

Be A Voter

All About the Rhode Island Presidential Primary

A guide for eligible voters



elections@sos.ri.gov



401.222.2340



vote.ri.gov



[@RISecState](https://twitter.com/RISecState)



Nellie M. Gorbea
Secretary of State



Dear Rhode Island Voter,

As your Secretary of State, it is my responsibility to make sure you are able to exercise your right to vote safely and securely. The social distancing practices that help us prevent the spread of the coronavirus/COVID-19 have forced us to change many aspects of our life but we can still be united in casting our votes.

That's why we encourage all Rhode Island voters to apply for a mail ballot to vote in the upcoming Presidential Primary. Voting by mail ballot makes it possible for you to vote without having to go to a polling place in person.

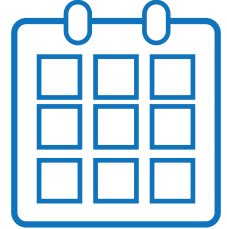
I understand that voting by mail will be different for most Rhode Islanders. This guide is meant to answer common questions you may have about the process.

Rhode Islanders are a resilient and resourceful community. During these challenging times, we can help keep each other safe and show the nation that we will safeguard our democracy through our vote.

Sincerely,

Nellie M. Gorbea

Secretary of State



Important Presidential Primary Dates

Sunday, May 3:

Voter registration deadline

Monday, May 4:

Deadline for voters to disaffiliate from a party to vote in a different party primary on June 2

Tuesday, May 19:

Last day to submit a mail ballot application

Wednesday, May 20:

Emergency mail ballot period starts

Monday, June 1:

Emergency mail ballot period ends

Tuesday, June 2:

Election Day

Mail ballots must be received by 8 p.m.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Presidential Primary and why was it moved to June 2?

The Presidential Primary is when party voters (Democrat and Republican) choose the candidate they wish to represent their party in the November general election. Voters also select the delegates for that presidential candidate to represent them at their party's national convention.

Under Rhode Island law, registered Democrat voters can only vote in the Democrat primary and Republican voters can only vote in the Republican primary. Unaffiliated voters can choose which party primary they would like to vote in, but they will remain affiliated with that party until they complete the disaffiliation process.

To ensure the safety of all Rhode Islanders during the COVID-19 pandemic, the presidential primary was moved to June 2.

Why is this election primarily vote-by-mail?

A predominantly mail ballot election will ensure that all eligible Rhode Islanders can cast a ballot in a safe and secure manner while protecting the integrity of every vote.

Is it safe to vote by mail?

Yes, voting by mail allows you to vote from the safety and comfort of your own home. Millions of voters around the country cast their ballots by mail and our military voters regularly vote by mail for every election. During the pandemic, it is also the best way for RI voters to follow social distancing best practices.

PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY

Rhode Island holds party primaries for party members to elect their presidential candidate of choice.

Voters are also asked to vote for the presidential candidate's delegates. These delegates will represent voters at their party's National Convention.

Unaffiliated voters may vote in either party's Primary*

Registered Democrats may only vote in the Democratic Primary

Registered Republicans may only vote in the Republican Primary

*To remain unaffiliated, voters must complete the disaffiliation process after voting. (See page 7 in this guide.)

The infographic shows three stylized human figures: a blue one for Democrats, a black one for unaffiliated voters, and a red one for Republicans. Arrows point from the blue figure to a blue donkey icon and from the red figure to a red elephant icon. Below these are ballot boxes with the number 4. A central black figure has arrows pointing to both the donkey and elephant icons. At the bottom, there are two sets of ballot boxes, one blue and one red, representing the two parties.

NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

Each party holds a national convention to formally select their party's presidential nominee. The presidential nominee also chooses a vice presidential running mate.

The infographic shows two stylized human figures at podiums, one blue and one red, representing the two parties. The background features faint icons of a donkey and an elephant.

GENERAL ELECTION

In November, when voters across the country vote for a President and Vice President, they are actually voting for a group of people known as electors.

The infographic shows several ballot boxes, some with the number 4, representing the general election process.

ELECTORAL COLLEGE

Each state gets a certain number of electors based on its representation in Congress.

Rhode Island has 4 electors.

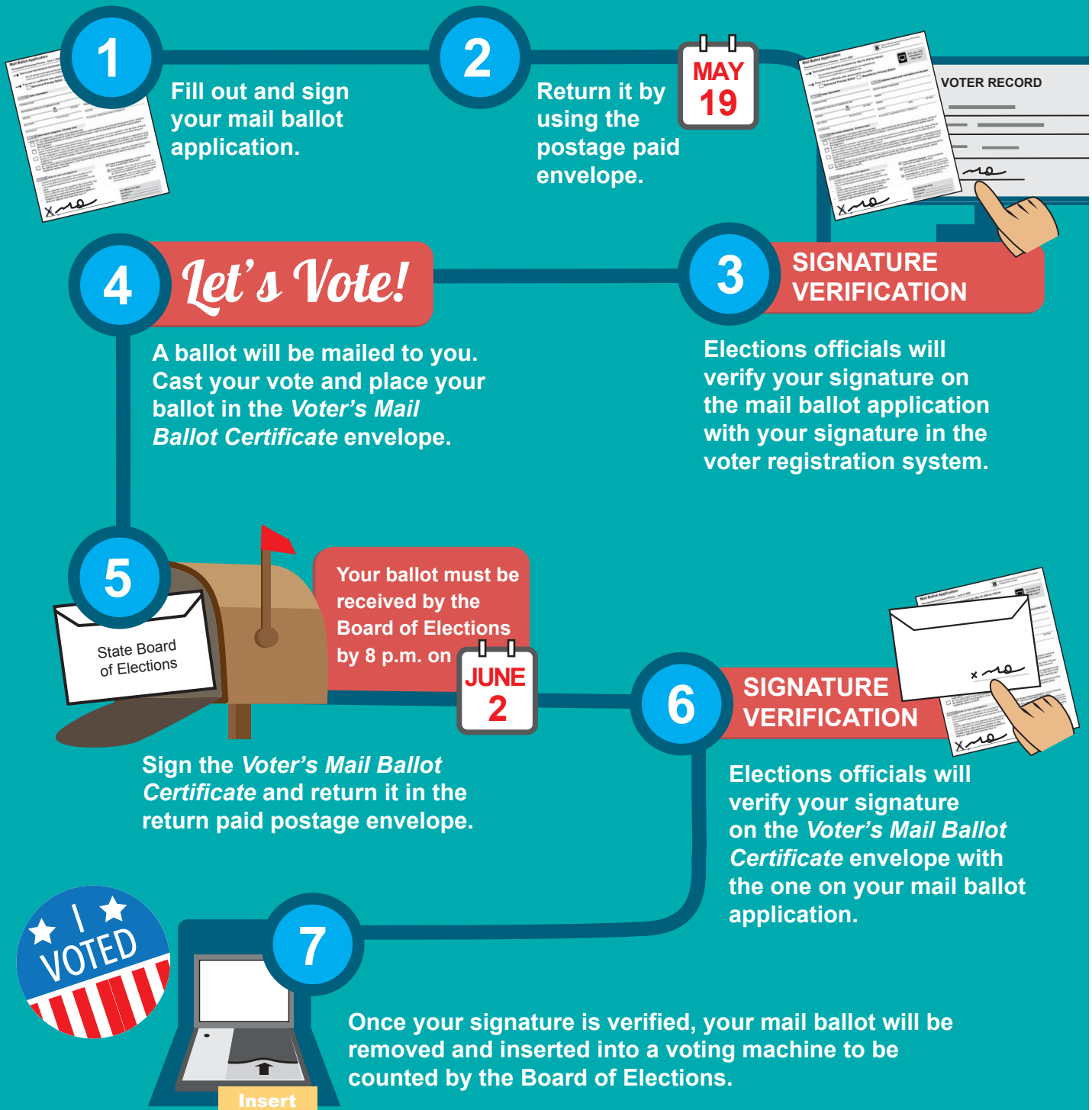
Each elector casts one vote following the general election.

538 TOTAL ELECTORAL VOTES
A CANDIDATE MUST WIN MORE THAN HALF: 270 TO WIN THE ELECTION

The infographic features a map of the United States with a grid of dots representing electoral votes. The dots are colored in blue and red, indicating the political affiliation of each state's electors. The text is overlaid on the map.

How voting by mail works for the Presidential Primary in Rhode Island

Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, the Presidential Primary on June 2, 2020 will be a predominantly mail ballot election. This illustration explains the safe and secure mail ballot process in Rhode Island.



What if I need a Spanish mail ballot application?

Registered voters in Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket will receive English and Spanish mail ballot applications per Voting Rights Act guidelines. Spanish applications are also available online at vote.ri.gov.

How do I check my voter information?

Go to vote.ri.gov! This website is Rhode Island's one-stop shop for elections information. Use it to register to vote online, change your party affiliation, access elections information, and more.

If you know someone who wants to check their information without internet access, have them call (401)222-2340.

What if I do not receive a mail ballot application?

All registered voters in Rhode Island should receive a mail ballot application by May 1. If you do not receive an application, please call our Elections Division at (401)222-2340 or email at elections@sos.ri.gov. Mail ballot applications are also available at vote.ri.gov.

I recently moved but didn't update my voter registration. Was my application sent to the wrong address?

You can go to vote.ri.gov to check your voter registration information. If your address is not accurate, you should update your voter information online or contact your local Board of Canvassers. You will receive a mail ballot application in the mail with your acknowledgement notice.

What should I do if I receive an application addressed to someone who doesn't live at my address?

Please send the application back as undeliverable. We have paid for the return postage. Just write "does not live here" and put it in your mailbox or a blue mailbox. This helps with voter roll maintenance.

Can we put multiple applications into one return envelope?

Yes.

What happens if I make a mistake filling out my mail ballot application?

You can print an application for the presidential primary online at: <https://vote.sos.ri.gov/Content/Pdfs/Calendar/PPP-MailBallot.pdf> or call our Elections Division at (401)222-2340 to have another application sent to you.

What happens after I send back the application?

Your application will be verified by your local Board of Canvassers by comparing your signature on the application with the signature on file from your voter registration. Once verified, a mail ballot will be sent to the address in Box A (unless you filled out a different mailing address in Box B).

The infographic on page 5 is a helpful tool that outlines the vote-by-mail process in Rhode Island!

When will I receive my mail ballot?

Mail ballots will begin to be mailed the week of May 11. Voted ballots must be received by the Board of Elections by Primary Day on June 2.

Voters must return their mail ballot application by May 19 to ensure they have time to receive and return their mail ballot by Primary Day on June 2.

Should I let someone else deliver my mail ballot to the Board of Elections?

Every mail ballot includes a postage paid return envelope so voters can easily return their mail ballot for free. If you don't want to mail your ballot, you can hand-deliver it to the Board of Elections or you can give it to someone you trust to return for you.

Never rely on a stranger to return your mail ballot.

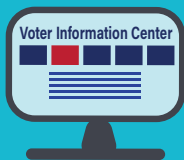
Won't you know who I vote for if I vote by mail? How is my vote kept private?

Your mail ballot must be inserted into a "Mail Ballot Certificate" envelope and then in the postage paid return envelope. Elections officials will open the postage paid return envelope and the signature on your "Mail Ballot Certificate" envelope will be matched to the signature on your mail ballot application.

Once that signature has been verified, your ballot will be removed from the certificate envelope and immediately inserted into a voting machine. This ensures your vote is kept private.

How do I disaffiliate after voting in a party's primary?

Under Rhode Island law, unaffiliated voters can choose which party primary they would like to vote in. They will remain affiliated with that party until they complete the disaffiliation process. Below are three ways to complete the process after voting by mail.*



Go to vote.ri.gov to update your voter information using the Voter Information Center.



Go to vote.ri.gov to print a voter registration form and mail it to your local Board of Canvassers.



Call your local Board of Canvassers to have a voter registration form mailed to you.

*Voters who choose to vote in person may fill out a disaffiliation form at their polling place.

I received my mail ballot. What happens if I make a mistake filling it out, or if my ballot is damaged?

Call our Elections Division at (401)222-2340 or email elections@sos.ri.gov to request a new one.

I don't want to vote by mail. Where is my polling place on June 2?

Because the June 2 Presidential Primary is being conducted primarily by mail, there will be a limited number of polling places open. The Board of Elections is working closely with local cities and towns to determine the best locations for social distancing practices. Closer to Primary Day, voters should check their polling place location using vote.ri.gov.

I mailed back my ballot. How can I check that it was received?

You can track your mail ballot at vote.ri.gov.

I applied for a mail ballot but have changed my mind and would like to vote at a polling place. Am I allowed to do so?

If you applied for a mail ballot, you should complete the process by mail. Any voter who applies for a mail ballot and attempts to vote in person will be required to vote a provisional ballot. The provisional ballot will be returned to the local Board of Canvassers where they will determine if your vote will count.

Elections officials will then determine if that voter already cast a mail ballot or if the provisional ballot should be counted. Voting more than once is a felony.

If someone loses their ballot and gets another one, how will you know they didn't vote twice?

Our office notifies the Board of Elections that a second ballot is being mailed. We also mark the envelope so the Board of Elections can track the ballot. There is a barcode on each envelope that is scanned when the ballot is returned. If someone votes twice, it will be detected and prevented when the Board of Elections scans the ballot envelope.

Similarly, it will be detected and prevented if someone votes by mail and tries to vote again at a polling place.

How do you ensure that someone doesn't vote using someone else's ballot?

Signatures are compared in two steps of the vote-by-mail process. The signature on your mail ballot application will be compared to the signature on file at your city/town hall. When you return your voted ballot, the signature on your ballot envelope will be matched to the signature on your mail ballot application.

It is a felony to fill out a mail ballot application or a mail ballot fraudulently.

Will the September and November elections be primarily vote-by-mail also?

This document only pertains to the June 2 Presidential Primary. The priority is to ensure the health and safety of Rhode Island voters as well as those who help to administer elections. The Department of State will work with the Governor, General Assembly, Board of Elections, and local election officials in consultation with the Department of Health on how to best prepare for the September and November elections.

Any registered RI voter who is unable to go to the polls on Election Day is eligible to vote by mail, and is encouraged to check vote.ri.gov for up-to-date elections information.

Contact Information

RI Department of State Elections Division

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RI Board of Elections

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