive a confirmation?

A: DCBOE is working closely with its vendors so that confirmation emails will be sent to users more quickly. If you completed the application request, please do not make a second request.
Ballots should be mailed in early to mid-May, so if you do not receive your ballot, please call (202) 741-5283 for more information.

Q: Do you expect that the final election certification will be delayed because of the increased reliance on mail-in ballot (absentee voting process)?

A: It is possible that final certification will be somewhat delayed.

**Assisting Vulnerable Populations**

Q: What is the call-center process for seniors and others without internet access to request a mail-in-ballot?

A: Anyone who needs special assistance can write us a letter with the relevant information listed [here](#) and indicate where you want the ballot mailed.

You can also call the Board at (202) 741-5283 to request an application, or you can go to a Vote Center. If you know of a person who needs additional assistance, you can complete a request for them. For this election, DCBOE has waived the signature requirement on the ballot request form. Voters only need to make sure to sign their mail-in ballot before submitting it. Voting is for everyone who is eligible, and the Board stands ready for those who might need a little extra help with registering or voting.

Q: How will the homeless and other vulnerable populations with no fixed address request a ballot?

A: DCBOE has processes in place to serve the homeless population, just as it serves anyone else who wishes to vote. Persons experiencing homelessness can simply have the ballot mailed to any fixed address that receives mail on their behalf for services such as food, shelter, or other social services.

Q: How do newly incarcerated or homeless people request a mail-in ballot?

A: The same way they always have – by phone, fax, online, or in person.

Q: Can I request a ballot for others (family members, people with disabilities, seniors, etc.)?

A: Yes. Download a ballot request form (or application) [here](#). The form is called an Absentee Ballot request form. Fill it out on the voter’s behalf and return it to DCBOE. For this election, DCBOE has waived the signature requirement for the ballot request form. Voters just need to make sure that they sign their mail-in ballot before submitting it. More details can be found [here](https://www.vote4dc.com/ApplyInstructions/Absentee).

Q: Can community organizations collect Mail-in Ballot Request forms or simplified forms/letters from voters and submit them via email or fax? Can simplified ballot request forms or letters be distributed to voters?

A: Yes, but the letter must contain name, DOB, address you want your ballot sent to, and which elections you want to vote absentee (Primary only, Primary and General, or permanent Absentee Voter.) Additional details can be found [here](#):
Q: Will you be tracking/reporting where absentee ballot requests are coming from to determine any gaps in outreach?
A: For future elections, yes.

Q: How do you plan to reach people without internet access to inform them?
A: Mass public messaging and the Vote Safe DC media campaign that extends beyond the internet will reach people who may not be online.

Vote Safety and Security

Q: Will you inform people to not lick their envelopes?
A: The ballot envelopes will come with an adhesive seal – licking is not necessary.

Q: Will election officials be protected from potential COVID-19 contact if voters do not follow the envelope protocol?
A: The Board will follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations and is in weekly contact with a special federal interagency working group of elections safety and health options.

Q: Are there any additional risks of foreign interference in the election as a result of these new measures?
A: No. In fact, from a data security perspective, voting by mail makes foreign interference more difficult.

Q: What safeguards are in place to guard against absentee ballot fraud for the June 2, 2020 Primary Election and the June 16, 2020 Ward 2 Special Election?
A: As always, DCBOE will be thorough in the review of each absentee ballot, comparing signatures to voter registration records.

Q: Are there any new processes in place to ensure election integrity?
A: The same procedures that are currently in place for no-excuse absentee voting will remain in place. DCBOE has used the same procedures since 2010 for no excuse absentee, and for more than 20 years with absentee voting generally. The process is already proven, and parameters in place prior to the COVID-19 response will continue to be used.

Q: How can I report suspected absentee ballot abuse or voter fraud?
A: All suspected voter fraud should be reported to the Office of the General Counsel by calling (202) 727-2194 or emailing ogc@dcboe.org.
Q: What safety measures will be taken at the Vote Center locations besides your COVID-19 preparations?

A: DCBOE will have Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) and security officers on call.

Q: If the city does expect high numbers of voters at the Vote Center locations, what input do other agencies like MPD have in securing and processing these locations?

A: DCBOE always has MPD and other security officers on call. The Board does not currently foresee any need for additional measures beyond the agency’s COVID-19 response.

Physical Locations

Q: How will this campaign maintain the CDC recommendation of congregating in groups no larger than 10 people?

A: While adhering to the CDC recommendation will be a challenge, DCBOE plans to have more early Vote Centers to help with social distancing, using mail-in ballots to reduce the risk of residents contracting and spreading the coronavirus by voting in person, and strict CDC-recommended cleaning protocols for voting sites.

Q: Will voting machines be spaced out?

A: Yes, machines will be spaced out.

Q: For the physical locations which remain, how were those determined and why were they chosen?

A: The Board will continue to use the early Vote Centers used in previous elections. The Board is trying to acquire additional sites that are larger in order to accommodate more voters while still practicing effective social distancing.

Q: Does DCBOE expect a large influx of voters at the limited locations and will there be extra staffing on hand to enforce anti-COVID measures?

A: This situation is uncharted territory for DCBOE as well as election officials nationwide. The Board will do a major push for using mail-in ballots but will be prepared to serve voters if they show up to vote at centers as well. However, the Board strongly advises voters to use mail-in ballots for the June 2, 2020 Primary Election and the June 16, 2020 Ward 2 Special Election. Please help the Board keep everyone safe and ensure that every vote is counted.

Q: How does the new approach compare to the regular election process? How many polling stations and early Vote Centers were there previously? How many do you have now?
A: Previously, DCBOE had 144 precincts open on election day, and 15 early Vote Centers open for a week. For the 2020 June Primary Election, the 144 precincts will remain closed, but 20 Vote Centers (5 of them newly added, larger Vote Centers) will be open for 11 days (Vote Centers will be closed on Memorial Day), including the June 2, 2020 Primary Election Day.

For the Ward 2 Special Election, 2 Vote Centers will be open for 5 days including Election Day for the June 16, 2020 Special Election.

We strongly encourage voters to request their mail-in ballots by going here and using the absentee ballot request process to vote in the June elections.

Q: Can I drop off a ballot at an early Vote Center instead of mailing it back if I run out of time?

A: While we encourage all voters to request a mail-in ballot as soon as possible to allow enough time to mail it back before the deadline, voters are able to drop off their ballots at a Vote Center instead of mailing it back.

Announcing the Change to the Public/Media

Q: Where can I find information about the new process?

A: The Board is the most reliable source of information for any changes with the June 2, 2020 Primary Election and the June 16, 2020 Ward 2 Special Election. Information will be available on www.dcboe.org at the Vote Safe DC page, on social media, as part of the Vote Safe DC media campaign, in emails for many voters, the Voter Guide, and via radio/television stations.

Q: What are you doing to combat misinformation about this process?

A: The Board plans to get in front of misinformation or disinformation and correct any story as soon as possible. If you are reading information that did not come from DCBOE, please check here to make sure you are not accidentally passing along bad information.

Q: Who is the official spokesperson for this change?

A: The Board Chair Michael Bennett made the initial announcement, and LaDawne White is the official spokesperson.

Q: What is the process for securing information or interviews from the media?

A: Please contact and coordinate with LaDawne White. Ms. White can be reached at media@dcboe.org.

Q: What is the city's process for informing residents of the change and what's the budgetary impact of this effort?

A: The Board will lead all public communication and education efforts regarding the change. The Board does not know the full budgetary impact yet. However, the Board has sufficient resources to address this issue effectively and appropriately.

Q: Is there anything the Chairman of the Board would like residents of the District of Columbia
to know?

A: DCBOE is dedicated to providing voters with elections that ensure public safety, so that everyone who is eligible and chooses to vote can do so, and to ensure that every vote is counted. DCBOE is doing everything in its power to accommodate voters in this challenging time, but also asks the public to support its efforts. Please get the word out about the Board’s #VoteSafeDC campaign, which informs voters of changes and how to cast their ballot by mail. It is simple, safe and secure – and it will help save lives.