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How is the General Election going to be run?

The 2020 General Election in Barnes County will be primarily Vote-By-Mail, with an in-person polling location open on Election Day November 3, 2020 at the Barnes County Courthouse from 7:00 A.M. to 7:00 P.M.

Why are we encouraging Vote-By-Mail?

We don't know what is going to happen over the next few months with the COVID-19 Virus. Our biggest concern, second only to the safety of our election workers and voters, is having anything disrupt or delay the General Election. Vote-By-Mail has proven to be a safe and secure option in this uncertain time and situation that we've found ourselves in.

How is Vote-By-Mail different from absentee voting?

All counties in North Dakota offer **absentee voting** starting at 40 days prior to an election. That means someone who wants to vote absentee because they are going to be gone or prefer that method of voting may either mail, fax, or e-mail us an application, and we would send them a ballot in the mail. Similarly, another method is they may stop in our office to apply for and receive a ballot.

With Vote-By-Mail balloting, all active and inactive voters in the central voter file are mailed an application (unless they applied for a ballot in the 2020 Primary Election and indicated their desire to also receive a ballot for the General Election, in which case they should automatically receive one) which they need to complete and return to the county auditor to get a ballot back in the mail. If you do not receive an application by September 28th, please contact our office. Applications may be mailed to us at: Barnes County Auditor's Office, 230 4th St NW Room 202, Valley City ND 58072, or they may be dropped off at our office or in the secure ballot drop box available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at the north entry of the Courthouse. Please give yourself plenty of time to navigate the steps, especially if you are relying on the postal service. They do their best, but if you are waiting until the last minute, you may run out of time.

How will I get my Ballot?

As mentioned above, we will be mailing applications to all the individuals listed in the Central Voter File. These applications will be mailed between the 50th (September 14th) and the 40th day (September 24th) before the election. You need fill out the form, sign it, and return it to the county auditor to get your ballot.

To fill out the Application:

- Mark the box for the November (General Election)
- Full name, date of birth, and a phone number where you can be reached during the day
- Mark the box for the ID type that you are using, usually your North Dakota driver license or ND non-driver ID, and put your ID number in the box directly below
- Residential Address
- Mailing Address, if different from your residential address
- And you will need to sign and date your application (please be mindful when signing the application, as the signature you use on the application will be compared to the

signature you use on the ballot affidavit (ballot return envelope) and if the signatures are not consistent, someone will have to follow up with you to verify that you did, in fact, sign both pieces)

Do I have to vote my ballot right away?

No, you need to complete and mail your ballot by the day before Election Day (postmarked by November 2nd, but please keep in mind that some post offices do not place that postmark locally; it may go to another city to be postmarked). If you are running up against this deadline, please hand deliver your ballot to the post office and witness that they hand cancel the postmark with the appropriate date. If it is dated the 3rd or later, your ballot will not be counted. Plan ahead and give yourself and the postal service plenty of time. Also, please remember to place proper postage on the envelope. It will take just a regular stamp; additional postage is not required.

What if I do not get an application?

It is possible that you will not receive an application. Usually, the reason is that you moved and have not updated your address with the North Dakota Department of Transportation or have moved too recently for that data to be updated and transmitted to the Central Voter File. You may be new to the state and have not been issued a driver license or state-issued non-driver identification card. Whatever the reason, if you don't receive an application, you can go online to WWW.VOTE.ND.GOV and fill out, print, sign, and mail your application to your county auditor. You can also call the Barnes County Auditor's office (701-845-8500) and we will get you an application.

So, what if I am filling out my ballot and I make a mistake?

If you make a mistake when filling out your ballot, you can request a replacement ballot. Call your county auditor's office and they will process another ballot for you.

Anything else I have to do with my ballot after voting?

After voting, put your ballot into the secrecy envelope, put the secrecy envelope (with the ballot inside), into the return envelope provided. You must date and sign the back of the return envelope and you must put postage on the envelope before mailing it back to the county auditor, unless you are dropping it off in the secure ballot drop-box on the north side of the courthouse entrance. Ballot envelopes that are returned to the county auditor without a signature may not be processed, unless we can reach you and rectify the situation.

What happens to my ballot when I mail it to the county auditor?

When we receive your ballot, we record the receipt of the ballot in Voices, our election administration software. We then attach your application to the front of your ballot envelope. It is important that **you** sign your application and **you** sign your return envelope to ensure your vote counts. The Election Judges compare these two signatures before opening and counting your ballot.

My son/daughter is my Power of Attorney. Can they apply for a ballot for me?

Your vote is yours to cast. You need to apply for your ballot under your signature, and you can have anyone help you with completing the application. We cannot send you a ballot based on a request from your Power of Attorney.

How secure is my vote?

We will only issue ballots based on your application for a mail-in/absentee ballot. We compare your name, address, and ID number with the Central Voter File before sending you a ballot. We will not issue you a ballot without your signature. When we receive your ballot back, it is held in a secure location until the Mail-in/Absentee Board meets to process all the ballots received. At that point, the Election Judges will compare the signature on your application with the signature on the ballot return envelope before the envelope is opened and processed. If that board cannot determine if the application and ballot envelope are signed by the same person, they will not process the ballot. Instead, they will refer that ballot to the County Canvassing Board that meets six days following each election for further review and final determination as to whether to count the ballot.

Will anyone know how I voted?

No, the ballots are opened by Election Judges. They first separate the secrecy envelopes from the ballot return envelopes after examining the signatures. Once the ballot return envelopes are empty, they are set aside before ballots are removed from the secrecy envelopes and initialed by the Election Judges.

When will my ballot be counted?

For this Election, we will begin processing mail-in ballots the day before Election Day. The ballots will be opened and processed; however, the ballot scanners will be locked so that no results can be tabulated until after 7:00 PM on Election Day.

When and how will election results be released?

Election results will be uploaded to the Secretary of State's website sometime after 7:00 PM on Election Day, November 3, 2020.