

JULIE PALAKOVICH CARR
Legislative District 17
Montgomery County

Ways and Means Committee



The Maryland House of Delegates
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony in Support of HB 37 - Election Law - References to Absentee Voting in
Communications – Mail-In Voting**

January 21, 2020

Dear Chair Kaiser, Vice Chair Washington, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

I am pleased to present House Bill 37. The goal of this legislation is to increase voter participation in Maryland elections by renaming “absentee voting” as “mail-in voting.”

Using the term “absentee ballot” is a misnomer. Under current law, no excuse is needed to vote “absentee” and all registered voters are eligible to request, receive, and submit their ballot prior to Election Day via the mail. Calling such a ballot a “mail-in ballot” is a more accurate representation of what service is available to Maryland voters.

Because there is no standard definition or requirements for “absentee voting” among states, Maryland voters may be unaware they are able to cast their ballot via mail in any election, no excuse necessary. Changing the name would especially improve clarity for new voters who may not be familiar with Maryland election laws.

At least two local Boards of Elections already use terms in addition to “absentee ballot” when communicating with the public. The Montgomery County Board of Elections has been using the terms “absentee ballot” and “vote-by-mail” interchangeably for at least seven years. St. Mary’s County refers to “any ballot received by mail” in multiple places on their website.

This proposed name change would make clear to voters that they have the option to vote by mail if they so choose and will make it easier for all voters to exercise their right to vote.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Delegate Julie Palakovich Carr



Board of Elections

Montgomery County, Maryland



Absentee Voting

Absentee Application

You do not need to give a reason to **vote by mail**, which is sometimes called "absentee voting". Any registered voter may apply for an absentee ballot. You can even request that your ballot be sent to you electronically. If you do, be sure to return your ballot by mail or in person to the Board of Elections in Gaithersburg. If you do not return it, you may only cast a provisional ballot at the polls or on Election Day. Absentee and provisional ballots cast by eligible voters are all counted before the results of the election are certified.

Requests to receive your ballot by mail or fax must be received at least one week before Election Day. You may request to download your ballot until the Friday before Election Day. If you miss these deadlines, you can still vote an absentee ballot in person at the Board's office in Gaithersburg until Election Day.

Paper Request

If you prefer, you may complete and return one of the forms below. Read the instructions, enter the required information, print the form, sign it, and return it to The Montgomery County Board of Elections. You can return it by mail, fax, or email (scanned as an attachment).

- Absentee Application [English]
- Absentee Application [En Español]

Absentee Voting FAQs

Agent Designation

Use of an Agent to pick-up an Absentee Ballot

A registered voter or the voter's duly authorized agent may apply in-person for an Absentee Ballot at the office of the local board. A qualified designated agent may pick-up and deliver the Absentee Ballot. To qualify to be an agent the designee:

- Must be at least 18 years old;
- May not be a candidate on the ballot;
- Must be designated in writing by the voter, under penalty of perjury;
- Must sign an affidavit under penalty of perjury that the ballot was:



[Home](#) > [Board of Elections](#) > Absentee Ballot Information

Absentee Ballot Information

An Absentee Ballot application form can be obtained by contacting the Saint Mary's County Board of Elections office at (301) 475-4200 ext. *1625 or ext. *1614, or by emailing susan.julian@stmarysmd.com or the State Board of Elections at 1-800-222 VOTE or you can download an application by clicking the link below .

[Click here to Download a Maryland Absentee Application](#)

For the **2018 GUBERNATORIAL PRIMARY**, your request for an absentee ballot application must be received (not just mailed) by the **deadline: June 19, 2018** via Mail or Fax. June 22, 2018 via the Internet. After these dates, you must come in our office to do a Late Absentee or Vote Early (see home page for Early Voting Information).

For the **2018 GUBERNATORIAL GENERAL**, your request for an absentee ballot application must be received (not just mailed) by the **deadline: October 30, 2018** via Mail or Fax. November 2, 2018 via Internet. After these dates, you must come in our office to do a Late Absentee or Vote Early (see home page for Early Voting Information).

Deadline for receipt of Absentee Ballots

Any absentee ballot, whether mailed or hand delivered, is timely if it reaches the election office by 8 p.m. on Election Day. **An absentee ballot may not be faxed.** **Any ballot received by mail** is timely if it arrives by 4 p.m. on the Wednesday after Election Day, and if the U.S. Postal Service has affixed a postmark on the envelope verifying that the ballot was mailed before Election Day. If the postmark is illegible, the voter's affidavit on the ballot envelope, indicating that the ballot was completed and mailed before Election Day, is sufficient.

Deadline for receipt of Overseas Absentee Ballots

Any ballot received by mail from outside the United States is timely if it arrives:

By 10 a.m. on the second Wednesday after a Presidential General Election; or By 4 p.m. on the second Friday after all other elections, and if the U.S. Postal Service, an Army post office, a fleet post office, or the postal service of any other country has affixed a postmark on the envelope verifying that the ballot was mailed before Election Day. If the postal service of the place from which the ballot was mailed does not provide a postmark, or if the postmark is illegible, the voter's affidavit on the ballot envelope, indicating that the ballot was completed and mailed before Election Day, is sufficient.

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- ★ [Candidacy](#)
- ★ [Candidate Information](#)
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- ★ [F.A.Q's](#)
- ★ [Get Involved](#)
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