

Minnesota Elections Administration

City Clerk Manual



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Clerk Guide Introduction

This guide is designed to aid city clerks and their staff in administering city elections. Please use this guide with the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State (OSS) publication “Minnesota Election Laws.” Citations in this guide refer to Minnesota election laws (Minn. Stat. citations) or rules (M.R. citations). Full text of the Minnesota election laws and rules can be found at the [Minnesota Office of the Revisor of Statutes](#). If you are using an interactive electronic edition of this guide, you may simply click on the citations to retrieve current statute or rule.

Home-rule charter cities should refer to their city charter for specifics concerning their municipal elections.

City clerks have a key role in administering the election process that involves a sequence of “must do” tasks. For this reason, this guide is organized to generally follow the election calendar.

For a more comprehensive view of election administration in Minnesota, we refer you to the following election guides:

- County Auditor Elections Guide
- Township Clerk Election Guide
- School District Clerk Election Guide
- Election Judge Guide
- Voting Equipment Testing Guide
- Absentee Voting Administration Guide
- Mail Election Guide
- Recount Guide
- Post-Election Review Guide
- Campaign Manual
- Presidential Nomination Primary Administration Guide

These guides, training materials and other publications are updated periodically. Current editions are available at the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State [Election Guides](#) webpage.

Election Activities by Month

The complete detailed version of the 2026 Election Calendar is available at the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State [Election Calendars](https://www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/election-administration/election-calendars/) webpage (<https://www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/election-administration/election-calendars/>).

Note: In the 2026 Legislative Session, Minnesota statutes 203B.05 was amended to allow a municipality who is designated to administer absentee voting the option of managing in-person absentee voting for the entire 46 days or 18 days.

Subdivision 1. Generally.

(a) The full-time clerk of any city or town shall administer the provisions of sections [203B.04](#) to [203B.15](#) and [203B.30](#) if:

(1) the county auditor of that county has designated the clerk to administer them; or

(2) the clerk has given the county auditor of that county notice of intention to administer them.

The designation or notice must specify whether the clerk will be responsible for the administration of a ballot board as provided in section [203B.121](#) and the municipality must determine whether the municipality's office will be designated to administer voting under section 203B.081 starting on the 46th day before the election or the 18th day before the election.

If a city chooses to administer in-person absentee voting for 18 days, they should communicate with their county about how they will manage other absentee responsibilities during the full 46 days (mailed in ballots, ballot drop-offs, "take with" ballots – and ballot board operations).

January

- Send polling place designation resolutions/ordinances to county elections office as soon as possible (December 31st deadline) so changes can be made in SVRS if needed
- If polling place has changed, notice of change must be sent out. The 25-day deadline falls in January if there is a February special election scheduled.
- Elected city officials take office.
- Confirm the city's contact information with all the county auditors that fall within your city's boundaries.
- Confirm city's election schedule, odd or even year general elections? Primary possible?
- Charter items that affect elections?
- Confirm offices that are scheduled to be on that year's general ballot.
- Inform county auditors as to potential special elections, vacancies, change in election schedules, change in primary possibility, etc.
- Confirm health care facility outreach locations and contacts.
- ALM is conducted by OSS. This might affect the registration status of voters with AB ballots already distributed for a February special election.

February

February uniform election date – 2nd Tuesday in February

March

- Possibility of city meeting restrictions on statewide caucus date in even years.
- Make note of election supplies on hand and contact auditors to replenish supplies if needed.
- Review HR policies regarding hiring and appointment of election judges.
- Possibility of presidential nomination primary in presidential election year

April

- April uniform election date – 2nd Tuesday in April.
- Many election year materials, guides, calendars are updated for the year's election cycle and placed on OSS webpages (end of April, beginning of May).
- "Primary possible" candidate filing notices.

May

- May uniform election date – 2nd Tuesday in May.
- Even years, many OSS election year paper materials are delivered to Auditor's Office for distribution to local jurisdictions.
- "Primary possible" candidate filings.
- Primary ballot preparation. In odd years, counties might not assist with ballot ordering activities.
- Campaign financial reporting.
- Even years, political party election judge lists are shared with municipalities.

June

- 46-Day absentee voting for primary elections begins. UOCAVA ballots are distributed by 46 days by county auditors.
- Odd years, master lists provided by all counties for primary voting not using SVRS.
- Review emergency election plans by July 1st in state general election years.

July

- Primary AB voting continues.
- Election judge training conducted by auditor or delegated municipal clerk.
- Notices of candidate filings for jurisdictions that are not "primary possible."
- "Late" candidate filing period.

August

- Primary elections. Canvass meetings. Notices of nomination.
- Campaign financial reporting.
- Begin preparing general election ballots. In odd years, counties might not assist with ballot ordering activities.

September

- Review previous years' election items and determine if retention period is over.
- AB voting for general elections begins. UOCAVA ballots are delivered by 46 days by county auditors.

October

AB voting for general elections continues.

November

General Election. Canvass meetings. Certificates of election due 7 days after Election Day.

December

Polling place change resolutions/ordinances due by December 31st.

ELECTION ADMINISTRATOR TRAINING & CERTIFICATION

City clerks, who serve as the local election administrators, must be trained and certified before they may administer elections. They may approve designees to be trained and certified as designated officials of the clerk's office to carry out administrative statutory elections duties.

Initial Certification

- initial certification requires successful completion of five hours of training
- initial certification is good for the election cycle in which it is earned and through the following election cycle
- each election cycle begins on January 1 of an even-numbered year and ends on December 31 of an odd-numbered year

Annual certification maintenance

To maintain certification to administer elections, city clerks need to complete 4 hours of election training during each election cycle after the expiration of the initial certification. [M.R. 8240.2700, subp. 4](#)

Note: The county elections office maintains the certification documents and certification status of their jurisdictions' election clerks and designees.

Training may be provided by the county auditor or by the OSS.

If the county auditor has delegated election judge training responsibility under [Minn. Stat. 204B.25](#), the clerk is responsible for training election judges. If delegated, the clerk must complete, in addition to the initial training or maintenance training, a "train the trainer" course conducted by or approved by the OSS before each state primary election. [M.R. 8240.1100](#)

If a city clerk is designated to provide absentee voting using the statewide voter registration system (SVRS), the clerk must receive training approved by the OSS on the use of SVRS before accessing the system. The auditor will notify the OSS of the clerk's access to the system. [Minn. Stat. 203B.05, subd. 1](#)

There is emergency training provisions in statute for a city clerk who has taken office less than six months before an election. They may administer that election after completing two hours of emergency training conducted by the home county auditor or the OSS. [M.R. 8240.0100, subp. 2](#); [8240.1100](#); [8240.2700](#)

City clerk election administration training areas

- candidate filing
- campaign practices
- campaign finance
- election calendar
- ballot preparation
- election judge recruitment and duties
- notice requirements
- voting systems
- mail elections
- absentee voting
- security practices
- post-election duties

[M.R. 8240.2700, subp. 5](#)

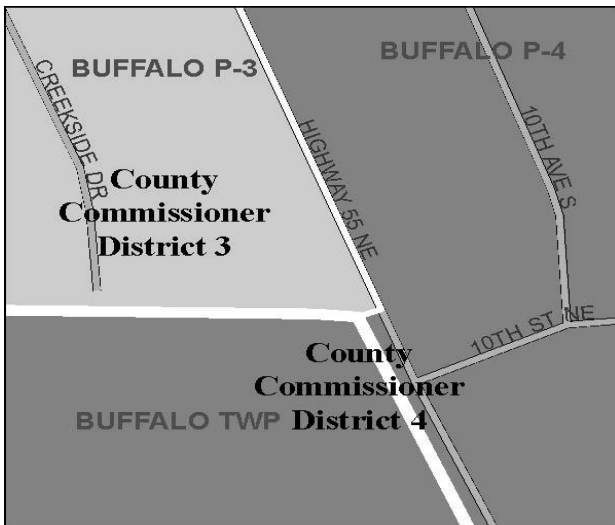
Up to four of the five training hours for initial certification, and three of the four training hours for certification maintenance, may be from other sources, subject to the approval of the home county auditor. Time spent attending, or teaching, election judge training may be counted toward a clerk's initial certification or biennial certification maintenance requirement; however, "train the trainer" sessions may not be counted toward these requirements. The clerk's county auditor will issue their election administrator certificate and maintain a record of related training. [Minn. Stat. 204B.25](#); [M.R. 8240.2700, subp. 6](#); [8240.2700, subp. 7](#)

Precincts

County election officials must know when municipal governments change precinct boundaries to ensure that voter registration records for affected voters in SVRS and the related online precinct finder are updated. The address ranges that individual voters are tied to in SVRS must be kept up to date. [Minn. Stat. 201.022](#); [M.R. 8200](#)

What Are Precincts?

Precincts are the basic geographical areas for organizing and administering elections. The graphic below shows three different sample precincts: Buffalo P-3, Buffalo P-4 and Buffalo Twp.



Precinct boundaries are established by the governing body of each municipality, and the county board in unorganized territories. City councils and township boards establish precinct boundaries as the result of various requirements in state statutes and also to suit the needs of the community. At a minimum, each municipality must be at least one precinct; additional precincts are necessary if the municipality is divided by a county, county commissioner, legislative or congressional district boundary. Within these broad requirements, municipalities may create as many or as few precincts as suits the community. Precincts are not tied to population size. [Minn. Stat. 204B.14](#)

Precinct Boundary Changes

The municipality (or county board for unorganized territories) may make precinct boundary changes at any time except:

- after January 1 of a year ending in 0 until after the legislature has been redistricted in a year ending in 1 or 2. See [Minn. Stat. 204B.14, subd. 3](#) for exceptions (a) through (d).
- no later than December 1 in the year prior to the year of the state general election. [Minn. Stat. 204B.14, subd. 4](#)
- within 10 weeks before the next election. [Minn. Stat. 204B.14, subd. 4](#)

Precinct lines must not cross city, ward, county, county commissioner, legislative or congressional district boundaries. A municipality or county may establish new election precincts lying entirely within the boundaries of any existing precinct and shall assign names to the new precincts which include the name of the former precinct. [Minn. Stat. 204B.14, subds. 2 & 3; 375.025, subd. 1](#)

The municipal clerk (or county board for unorganized territories) must provide the following notification after a boundary change occurs:

- the municipal clerk must immediately notify the county auditor and the OSS
- the municipal clerk must file a corrected base map with the county auditor and the OSS within 30 days after the boundary change was made.
- post a notice of the change for at least 56 days; the change cannot go into effect until a notice has been posted for the 56-day period.
- if polling locations change, make arrangements with the county auditor to notify the affected voters and their households of the change. [Minn. Stat. 204B.14, subd. 5](#)

The county auditor must use the corrected map filed by the municipal clerk to update the precinct finder in SVRS. The corrected map and precinct finder must be made available for inspection. If a municipality makes a change to the boundary of an election precinct (or if an annexation occurs affecting a precinct boundary) the auditor must notify each school district with territory affected by the boundary change at least 30 days before the effective date of the change. [Minn. Stat. 204B.14, subd. 5](#)

Annexations & Precinct Boundary Changes

A common trigger event for precinct boundary changes is municipal annexation, which usually goes through the [Municipal Boundary Adjustments Unit](#) of the Court of Administrative Hearings. The Municipal Boundary Adjustments staff works with property owners, local governments, and state agencies to review and facilitate municipal boundary adjustments. After an annexation has occurred affecting a precinct boundary, the city clerk must comply with the precinct boundary change requirements in [Minn. Stat. 204B.14, subd. 5](#), described above. Annexed territory may be incorporated into the existing adjacent precinct if the new precinct meets all legal requirements and the pre-annexation municipal boundary was not coterminous with a county, county commissioner, legislative or congressional district boundary. Coterminous boundaries have a boundary in common. In the graphic under “What are Precincts?,” the boundaries of the Buffalo P-3 precinct are coterminous with the boundaries between County Commissioner Districts 3 and 4.

If the pre-annexation municipal boundary was coterminous with a county, county commissioner, legislative or congressional district boundary, a new precinct must be created. If the affected territory is contiguous with the municipal boundary, in the same county, and contains 50 or fewer registered voters, the OSS may move the boundary to be coterminous. Please call the Elections Division at (651) 215-1440 or 1-877-600-8683 for more information on the process of obtaining a Boundary Adjustment Order from the OSS. [Minn. Stat. 204B.14, subd.5; 204B.146, subd. 3](#)

A change in the boundary of a precinct that has occurred as a result of a municipal boundary adjustment that is effective more than 21 days before a regularly scheduled election takes effect at the scheduled election. A change that is effective less than 21 days before a regularly scheduled election takes effect the day after the scheduled election. [Minn. Stat. 204B.14, subd. 4a](#)

Maps & Data

The map information sent to the OSS is used to update the statewide database of precinct and election district boundaries. The precinct map data is used by a variety of state agencies and is available to the public for download, find links at the OSS [Shapefiles](https://www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/data-maps/shapefiles/) webpage (https://www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/data-maps/shapefiles/).

A variety of maps are available for download and most are formatted to print on 8 ½" x 11"-sized paper. These maps can be found on pages in the [Data & Maps](https://www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/data-maps/) section of the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State's website (https://www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/data-maps/).

Printed maps are also available from OSS for the cost of production. Information on costs and a downloadable order form are found at the [Ordering Maps](https://www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/data-maps/ordering-maps/) webpage (https://www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/data-maps/ordering-maps/).

[Minn. Stat. 204B.146](#)

House Number & Street Address Changes

If a municipality administratively changes the number or name of a street address of an existing residence, the city clerk shall promptly notify the county auditor and the county auditor shall immediately update the voter records of registered voters in SVRS to reflect the change. A municipality must not make a change to the number or name of a street address of an existing residence effective during the 45 days prior to any election in a jurisdiction which includes the affected residence. [Minn. Stat. 201.11, subd. 2](#)

Polling Places

Polling places are designated by the governing body of each municipality or each county for unorganized territory.

Designation

By December 31 of each year, municipalities and counties for their unorganized territories must designate by ordinance or resolution any changes to a polling place location. The designated polling place remains the polling place for that precinct throughout the next calendar year unless:

- an emergency occurs after the deadline to designate a polling place but before the polls close on Election Day
- a polling place becomes unavailable
- a township designates one location for state/federal elections and one location for a township's standalone elections. [Minn. Stat. 204B.16, subd. 1](#); [204B.175](#)

Mailed notice

If the designated polling place has changed, the governing body shall send to every affected household a nonforwardable, mailed notice stating the location of the new polling place at least 25 days before the next election. Counties may work with local jurisdictions to fulfill this administrative requirement including providing address data or labels. Postal verification cards (PVCs) can be used to send notifications of municipal and county (unorganized territory) election precinct polling place changes. PVCs are not required; any type of notification document (i.e., letter, trifold) can be used, as long as it is sent as non-forwardable. [Minn. Stat. 204B.16, subd. 1a](#)

Posted notice

If the location of a polling place has been changed, the local official for the governing body establishing the polling place must post a notice in large print and in a conspicuous place at the closed polling place, if practical (unless, for instance, the previous building is destroyed) – stating the location of the new polling place. The local election official must also post the notice, if practical, in a location visible by voters who vote from their motor vehicles as provided in section [204C.15, subdivision 2](#). The notice must be in all languages required under section [204B.295](#) for that precinct. The notice must be posted for each special, primary, and general election until a November presidential election or redistricting has occurred. The secretary of state shall prepare a sample of this notice. [Minn. Stat. 204B.16, subd. 1a](#)

All polling places must be:

- fully accessible;
- large enough to accommodate the election activities;
- free of other, non-election, activities;
- smoke free; liquor free and not next to a liquor service area; and
- for cities in the metro area, within the precinct or within one mile of the precinct boundary or it is part of a combined polling place (see the Combined Polling Place section 4.3). [Minn. Stat. 144.414](#); [200.02, subd. 24](#); [204B.16, subd. 1](#)

Note: Governing bodies using school district buildings as polling places should contact the school district annually to verify that their security requirements have not changed.

Guidelines for Conducting Elections During Public Health Emergencies

In the event of a public health emergency, certain general practices can help ensure the safety of both election judges and voters. Election judges should maintain social distancing, frequently sanitize hands and surfaces, and wear face coverings. It's crucial to promote hygiene practices in training sessions and provide clear instructions for cleaning and sanitizing equipment within view of voters to maintain public confidence.

Polling place layouts should be adjusted to facilitate social distancing, with clear markers for entry and exit points and ample space between voting booths. Ensure that hand sanitizer and disposable face coverings are available at the entrance, and consider well-ventilated rooms for polling locations. Additionally, measures like curbside voting can accommodate voters hesitant to enter the polling place. Planning for increased curbside voting includes assigning more election judges to assist and setting up designated areas for this service.

In all these measures, it is important to follow federal, state, and county guidance to ensure compliance and safety during public health emergencies.

Emergency Designation

When an emergency occurs after the deadline to designate a polling place pursuant to [Minn. Stat. 204B.16](#) but before the polls close on Election Day, a new polling place may be designated. An emergency is any situation that prevents the safe, secure, and full operation of a polling place.

Changing Polling Place due to an Emergency

If a local election official determines that an emergency has occurred or is imminent, the local election official must procure a polling place that is as near the designated polling place as possible and that complies with the requirements of [Minn. Stat. 204B.16, subds. 4 & 5](#).

If it is not possible to locate a new polling place in the precinct, the polling place may be located outside of the precinct without regard to the distance limitations in [Minn. Stat. 204B.16, subd. 1](#). The local election official must certify to the appropriate governing body the expenses incurred because of the change. These expenses shall be paid as part of the expenses of the election.

Emergency Change of Polling Place Notice

Upon making the determination to relocate a polling place, the local election official must immediately notify the county auditor and the secretary of state. The notice must include the reason for the relocation and the reason for the location of the new polling place.

As soon as possible, the local election official must also post a notice stating the reason for the relocation and the location of the new polling place. The notice must also be posted on the website of the public body, if there is one.

The local election official must also notify the election judges and request that local media outlets publicly announce the reason for the relocation and the location of the polling place.

Emergency Change of Polling Place Notice on Election Day

On Election Day, the local election official must post a notice in large print in a conspicuous place at the polling place where the emergency occurred, if practical, stating the location of the new polling place. The local election official must also post the notice, if practical, in a location visible by voters who vote from their motor vehicles as provided in [Minn. Stat. 204C.15, subd. 2](#).

If polling place hours are extended pursuant to [Minn. Stat. 204C.05, subd. 2\(b\)](#), the posted notices required by this paragraph must include a statement that the polling place hours at the new polling place will be extended until the specified time. [Minn. Stat. 204B.175](#)

Combined Polling Place

Under certain circumstances, the governing body of a municipality may combine polling places into a single, accessible location, with a single team of election judges. A copy of the ordinance or resolution establishing a combined polling place must be filed with the county auditor within 30 days after approval by the governing body or, in the case of multiple municipalities, all governing bodies. Separate ballot boxes and separate returns are kept for each precinct involved.

A single, accessible, combined polling place may be established November 1 if a presidential nomination primary is scheduled to occur in the following year or May 1 of any other year (unless in case of an emergency) in any of the following:

- cities of the 3rd and 4th class;
- cities located in more than one county;
- contiguous precincts in the same city;
- up to four contiguous municipalities located outside the metro area and in the same county;
- noncontiguous precincts located in one or more counties subject to approval by both of the governing bodies of each municipality and the secretary of state; and
- mail election precincts, in which case the designation by the municipality or the auditor of only one centrally located polling place is required. See the Mail Voting Guide found at the OSS [Election Guides](#) webpage (www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/election-administration/election-guides/).
[Minn. Stat. 204B.45](#); [M204B.14](#)

Note: The metropolitan area is defined as Anoka, Carver, Chisago, Dakota, Hennepin, Isanti, Ramsey, Scott, Sherburne, Washington and Wright counties. [Minn. Stat. 200.02, subd. 24](#)

One precinct-count voting system and one memory unit may be used to count ballots for combined precincts. A separate summary statement must be produced for each precinct being counted by the precinct count voting system and the voted ballots must be separated and sealed by precinct. [M.R. 8230.4365](#)

A municipality withdrawing from participation in a combined polling place must do so by resolution. The resolution of withdrawal must be filed with the county auditor no later than April 1 of any year. [Minn. Stat. 204B.14, subd. 2](#)

After May 1 of any year

If a local elections official determines that an emergency situation preventing the safe, secure, and full operation of a polling place on election day has occurred or is imminent, the local elections official may combine two or more polling places for that election pursuant to this subdivision. To the extent possible, the polling places must be combined and the election conducted according to the requirements of paragraph (b), except that:

1. polling places may be combined after May 1 and until the polls close on election day;
2. any city or town, regardless of size or location, may establish a combined polling place under this paragraph;
3. the governing body is not required to adopt an ordinance or resolution to establish the combined polling place;

4. a polling place combined must be approved by the local election official of each participating municipality;
5. the local elections official must immediately notify the county auditor and the secretary of state of the combination, including the reason for the emergency combination and the location of the combined polling place. As soon as possible, the local elections official must also post a notice stating the reason for the combination and the location of the combined polling place. The notice must also be posted on the governing board's website, if one exists. The local elections official must also notify the election judges and request that local media outlets publicly announce the reason for the combination and the location of the combined polling place; and
6. on Election Day, the local elections official must post a notice in large print in a conspicuous place at the polling place where the emergency occurred, if practical (unless the building was destroyed), stating the location of the combined polling place. The local election official must also post the notice, if practical, in a location visible by voters who vote from their motor vehicles as provided in section [204C.15, subdivision 2](#). If polling place hours are extended pursuant to section [204C.05, subdivision 2](#), paragraph (b), the posted notices required by this paragraph must include a statement that the polling place hours at the combined polling place will be extended until the specified time.

The secretary of state shall provide a separate polling place roster for each precinct served by the combined polling place. In a precinct that uses electronic rosters the secretary of state shall provide separate data files for each precinct and the election official responsible for the electronic rosters may combine the files as necessary to be loaded onto one or more electronic rosters, provided that the requirements under section 201.225, subdivision 2, are met. The secretary of state and county auditor must provide guidance to the election judges serving in a combined polling place on the procedures to be used to ensure each voter is provided the correct ballot for that voter's precinct. A single set of election judges may be appointed to serve at a combined polling place. The number of election judges required must be based on the total number of persons voting at the last similar election in all precincts to be voting at the combined polling place. Separate ballot boxes must be provided for the ballots from each precinct. The results of the election must be reported separately for each precinct served by the combined polling place, except in a polling place where one of the precincts has fewer than ten registered voters, in which case the results of that precinct must be reported in the manner specified by the secretary of state. In addition to other required informational material and notices, a map showing the precincts served by the combined polling place, along with a notice that multiple ballot styles are in use, must be prominently displayed near the entrance to the combined polling place ([Minn. Stat. 204B.14, Subd. 2](#)).

Voter Notification

When municipalities change polling places, in addition to notifying the auditor to update SVRS, they must notify all affected households with at least one registered voter by a nonforwardable mailing no later than 25 days before the next election. [Minn. Stat. 204B.16, subd. 1a](#)

There are multiple ways to provide the required voter notification:

- The clerk may request that the county auditor mail a Postal Verification Card (PVC) to all households with at least one registered voter in the affected precincts.
- The clerk may request that the county auditor mail a PVC to all the voters in the affected precincts.
- The clerk may purchase household address labels from the OSS to send their own notification to all affected households with at least one registered voter.
- The clerk may purchase voter labels from the OSS to send their own notification to all affected voters.

Be sure the County Auditor enters the new polling place information into SVRS **before** PVCs are mailed out.

Ordering information is found at the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State's [Registered Voter List Requests](#) webpage (<https://www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/campaigning/registered-voter-list-requests/>).

Polling Place Accessibility

Federal and state laws require that all polling places be fully accessible and usable by elderly voters or voters with disabilities.

Minimum requirements include:

- paved parking with extra wide spaces reserved for people with disabilities;
- curb cuts or temporary ramps;
- paved main routes free of stairs or with ramp or elevator bypasses;
- entrances/doorways a minimum of 32 inches wide;
- walkways and hallways at least 36 inches wide;
- hallways free of protrusions overhanging the floor;
- handrails on all stairs;
- signs directing voters around obstructed entrances or stairs to accessible routes;
- signs outlining the assistance available to voters; and
- one or more wheelchair accessible voting booth(s) or station(s) with writing surfaces 34 inches high.

[Minn. Stat. 204B.16](#)

When using large buildings such as a school or athletic complex for a polling location, accessible parking is to be made available at the closest entrance to the polling place within the building. If the building's permanent accessible locations are at another entrance, election judges are to use the accessible parking signs found in their election supplies to set aside accessible parking spots right next to the entrance that is the shortest distance to the polling place within the building.

Minnesota election law offers some additional accommodations if the voter needs assistance with the voting materials:

- voting by absentee ballot;
- curbside voting;
- a team of election judges from different major political parties to provide assistance in the polling place;
- voters bringing someone of their choosing to assist in the polling place; and
- assistive voting equipment available at the polling place. [Minn. Stat. 203B.02](#); [204C.15](#); [204C.16](#)

For more specific details on accessibility, the visit the U.S. Department of Justice's [Americans with Disabilities Act](#) website (<https://www.ada.gov>).

Polling Place Materials & Equipment

City clerks are responsible for ensuring that all necessary supplies are delivered to the polling place for use on Election Day. This includes ballots, ballot boxes, voting equipment such as precinct optical scan ballot counter, assistive voting device, rosters, posters, flags, and boxes, envelopes and seals to secure ballots and other election materials. A more extensive example supply list is included in the Appendix of this guide. [Minn. Stat. 204B.28](#)

Voting Instructions and Sample Ballots in Languages Other than English

For state elections, City Clerks are responsible for posting translation of sample ballots and voting instructions at polling places in the three most commonly spoken non-English languages in the state: Hmong, Somali, and Spanish. These translated signs are included with the printed polling place poster packs sent to the counties.

Determination of Language Minority Districts; Required Translation & Interpretation

Translated voting instructions, sample ballots, and translation services are required in polling places if certain language thresholds are met.

- No later than 90 days before an election, the OSS or county auditor, in consultation with the state demographer, must determine the number of voting age residence in each census tract who “are members of a language minority and who lack sufficient skills in English to vote without assistance.”
- If the number of residents is three percent or more of a census tract, OR if the OSS/county auditor is provided with information that a sufficient need exists:
 - o At least two copies of translated voting instructions and sample ballots must be provided to each precinct during any regular or special state election conducted in that district.
- If the number of residents with a language need is equal to 20 percent or more of voting age individuals in a census tract OR if the OSS/county auditor is provided with information that a sufficient need exists:
 - o At least four copies of the translated materials must be provided to each precinct during any regular or special state election conducted in that district.
 - o If 10 or more voters in the precinct request translation services with the county auditor or the OSS at least 30 days before the election, then at least one interpreter must be appointed by the county auditor or city clerk to translate in the specified language in the polling place.
 - o In designated precincts, at least one sample ballot and set of instructions for each language must be posted in the polling place.
 - o The OSS works with the state demographer to determine the best approach to making these determinations and provides guidance/training to counties on determining language access levels and identifying which languages meet exceed these thresholds.
 - o Counties will receive the materials for each precinct and distribute them to their cities, if applicable.

Election Supplies/Costs

The clerk is responsible for providing all the supplies for conducting a city election. An example polling place supply list is provided in the Appendix of this guide, although specific needs may vary. Generally, the cost of these supplies is borne by the city. Costs may be prorated, however, for elections that involve other jurisdictions such as county, school district, soil and water district, or a hospital district. Local units of government can agree on any method of cost sharing that is mutually agreeable or use methods described in the OSS Cost Allocation Procedures. This document is also available at the OSS [Election Administrator Forms](https://www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/election-administration/election-administrator-forms/) webpage (<https://www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/election-administration/election-administrator-forms/>). [Minn. Stat. 204B.32, subd. 2](#)

Election Judges

Election Judge Qualifications

An individual may be an election judge if they are:

- eligible to vote in the State of Minnesota;
- able to read, write and speak English;
- appointed by the school board; and
- trained and are currently certified as an election judge. [Minn. Stat. 204B.19](#); [204B.25](#); [205A.10](#)

Individuals applying to be election judges need to declare their party affiliation, if they are affiliated with a major political party.

An exception to the requirement that all election judges be trained and certified is provided for precincts in which less than 100 people voted at the last state general election. In these precincts, having only two of the required number of election judges trained is sufficient if they are not from the same major political party. If electronic voting equipment is in use in the precinct such as in a statewide election, it is highly recommended that all election judges be trained and certified. [Minn. Stat. 204B.25, sub. 3](#)

An election judge cannot be:

- a candidate in that election (i.e., they are running for an office on a ballot used in that precinct. An individual actively campaigning as a write-in candidate is a candidate.);
- the husband, wife, parent, child, brother, sister of or domiciled with (permanently or temporarily) a candidate;
- the husband, wife, parent, child, stepchild, brother, or sister, or stepsibling, of a candidate or another judge in the same precinct; or
- a challenger.

Individuals who are related to each other (spouse; parent, including stepparent; child, including stepchild; sibling, including stepsibling) may serve as election judges in the same precinct, provided that they serve on separate shifts that do not run concurrently. [Minn. Stat. 204B.19](#)

Student Election Judge Trainees

High school students 16 and 17 years of age can be trainee election judges. Students who are 18 years of age or older can serve as regular election judges.

To serve as trainee election judges students must:

- be a United States citizen
- at least 16 years of age;
- serve in the county where or adjacent to where they reside;
- be in good academic standing; and
- have permission from their school and parents. [Minn. Stat. 204B.19, subd. 6](#); [Minn. Rule 8240.1655, subp. 3](#)

Trainee election judges can serve for all elections. They serve without party affiliation and must be paid at least 2/3 of the minimum wage. They cannot serve past 10:00 p.m. and cannot number more than 1/3 of the election judges in any one precinct. Trainee election judges, like other election judges, are not required to serve the entire day.

Because trainee judges serve without party affiliation, they cannot perform tasks that must be performed by two judges of different political parties, like curbside voting. Trainee election judges can perform any other election judge tasks and should be assigned those duties just as other election judges are assigned. Trainees do

not count toward the minimum number of election judges required to serve. [Minn. Stat. 204B.19, subd. 6](#); [Minn. Rule 8240.1655](#)

Appointing Election Judges

County Lists

Each major political party will furnish electronic lists of potential election judges to the Secretary of State's office by May 1 of even-numbered years. The OSS will in turn furnish the list to the auditor's office by May 15. County auditors must promptly forward the lists to city and town clerks. [Minn. Stat. 204B.21](#)

The party lists are used to appoint election judges to serve at elections in their jurisdictions over the next two years. If there are not enough people on the lists from your municipality or no lists have been received, the governing body may appoint other people who meet the qualifications. [Minn. Stat. 204B.21](#); [M.R. 8240.0300](#)

An individual who is appointed from a source other than the major political party list must provide to the appointing authority the individual's major political party affiliation or a statement that the individual does not affiliate with any major political party. An individual who refuses to provide the individual's major political party affiliation or a statement that the individual does not affiliate with a major political party must not be appointed as an election judge.

The major political party affiliation of an election judge or a statement that the judge does not affiliate with a major political party may be shared with other election judges assigned to the precinct at the same election, to verify compliance with party balance requirements. This data may not be disclosed or used by the election judges for any other purpose. [Minn. Stat. 204B.21](#); [M.R. 8240.0300](#)

Appointment by City Council

The clerk recommends elections judges to be appointed for the upcoming election (including health care and absentee ballot boards if applicable), and then the city council makes the appointments at least 25 days before the election. The city council may pass a resolution authorizing additional election judges within 25 days before the election, if they deem necessary. If there aren't enough people on the list, the city council may appoint other people who meet the qualifications. The city council may evaluate applicants to determine if they are capable of carrying out the duties. [Minn. Stat. 204B.21, subd. 2](#)

Note: The clerk may suggest that the council include wording to the resolution to allow the clerk substitutions, as necessary.

Note: In 1988, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service exempted jurisdictions that hire election judges from the Form I-9 employment verification procedures.

Party Balance

At least two election judges in each precinct must serve with a different major political party designation (except in school district and township elections not held in conjunction with a statewide election, and for student trainee election judges). The remaining election judges in a precinct can serve without an affiliation to a major political party. No more than half the judges in a precinct may belong to the same major political party. [Minn. Stat. 204B.19, subd. 5](#); [Minn. Stat. 204B.21, subd. 2](#); [205A.10, subd. 2](#); [205.075, subd. 4](#)

Required Number of Election Judges

A minimum of four election judges shall be appointed for each precinct in the state general election, provided that a minimum of three election judges shall be appointed for each precinct with fewer than 500 registered voters as of 14 weeks before the state primary. In all other elections, a minimum of three election judges shall be appointed for each precinct. In a combined polling place, at least one judge must be appointed from each municipality that has precincts in the combined polling place.

Student election judge trainees do not count towards the election judges appointed per precinct requirement. [Minn. Stat. 204B.22](#)

Currently, in the State of Minnesota, there are two major parties the Minnesota Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party & The Minnesota Republican Party.

Head Election Judge

When the city council appoints the election judges, they designate one of the judges as head election judge. The head election judge assigns duties among the judges and is responsible for the performance of all required duties. In addition to election judge training and certification, head election judges complete an additional hour of training every two years to be certified as head election judge. [Minn. Stat. 204B.20](#); [M.R. 8240.1750](#)

Health Care Facility Outreach Voting Election Judge

Health care facility (HCF) outreach voting must be administered during 20 days before election. The municipal clerk is responsible for the administration of this type of absentee voting for the health care facilities within their jurisdiction. Election judges who are appointed to conduct HCF outreach voting must have an additional hour of HCF-specific training in addition to their two-hour, election judge certification training.

Vacancies

If a judge does not show up at the polling place or does not perform required duties, the other judges may select a qualified person from the precinct to fill the vacancy. The clerk may also fill vacancies as they occur. [Minn. Stat. 204B.23](#)

Compensation

The city council sets the compensation for election judges, but it must be at least the state minimum hourly wage. Training and work-related travel time along with work related travel mileage must be included. Judges may volunteer their time without pay by submitting a written statement no later than 10 days before the election. [Minn. Stat. 204B.31](#)

Time-off From Work

People who would like to be election judges may take time-off from work without loss of pay. Prospective judges must give their employer at least 20 days' written notice and a certificate from the city that shows the hours the person will work and rate of pay. The employer may deduct what the person receives for being an election judge from their salary for the hours that overlap.

For example, if the employee normally works eight hours per day at \$10 per hour (8 hours X \$10=\$80), and the rate of pay established by the city for election judges is \$8 per hour for the same eight hours of service as an election judge (8 hours X \$8=\$64), the city will pay the election judge \$64 and the employer must pay the difference of \$16.

As an alternative, if the employee takes vacation for the time off, the employee can keep the salary paid by the city for election judge service. An employer can also restrict the number of persons serving to no more than 20 percent from any single work site. An employer cannot force an employee to take vacation. [Minn. Stat. 204B.195](#)

Note: Federal employers might not be required to provide time off from work. Federal employees are encouraged to discuss election judge service with a supervisor and/or human resources department to clarify the organization's policies regarding election judge service.

Election Judge Training

Certification & Administration

All election judges must successfully complete training. Student election judge trainees (16 -17-year-olds) complete the same training as all other election judges. County auditors are responsible for training election judges or delegating the responsibility to municipal clerks. If the clerk will be conducting election judge training, the clerk or a designee must attend an adult education ("train the trainer") training provided by the OSS. A review of the Train the Trainer Manual found on the OSS website for guides equates to the required OSS training. [Minn. Stat. 204B.25](#); [M.R. 8240.1100](#); [8240.1655](#)

Working through the county auditors, the OSS will provide copies of the Election Judge Guide, Election Judge Workbook, customizable slide presentation, and other training materials to municipalities. Current editions of guides and training materials are available at the [Election Judge Training](#) webpage (<https://www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/election-administration/election-judge-training/>). Clerks must arrange to have at least one Election Judge Guide available in each polling place on Election Day. The training authority, whether auditor or clerk, must develop a training plan that outlines the staff and resources assigned to training, the dates, topics to be covered, and materials to be used. The plan must be kept available for public inspection. [M.R. 8240.2000](#); [8240.2400](#)

Trainers must keep a record of the training each election judge has completed. The trainer must give a certificate to each election judge, head election judge, or health care facility absentee voting election judge who successfully completes a training course. [M.R. 8240.2100](#); [8240.2300](#)

Time spent attending, or conducting, election judge training may be counted toward a clerk's initial election administrator certification, or biennial certification maintenance requirement. City clerks (and their deputies) are strongly encouraged to take advantage of election judge training. [M.R. 8240.2700, subp. 7](#)

The training includes the following phases:

- basic training course;
 - o all election judges must complete a two-hour basic training course every two years;
- maintaining certification;
 - o a person must successfully complete the basic training course every two years to remain qualified to serve as an election judge; and
- additional training;
 - o after completing the basic training course, judges may need to complete additional training if they will be administering health care facility voting or serving as a head judge. [M.R. 8240.1300](#)

Election Judge Training Plan & Course Content

Each training authority shall prepare a training plan which shall be available for public inspection. The training plan must include:

- the names of persons conducting training;
- number of sessions planned;
- projected attendance at each session; training materials to be used;
- training methods employed; and
- an outline of the content of each election judge training course. [M.R. 8200.2400](#)

Election judge training is two hours long and covers the following topics:

- eligibility;
- training and assignment;
- new laws, rules, forms, and procedures;
- role of head judge;
- preparations on Election Day before polls open;
- poll opening activities;
- greeting and directing duties;
- roster duties;
- challenge process;
- providing assistance to voters with disabilities;
- operation of voting equipment;
- vote tabulation duties; and
- closing the polls. [Minn. Stat. 204B.25](#); [M.R. 8240.1600](#)

Additional training requirements may be adopted provided they are reasonably related to the ability to perform election judge duties in that election. [Minn. Stat. 204B.25, subd. 2](#); [M.R. 8240.1600, subp. 2](#)

Health Care Facility (HCF) Absentee Voting Election Judge Training

If the city has a health care facility (HCF), special outreach to that facility is required by any full-time clerk responsible for absentee balloting in that election. HCFs located in a particular area can be looked up at the MN Department of Health's [Health Care Provider Directory](#). In order to be certified as a HCF absentee election judge, in addition to the basic election judge training, an individual must complete another hour of training every two years.

There are slides found on the OSS [Election Judge Training](#) webpage (<https://www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/election-administration/election-judge-training/>) that can be used for HCF outreach voting election judge training.

The HCF absentee voting course shall be at least one hour long and cover the following topics:

- who is eligible to vote absentee from HCF;
- application process, including methods for providing proof of residence;
- voter registration;
- providing assistance to voters, consent for assistance;
- voting procedures;
- names and addresses of eligible facilities;
- name of contact person at each facility; and
- transporting the materials and voted ballots. [M.R. 8240.1800](#)

Head Election Judge Training

In addition to election judge training, head election judges must complete an additional hour of training. This training includes:

- duties before Election Day;
- training and assignment;
- new laws, rules, forms, and procedures;
- preparations on Election Day before polls open;
- polling place opening activities;
- use of training materials to find answers to questions on Election Day;
- helping election judges work together on Election Day;
- use of voting equipment;
- handling emergencies;
- preparing election returns; and
- returning election materials to the local election official. [M.R. 8240.1750](#)

Absentee Ballot Board Election Judge Training

In order to serve as an election judge on an absentee ballot board, individuals must be appointed as provided in [Minn. Stat. 204B.19 to 204B.22](#) and trained on the handling and processing of absentee ballots. It is recommended that this be at least a one-hour training that covers all aspects of the handling and processing of absentee ballots. An individual does not need to attend a basic election judge training course to serve on an absentee ballot board. [Minn. Stat. 203B.121](#)

PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION PRIMARY ELECTION JUDGE TRAINING

Election judges appointed to serve during the presidential nomination primary will need to have obtained election judge training within the past two years and attend an additional, specific training session shortly before the primary.

Required Notices

Candidate Filing Period Notice

City clerks must publish a notice of filing dates at least two weeks before the first day of the candidate filing period. The city shall publish a notice in the official newspaper stating the first and last dates on which affidavits may be filed in the clerk's office and the closing time for filing on the last day for filing. The clerk must post a similar notice 10 days before filing opens. The notice must list separately any office(s) where candidates can file affidavits to fill the unexpired term of a vacancy at a special election. The posted notice must also state the opening date, the closing time on the last day of the filing period, and where candidates may file affidavits of candidacy. [Minn. Stat. 205.13, subd. 2](#)

Note: The municipal clerk's office must be open for filing from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. on the last day of its filing period.

Election Notice to County Auditor

Before every municipal election the municipal clerk must provide at least 84 days' written notice to the county auditor.

The notice should include the date of the election, the offices to be voted on, and the title and language for each ballot question. With this information, auditors are able to provide accurate information to the public, coordinate absentee voting, and begin ballot layout. [Minn. Stat. 205.16, subd. 4](#); [205A.07, subd. 3](#)

At least 84 days' written notice must be given to the county auditor by the city clerk of any special election cancelled. [Minn. Stat. 205.16, subd. 4](#); [Minn. Stat. 205A.05, subd. 3](#)

For mail elections, additional notice of the mail procedures must begin at least six weeks before the election. Please refer to the Mail Voting Guide found at the OSS [Election Guides](#) webpage (<https://www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/election-administration/election-guides/>). [Minn. Stat. 204B.45, subd. 2](#)

Electronic Voting System Notice Requirements

Notice of Public Accuracy Test (PAT)

Public notice of the time and place of the Public Accuracy Test (PAT) must be given at least five days in advance by publication once in official newspapers. The PAT of the voting system must be performed within 14 days before Election Day and three days before equipment is used. [Minn. Stat. 206.83](#)

Notice to OSS of Use of New Equipment

When using new voting equipment, the clerk must submit a plan for the use of this equipment to the OSS more than 60 days before the first election where the municipality will use the new equipment. This plan must include information regarding the acquisition of sufficient facilities, computer time, and professional services. The plan must be signed and notarized before it is submitted to the OSS. The OSS shall review each plan for sufficiency. Within 20 days of receiving the plan, the OSS shall notify each reporting authority of the sufficiency or insufficiency of its plan. [Minn. Stat. 206.58](#); [206.80](#); [206.82](#)

Notice to Public of New Voting System

The governing body of a municipality must provide information to the public regarding the use of a new voting system at least 60 days prior to the election. A demonstration voting system must be provided in a public place for the six weeks immediately prior to the first election at which the new voting system will be used. [Minn. Stat. 206.58](#)

Notice to Secretary of State of Change in Voting System Plan

The clerk or auditor must notify the OSS of any changes to the plan on file prior to May 1st of each year following general election year. [Minn. Stat. 206.82](#)

Notice of Mail Election Procedures

In a city where a mail election under Minn. Stat. Chapter [204B](#) for mail ballot precincts will occur, notice of the election and procedures must be given at least 10 weeks prior to the election. When a mail election will occur, notice of the election and procedures must be given at least six weeks prior to that election. Please refer to the Mail Voting Guide found at the OSS [Election Guides](#) webpage (<https://www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/election-administration/election-guides/>). [Minn. Stat. 204B.45](#); [204B.46](#)

Public Notice of Election

In every city, except for those of the fourth class, the clerk must publish notice of the election two weeks before Election Day and again one week before Election Day. The clerk may also give 10 days' posted notice. [Minn. Stat. 205.16, subd. 1](#)

Cities of the fourth class not located within a metropolitan county, as defined in [Minn. Stat. 471.121](#) are not required to provide published notice of the election but must provide posted notice 10 days before Election Day. [Minn. Stat. 205.16, subd. 1](#)

All notices of election must include:

- the election date;
- voting hours;
- all polling place locations; and
- a list of all offices and questions on the ballot. [Minn. Stat. 205.16, subd. 1](#)

Notice of No Primary

If there are no partisan or nonpartisan offices for which nominees must be selected, the city council may decide whether a state primary will be held. If the city council decides that there will not be a primary, within 15 days of the close of filing, the clerk must post a notice of the primary cancellation and must also notify the OSS.

[Minn. Stat. 204D.03](#); [204D.07](#)

No Longer Required to Publish Sample Ballot, Only Notice

For every municipal election, the clerk must publish notice at least two weeks before the city election. This notice must include: (1) a statement that the voter's official ballot will have the names of all candidates for the voter's precinct; (2) the web address where a voter may view the voter's sample ballot based on the voter's address; (3) the county's website where a list of sample ballots for each county precinct may be viewed; (4) how a voter may obtain a free copy of a sample ballot specific to the voter's address; and (5) contact information for the appropriate local election official, including a phone number and email address.

The notice may include information about contests on the ballot; names, offices, and party affiliation, if any, of candidates; polling place locations; poll hours; and absentee voting information.

For every municipal election, the clerk must post the sample ballot at least two weeks before the election, and post a sample ballot on Election Day in each polling place. [Minn. Stat. 205.16, subds. 2 & 3](#)

Fourth class cities not located within a metropolitan county, as defined in [Minn. Stat. 473.121](#), are not required to publish the notice of sample ballot information. [Minn. Stat. 205.16, subd. 2](#)

Note: Providing an electronic sample ballot file to the OSS is optional for elections not held in conjunction with state elections. [Minn. Stat. 205A.07, subd. 2](#)

Candidate Filing

Filing Period

Candidate filing is the process through which candidates have their names placed on the ballot. City clerks are the filing officers for the city offices, meaning the clerk, or a designated deputy, administers candidate filing.

[Minn. Stat. 205.13, subd. 1](#)

Candidates must file during a two week filing period. In cities nominating candidates at a municipal primary, an affidavit of candidacy for a city office voted on in November must be filed during a two-week period that opens not more than 84 days before the primary and closes not less than 70 days before the primary. In all other cities, affidavits of candidacy must be filed during a two-week period that opens not more than 112 days before the general and closes not less than 98 days before the general. Hospital district office candidates file with the city or township clerk during the same “late filing” time period. [Minn. Stat. 447.32, subd. 4](#)

For special elections not held in conjunction with another election, candidates file affidavits of candidacy during a two-week period that opens not more than 70 days before the election and closes not less than 56 days before the election. [Minn. Stat. 205.13, subd. 1a](#)

If a candidate will be absent from the state during the filing period, the candidate may file an affidavit, and filing fee or required petition during the seven days immediately before the candidate leaves the state. The candidate must state in writing the reason for being unable to file during the normal filing period. In cities of the first class (and other cities which permit the use of a nominating petition under city charter), a nominating petition for an absent candidate may be signed during the 14 days immediately before the affidavit is filed. [Minn. Stat. 205.13, subd. 1a; 205.13, subd. 1b](#)

The clerk must publish a notice of filing dates, location and closing time at least two weeks before filing opens and must post a similar notice 10 days before filing opens. The municipal clerk’s office must be open from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. on the last day of filing. [Minn. Stat. 205.13, subd. 2](#)

Candidate Eligibility

For a city office, any person may be a candidate who is:

- eligible to vote;
- will be 21 years old on assuming office; and
- will have been a resident of the city for 30 days before the general election. [Minn. Stat. 204B.06, subd. 1](#)

Also, mayor or city council member elected or appointed after August 1, 2010 may not be a full-time permanent employee of the city. [Minn. Stat. 410.191, 412.02, subd. 1a](#)

Note: Charter cities may have additional requirements.

Filing Process

A candidate for city office must file an affidavit of candidacy with the city clerk. The steps for candidate filing are as follows:

- a candidate for an office to be voted for at the city general election must file an affidavit of candidacy with the city clerk;
- affidavits must be signed, notarized and delivered in person or otherwise to the clerk during the candidate filing period;
- in most cases, affidavits are completed, signed and signed by the authorized filing officer at the time of filing; however, some are completed before arriving. If so, affidavits must be signed, notarized and delivered in person or otherwise to the clerk during the filing period;

- absent candidates may follow the process listed in;
- alternatively, five or more voters can “draft” a candidate by filing an application on behalf of an eligible voter in the city with the city clerk;
 - o this candidate’s name is placed on the ballot after the proper filing fee is received;
- the proper filing fee must be paid or a petition in place of a filing fee must be filed at the time of filing;
- candidate filings are not complete unless accompanied by the filing fee or petition in place of the filing fee;
 - o filing fees are nonrefundable once accepted by the filing officer;
 - o filing fees are \$20 in first class cities, \$5 in second or third class cities, and \$2 in fourth class cities;
 - o a home rule charter or statutory city may adopt, by ordinance, a filing fee of a different amount not to exceed the following:
 - in first class cities, \$80, in second and third class cities, \$40, and in fourth class cities, \$15
 - o A home rule charter city that sets filing fees by authority provided in city charter is not subject to the fee limits of this section
- the candidate may file in place of the filing fee a petition by eligible voters having either 500 or a number equal to 5% of the total number of persons who voted in the last general election when the office was on the ballot (whichever is less);
- affidavits of candidacy must be numbered in the order they are received by the filing officer;
- when the similarity of both the first and last names of two more candidates for the same office and election may cause confusion, candidates may provide up to three additional words to be printed to distinguish between the two;
- the name placed on the ballot is the candidate’s true name or the name by which the candidate is commonly and generally known in the community;
- confirm the capitalization of a candidate’s name;
- any individual who has an issue with the names placed on a ballot or with the candidate filing process may file an error and omissions petition in accordance with [Minn. Stat. 204B.44](#); and
- Charter cities may have additional requirements. [Minn. Stat. 204B.10](#); [204B.11, subd. 2\(d\)](#); [205.13, subd. 1](#); [205.13, subd. 3](#); [205.13, subd. 4](#)

Because candidate names will now appear on ballots with upper and lower case lettering, it is important to make sure that the candidate has listed exactly how the name should be spelled and capitalized. It is suggested to make a copy of the affidavit and go over the spelling and capitalization of the name with the candidate, underlining the exact letters that should be capitalized, before the candidate leaves.

Withdrawal

A candidate may withdraw from participation in the election by filing an affidavit of withdrawal with the filing officer. The affidavit shall request that the official withdraw the candidate’s name from the ballot. The candidate’s filing fee is non-refundable. A candidate may stop campaigning but their name will remain on the ballot if they fail to submit an affidavit of withdrawal during the withdrawal period. City candidates have until 5:00 p.m. two days after the close of filing to withdraw.

Information about [filing for city offices](#) is on the OSS website. That page also includes a link to the Affidavit of Withdrawal form. [Minn. Stat. 205.13, subd. 6](#)

Non-Partisan Vacancy in Nomination

A non-partisan vacancy in nomination exists when:

- a candidate for any non-partisan office, for which one or two candidates filed, withdraws as provided in [Minn. Stat. 204B.12, subd. 1](#); or
- a candidate for any nonjudicial nonpartisan office, for which only one or two candidates filed or who was nominated at a primary, dies on or before the 79th day before the date of the general election.

A non-partisan vacancy in nomination may be filled by:

- filing an affidavit of candidacy and paying a filing fee, or
- by filing an affidavit of candidacy and filing a petition in place of a filing fee, in the manner provided in [Minn. Stat. 204B.06](#), [204B.09](#) and [204B.11](#).

All documents and fees required must be filed within five days after the non-partisan vacancy in nomination occurs. There must be a two-day period for withdrawal of candidates after the last day for filing.

If the non-partisan vacancy in nomination resulted from a withdrawal during the withdrawal period held on the 68th to 69th day before the primary, and if, at the end of the withdrawal period to fill the vacancy, there are more than two candidates, the candidates' names must appear on the primary ballot. In all other cases, the candidates' names must appear on the general election ballot. [Minn. Stat. 204B.131](#)

When No One Files for an Office

If no one files for an office, the general election ballot will reflect only write-in spots for candidates. If it is a "vote for one" office, there will only be one write-in space. If it is a "multi-seat" office (i.e., vote for up to 3), the number of write-in spaces matches the number of candidates to be voted.

Campaign Practice & Financial Reporting (Campaign Manual)

As candidates file, the clerk must give them a copy of the Minnesota Campaign Manual, available the OSS [Election Guide](#) webpage (<https://www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/election-administration/election-guides/>). This Manual explains campaign financial reporting requirements, found in [Minn. Stat. 211A](#), and campaign practices requirements, found in [Minn. Stat. 211B](#), that apply to municipal candidates. [Minn. Stat. 211B.14](#)

Although the clerk does not interpret or enforce campaign finance laws, the clerk must:

- give a copy of the Minnesota Campaign Manual, the financial reporting form, and the Certificate of Filing form to each candidate at the time of filing;
- receive financial reports from candidates and committees according to campaign finance report filing schedule, described in the Minnesota Campaign Manual; with the clerk's permission, these forms may be filed electronically;
- the campaign report filing schedule is triggered after a committee or candidate files an initial campaign finance report, due within 14 days after they receive contributions or make expenditures in excess of \$750;
- charter cities may have additional campaign finance requirements;
- collect Certification of Filing forms from all candidates and committees within seven days after the election;
- have financial reports available for public inspection;
- post the financial reports on web site for four years if a web site is maintained as soon as received, but not later than 30 days after receipt;
- provide the Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board with the link to the financial reports section of their web site;

- if a candidate or committee has filed an initial report, but fails to file a subsequent campaign finance report when due, notify the candidate or committee of the failure; if no reply is received within 10 days after notification is mailed, file a complaint before the Minnesota Court of Administrative Hearings; and
- must issue Certificates of Election only to winning candidates who have filed Certification of Filing forms. [Minn. Stat. 13.601, subd. 1](#); [211A.02](#); [211A.05](#); [211B.14](#)

For information on campaign practices for state office candidates or constitutional amendment campaigns, contact the [Minnesota Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board](#) at (651) 296-5148.

Campaign Complaints

Complaints of campaign finance or practice violations ([Minn. Stat. 211A](#) or [211B](#)) are heard by the Court of Administrative Hearings (CAH). To initiate a complaint, a completed form must be filed with the CAH; the matter is then subject to review and possible hearing. For further information on complaints and penalties, see the CAH's [Fair Campaign Practices](#) webpage (<https://mn.gov/CAH/self-help/administrative-law-overview/fair-campaign.jsp>). [Minn. Stat. 211B.32](#)

In addition to receiving financial reports required under [Minn. Stat. 211.02](#), clerks also have to notify a candidate or committee that has filed an initial report of the failure to file a subsequent report. If a report is not filed within 10 days after the notification is mailed, the filing officer must file a complaint with the CAH. [Minn. Stat. 211A.05, subd. 2](#); [211A.32](#)

Clerks are not responsible for interpreting or enforcing campaign finance or practices laws but have the following administrative duties for local candidates who report under [Minn. Stat. 211A](#):

- provide report forms to candidates or committees. The forms are printed by the OSS and distributed through the auditors and are available at the OSS [Campaign Filing Packet](#) webpage (<https://www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/become-a-candidate/campaign-filing-packet/>)
- receive financial reports from candidates and committees (They may be filed electronically);
- notify a candidate or committee that has filed an initial report of the failure to file a subsequent report on the date it is due;
- file a complaint with the CAH of any candidates or committees who appear to have collected or spent more than \$750 but did not file Campaign Financial Reports and/or a Certification of Filing form;
- hold financial reports available for public inspection;
- collect Certification of Filing forms from all candidates and committees within seven days after the election, available at the OSS [Campaign Filing Packet](#) webpage (<https://www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/election-administration/campaign-filing-packet/>); and
- issue Certificates of Election only to winning candidates who have filed Certification of Filing forms. [Minn. Stat. 13.60](#); [211A.02](#); [211A.05](#); [211B.32](#)

Statement of Economic Interest

Candidates in a metropolitan governmental unit, as defined in [Minn. Stat. 10A.01, subd. 24](#), are required to file a statement of economic interest within 14 days of filing an affidavit of candidacy or a petition to appear on the ballot. A supplemental statement of economic interest must be filed on April 15 of each year after this initial filing if the individual remains in office and the information on a previously filed statement has changed. Any city clerk collecting statements of economic interest must maintain them as public data. [Minn. Stat. 10A.01](#); [10A.09](#)

Ballot Preparation

Ballot Printing Arrangements

Contact the county election official to confirm the specifics of responsibilities for printing ballots for the city. During state election years the county auditor will instruct on how ballot preparation will be coordinated with the city.

The official administering the election must identify a ballot printer as early as possible and begin working with the printer well before filing closes. Immediately after the filing period closes and the withdrawal period has passed, the official administering the election needs to finalize the ballot preparation. The ballots must be prepared in time to have a supply for every precinct available to cover absentee voting at least 46 days before all elections. [Minn. Stat. 203B.081; 204B.35](#)

The official charged with preparation of the ballots prepares instructions for the printer in writing addressing candidate name rotation, if any, and ballot layout. These instructions must be approved by the legal advisor of the official before delivery to the printer. If the printing contract will exceed \$1000, the election official may request the printer first furnish a bond, letter or credit, or certified check conditioned on the ballot being prepared in accordance with the furnished instructions and Minnesota election law. [Minn. Stat. 204D.04, subd. 2](#)

Each precinct must be provided with at least 100 ballots for every 85 individuals who voted in that precinct at the previous election for the same office or on similar questions, or in an amount at least 10 percent greater than the number of votes which are reasonably expected to be cast in that precinct, whichever supply of ballots is greater. The auditor or clerk must certify the number of ballots being provided to each precinct, without opening any of the packages of ballots, and provide this number to the election judges for inclusion on the summary statement. [Minn. Stat. 204B.28, subd. 3; 204B.29 sub. 1](#)

When determining ballot quantities, also consider:

- referring to turnout statistics of previous similar elections;
- noting campaign activity and public interest which may increase voter turnout. [Minn. Stat. 204B.29, subd. 1](#)

A major decision to resolve well in advance is whether to use an electronic voting system or traditional hand counted ballots. Even when normally using an electronic voting system for state elections, it may be more convenient and cost-effective to hand count the ballots for low turnout elections. Even with hand counting, ballots must be in optical scan format to accommodate use of the assistive voting devices.

Ballot Layout

By May 1 of state election years, the OSS will distribute examples of the ballots to auditors and on the [Example Ballots](#) webpage (<https://www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/election-administration/example-ballots/>). The county auditor distributes copies of the example ballots to the clerks in municipalities holding elections that year. [M.R. 8250.1810, subp. 18; Minn. Stat. 204D.09, subd. 1](#)

Optical Scan Ballot Layout

Ballots must be prepared by the county auditor according to the rules for format of optical scan systems. The ballots must be packaged for each precinct in groups of 25, 50 or 100. [M.R. 8250.1810](#)

Proofing Tips

- Check ballot header language for accuracy.
- Check that the layout matches the example ballot.
- Check the headings on the ballot.
- Check order of offices on ballot.
- Check the vote for # on each office.
- Check to make sure candidates are in proper order for each race.
- Check that candidate names are spelled correctly.
- Check capitalization of candidate names.
- Check these items for both the front and back sides of the ballots.

Note: If it is determined that the candidate's name provided on the affidavit of candidacy should not appear on the ballot because it gives the candidate an advantage over an opponent, including words descriptive of the candidate's occupation, qualifications, opinions or principles, then the candidate should be notified that their name will appear on the ballot in a different form than was provided in the affidavit of candidacy. [Minn. Stat. 204B.06](#); [204B.35 subd. 2](#)

Court Remedy for Errors & Omissions

Any person may petition a court to seek to correct any error, omission or wrongful act that they feel has occurred or is about to occur in the election process or ballot preparation. This includes mistakes in preparing or printing ballots, errors or omissions in printing names or questions, or any error or wrongful act of any individual charged with any duty concerning an election.

The petitioner must state the problem and the proposed solution in the petition. In matters concerning election for state or federal office the petition must be filed with any judge of the state Supreme Court. In matters concerning election for county, municipal, or school district office the petition must be filed with any judge of the district court in the county where the election was held. The court will hold an expedited hearing and issue its findings and order as soon as possible after. Failure to obey the order is contempt of court. [Minn. Stat. 204B.44](#)

Ballot Questions

What Are Ballot Questions?

The city may decide to place certain questions on the ballot that the voters are authorized or required under the law to vote on. Some of the more common questions include:

- Adoption or amendment of a city charter.
- Changing options for organizing governing body.
- Liquor licensing or Sunday liquor sales.
- Issuance of city bonds.
- Other subjects authorized by the city charter. [Minn. Stat. 275.60](#); [340A.416](#); [416](#); [340A.504, subd 3\(c\)](#)

Petitions

Special elections may be held in a city on a question on which the voters are authorized by law to pass judgment. In these cases, a special election may be ordered by a city council by its own motion or upon receipt of a petition signed by a number of voters equal to 20 percent of the voters at the last city general election. A question is carried only with a majority in its favor required by law or charter. The same question must not have been submitted to voters within the previous six months. Specific directions for all petitions used in elections are provided in [M.R. 8205](#). This rule addresses petition form, circulation, signing, filing and verification. [Minn. Stat. 205.10](#); [M.R. 8205](#)

Advisory Elections

Occasionally there will be calls for an “advisory” election on a given topic. The Attorney General has previously ruled that unless authorized by a specific law, advisory elections would violate Minnesota law. [Minn. Stat. 205.10, subd. 1](#)

A specific exception is provided for cities when the council has sole authority to decide whether the city should join a special district or similar independent governmental body having taxing powers within the city. In these cases, the council has authority to submit to the voters at a regular or special election the question of whether the municipality should join such a body. The results of the election on the question so submitted shall be advisory to the council only and shall have no binding effect upon its decision to join or withdraw from the special district or similar independent body. [Minn. Stat. 412.221, subd. 33](#)

An additional specific exception is a special election held by a city to authorize a city charter. [Minn. Stat. 205.10 subd 1](#)

Bond & Levy Referendums

A bond referendum is a referendum held to determine if the jurisdiction should be authorized to sell bonds to obtain the funds to finance a project, such as a new building. For all bond or levy referendums that will have the effect of raising property taxes, the ballot must include the notice:

BY VOTING “YES” ON THIS BALLOT QUESTION, YOU ARE VOTING FOR A PROPERTY TAX INCREASE. [Minn. Stat. 275.60](#)

A levy referendum is a referendum held to determine if the jurisdiction should be authorized to levy additional property taxes to fund general operational expenses. Levy referendum ballots may also require notice of the maximum amount of the increased levy as a percentage of market value and the amount that will be raised by the new referendum tax rate in the first year it is to be levied. [Minn. Stat. 275.61](#)

Voting Systems

What Are Voting Systems?

All voting systems must meet standards issued by the federal government and be certified by the OSS before they can be used in Minnesota.

Optical Scan

Optical scan voting systems are electronic ballot counters that use scanners for reading the marks voters make on the ballots similar to the process used for standardized testing. They can instantly produce vote totals, even on the most complex ballots. Other than paper ballots, current state law permits the use of only optical scan type voting systems. [Minn. Stat. 206.57, subd. 6](#)

Optical scan systems are available in two configurations:

- "precinct ballot counters" that sit on top of the ballot box in the polling place and that scan the ballot as the voter places the ballot into the ballot box.
- "central count" systems where ballots are collected from several precincts and brought to the scanner for tabulation. [Minn. Stat. 206.56, subd. 8; 206.57](#)

The following are certified precinct optical scan voting systems in the State of Minnesota:



DS200



VerityScan



ImageCast Evolution

Assistive Voting Device

Every precinct must have at least one assistive voting device. The assistive voting device allows voters with disabilities to mark their ballot independently and privately but does not count the ballot. Local jurisdictions must make assistive voting devices purchased with HAVA funds available to other jurisdictions holding stand-alone elections. The jurisdictions providing the equipment cannot charge the jurisdiction using the equipment a rental fee, but may require reimbursement for any actual direct cost that results from the equipment's use and prorated indirect cost of maintaining and storing the equipment. Reimbursements for any cost paid for with HAVA funds must be deposited in the counties HAVA account. [Minn. Stat. 204B.18, subd. 1](#)

The following are certified assistive voting devices in the State of Minnesota:



AutoMARK



ImageCast Evolution



Verity TouchWriter



OmniBallot

Programming & Ballot Layout

Voting systems require specific programming for each election, and the programming must be carefully coordinated with ballot printing. Some jurisdictions opt to do their own programming, but the vast majority contract for this service. Either way, timeliness is critical. As soon as possible, jurisdictions must provide the programmer with complete ballot information including office order, candidate names, base rotation, ballot questions, and the precinct registration counts used in the rotation algorithm. The deadline for providing the candidate names is within five days after the withdrawal period closes. If all candidates are entered into ERS, the OSS works to electronically transfer the candidate information to the vendor. Share candidate name pronunciation instructions with the auditor to enter into ERS for ballot vendors.

The vendor or programmer, in turn, must provide the completed programming to the jurisdiction at least 21 days prior to the election. [M.R. 8220.0850](#)

Testing

State statutes and rules require jurisdictions to complete two rounds of testing of optical scan equipment and assistive voting equipment and programming prior to Election Day. Contact the county election official to confirm the specific responsibilities in the testing process. Preliminary testing is extensive and should be performed as soon as possible. The second round of testing is a Public Accuracy Test which occurs within 14 days of the election. Each jurisdiction that operates electronic voting equipment, even if only an assistive voting device is employed, must hold a PAT, giving at least five days' published and posted notice of the time and place of the test. At least two election judges from different parties must be on hand to witness the test. If the jurisdiction has three or fewer precincts, all precincts must be tested. If more precincts exist, test at least three including one from each congressional, legislative, county commissioner, school district and ward. The public is welcome to watch the test. See the Equipment Testing Guide for more details on conducting testing available at the OSS [Elections Guide](#) webpage (<https://www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/election-administration/election-guides/>). [Minn. Stat. 206.83](#); [M.R. 8220.1550](#)

Absentee Voting

There are two distinct absentee voting processes:

- the Minnesota process (i.e. regular), found in [Minn. Stat. 203B.04 to 203B.15](#); and
- the process for military and overseas voters (those covered by UOCAVA – the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act), found under [Minn. Stat. 203B.16 to 203B.27](#).

The county auditor administers UOCAVA voting for all elections. The jurisdiction responsible for administration of the regular (Minnesota) process varies depending on the type of election.

The following section provides a brief introduction to absentee voting administration. Complete information can be found in the Absentee Voting Administration Guide available on the OSS [Election Guides](#) webpage (<https://www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/election-administration/election-guides/>

Who – Administers Regular Absentee Voting

State Elections

The county auditor administers regular absentee voting for county, state and federal elections. They may also designate regular AB administration to a full-time municipal clerk. A full-time clerk must accept the designation. If the auditor has not designated, a full-time clerk may give the auditor notice that the municipality will administer regular absentee voting. (A clerk of a city that is located in more than one county may only administer absentee voting if the clerk has been designated by the county auditor or has provided notice to each of the county auditors that the city will administer absentee voting.) In order to be designated, the municipality must have the technical capacity to access SVRS and must first receive SVRS training from the OSS. The designation by the auditor or notice provided by the clerk must specify whether the clerk will be responsible for the administration of a ballot board as provided in [Minn. Stat. 203B.121](#), [Minn. Stat. 203B.05, subd. 1](#); [203B.22](#)

Standalone City Elections

When a city election is held on a different day than a state election, the city is responsible for administering absentee voting for its election (with the exception of UOCAVA absentees). However, if the city asks the county, and the county agrees, the county may administer all absentee voting on their behalf.

Special Elections

County, municipal and school district special elections must be held on one of five uniform election dates in a given year. So, it is possible that overlapping jurisdictions may hold special elections on the same day. (For example, city and school district holding concurrent special elections.)

Voters must not be required to go to more than one location in order to cast an absentee ballot. So, if concurrent special elections occur, absentee voting will be administered by jurisdiction ranked highest in the election hierarchy.

Note: Election Hierarchy Top to Bottom: Federal/State, County, Municipal, School District.

For example, if a county and a municipality are conducting an election on the same day, the auditor administers absentee voting for the other jurisdictions whose residents also reside in the county. If a city and a school are conducting an election on the same day, the city clerk will administer absentee voting for the school district's residents who also reside in the city. The school district would administer absentees for all other voters.

Where & When – Absentee Voting Locations & the Absentee Time Period

At county/state elections, an eligible voter may vote by absentee ballot in the office of the county auditor and at any other absentee polling place designated by the county auditor. The auditor must designate absentee polling places at least 14 weeks before the election at which they will be used. These AB polling places must include at least one voting booth and an assistive voting device. [Minn. Stat. 203B.081, subds. 1 & 2](#)

For standalone city elections, the office of the clerk and any other locations designated by the clerk serve as the absentee voting location(s).

The absentee time period is for 46 days before the election. Regardless of the jurisdiction, or whether it is a regularly-scheduled or special election, all absentee voting laws, processes and procedures must be followed. Clerks administering absentee voting are subject to the same polling place prohibitions that election judges enforce on Election Day. During absentee voting, the place of business is the voter's polling place.

In-person absentee voting locations must be open during the entire absentee voting period. Additional In-person absentee voting locations that only provide for "early voting" (the alternate procedure described in [Minn. Stat. 203B.081](#)) during the 18 days preceding an election, are only required to be open for the eighteen days preceding Election Day.

Early Voting

"Early voting" is the statutory in-person absentee voting period 18 days before Election Day for all federal, state, and county elections. Early voting must be offered during all regular office hours, as well as the additional days/hours required by [Minn. Stat. 203B.085](#).

Early voting is also required for municipalities designated to administer absentee voting under [Minn. Stat. 203B.085](#) for their standalone municipal elections.

Early voting official ("EV official") is a county auditor, city clerk, deputy of the auditor or clerk, or an election judge. The early voting is outline in a separate Early Voting Manual created by the OSS and the procedure is defined in [Minn. Stat. 203B.30, subd. 2](#). The ballot processing procedures for early voting are defined in [Minn. Stat. 203B.30, subd. 3](#).

Voting Hours

Absentee voting should be available during the office's regular business hours throughout the absentee period. For certain jurisdictions, additional extended hours are required:

- Saturday before Election: Counties, cities and townships must be open from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
 - o Exception: For town general elections held in March, the clerk's office must be open from 10:00 a.m. to 12 noon. Note: If the county is administering ABs for this election, the county must remain open until 3:00 p.m.
- Before the general election in a state election year, counties, cities and townships must be open from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. 2 Saturdays before Election Day and the Sunday immediately preceding Election Day.
- Day immediately before Election Day: Counties, cities and townships must remain open until 5:00 p.m.
 - o Exception: If 'day immediately before' is a Saturday or Sunday, counties and municipalities do not need to be open until 5:00 p.m.

Note: There is not a Minnesota Statutes or Rules requirement to publish or post the office's absentee voting hours. However, many offices will do so as a public service best practice.

How – Ballots & Ballot Boards

Anticipating Absentee Voter Counts

Use your past experience in similar elections and feedback from county and/or municipal election administrators to estimate the number of anticipated absentee voters. Adjust for health care facilities within your jurisdiction and for municipal growth. Some counties have formulas to use for this process.

Ballot Supply Has Not Arrived

Ballots must be available for absentee voters at least 46 days before the election. If the vendor preparing your ballot is late in providing them, absentee voting must still begin as scheduled. You must accommodate absentee voters under emergency procedures using substitute ballots. (This situation is similar to running out of printed ballots at the polling place on Election Day.) [Minn. Stat. 204B.35, subd. 4](#); [204B.39](#)

Substitute ballots are prepared to look like the official ballots as much as possible. The words “Substitute” must be printed in brackets directly above the words “Official Ballot” on the ballots. When delivered, these ballots must be accompanied by an initialed affidavit from the election official who prepared them that lists the reason why the official ballots were not ready. [Minn. Stat. 204B.39](#)

Issuing Ballots

An application is required before an absentee ballot can be issued. Any eligible voter may apply for an absentee ballot using the Minnesota process. If an applicant is not registered, they will register as part of the absentee voting process. [Minn. Stat. 203B.02](#); [203B.04, subds. 1 & 4](#)

Note: Minnesota law does not provide for a continuous absentee ballot request. A voter who has voted AB for an election of the same type in the past must submit a new absentee ballot application form for the current election.

Ballot Boards

The governing body of the jurisdiction administering regular absentee voting must authorize an absentee ballot board by ordinance or resolution. The absentee ballot board is a special board of election judges or election administrators that process and count returned regular absentee ballots. The county auditor must establish a UOCAVA ballot board to process returned UOCAVA absentees.

Minnesota law does not provide a defined time period for establishing a ballot board. However, as a regular AB board must meet at regular intervals shortly after the receipt of returned absentee ballots and a UOCAVA board must meet immediately after ballots are returned, it is good practice to have the board established by the start of the elections absentee period. [Minn. Stat. 203B.121, subd. 1](#)

The absentee ballot board must consist of a sufficient number of election judges trained in the handling and processing of absentee ballots. The board may include deputy city clerks who have received training on AB processing. Election Judges performing ballot board duties must be of different major political parties; deputy clerks are exempt from the party balance requirement. [Minn. Stat. 203B.121, subd. 1](#)

Notes:

A sample resolution establishing a ballot board is available in the Absentee Voting Administration Guide.

When a city clerk is designated to administer regular absentee voting for county/state/federal elections, the designation must specify whether the clerk is responsible for the administration of the ballot board.

Temporary Absentee Voting Locations

Counties or authorized municipal clerks are now permitted to designate additional temporary locations for voting before Election Day. These temporary locations can include different dates and hours than those required by *Minn. Stat. 203B.085*. Additional temporary locations must be designated at least 47 days before the election, and notice must be provided to OSS to include the dates, times, and locations.

County auditors or municipal clerks who are authorized to administer absentee voting may establish temporary in-person absentee voting locations. Temporary locations allow for flexibility in scheduling a specific date and time that the temporary location will operate, but certain requirements must still be met.

When Is It Required to Established a Temporary Absentee Voting Location?

In certain circumstances, a county or municipality may be required to establish a temporary absentee voting location upon request from an eligible entity.

Post-secondary temporary absentee voting locations

If requested by an eligible post-secondary institution or its student government, a temporary absentee voting location must be established for the state general election or odd-year city general election. The requirement does not apply for any other elections.

To be eligible, the post-secondary institution must:

- Provide on-campus housing to 100 or more students; and
- Submit a request for the temporary absentee voting location to the county auditor no later than May 31. A request is only valid for that specific election (state general election – November of the even year, or the city general election in November of the odd year).

Temporary absentee locations requested by post-secondary institutions must be:

- Mutually agreed upon between the institution (or student government) and the county auditor
- Open to the public
- On campus or within one-half mile and easily accessible to students
- Established for at least one day
- Compliant with state and federal laws

Election officials should work with the institution to ensure that the site meets the requirements above, as well as any other administrative or security considerations that provide for safe and accessible voting. See the section “Choosing a location” for additional considerations.

Both parties may also mutually agree upon an alternative site that does not meet all requirements listed above (e.g. further than half mile from campus). The institution may withdraw their request at any time by notifying the auditor or municipal clerk.

Funding is also available to reimburse expenses related to established temporary locations at post-secondary institutions. See the section “Reimbursement for post-secondary institution absentee locations” for additional information.

Designating Temporary Absentee Voting Locations

Counties or municipalities can set up absentee voting sites in addition to their main location. These locations can have different dates and hours than the regularly established schedule.

Note: for a standalone city, town, or school district election, the school district or municipal clerk takes on the role of “county auditor” and is responsible for administering absentee voting, including temporary locations, unless the county agrees to perform these duties [Minn. Stat. 203B.05](#).

- A temporary absentee voting location must be designated at least 47 days before the election.
- The designation must include the dates, times, and address of the location.
- The Office of the Secretary of State (OSS) must be notified when the designation is made.
- Within five business days of designating a temporary polling place, the county or city must post the location’s address and voting hours on its official website.
- The OSS must post any designated locations and their hours on its website within five business days of receiving the notice.

Use of SVRS at Temporary Absentee Voting Locations

Although SVRS use is not required for temporary locations, it is strongly recommended to assist with ballot tracking, cross-county coordination, and balancing procedures.

Once a site is selected, if the county or city will be using SVRS, the site can be added into SVRS as an additional location.

If a jurisdiction plans to use early voting, they will be required to use SVRS to process applications for voters.

Choosing a location

When considering a temporary absentee voting location, a site visit should be conducted in advance to ensure the location is suitable and any issues can be addressed before voting begins.

Discuss and resolve any questions from the site visit with facility contacts for the temporary location. Ensure relevant information is captured in a polling place agreement/contract so that all parties understand key details, including formal support and coordination from the facility, documentation of any changes, and establishing contacts and chain of command for any scenarios in which the staff might need support.

To assist with evaluating potential temporary absentee voting locations, carefully consider the following:

Accessibility

Is the building accessible to voters with disabilities under ADA standards?

- Review considerations under federal and state laws.
- Use the Polling Place Accessibility Diagnostic Tool to review polling places for compliance with accessibility requirements.

Facility services

- Is the lighting, electricity, and ventilation of the space sufficient?
- Does the space have enough working restrooms for election officials and voters to use?
- Is water and/or refrigeration available?
- To support staff working in a space for several hours, as well as a potentially high volume of voters, does the space meet the need to support individuals with their basic needs throughout the day?

Internet

- If SVRS is being used to administer absentee voting in the temporary location, a secure and authorized internet connection is required.
- Locations in non-government facilities should connect through the county or city's VPN, unless additional arrangements have been approved by OSS. Please reach out to the OSS as far in advance as possible to coordinate any questions or details related to internet access at a temporary voting location.
- If SVRS is not being used, it is strongly recommended that the voting location is established in an internet-connected building so staff can access communication channels needed for facility or community support, resources and information from the OSS website that may help in providing voter service, and other resources and materials administrators may need to access to support voters in their community.

Secure handling and storage of voting equipment or materials

- Each voting location must have adequate space for voting equipment and all materials to be kept safe from public access before, during, and after voting takes place.
- Consider reviewing the CISA Physical Security Checklist for Polling Locations as part of your review and preparation for voting at the temporary location.

Public access plan within the space

- Will the space be quiet and private, or is it shared with other public events?
- What will you need to do to secure the voting equipment and materials, ensure constant monitoring of the space when the public is present, and consider voters' needs if there is noise or other distractions in the space?
- Will you need additional materials, such as barriers or stanchions, to properly define and divide the space, as necessary?
- Will the space be adequate to accommodate the anticipated voter traffic? Plan around room for lines to form, flow through the location, furniture for election workers and voters, ability to enter and exit without trouble or physical barriers, etc.
- Voter privacy at ballot-marking stations and within the voting area
- If the location is in a public space or building, will the space be sufficient for voters to be given adequate voting privacy at standing and seated voting booths, as well as for those using the assistive voting device?
- Can voters travel through the voting area with the ability to privately cast their ballots?

Preparing the Location

After selecting a location, create a thorough plan to address, at minimum, deployment of equipment and materials, proper staffing, and polling place layout that balances voter access with privacy and security. Some considerations for your planning should include:

- Establish contact with the site / facility manager who will be necessary to aid with access, set-up, administration, troubleshooting on-site, crowd control and security, etc.
- Design layout for tables, signage, and voting stations in a way that ensures privacy and a smooth voter flow. Consider line management tools, such as stanchions or signage, that can help keep order within the space and reduce either confusion or physical obstacles. An assistive voting device must be available for voters to use. Place the assistive voting device in an easy-to-access area that is also private to any passersby (ballot screen not facing other voters).
- Plan around lighting, seating, and accessibility considerations to ensure the space is fully compliant with voters' access needs and is a comfortable work environment for staff.
- Ensure access to enough electrical outlets to power computers, printers, assistive voting device, ballot tabulator, etc.

- Arrange voting materials needed for each site, such as ballot quantities (or ballot styles printing option, if possible), computers, printers, power cords, print materials (applications, envelopes needed, log forms, signage, etc.) and voting equipment. Ensure that you have adequate amounts of all materials and a well-defined transportation plan to securely deliver all items securely to and from the site.

Important note: a temporary absentee voting location must be prepared to provide all ballot styles for that jurisdiction. If the county is administering, all ballot styles in the county must be available. If the city is administering, all ballot styles in the city must be available. You should plan for more ballot quantities for the precinct(s) closest to the temporary absentee voting location.

- Secure all voting materials on-site, including ballots and sealed ballot return containers, so they are not left unattended or vulnerable.
- Plan for any ballot drop-offs where a voter wishes to leave their voted mail ballot with staff.
- Do you have a secure ballot box or a locked room where you can store any ballots dropped off at the temporary location?
- Do you have a copy of the agent return log to record the required information when an agent drops off someone else's ballot?
- Physical security should mirror Election Day expectations. Temporary absentee voting locations should follow the same security standards expected at Election Day polling places:
- Controlling access to both voting areas and election materials to ensure only authorized individuals are present.
- Protecting equipment, such as laptops or ballot counters, from unauthorized use, tampering, or theft.
- Monitoring the flow of voters throughout the site to maintain orderly traffic and safeguard voter privacy during the voting process.
- Developing and sharing a clear emergency plan so all staff know who they may contact and when they need support throughout the voting process: facility management, security, IT staff, local law enforcement, county elections staff, OSS, etc.
- Plan for any ballot drop-offs where a voter wishes to leave their voted mail ballot with staff.
- Do you have a secure ballot box or a locked room where you can store any ballots dropped off at the temporary location?
- Do you have a copy of the agent return log to record the required information when an agent drops off someone else's ballot?
- Consider how you will enforce restrictions on campaigning near absentee locations – within the polling place and within 100 feet of the room in which a polling place is situated, to the extent practicable.

Methods of Administration

Prior to arranging staff and supplies, plan for:

- Whether SVRS will be used to administer absentee voting; and
- If SVRS is being used, whether the site will be using the in-person absentee envelope voting process or direct balloting.
- How ballots will be handled at each temporary site

When choosing between these methods, consider factors such as the timing of the site (early in the absentee period vs. closer to Election Day), available technology, anticipated voter volume, travel needed to and from the site to secure voted ballots, and available staff resources and expertise to manage the site(s) for one day or more.

In-person absentee envelope voting

With this process, voters mark their ballots privately and place them in absentee ballot signature envelopes. Election judges or staff complete the witness portion of the signature envelope, and then the envelope is placed into a secured storage location. In this method, SVRS use is not required, but strongly encouraged.

- If SVRS will be used, staff should be trained properly in the use of SVRS for in-person absentee, voting and enter voters as “in-person” through the absentee module.
- Review the SVRS Absentee Voting Training Certification for Designated Users for more information on training and certification to administer absentee voting using SVRS.
- If SVRS will not be used, staff can use a Master List provided by the county to know which voters are currently registered and those who will need to complete registration documentation before voting. As voters complete the paper absentee application through this process, staff should also keep a record of voters casting ballots on a spreadsheet for reconciling statistics.
- Regardless of whether SVRS is used, administrators must complete detailed statistics reconciliation processes to ensure that the number of applications completed equals the number of absentee ballot signature envelopes submitted at the temporary location that day.

Early voting

Early voting allows voters to mark and cast their ballots on-site using a tabulator or scanner. This approach can speed up processing of voters on the front end and the statistics reconciliation on the back end, and also eliminates the need for the absentee ballot board to open and process all the envelopes and ballots. However, administrators should also consider the additional equipment and testing needed and ensure that there is an approved SVRS connection and trained staff to administer the direct balloting process in SVRS.

Ballot security and chain of custody (CoC)

Based on the method of absentee voting you choose to administer, ensure the security of ballots and election materials at every step. Use sealed, clearly labeled containers to protect ballots during storage and transit. Keep a detailed log of all handoffs—recording who handled the materials, when, and where—to maintain an unbroken chain of custody. Consider how ballots will be securely transported and stored at the end of the night. Be sure to incorporate each temporary location into your overall chain of custody plan so that every site is managed with the same level of detail as permanent polling places.

Staffing and training

Determining the right number of staff for a temporary absentee voting site starts with understanding your expected turnout. Review absentee and Election Day turnout data for the precincts in the area to help with predicting the number of voters that may use the temporary location. Factor in any special promotions or outreach efforts that could increase participation.

Once you have estimated site traffic, assign enough trained personnel to manage each stage of the process, greeting voters and assisting with registration to handling ballots and overseeing equipment. Ensure every team member receives comprehensive training on their specific duties, including:

- Overall administration of the absentee voting process
- Proper use of SVRS (if applicable)
- Chain of custody procedures for ballots and materials
- Security and privacy protocols

When in doubt, air on the side of caution and overstaff, or have additional staff available on standby for quick deployment. It is easier to scale back than to quickly ramp up.

Backup planning

Unexpected issues can arise. Plan and prepare to have contingency measures in place to minimize the impact of any unplanned disruptions:

Supplies

Keep extra supplies on hand, including ballots, materials for the envelope process if SVRS is temporarily unavailable, pens, stickers, etc.

Technical fallbacks

Document clear procedures for internet or equipment failures. Assign a staff member to monitor connectivity, have a mobile hotspot available, and train your team on how to switch to manual processes (such as paper-based check-in or envelope drop-off) until systems are restored.

Emergency situations

Consider what you will do if the temporary absentee voting location becomes unusable for some or all the time designated due to power failure, flooding, or other emergencies. Is there a suitable location nearby that could serve as a backup on short notice (for example, another room in the building or a nearby facility)? Is it possible to reschedule for another date and time?

Reimbursement for temporary absentee locations at post-secondary institutions

Counties and cities are eligible for reimbursement for administering absentee balloting for post-secondary absentee locations. The reimbursement is for temporary polling locations on post-secondary institution campuses that provide on-campus student housing to 100 or more students. The deadline to submit reimbursement applications is December 15th of each year following the November general election.

Eligible expenses (Minn. Stat. 203B.0815)

1. Voting equipment purchasing and programming
2. Secure storage for voting equipment and supplies
3. Staff costs for election administrators, election judges, or other election officials
4. Ballot and voting materials printing
5. Set-up costs including transportation, parking, and office supplies
6. Voting booths
7. Technology necessary to conduct voting at the polling location

Eligible reimbursements must not exceed

1. \$5,000 for one polling location the first year applying
2. \$3,000 for each additional polling location in the first year
3. \$3,000 for each polling location in subsequent years

The OSS will circulate more information in advance of the deadline detailing the process to submit a claim to reimburse expenses for administering a campus temporary absentee voting location.

Contact elections.grants.oss@state.mn.us with any questions.

Election Day

Voting Hours & Postponement

For state primaries and general elections, polling places must be open from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

For municipal elections, the minimum voting hours for cities in the metropolitan area are from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. For municipal elections outside the metropolitan area, minimum hours are from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. The “metropolitan area” for elections is defined as the counties of Anoka, Carver, Chisago, Dakota, Hennepin, Isanti, Ramsey, Scott, Sherburne, Washington and Wright. [Minn. Stat. 205.175, subd. 1](#)

Voters waiting in line at closing time are allowed to register and/or vote. Those who arrive after the closing hour cannot vote.

Local municipal elections not held in conjunction with a state or federal election may be postponed for inclement weather. When one or more local jurisdictions are holding elections in conjunction with one another, the jurisdiction with the largest local geographic area has the authority, after consulting with other auditors and clerks, to postpone the election. A decision to postpone must apply to every precinct in the jurisdiction and must be made no later than 6:00 p.m. on the day before the election. A postponed election must be rescheduled for the next following Tuesday. An election that is postponed due to weather may be postponed again. [Minn. Stat. 204C.05](#); [205.07, subd. 1a](#); [205.105](#); [205.175](#)

Activity in or Near the Polling Place

Authorized Persons in the Polling Place during Voting

The polling place will be administered by the head election judge and the other election judges on Election Day. No public official, including the clerk may assume the duties of an election judge simply because they hold elected or appointed office. All election judges must be eligible to serve, trained, and appointed according to the law. Each official on duty in the polling place must wear an identification badge that shows their name and role in the election process, such as head judge, election judge, or election judge trainee. The name and role badge must not show their party affiliation. [Minn. Stat. 204C.06, subd. 2](#); [204B.19](#); [204B.20](#); [204B.21](#); [204B.25](#)

During voting hours, the law allows only election judges, people directly engaged in voting, and authorized persons to be present in the polling place.

Authorized persons are:

- Persons helping a voter who is disabled or unable to read English.
- Persons who are vouching for a voter’s residence.
- Observers with written authorization from the OSS, the county auditor, or the clerk for the purpose of observing election procedures.
- Peace officers, if the election judges request their presence to keep order.
- Children when accompanying voters.
- Challengers authorized to observe in the polling place.
- Teachers, elementary and high school students if participating in a mock election that has been authorized by the secretary of state.
- The news media.
- Persons making a written complaint. [Minn. Stat. 204C.06](#)

Election Materials & Equipment Security

Election judges represent the first line of defense for the physical and cyber security of Minnesota's elections. All election judges must keep a watchful eye on all voting equipment, removable memory devices, ballots & supplies throughout the Election Day. Individuals observed inspecting, assessing or attempting to access or connect a device to voting equipment input/output data ports should be addressed by the head judge (and additional election judges if needed), with the incident communicated to the local election official immediately.

Further, it is good practice to view/inspect the seals and any port plugs on voting equipment & ballot storage containers throughout the day, with concerns again being reported immediately.

Voter reports to election judges of observation of any of the above, or of e-mail, text, social media, phone or other communications attempting to disrupt or influence the elections process should similarly be reported.

A sergeant-at-arms or a peace officer may be requested to arrest or remove from the polling place any individual who, despite a warning to desist, engages in disorderly conduct, to include attempting to tamper with voting equipment.

A sergeant-at-arms or a peace officer shall not otherwise interfere in any manner with voters. The sergeant-at-arms or peace officer cannot remain in or within 50 feet of the entrance of the polling place once peace has been restored.

Note the details of all security concerns & how they were addressed on incident log. [Minn. Stat. 204C.06, subds. 5 & 6](#)

Media Access

A news media representative may enter a polling place during the voting hours only to observe the voting process. A media representative must present photo identification to the head election judge upon arrival at the polling place, along with either a recognized media credential or written statement from a local election official attesting to the media representative's credentials.

A media representative must:

- Stay at least six feet from voters.
- Not converse with voters or interfere with the voting process.
- Not make a list of those voting or not voting. [Minn. Stat. 204C.06, subd. 8](#)

Prohibited Polling Place Activities

Some persons, items and activities are not allowed in the polling place:

- Disorderly persons.
- Intoxicated persons and/or liquor.
- Persons who are campaigning and/or campaign materials including literature or buttons.
- Smoking.
- Linger. [Minn. Stat. 204B.06](#)

People may not gather or linger in the polling place or within 100 feet of the building in which the polling place is located. One exception is an individual conducting an exit poll. Exit polls cannot be conducted within the polling place, but may be conducted anywhere outside of the room being used as the polling place. An individual conducting an exit poll may only approach voters as they leave the polling place after having voted to ask them to take an anonymous written questionnaire. Furthermore, campaigning is also not allowed in the polling place, within 100 feet of the building where the polling place is located or on public property if the polling place is on public property. This prohibition on campaigning means that campaign buttons, with offices

listed on the ballot, cannot be worn in the polling place and campaign signs cannot be displayed within 100 ft of the building or on public property if the polling place is on public property.

Voters, however, may take sample ballots from the newspapers or campaign flyers into the voting booth for personal use but they should take care not to display these materials outside of the voting booth. These prohibitions also limit where meetings and other activities can be held in polling place sites with multiple rooms. [Minn. Stat. 204C.06](#); [204C.13, subd. 2](#); [211B.11](#)

See the Election Judge Guide for additional information regarding prohibited conduct in the polling place, at the OSS [Election Guides](#) webpage (<https://www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/election-administration/election-guides/>).

On Election Day, if the clerk and other elected officials are not eligible to be appointed as election judges (e.g., they may be candidates in that election), special care must be taken to ensure that they do not act “in any manner” to influence voters in, or near, the polling place.

Note: Per *Schimming v. Riverblood*, CAH 7-6347-20326-CV (June 5, 2009), the prohibition of signs and campaign materials within 100 feet does not apply to adjacent private property.

Election Judge Neutrality in the Polling Place

Even though many judges are affiliated with major parties and often have strong political opinions about candidates and ballot questions, once a judge steps into the polling place and takes the oath, they are to remain neutral while serving in the role of election judge. Voters have the right to vote in a polling place, free of any influence.

This can be difficult when there is a controversial question on a ballot; especially a constitutional amendment. Many people will ask election judges, what does this “mean?” Or, what effect does this or that action have on the outcome of the election?

There should be nothing for election judges to explain orally about any question. The instruction wording is printed on the ballot above all questions. The instructions above a constitutional amendment are very clear and are explicitly laid out in law.

It is suggested that when election judges are asked about ballot questions, to refer the voter to the instructions. If needed, the election judge may read the instructions out loud. No further explanation is needed.

Election Judge Code of Conduct

- Always remain courteous and professional
- Do not bully or harass local election officials, Head Judges, other election judges, challengers, media, election administration representatives, vouchers, voters, or voter assistants
- Follow all instructions and complete all assignments given to you by the Head Judge
- Keep the Head Judge informed of all concerns and document details on incident logs
- Refrain from partisan comments or discussions
- Do not discuss the decisions and/or actions of political leaders
- Refrain from personal opinions of current election administration laws, rules, procedures and/or tasks
- Except to verify party balance, do not disclose or use for any other purpose the party affiliation or unaffiliated status of other election judges
- Avoid any action that may influence how a person votes
- Respect a voter's right to use the lawful assistance of any eligible person of their choice
- Provide respectful assistance to persons with language and/or disability challenges
- Keep passwords or other access credentials for voting equipment in a safe and secure location.

- Respect the secret ballot and the privacy of voters:
 - o Do not give advice, scrutinize ballots, or reveal how people voted
 - o Never disclose personal information about voters found on the roster; for example, a voter's birth date.
 - o [Minn. Stat. 204B.19, subd. 5](#); [204B.21, subd. 3](#); [204B.24](#); [204C.10\(e\)](#); [204C.15, subd. 1](#)

Election Day Voter Registration

Minnesota permits Election Day registration. The clerk may expect 20 percent or more of voters to register at the polling places on Election Day. To help avoid delays and congestion, plan a flow of traffic for voter registration and voting lines. Consider appointing additional judges to handle registration duties. Judges who register voters cannot also handle ballots for the same voter. These duties must be separated. [Minn. Stat. 201.061](#); [201.018](#); [M.R. 8200.5300](#)

Election judges must make sure each applicant is registering in the proper place. The clerk must supply an accurate precinct finder or precinct map to each polling place in the city. Election judges use the precinct finder or precinct map supplied by the clerk to determine if persons are registering in the correct precinct. [M.R. 8200.5300](#)

The clerk must return the polling place roster(s) and completed VRAs to the county auditor within 48 hours following the end of voting. [Minn. Stat. 204C.07](#); [201.018](#)

Challengers

Specifically-appointed “challengers” are permitted to be present in the polling place during the hours of voting. When challengers arrive at a precinct, they should be directed to the Head Judge to prove their Minnesota residency by presenting one of the proofs of residence accepted for Election Day registration (see [Minn. Stat. 201.061, subd. 3](#) for list) and a letter of appointment from a party or non-partisan candidate. Challengers do not need to prove residence in the precinct where they are appointed on Election Day. [Minn. Stat. 204C.07](#); [204C.12](#)

The challenger cannot speak to voters. Furthermore, the challenger cannot:

- Handle or inspect any of the voting materials
- Make lists of who has or has not voted
- Compile lists of voters to challenge on the basis of mail sent by a political party that was returned undeliverable, and
- Cannot attempt to influence voting in any manner.

Challenge of a particular voter's eligibility to vote takes place through the election judge. The challenger must complete the Oath of Challenge to Voters Eligibility form for each challenge and the election judge then resolves the issue with the voter. See the Election Judge Guide for more detailed information.

Appointment as a challenger requires issuance of a written certificate according to the following circumstances:

- Partisan elections. At an election to fill partisan offices, the chair of an authorized committee of each major political party may appoint by written certificate voters from that political party to act as challengers of voters at the polling place for each precinct. Only one challenger from each major political party for each precinct is allowed to remain in the polling place at one time.
- Nonpartisan elections. At an election to fill nonpartisan offices, nonpartisan candidates may appoint, by written certificate, voters to act as challengers of voters at the polling place for each precinct. Only one challenger for each candidate is allowed to remain in the polling place for each precinct at one time.
- Elections on questions. At an election where a question is to be voted upon, the mayor of a city, or the school board of a school district, or the board of supervisors of a town, upon receiving a written petition signed by at least 25 eligible voters, must appoint by written certificate one voter for each precinct in

the municipality, or school district if applicable, to act as a challenger of voters in the polling place for that precinct.

Emergencies

County Elections Emergency Plans

County election officials, in consultation with the political subdivision's local organization for emergency management established under [Minn. Stat. 12.25](#) and the municipalities and school districts within the county, must develop a county elections emergency plan to be made available for use in all state, county, municipal, and school district elections held in that county.

In developing the county elections emergency plan, the county must address the needs of voters with disabilities in all aspects of the plan.

Where ballot security is affected, the plan must provide procedures to maintain the security of the ballots.

Emergency Polling Place Relocation Procedures

When an emergency requires the relocation of the polling place, the plan must include:

- procedures for securing the ballots and voting equipment
- notifying the public and other government officials
- restoring voting activities as soon as possible

If the county contains jurisdictions that cross county lines, the affected counties must make efforts to ensure that the emergency procedures affecting the local jurisdiction are uniform throughout the jurisdiction.

Local Jurisdiction Elections Emergency Plans

Cities, towns, and school districts may create a local elections emergency plan that meets the requirements of the county elections emergency plan. If a local jurisdiction creates a local elections emergency plan, the procedures within the local elections emergency plan govern in all election emergencies within that local jurisdiction.

Review of Election Emergency Plans

County election officials and any municipality with a local elections emergency plan must review their county or local elections emergency plan prior to each state general election. Any revisions to the county or local elections emergency plan must be completed and filed with the secretary of state by July 1 prior to the state general election. [Minn. Stat. 204B.181](#)

Public Counting

After all voters in line at 8:00 p.m. have voted, the polling place is open to the public, including members of the media and candidates, until votes are counted and results are declared. Please make sure to notify those present that the results are only for the poll place itself (do not include absentee ballot totals) and are “unofficial.” Election judges will count the ballots/run results tapes, prepare the summary of results, secure and turn in election materials. Unless appointed as an election judge, no individual will touch election materials during this process, including the clerk. [Minn. Stat. 204C.19, subd. 1; 204C.19, subd. 2; 204C.07](#)

Summary Statements

After the last voter in line at 8:00 p.m. has voted, the election judges count the ballots; prepare summary statements of the votes for each candidate for each office for and against each ballot question; and sign the summary statement.

Three copies of the summary statements must be completed by the election judges, except that only two copies of the summary statements are needed for elections not held on the same day as the state elections.

In precincts with a precinct ballot counter, the summary statement is printed at the end of the results tape. All present election judges must complete the three copies of the summary statement and seal each in individually signed envelopes. The first copy must remain attached to the “zeros” report printed when the polls were opened.

Each copy of the summary statements must include the following:

- Total ballots delivered to your precinct as adjusted by the actual count
 - o From any adjustments noted on the incident log;
- The number of voting booths
 - o All stations set up to provide a space for a voter with a ballot;
- The number of election judges
 - o Count number of signatures of judge’s oath;
- The number of unofficial ballots made, if any;
- The number of spoiled ballots;
- The number of duplicate ballots made, if any;
- The number of unused ballots at the end of the day;
- The number of persons registered to vote at 7am on Election Day;
 - o This number is listed in the back of the pre-registered roster.
- The number of persons who registered to vote at the polling place on Election Day;
 - o This is the number of voter signatures on the Election Day registration roster (or the number of EDR voter registration applications).
- The number of signatures on the rosters (pre-registered roster plus the election day registration roster);
 - o This is the number of voter signatures on both rosters.
- Do not count “AB” notations printed, written, or stamped on the registered roster. Do not count the names listed on the non-registered AB supplemental report.
- The total number of voters that voted at the polling place on Election Day. [Minn. Stat. 204C.24](#)

Example of a Summary Statement

Precinct Summary Statement State General Election November 8, 2022

Municipality			
Ward	Precinct		☐ Check if Absentee (AB)
County			
Number of Election Judges who worked in this precinct	*		
Number of Voting Booths in this precinct	*		

Registration Statistics

Number of persons registered at 7 a.m.	*1.		
Number of new registrants on election day (Polls = EDRs) (ABs = non-registered ABs)	*2.		

Ballots delivered to the precinct

Ballots delivered as certified by the auditor/clerk (Polls = blank ballots delivered for voting) (ABs = blank ballots for duplication)	3.		
Ballot count adjustments from incident log (+/-)	4.		
Number of unofficial ballots made	5.		
Number of accepted absentee ballots (regular registered and non-registered, military-overseas, federal-only & SAH)	6.		
Total number of ballots delivered to precinct (3+4+5+6 = A)			A

Ballots not in the ballot box

Number of spoiled ballots	*7.		
Number of originals for which duplicates made	*8.		
Number of rejected absentees	*9.		
Number of unused ballots	10.		
Total number ballots not in the ballot box (7+8+9+10 = B)			B

Ballots cast in the ballot box

Number of signatures on roster (preregistered + EDR)	*11.		
Number of accepted absentee ballot (regular registered and non-registered, military-overseas & SAH ballots)	*12.		
Number of accepted federal only absentee ballots	*13.		
Number of accepted presidential only absentee ballots (presidential elections only)	*14.		
Total number of ballots in the ballot box (= persons voting) (11+12+13+14 = C)			C

Ballots returned to Auditor/Clerk

Ballots returned from the precinct (B + C = D)			D
Difference for auditor/clerk notation on delivery record (A - D = E)			E

* are entered into ERS stats

After the Election

Receiving materials

On election night at least one election judge from each precinct must deliver the following items to the county auditor or the city clerk (who delivers to the county auditor) after all ballots have been counted but no later than 24 hours after voting ends at 8:00 p.m. on election night:

- two sets of summary statements; and
- all voted, duplicated and spoiled ballots. [Minn. Stat. 204C.27](#)

Every auditor (or city clerk) must remain in their office on the night of the election until all returns have been delivered. The auditor (or city clerk) must prepare a record of all materials delivered to their office on the night of the election. This record must be prepared in the presence of who delivered the materials to the auditor's office (or clerk's office).

The record must include all materials delivered, the time of delivery, the name of the individual who made the delivery, the number of ballots delivered to the precinct and the total number of ballots returned as listed on the summary statement. A discrepancy between the number of ballots delivered and returned must be noted. All envelopes returned on election night must remain sealed and stored in a secure place. [Minn. Stat. 204C.28, subd. 1](#)

At least one election judge from each precinct must deliver the following to the city clerk within 24 hours after voting has ended on the night of the election:

- remaining summary statements and returns;
- all unused and defective municipal ballots;
- completed voter registration applications;
- voter rosters (both EDR and pre-registered); and
- voting systems.

The city clerk then must return all polling place rosters and completed voter registration applications to the county auditor within 48 hours after voting ends on election night. Rosters may need to be returned to the county auditor sooner to complete accepting/rejecting absentee ballots within 24 hours after the polls close. [Minn. Stat. 204C.27](#)

Canvassing of the Returns

The city council serves as the canvassing board for city elections. The council must meet to canvass the returns and declare the results on the second or third day after a primary and within three to 14 days after a general election. The canvass may only be held on the second day after a primary if the county auditor agrees to review primary voting statistics within a time that permits the canvass to be conducted on that day. [Minn. Stat. 205.185, subd. 3; 205.065, subd. 5](#)

The steps to canvass the results are:

- the clerk prepares a canvassing report (abstract) to accumulate results from multiple precincts; this report may be available from the state Election Reporting System (ERS);
- the canvass board publicly canvasses the election returns by reviewing the abstract and write-in reports
- the board may ask to examine summary statements before it declares the results;
- when satisfied that the abstract reports are correct, the board signs the abstracts and they become the official results;
- in the case of a tie vote, the canvassing board determines the winner by lot;

- errors by election judges in counting may be corrected by following specific procedures as prescribed by law. [Minn. Stat. 204C.38](#); [204C.39](#); [205.185](#)

Recounts

Minnesota election law authorizes administrative recounts after the canvassing board certifies the results. Rather than seeking a court order, the election administrator, on behalf of the canvassing board, may conduct a manual recount. A recount is limited in scope; the sole issue a recount may resolve is whether the election judges arrived at the correct vote total. Original ballots that have been duplicated are not within the scope of a recount and must not be examined except as provided by a court in an election contest. Rejected absentee envelopes may not be opened or subject to further review except in an election contest pursuant to [Chapter 209](#). [Minn. Stat. 203B.121, subd. 2](#); [204C.35, subd. 3](#)

[Minnesota Rules Chapter 8235](#) provides a complete discussion of the procedures for conducting a recount. See the Minnesota Recount Guide for more information on general procedures. See also the Minnesota Recount Guide found at the OSS [Election Guides](#) webpage (<https://www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/election-administration/election-guides/>) for more information on general procedures.

Publicly Funded Municipal Recounts

There are no automatic recounts for local, municipal office races. There are provisions for a publicly-funded recount:

Written Request: Candidates for city offices who wish to ask for a recount or those who would like a recount of a ballot question shall file a written request with the city clerk. All requests shall be filed during the time for notice of contest as per [Minn. Stat. 209.021, subd. 1](#): Within five days after the canvass of primary results and within seven days after the canvass of a general election's results. [Minn. Stat. 204C.36, subd. 1](#)

More than 50,000 total votes cast for the office: If the total number of votes cast for that election was more than 50,000, a losing municipal candidate may request a recount, at the expense of the city, of the votes cast if the difference between the votes cast for that candidate and for the winning candidate is less than one-quarter of one percent of the total votes counted for that office. In the case of offices where two or more seats are being filled from among all the candidates for the office, the one-quarter of one percent difference is between the elected candidate with the fewest votes and the candidate with the most votes from among the candidates who were not elected.

Between 400 and 50,000 total votes cast for the office: If the total number of votes cast for that election was between 400 and 50,000, a losing candidate may request a recount of the votes cast, at the expense of the city, if the difference between the votes cast for that candidate and for a winning candidate is less than one-half of one percent. If two or more seats are being filled from among all the candidates for the office, the one-half of one percent difference is between the elected candidate with the fewest votes and the candidate with the most votes from among the candidates who were not elected.

Less than 400 total votes cast for the office: If the total numbers of votes cast for that election was fewer than 400, a losing candidate may request a recount of the votes cast, at the expense of the city, if the difference between the votes cast for that candidate and for a winning candidate is less than 10 votes. In cases of offices where two or more seats are being filled from among all the candidates for the office, the 10 vote difference is between the elected candidate with the fewest votes and the candidate with the most votes from among the candidates who were not elected.

Discretionary Municipal Recounts

A losing candidate for a city office may request a recount at the candidate's own expense when the vote difference is greater than the differences mentioned in 13.3.1. The requesting candidate files with the city clerk

a bond, cash or surety in an amount set by the city for the payment of the recount expenses. The requesting candidate may provide the city clerk with a list of up to three precincts that are to be recounted first and may waive the balance of the precincts after the precincts have been counted. If a list is provided, the expected costs of the three or less precincts must be determined. If the winner of the race is changed by the optional recount, the costs of the recount are then paid by the city. And, if a result of the vote counting is different from the result of the vote counting reported on election night by a margin greater than the standard for acceptable performance of the voting systems, the cost of the recount is also then paid by the city. [Minn. Stat. 204C.36, subd. 2](#)

Ballot Question Recounts

A written request for a recount on a question must be:

- filed by any person eligible to vote on the ballot question
- filed with the city clerk and
- be accompanied by a petition containing the signatures of 25 voters eligible to vote on the question.

A recount on a ballot question may be requested within five days after a primary election canvass, and within seven days following the canvass of a general election. The clerk is responsible for conducting the recount on behalf of the city. The recount will be conducted at the city's expense if the difference between votes for and against the ballot questions is at or less than what is listed in 13.3.1. If the difference between votes for and against the ballot question is greater, the person requesting the recount shall also file with the clerk a bond, cash or surety in an amount set by the city for payment of recount expenses at the time when the written request and petition is submitted. [Minn. Stat. 204C.36, subd. 3](#)

Contest of Election

A "contest of election" means to challenge the result of an election in district court, usually seeking a specific correction. A voter or candidate may contest the election of a candidate or ballot question in which they were eligible to vote. An election may be contested over an irregularity in the conduct of an election, canvass of votes or on the grounds of deliberate, serious, and material violations of Minnesota election law. [Minn. Stat. 209.02; 209.021](#)

The individual contesting the election must file a written notice of contest with the clerk of the district court of the county. The notice must specify the points the contest is based on, and must be filed within seven days after the canvassing board declares the results of the election or recount. For a primary, the notice of contest must be filed with the clerk of the district court within five days. Anyone considering filing a notice of contest, should read and carefully comply with [Minn. Stat. 209](#), which governs the contest of election process. As a clerk, do not allow yourself to be misunderstood as providing legal counsel to an individual. Advise citizens to seek legal counsel to ensure that their efforts are in compliance with the law. [Minn. Stat. 209.02; 209.021](#)

If an election is contested, the clerk cannot issue a certificate of election until the contest has been determined by the court. The clerk takes no other action except as directed by the court. [Minn. Stat. 205.185, subd. 3\(b\); 209](#)

Security and Storage of Election Items for a Contest

There are numerous statutes and rules regarding retention and safeguarding of election materials:

Secured and sealed in ballot boxes and precinct supply boxes

- All ballots cast and counted in original sealed envelopes. [Minn. Stat. 204C.27; 204C.28; 209.05; M.R. 8235.0400; 8235.0600](#)
- All precinct summary statements. [Minn. Stat. 204C.27; 204C.28](#)

- All defective ballots not counted in original sealed envelopes. [Minn. Stat. 204C.23; 204C.25; 204C.27; 204C.28](#)
- All spoiled and unused ballots. [Minn. Stat. 204C.27; 204C.28](#)
- All electronic voting systems and counting programs.
- All polling place rosters and completed election day registration applications. [Minn. Stat. 204C.27](#)
- All county auditor records of materials delivered to them after completion of voting. [Minn. Stat. 204C.28](#)
- All county canvassing board reports. [Minn. Stat. 204C.33](#)
- All records of access to ballots. [Minn. Stat. 204C.28](#)
- All lists submitted by residential facilities and educational institutions pursuant to [Minn. Stat. 135A.17 & 201.061, subd. 3](#)
- All Election Day challenges to voters pursuant to [Minn. Stat. 204C.12](#).
- All precinct incident logs. [Minn. Stat. 204C.27; 204C.28](#)
- All absentee ballot applications. [Minn. Stat. 203B.06](#)
- All absentee and mail ballot return envelopes. [Minn. Stat. 203B.08; 203B.12](#)
- Any voting machine tape reports recording the votes cast on Election Day in each precinct. [Minn. Stat. 204C.27](#)

Other materials that have varying retention schedules

- Pre-election accuracy test results, including copies of any machine tapes generated as part of the process, or copies of any other similar documented means of verification. [Minn. Stat. 206.83](#)
- All voter registration applications. [Minn. Stat. 201.081](#)
- All records of notices of late, incomplete and deficient registrations. [Minn. Stat. 201.061, M.R. 8200.2900; 8200.3100; 8200.3110](#)
- All records of notices of ineligibility for registration. [Minn. Stat. 201.061, subd. 7](#)
- All reports of deceased voters, name changes, felony convictions, guardianships and commitments. [Minn. Stat. 201.13 through 201.155](#)
- All records of notices of challenge removal. [M.R. 8200.3550](#)
- All records of notices of application removal. [M.R. 8200.3700](#)
- All challenges to voter registration submitted pursuant to [Minn. Stat. 201.195](#).
- Copies of post-election machine audits, including machine tapes generated as part of the process, or copies of any other similar documented means of verification. [Minn. Stat. 206.89](#)

During a contest period it is suggested:

- Communicating with all county staff about the importance of preserving and/or protecting any election items.
- Search all offices and premises under the auditor's jurisdiction and authority, including computer networks, to ensure that all documents, materials and election items are preserved and protected.
- Except when conducting official or court ordered tasks, the ballots remain under lock and key at all times. No less than two official elections staff enter the room at any time. A room-access log, including the time, date and purpose, shall be kept. No "visual guards" posted pursuant to Minn. Stat. 209.05 may enter the ballot storage room at any time.
- A copy of the county's security policy should be posted on the ballot storage room.

Certifying Results

The clerk must certify the results of the city election to the county auditor. If a question on the ballot involves intoxicating beverages or a change in the form of city government, the clerk must promptly notify the county auditor and certify to the OSS the form of the question and votes for and against the proposition. [Minn. Stat. 204C.40; 205.185; 340A.416](#)

Campaign Finance Reporting

The clerk shall ensure that candidates have certified that all campaign financial reports required by [Minn. Stat. 211A.02](#) have been submitted, including the Certification of Filing. The Certification of Filing is due no later than 7 days after the general or special election. [Minn. Stat. 211A.02](#); [211A.05, subd. 1](#)

If a candidate or committee fails to file a campaign finance report when due, the clerk shall notify the candidate or committee of the failure. If no reply is received within 10 days after notification is mailed, the clerk must file a complaint with the Minnesota Court of Administrative Hearings. [Minn. Stat. 211A.05, subd. 2](#)

Certificate of Election

After the time for recounts and contesting election results has passed (and after any contests have been resolved), and after confirming that all required campaign financial reports due from the successful candidate are on file, the clerk shall issue a certificate of election to the successful candidate. A clerk or auditor who issues a certificate of election to a candidate who has not certified that all campaign finance reports have been filed is guilty of a misdemeanor. [Minn. Stat. 205.185](#); [211A.02](#); [211A.05](#)

Oath of Office

Every person elected or appointed to any public office shall take and subscribe an oath or affirmation to support the U.S. Constitution and the Constitution of Minnesota, and to discharge faithfully the duties of their office to the best of their judgment and ability. This requirement applies to every official commissioner or member of a public board or body before transacting any of the business or exercising any privilege of such office. Unless otherwise specified in law, city officials take and subscribe their oath of office with their city clerk or recorder. [Minn. Stat. 358.05](#); [359.04](#); [358.11](#); [Constitution of the State of Minnesota](#)

Record Retention

The clerk is responsible for custody of the ballots and returns in city elections. The clerk must secure all materials used in the election including optical scan testing materials and the voted ballots for 22 months following the election. Abstracts filed by canvassing boards shall be retained permanently by the officer with whom those abstracts are filed. Abstracts are permanently retained because they contain the original signatures of the canvassing board. [Minn. Stat. 138.163](#); [204B.40](#)

Post-Election Review

For the state general election, the county canvass board will select the precincts by lot for a post-election review. Details can be found in the Post-Election Review Guide, available at the OSS [Election Guides](#) webpage (<https://www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/election-administration/election-guides/>). The county auditor is the post-election review official unless the auditor designates the city clerk as the review official within 24 hours after the county canvass of the state general election. [Minn. Stat. 206.89](#)

Occurrences

Vacancies in elective offices occur due to the incumbent's death, resignation, becoming ineligible or moving out of the elective district. Occasionally, someone who has been elected to an office will decline or refuse to serve, and this is considered a vacancy as well. A resignation creates a vacancy when the letter of resignation is received and accepted by the officer, body, or board authorized to receive it, or upon the effective date specified in that letter. Preparations for a special election, if needed, may begin immediately after the written

resignation is received by the official(s) authorized under [Minn. Stat. 351.01](#) to receive it. [Minn. Stat. 351.01, subd. 2](#); [351.02](#); [351.055](#)

Filling Vacancies

For charter cities, refer to your city charter for how vacancies are filled for your city.

For statutory cities, a vacancy in an elected city office shall be filled by council appointment of an individual who is eligible to hold the office until a special election is held or the remainder of the term expires. In the case of a vacancy arising from a mayor's or council member's inability or refusal to serve, the appointee serves until the mayor or council member is able to resume their duties or until the term expires. [Minn. Stat. 412.02, subd. 2a; 412.02, subd. 2b](#)

A special election shall be held at or before the next regular city election if more than two years remain in the unexpired term and the vacancy occurs before the first day to file affidavits of candidacy for the next regular city election. [Minn. Stat. 412.02, subd. 2a](#)

If less than two years remain in the unexpired term—or the vacancy occurs on or after the first day to file affidavits of candidacy for the regular city elections—a special election may be held, or a person appointed by the city council may serve the remainder of the unexpired term. [Minn. Stat. 412.02, subd. 2a](#)

The city council must specify by ordinance under what circumstances it will hold a special election to fill a vacancy other than a special election held at the same time as the regular city election.

If a special election is being held to fill a vacancy, candidates must file their affidavit of candidacy for the specific office with the vacancy to fill the unexpired portion of the term. [Minn. Stat. 412.02, subd. 2a](#)

When filling a vacancy by special election, regular laws, including election related deadlines, must be followed as far as practicable. [Minn. Stat. 204D.18, 205.02](#)

Also, the precincts, polling places, and election judges are the same as the last general election, unless they are changed according to law. [Minn. Stat. 204D.24](#)

Other Elections

Uniform Local General Election Day

Cities must hold their officer elections in the fall of either even- or odd-numbered years (but not both) at local option. The general elections occur on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. Cities have the option to hold a primary election; if held, it must be on the second Tuesday in August, and the election calendar is essentially the same as for state elections. If a city wishes to choose nominees for municipal offices by a primary, the city council must adopt a resolution or ordinance by April 15th in the year when the municipal general election is held. The resolution or ordinance is effective for all municipal elections until it is revoked. The clerk must provide notice of the adoption of the resolution or ordinance within 30 days after adoption.

[Minn. Stat. 205.065](#); [205.13](#); [205.16](#)

Timeline for municipalities without a primary:

- Notice of Filing published 15 weeks before election—municipal clerk's office is open from 1-5:00 p.m. on last day of filing;
- filing opens no more than 112 days and remains open no less than 98 days before;
- candidate withdrawal closes at 5:00 p.m., two days following the close of filing;
- clerk notifies auditor of election details at least 84 days before an election;
- Notice of Election is published two weeks before; and
- the governing body canvasses between three and 14 days after the election.

Metropolitan area cities minimum voting hours are from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. In non-metro areas, minimum hours are from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. [Minn. Stat. 205.16](#); [205.175](#); [205A.09](#)

Mail Balloting & Mail Elections

Minnesota Statutes provide procedures for the conducting of an election by mail, where the only polling place is the office of the clerk or auditor. [Minn. Stat. 204B.45](#) allows certain municipalities or counties to use special mail balloting procedures for precincts for all of their elections. [Minn. Stat. 204B.46](#) allows a special election for question(s) to be conducted as a mail election for precincts which would normally vote at a regular polling place in other elections.

A Mail Voting Guide (for mail balloting and mail elections) is available at the OSS [Election Guides](#) webpage (<https://www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/election-administration/election-guides/>).

Mail Balloting

Minnesota Statutes permit mail balloting for the following:

- Towns of any size or cities with fewer than 400 registered voters anywhere in the state,
- Any precinct having fewer than 100 registered voters (June 1 voter registration number),
- Unorganized territories if provided for by the county board.

Mail balloting can be used at any municipal, county or state election. The governing body of a municipality, or county board for unorganized territories, must authorize mail balloting no later than 90 days prior to the first election at which mail balloting will be used. The resolution must specify at which elections (municipal, county and/or state) mail balloting will be used.

If conducting balloting by mail, the Notice of Special Mail Election procedures must be given at least 10 weeks prior to the election. The clerk will need to develop a plan for the mailing and for processing the voted ballots. The Office of the County Auditor or municipal clerk is the only polling place. Excluding a mail special election for a question, the county auditor (all auditors if municipality is located within multiple counties) must give approval before mail ballot procedures can be used for elections.

Ballots are mailed no more than 46 days nor later than 14 days before a regularly scheduled election, and not more than 30 days nor later than 14 days prior to any other election day. If needed, the county auditor or clerk does a second mailing no later than 14 days before the election to voters who registered to vote after the initial mailing but before the voter registration cutoff.

The auditor or clerk must appoint a ballot board, as done for processing regular absentee ballots, to process returned mail ballots. One board may be created to process both AB and MB ballots. The ballot board must mark returned ballots “accepted” or “rejected” within five days they are received, and within three days if they are received 14 or fewer days before the Election Day. [Minn. Stat. 204B.45](#); [M.R. 8210.3000](#)

Mail Election Questions

A county, municipality, or school district submitting questions to the voters at a special election may conduct the election by mail with no polling place other than the office of the auditor or clerk. No offices may be voted on at a mail election under this provision. The county auditor must be given a 74-day notice and a notice must be posted at least six weeks prior to the election. Ballots are mailed no more than 46 or later than 14 days prior to the election. No later than 14 days before the election, the auditor or clerk must make a subsequent mailing of ballots to voters who registered to vote after the initial mailing was sent but before the voter registration cutoff (20 days before Election Day) for the election.

The auditor or clerk must appoint a ballot board, as done for processing regular absentee ballots, to process returned mail election ballots. One board may be created to process both ABs and MBs. The ballot board must mark returned ballots “accepted” or “rejected” within five days after they are received, and within three days if they are received 14 or fewer days before Election Day. More detailed information regarding mail balloting is available in the Mail Elections Guide. [Minn. Stat. 204B.46](#); [M.R. 8210.3000](#)

Mail ballots must be returned by 8 p.m. on Election Day.

City Special Elections

Special elections for local jurisdictions (county, municipal, school district) are to be held on the uniform election dates identified in [Minn. Stat. 205.10, subd. 3a](#) and [205A.05, subd. 1a](#). Federal and state special elections are not required to be held on the newly identified uniform election dates.

The dates that a county or local jurisdiction may now hold a special election are:

- the second Tuesday in February
- the second Tuesday in April
- the second Tuesday in May
- the second Tuesday in August
- the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November

With the newly identified uniform special election dates, there is a greater likelihood of multiple jurisdictions holding special elections on the same date. Counties should review notices of elections for the same date and provide information to jurisdictions holding concurrent elections regarding the “hierarchy” of election administration. Concurrent elections will affect absentee voting locations, polling place locations, election judge appointments, roster printing, results reporting, etc.

Depending upon the type of special election being held on a uniform election date and if there are concurrent elections, there are variances in deadlines for notices, candidate filing periods, canvassing results, etc. The county should review each special election notice and provide guidance regarding variances in deadlines from “usual” special election administration if appropriate.

State Elections

Clerks share responsibility for administering state elections with county auditors and the OSS. State elections are held every even-numbered year.

State Primary

Held on the 2nd Tuesday in August to select political party and nonpartisan candidates for elective offices to be filled at the general election. [Minn. Stat. 204D.03](#)

If there are no partisan or nonpartisan offices for which nominees must be selected, the city council may decide whether a state primary will be held. If the city council decides that there will not be a primary, within 15 days of the close of filing, the clerk must post a notice of the primary cancellation, and must also notify the OSS. [Minn. Stat. 204D.03](#); [204D.07](#)

At least 15 weeks before the state primary, the OSS notifies each county auditor of the offices to be voted for in that county at the next state general election for which candidates file with OSS. Within 10 days after notification by the OSS, each county auditor must notify each city clerk in the county of all the offices to be voted for in the county at that election and the time and place for filing for those offices. The county auditors and city clerks must promptly post a copy of that notice in their offices. [Minn. Stat. 204B.33](#)

Notice of election must be posted in the clerk's office 15 days before the election stating: officers to be nominated; location of each polling place; and hours for voting. The notice may also be published. [Minn. Stat. 204B.34](#)

No write-in candidates are permitted on a primary ballot. Voters may vote in only one party's primary column on the ballot; voters may not "cross-party vote" between the parties' columns and candidates. [Minn. Stat. 204B.36](#)

Nonpartisan (judicial, local, and school) offices appear on the primary ballot only when more than twice the number of persons to be elected file for the nomination. Municipalities and schools must, by resolution or ordinance, elect to choose nominees for municipal or school office by primary. [Minn. Stat. 204D.07](#); [205.065](#); [205A.03](#)

State General Election

Held on 1st Tuesday after the first Monday in November to elect all elective state and county officers, judges of the state supreme, appeals, and district courts, members of the legislature, senators and representatives in congress, and presidential electors. Proposed amendments to the Minnesota Constitution may be on the ballot as well as elective offices for soil and water conservation districts and hospital districts. For specific dates and notices see the 2026 Elections Calendar on the OSS [Election Calendars](#) webpage (<https://www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/election-administration/election-calendars/>). [Minn. Stat. 103C.305](#); [204D.03](#); [204D.13](#); [204D.15](#); [447.32](#)

Summary Statements for Returns

For state elections, each official responsible for printing ballots must furnish three or more blank summary statement forms for the returns of those ballots for each precinct. Blank summary statement forms are furnished at the same time and in the same manner as the ballots. After election judges complete the returns, they deliver at least three copies of the summary statement to the clerk. In first-, second- and third-Class cities the clerk must remain in the clerk's office to receive delivery of the summary statements and other election materials from the election judges or until 24 hours have elapsed since the polls were closed, whichever occurs first. [Minn. Stat. 204C.24](#); [204C.26](#); [204C.28](#)

Canvassing

Results of state elections are declared by the appropriate county canvassing boards and the state canvassing board. [Minn. Stat. 204C.32](#); [204C.33](#)

Presidential Nomination Primary

The state legislature approved presidential nomination primaries. Except as otherwise noted in the new legislation, the primary must be conducted, and the results canvassed and returned, in the manner provided by law for the state primary.

A presidential nomination primary must be held each year in which a president and vice president of the United States are to be nominated and elected. The party chairs of Minnesota's major political parties may jointly submit to the OSS by March 1 of the year prior to the presidential nomination primary year a single date to conduct the election. The date chosen cannot be the date of the March town general elections. If a date is not submitted by March 1st of the prior year, the presidential primary will be held the first Tuesday in March of the year of the presidential election.

Presidential nomination primary voters must be eligible to vote in the State of Minnesota. The presidential nomination primary voter must request the ballot of the party for whose candidate the individual wishes to vote. The choice must be recorded on the roster, will be added as part of the voting history for the primary and included in the voter public information list.

The state canvassing board shall meet seven days after the primary date. The state canvassing board will declare the results of the presidential nomination primary and the OSS will notify the chairs of each major political party of the results. The results must bind the election of delegates of presidential nomination conventions in each party. [Minn. Stat. 207A](#)

Presidential Nomination Primary Ballots

Presidential nomination primary ballots shall be printed in the same manner as state primary ballots as far as practicable with a few notable exceptions:

- The heading will be "Presidential Nomination Primary Ballot"
- There must be separate ballots for each major political party
- Major political party chairs will submit the names to be placed on their ballot to the OSS no later than 63 days before the primary. Once submitted, no changes can take place.
- If requested by a major party's chair, the ballot for their party must contain a place for a voter to indicate a preference for having delegates remain uncommitted (deadline is no later than 63 days before the primary)
- If requested by a major party's chair, the ballot for their party must contain a place for write-in name (deadline is no later than 63 days before the primary) [Minn. Stat. 207A.13](#)

Presidential Nomination Primary Notices & Sample Ballots

The OSS will provide notice of the date of the presidential nomination primary to county election offices 20 weeks before the primary. Within 10 days after notification each county shall provide notice of the date to each municipal clerk.

Presidential nomination primary sample ballots will be supplied by the OSS to county elections offices no later than 70 days before the primary.

Municipal clerks and county elections offices (unorganized territory) shall post (publishing is an option in addition to) a public notice stating:

- the date of the presidential nomination primary
- the location of each polling place
- the hours during which the polling places will be open
- requirements to vote in the primary as per [Minn. Stat. 207A.12\(b\)](#)
- notice that the voter's choice of a political party's ballot will be recorded and is public information. [Minn. Stat. 207A.14](#)

School District Elections

School districts are required to conduct their board elections in November of either even or odd numbered years. If a school district is holding an election at the same time as a city election or a state primary or state general election, the city clerks in the school district will in effect be conducting the election for the school district. The school district will still take the candidate filings for school board office, prepare and supply a school district optical scan ballot, and canvass the results of the election. The city, however, is responsible for all other facets of the election including election judges, and polling locations. If the election is not held with the state election, but is held in conjunction with a city election, the city is also responsible for optical scan ballot preparation, and absentee ballots. [Minn. Stat. 205A.04](#); [205A.06](#)

A school board may, by resolution, decide to choose nominees for school board by a primary. If school candidates are to be nominated by primary, a primary must be held when there are more than two candidates for a specified school board position or more than twice as many candidates as there are at-large school board positions available. The primary would be held on the first Tuesday in August. The candidate filing period would open 84 days before and close 70 days before the primary. [Minn. Stat. 205A.03, subd. 1](#)

The city may bill the school district for a fair share of conducting the election. The OSS has developed a Cost Allocation Procedure for election expenses that can be used as the basis for billing election costs. This document is available at the OSS [Election Administrator Forms](https://www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/election-administration/election-administrator-forms/) webpage (<https://www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/election-administration/election-administrator-forms/>).

Glossary

Absentee ballot board: A special board of election judges, that handles all processing of regular absentee ballots.

Agent delivery: A process by which during the seven days preceding an election, and up until 2:00 p.m. on Election Day, a voter may designate someone to serve as an agent to pick up and return absentee ballots to them. [Minn. Stat. 203B.11, subd. 4](#)

Assistive voting device: An electronic ballot marker with a touch screen, keypad, keyboard, earphones, or any electronic ballot marker that assists voters to use an audio or electronic ballot display in order to cast votes. [Minn. Stat. 206.56, subd. 1](#)

Ballot, defective: A ballot is defective if the voter overvoted, voter's intent cannot be determined during counting, or if the voter has written their name, ID number, signature on the ballot. A ballot may be defective in whole (as in cross-party voting in a primary) or as to a single office or ballot question (as in voting for too many candidates for one office).

Ballot, duplicate: A ballot created by an election judge team to replace a ballot that cannot be scanned by a ballot counter.

Ballot, spoiled: A ballot returned to an election judge due to an error made by the voter. The voter can exchange this for a new blank ballot.

Ballot box: Secure box used to hold voted ballots. The ballot counter sits atop the ballot box.

Ballot counter: Electronic optical scan device that counts paper ballots.

Bond referendum: A referendum held to determine if the jurisdiction should be authorized to sell bonds to obtain the funds to finance a project, such as a new building.

Challenger: An individual with written authorization to be present in a polling place to question the eligibility of voters. A challenger must prove they are a resident of Minnesota by providing the Head Judge with one of the proofs of residence acceptable for Election Day registration and complete an Oath of Challenge to Voter's Eligibility form to challenge a voter's eligibility.

City: A home rule charter or statutory city. [Minn. Stat. 200.02, subd. 8](#)

City, first class: A city with more than 100,000 inhabitants. [Minn. Stat. 410.01](#)

City, second class: A city with between 20,000 and 100,000 inhabitants. [Minn. Stat. 410.01](#)

City, third class: A city with between 10,000 and 20,000 inhabitants. [Minn. Stat. 410.01](#)

City, fourth class: A city with less than 10,000 inhabitants. [Minn. Stat. 410.01](#)

Clerk: Statutes refer to "municipal" clerks meaning either the city clerk or township clerk or a designee. References to school districts mean the school district clerk or a designee.

Coterminous: Two precincts having the same border or covering the same area.

Cross-party voting: Voting for candidates of more than one party when candidates compete for party nomination in a partisan primary. "Cross-party" voting is not allowed in a partisan primary.

DOH: Department of Health. Also known as the Minnesota Department of Health or MDH.

Exit polling: Individuals may conduct exit polls, surveys of voters, anywhere outside of the room being used as the polling place. An individual conducting an exit poll must present a photo ID to the head judge, along with credentials or a letter from the news media, and may only approach a voter as they leave the polling place after having voted to ask them to complete a written anonymous questionnaire.

General election: An election held at regular intervals on a day set by law at which voters of the state or any of its subdivisions choose by ballot public officials or presidential electors. [Minn. Stat. 200.02, subd. 2](#)

Governing body: The board of commissioners of a county, the elected council of a city, the board of supervisors of a township, or the school board of a school district. [Minn. Stat. 200.02, subd. 10](#)

Health care agent delivery: When a patient in a healthcare facility authorizes a person to pick up and return absentee ballots for the patient.

Health care facility: A hospital, residential treatment center, or nursing home licensed under Minnesota Statutes [144A.02](#) or [144.50](#). The Minnesota Department of Health has lists of licensed facilities.

Levy referendum: A referendum held to determine if the jurisdiction should be authorized to levy additional property taxes to fund general operational expenses.

Mail balloting: A method of voting that a qualified jurisdiction has chosen to be used for its regularly scheduled elections. [Minn. Stat. 204B.45](#)

Mail election: A special election for question(s) submitted to the voters of a county, municipality or school district with no polling place other than the office of the auditor or clerk. [Minn. Stat. 204B.46](#)

Metropolitan Area: The counties of Anoka, Carver, Chisago, Dakota, Hennepin, Isanti, Ramsey, Scott, Sherburne, Washington and Wright. [Minn. Stat. 200.02, subd. 24](#)

Metro Towns: Towns located in the “metropolitan area” as defined above.

Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA): A security mechanism in which users are authenticated through more than one required security and validation procedure. SVRS and ERS both have 2-factor authentication.

Municipality: Any city or township. [Minn. Stat. 200.02, subd. 9](#)

Non-partisan: Offices that do not have party designation.

Partisan: Offices with party designation.

Posted: “Posted” notice refers to the posting of a copy of the notice in a manner likely to attract attention by affixing the notice to a wall, post, or bulletin board, etc. [Minn. Stat. 645.12](#)

Precinct: The basic geographical units for organizing and administering elections. [Minn. Stat. 200.02, subd. 3](#)

Primary: An election at which voters choose the nominees for the offices to be filled at a general election. A primary can be either partisan or non-partisan, based on the office. [Minn. Stat. 200.02, subd. 3](#)

Prior registration: The registration record of an individual at the individual’s most recent prior residence address.

Published: “Published” notice means the publication in full of the notice in the regular issue of a qualified newspaper, once each week for the number of weeks specified. [Minn. Stat. 645.11](#)

Roster: The document provided to each precinct listing the voters registered in that precinct current residence address and date of birth.

Summary statement: The precinct summary statement is the official record of the numbers of voters and vote totals for the precinct. In precincts using an electronic ballot counter, the machine tape is the summary statement.

Voter Registration Application (VRA): Application used to register to vote or to update an existing registration.

Vouching: An Election Day procedure that permits an individual to register to vote and to cast a ballot if another authorized individual swears an oath that the individual resides in that precinct. Election Day voter vouchers within a polling place are limited to vouching for eight voters. However, that limitation does not apply to employees of residential facilities vouching for residents of those facilities.

Registered Voter in the Precinct: A registered voter in the precinct or a voter who registers on Election Day in the precinct who can attest to a new registrant's residence allowing them to register in the same precinct on Election Day. A voter may vouch for a maximum of 8 persons. Vouched for voters cannot vouch for new voters on Election Day.

Employee of a Residential Facility: An individual who proves that they are an employee of a residential facility in the precinct and attests to know a new registrant's residence at the facility. The employee voucher may vouch for an unlimited number of residents of the facility.

Witness: A registered voter who signs an absentee ballot envelope to document that the ballots inside were marked by the voter entitled to cast the ballots. Please refer to [Minn. Stat. 200.02](#) for other definitions that may be used in this guide.

Please refer to [Minn. Stat. 200.02](#) for other definitions that may be used in this guide.

Appendix

ELECTION RESOURCES

COUNTY AUDITOR

County auditors are required to train municipal clerks, election judges and individuals serving on the absentee ballot board (unless delegated) prior to the state primary. Training will address election laws and procedures; duties of municipal clerks and duties of election judges; and related subjects. [Minn. Stat. 204B.25](#); [204B.28](#)

SECRETARY OF STATE

The OSS supports county auditors' training programs by training the auditors (or their designees) in the administration of election laws and the training of local election officials and election judges. As part of the OSS's training program, the Secretary meets with election officials to present information about new laws and rules, and to discuss proposals for laws and for amendments to rules. The OSS also collaborates with other programs and conferences offered for election officials by their own associations. [Minn. Stat. 204B.27](#)

To assist county auditors, municipal clerks, and other election officials in their duties, the OSS makes available the following publications in hardcopy or electronic form:

MINNESOTA ELECTION LAWS - A compilation of Minnesota's election laws with annotations by the Attorney General. Printed in odd-numbered years, copies and updates are sent to county auditors for distribution to municipal clerks. It is updated online in even-numbered years. In all matters, the law and rule are the final authority. [Minn. Stat. 204B.27](#)

MINNESOTA ELECTION JUDGE GUIDE - Explains election judge duties.

MINNESOTA CITY CLERK ELECTIONS GUIDE - Provides city election procedure summary and references to Minnesota election laws.

MINNESOTA TOWNSHIP CLERK ELECTIONS GUIDE - Provides township election procedure summary and references to Minnesota election laws.

MINNESOTA SCHOOL DISTRICT CLERK ELECTIONS GUIDE - Provides school board election procedure summary and references to Minnesota election laws.

MINNESOTA CAMPAIGN MANUAL – Summarizes campaign financial reporting and fair campaign practices references to Minnesota election laws.

MINNESOTA ABSENTEE VOTING ADMINISTRATION GUIDE – Provides Absentee voting procedures summary and references to Minnesota Election Laws.

MINNESOTA MAIL ELECTIONS GUIDE – Provides Mail Election and Mail balloting procedures summary and references to Minnesota Election Laws.

MINNESOTA ELECTION RECOUNT GUIDE – Provides procedural summary for Election recounts and references to Minnesota Election Laws.

MINNESOTA POST-ELECTION REVIEW GUIDE – Provides procedural summary for Post-Election Reviews and references to Minnesota Election Laws.

MINNESOTA VOTING EQUIPMENT TESTING GUIDE – contains procedures for creating test decks, conducting pre-testing and public accuracy tests when using electronic voting equipment.

MINNESOTA PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION PRIMARY ADMINISTRATION GUIDE – Provides presidential nomination primary procedures summary and references to Minnesota Election Laws.

EXAMPLE POLLING PLACE SUPPLY LIST

This list is provided as an example only. Depending on your voting equipment, or arrangements your office may have with other units of government, you may not use certain items, you may use items not listed.

- Alphabetical tabs – 1 set
- Assistive voting device
- Bag of rubber bands & paper clips
- Ballot counter & power cord
- Ballots
- Ballot marking pens
- Ballot marker boxes/strings
- Ballot receipts for registered voter
- Blank cardboard pieces for signs
- Certificate of registered voter for curbside voting
- Clipboard
- Deceased voter forms
- Demonstration ballot
- Duplicated ballot envelope
- Duty cards
- Election Judge Manual(s) – add phone numbers on the back
- Election day registration applications
- Extension cords
- Flag(s) & stand
- HAVA Election Complaint Form
- State Election Law Complaint Forms
- Highlighter
- “I Voted” stickers
- Identification Badges
- Incident logs
- Key(s) to polling place; ballot box
- Letter opener
- Magic marker
- Magnifying lens
- Masking tape
- Oath of election judge form
- Oath of challenge to voter’s eligibility form
- Official certification sheet
- Opening/closing the polls checklist
- Payroll/timesheet records for election judges
- Poll closing sign for last voter in line at 8 p.m.
- Polling place posters and signs
- Precinct finder
- Precinct list of persons vouched for Form
- Precinct map
- Precinct rosters
- Results tape envelope
- Rubber fingers
- Sample ballots
- Scissors
- Secrecy cover for ballots
- Security seals for ballot transfer case
- Spoiled ballot envelope
- Voter registration tally sheet
- Voter registration bags
- Oath of Vouching to Voter’s Eligibility
- Precinct List of Person’s Vouched for Form
- Non-registered AB voter supplemental report(s)
- Voter receipts (may be different receipts to identify different school districts within same precinct)
- Write-in tally sheets/summary statements
- Greeter’s Lists

Chain of Custody Plans

Minn. Stat. 204B.182 CHAIN OF CUSTODY PLANS.

County auditors must file an elections chain of custody plan biannually with the secretary of state starting June 1, 2026.

- The county auditor must develop a county elections chain of custody plan to be used in all state, county, municipal, school district, and special district elections held in that county.
- If any of the political subdivisions cross county lines, the affected counties must make efforts to ensure that the elections chain of custody procedures affecting the local jurisdiction are uniform throughout the jurisdiction.
- County auditors must file the elections chain of custody plans with the secretary of state.
- The chain of custody plan must account for both the physical and cyber security of elections-related materials.
- The plan must include sample chain of custody documentation.
- The secretary of state may provide additional guidance to counties on elections chain of custody best practices and planning.

Note: the OSS created template for counties to use in the development of their chain of custody plans.

- A municipal clerk, school district clerk, or special district clerk must utilize either the county chain of custody plan or create a local chain of custody plan for use in local elections not held in conjunction with federal, state, or county elections that meets or exceeds the requirements of the county elections chain of custody plan.
- Any plan adopted under this paragraph must be adopted and filed with the secretary of state and the county auditor at least 84 days before the first election in which it will be used.

Each political subdivision clerk who develops a local elections chain of custody plan pursuant to paragraph (d) and each county auditor must review their respective elections chain of custody plan prior to each state primary election. Any revisions to the elections chain of custody plan must be completed and filed with the secretary of state by June 1 prior to the state primary election.

Minnesota City Clerk Manual
Elections Division – Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State
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