

Secretary Merrill Outlines Process and Timelines for November General Election

Every Connecticut voter will have the opportunity to safely and securely cast their ballot by the method of their choosing and make their voice heard

HARTFORD – Connecticut’s Secretary of the State Denise Merrill today outlined the process and timeline for the November general election in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Every Connecticut voter must and will have the opportunity to safely and securely cast their ballots, by the method of their choosing, and make their voice heard,” said Secretary Merrill. “My staff, and our partners at the local level, the hard-working registrars of voters and town clerks in each of Connecticut’s 169 towns, are busy ensuring the most important goal of every election – that every Connecticut voter who wants to participate has the opportunity to easily register and conveniently cast their ballot, and that every valid vote cast is a vote counted. Our efforts to expand absentee balloting, to deliver secure drop boxes to every town, to protect the health and safety of voters and poll workers in polling places, and to protect the cybersecurity of our election infrastructure from the foreign actors attempting to compromise it, are all designed to provide an election that is safe, secure, and accessible for every voter in Connecticut.”

The Office of the Connecticut Secretary of the State will be sending out applications for absentee ballots to all eligible (active, registered) voters on a rolling basis between Tuesday September 8th and Friday September 11th. Voters can check their registration status at myvote.ct.gov/lookup. **All voters are eligible to vote by absentee ballot for the 2020 election by checking the COVID-19 excuse on the application.** Although absentee ballot applications will be mailed to every eligible voter, they are also available in English and Spanish at myvote.ct.gov/absentee.

“Mailing absentee ballot applications to all eligible voters makes it easier for every voter to exercise their right to vote without jeopardizing their health, if they choose to vote by absentee ballot,” said Secretary Merrill. “By including postage paid envelopes with the applications, and with the absentee ballots, we are using federal funds to make sure everyone who chooses to can vote by absentee ballot with no cost to the voters or to their towns. We are committed to using federal CARES Act funds to make sure that the town clerks have the resources they need to process and fulfill what will certainly be an unprecedented number of absentee ballots in November.”

Given the well-publicized problems with the United States Postal Service, Secretary Merrill is encouraging voters to use the secure ballot drop boxes to return their absentee ballot applications and the ballot themselves, in order to be sure that all critical mailings are received in a timely fashion. The USPS has made clear that they are not a reliable method for

delivering election mail; the ballot drop boxes are and should be used to deliver the absentee ballot applications and the absentee ballots themselves back to the towns.

Additionally, several legislative delegations have requested more secure ballot drop boxes for their towns. **To that end, we have used federal CARES Act funding to order 50 additional secure ballot drop boxes to be distributed to the towns that need them and to be installed in secure locations convenient to voters aside from town halls.**

“The secure ballot drop boxes have been a fantastic addition to Connecticut’s democratic process by making it easier for voters to vote,” said Secretary Merrill. “They are even more critical because the United States Postal Service has made it clear that they are either unable or unwilling to help voters cast their ballots. I encourage all voters to not rely on the post office and to deliver their absentee ballot applications and their absentee ballots directly to the ballot drop box in their towns.

“I’m thrilled to be able to provide additional secure ballot drop boxes to the towns that want them,” Merrill continued. “Making it more convenient for voters to cast their ballots in a safe and healthy way is our most important mission as election officials.”

Although applications will be mailed to voters after Labor Day, voters should be aware that the absentee ballots themselves cannot be distributed prior to October 2nd, by Connecticut law. **The small amount of time between October 2nd and November 3rd makes it imperative that voters return their applications and their ballots as soon as possible.** Returning the applications and the ballots early will make it easier for the town clerks to do the work that is necessary to process all of the applications and the ballots. **Connecticut law only allows the counting of ballots that have arrived by the close of polls, 8:00pm on Election Day November 3rd,** so returning ballots early and not relying on the post office are the best way for voters to ensure that their votes are counted and their voices heard.

“If you choose to vote by absentee ballot, please return your application as soon as you can to relieve the burden on the local election officials who process them,” said Secretary Merrill. “By law, the ballots themselves cannot be mailed out before October 2nd, so please return them as soon as possible as well, as they must be received by 8:00pm on Election Day. And use the secure ballot drop boxes in your town to ensure that they are received on time!”

More information can be found at myvote.ct.gov.

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