



MAIL BALLOTS IN NEVADA

PROCEDURES, REQUIREMENTS, AND PROCESSING – AN FAQ

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Introduction



Mail ballots will be distributed to Nevada’s voters in mid-October in advance of the 2026 General Election. These ballots provide every active registered voter with the opportunity to participate in elections by mail. This policy brief outlines—in a “Frequently Asked Questions” (FAQ) format—the procedures, requirements, and regulations governing mail ballots in Nevada. It is intended to help you be informed as you complete your ballot, mail or drop it off, and follow it through the counting process.

How Long Have Mail Ballots Been Used in Nevada?



The practice of voting by mail is not new in Nevada. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, any voter could request to vote using a mail-in absentee ballot, which was first authorized for use in 1921. During the June 2020 Primary Election—at the height of the pandemic and amid fears that a sufficient number of poll workers could be hired to assist with the election—the Office of the Secretary of State used its existing authority in *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS) to establish mail precincts to conduct the election by mail. In August 2020, the Nevada Legislature approved [Assembly Bill 4](#) of the 32nd Special Session, which provided for the conduct of elections by mail during a state of emergency or disaster declaration. As outlined in the measure, every registered voter received a mail-in ballot but still had the option to vote in person at designated voting centers during early voting and on Election Day. During the 2021 Legislative Session, the Legislature made the distribution of mail ballots to all voters a permanent practice.¹ It is important to note that today’s vote-by-mail procedures follow many of the same foundational methods Nevada voters used for many years under absentee balloting.



1. See [AB 321](#) of the 2021 Legislative Session.

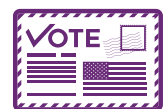
What Is a Mail Ballot and Who Can Receive One?

A mail ballot is a paper ballot that is sent by mail to every active registered voter in Nevada, including those who register to vote or update their voter registration information up to 14 days before the election. Mail ballots are synonymous with absentee ballots, and since every active registered voter receives one (unless the voter has specifically opted out), it is important that voters keep their voter registration information current. Mail ballots must be distributed to active voters between the fifth Monday before the election (October 5, 2026) and the fourth Monday before the election (October 12, 2026). A voter may elect to receive the mail ballot before this period if the mail ballots are available for distribution. They are distributed earlier to Nevada voters residing outside of the state (to students, for example) or who are entitled to receive a “military overseas ballot” ([NRS 293.269911](#) and [NRS 293D.320](#)). A registered voter may, however, elect **not to receive** a mail ballot by submitting a written notice to the Secretary of State or the applicable local election officer (LEO) not later than 60 days prior to the election. If the notice is received less than 60 days before the election, the request will apply for the next election ([NRS 293.269911](#)). The voter can later request to receive a mail ballot by submitting another written notice ([Nevada Administrative Code \[NAC\] 293.327](#)).



How Are Mail Ballots Distributed and What Is Included with the Mail Ballot?

Mail ballots are distributed by first-class mail (or any class of mail if the Official Election Mail logo or an equivalent logo is placed on the ballot). A secrecy sleeve for the return ballot must be included, and the return envelope must have prepaid first-class postage if the voter is within the United States, its territories, or on a military base ([NRS 293.269913](#)). If a registered voter updates their mailing address after the mail ballot is sent but on or before the 14th day before the election, the LEO must send a second mail ballot to the updated address and cancel the first mail ballot ([NAC 293.325](#)). Each LEO must provide instructions with each mail ballot, including how to correct any errors made when completing the ballot ([NAC 293.329](#)).



How Do I Complete My Mail Ballot?

Be sure to follow the instructions included with your mail ballot. Upon receiving a mail ballot, voters should:

- 1** Mark and fold the ballot (if possible, please mark your ballot using a blue or black pen);
- 2** Place the ballot in the secrecy sleeve;
- 3** Include a legible photocopy of the required identification (ID), if required;
- 4** Place it in the return envelope;
- 5** Seal the envelope;
- 6** Sign in the space provided; and
- 7** Mail or deliver the return envelope as authorized by law ([NRS 293.269917](#)). Please see “What Are My Options for Returning the Mail Ballot?” below.



Are There Any Identification Requirements When Voting by Mail?



First-time voters who register by mail or computer and have not previously voted in a federal election in Nevada must include a legible photocopy of a current and valid photo ID or a current utility bill, bank statement, paycheck, or document issued by a governmental entity with their mail ballot ([NRS 293.2725](#)). If a legible photocopy of the required ID is not included, the ballot will be treated as a provisional ballot, and the voter must provide the ID before 5 p.m. on the sixth day following the election ([NRS 293.269915](#)).² The local election office will contact the voter requesting the necessary identification.



REMINDER—You DO NOT have to vote using your mail ballot. *If you prefer, you can vote in person at a local voting center during the early voting period or on Election Day. It is illegal to vote twice in an election, and if you vote in person at the polls, you will be asked to confirm during voter check-in that you understand voting twice is a crime.³ At the polls, you will have the option to either surrender your unvoted mail ballot or affirm that you will destroy it and not use it.*

Can Someone Help Me Complete My Mail Ballot?

It is unlawful for a person to mark and sign a mail ballot on behalf of a voter or assist a voter in doing so, except in situations where the voter has a physical disability, is at least 65 years old, or is unable to read or write. In these cases, a person may mark and sign the mail ballot on behalf of the voter or assist the voter in marking and signing the ballot. The person assisting must indicate next to their signature that they have marked and signed the ballot on behalf of the voter. Additionally, if a person assists a voter, either the assistant or the voter must include their name, address, and signature on the return envelope ([NRS 293.269919](#)).



2. In this case, a provisional ballot is used when the voter's identity needs to be verified by local election staff. The ballot can be cast as normal; however, it will not be counted until the required verification is completed by local election staff.

3. See [NRS 293.780](#).

What Are My Options for Returning the Mail Ballot?

Mail ballots must be:

- Delivered by hand to the LEO or any ballot drop box in the county before the polls close on Election Day; or
- Mailed to the LEO, postmarked on or before Election Day, and received by the county no later than 5 p.m. on the fourth day following the election ([NRS 293.269921](#)).



NOTE: If the deadline for receiving a mail ballot falls on a legal holiday, the deadline is extended until 5 p.m. on the next working day ([NAC 293.332](#)).

Ballot Drop Boxes—Each LEO must provide a ballot drop box at every polling place in the county, including those for early voting. These drop boxes must be made of metal or other rigid material and be capable of securely receiving and holding mail ballots ([NRS 293.269921](#)).



Returning Mail Ballots—A voter may request another person to return the voter's mail ballot. The authorized person can return the mail ballot by mail or personal delivery to the LEO or deposit it in any ballot drop box in the county. Prior to 2020, similar provisions existed for the return of an absentee ballot, except the law limited the ability to return it to the voter or certain family members. These provisions were expanded for mail ballots by the Legislature during the 32nd Special Session in 2020 in [AB 4](#) and made permanent in [AB 321](#) of the 2021 Legislative Session.



Penalties for Violations of Mail Ballot Drop Off—It is illegal for anyone to impede, obstruct, prevent, or interfere with the return of a mail ballot. Moreover, violating any rules related to returning mail ballots, such as impeding the return of a ballot or failing to return a ballot on behalf of a voter, is a category E felony and is punishable as provided in [NRS 193.130](#) ([NRS 293.269923](#)).



Tracking and Recording Received Mail Ballots—LEOs must count, batch, and record the total number of mail ballot return envelopes received beginning on the first day of early voting. If a return envelope for a different county is received, it must be forwarded to the correct LEO ([NAC 293.342](#)).



How Is My Mail Ballot Processed and Counted?



LEOs must establish procedures for processing, verifying, and counting mail ballots, which may be conducted by computer or other electronic methods. These procedures **must** align with the provisions of Nevada law relating to mail ballots ([NRS 293.269925](#)).

Mail Ballot Central Counting Board—To assist in the processing of mail ballots received, each LEO must appoint a mail ballot central counting board. The size of the counting board shall be determined based on the volume of mail ballots required to be sent to each active registered voter in the county for the election ([NRS 293.269929](#)).



NOTE: *The voters appointed as election board officers for the mail ballot central counting board must not all be of the same political party. No candidate for nomination or election, or a spouse, child, sibling, grandparent, or grandchild of the candidate, may be appointed to serve on the mail ballot central counting board.*

The LEOs' deputies who perform duties in connection with elections shall be deemed "officers" of the mail ballot central counting board. The mail ballot central counting board operates under the direction of the LEO.



Duties of the Mail Ballot Central Counting Board—The LEO must deliver received mail ballots to the mail ballot central counting board for counting not earlier than 15 days before Election Day. The board must sort, count, and account for all mail ballots by precinct or voting district and place them in a container provided by the LEO. The mail ballot central counting board can begin counting the received mail ballots 15 days before Election Day and must complete the count on or before the seventh day following the election ([NRS 293.269931](#)).



TotalVote and Other Election Software and Systems for Mail Ballot Processing—Nevada election officials use TotalVote Election Software within [Voter Registration Election Management Solutions \(VREMS\)](#) in addition to other ballot sorting technology—including the TriTek system in Carson City, the Agilis system in Clark County, and Relia-Vote from BlueCrest in Nye and Washoe Counties—to securely sort and process returned mail ballots. Returned mail ballot status is automatically shared with Nevada's "Poll Pad" platform to ensure that voters who have already submitted their mail ballot cannot vote at the polls (or vice versa, for voters who have already voted in person and also attempt to vote by mail). This system integration assists with voter integrity, election security, and system transparency.⁴

4. For more information regarding VREMS and Nevada's "Poll Pad" election management procedures, please see the Guinn Center's election FAQs, "[Voter Registration: Procedure, Security, and List Maintenance—An FAQ](#)," September 2026, and "[Nevada's VREMS for Voter Registration Management](#)," October 2024.

Can the Public Observe the Counting Process?

The public must be notified of the counting process, and members of the general public are allowed to observe the handling of mail ballots ([NAC 293.322](#)).

How Are the Signatures on Mail Ballots Verified?



Signature Verification—When a mail ballot is returned, the LEO will verify the voter’s signature using the TotalVote, Tri-Tek, Agilis, or Relia-Vote election software. If there is any doubt about the signature matching through the software, a manual verification is required. If at least two election employees believe there is a “reasonable question of fact” regarding the match of the signature, the LEO will contact the voter to confirm the signature ([NRS 293.269927](#)). This is known as “curing” the signature. The voter must provide a signature or confirmation no later than 5 p.m. on the sixth day following the election ([NRS 293.269927](#)).



Criteria for Signature Discrepancies—Pursuant to [NRS 293.269927](#), when verifying signatures on the mail ballot, a “reasonable question of fact” exists if the signature “differs in multiple, significant and obvious respects from the signatures of the voter available in the records of the clerk” [LEO]. The law provides that there is **not** a reasonable question of fact as to whether the signature used matches the signature of the voter “if the signature used for the mail ballot is a variation of the signature of the voter caused by the substitution of initials for the first or middle name, the substitution of a different type of punctuation in the first, middle or last name, the use of a common nickname or the use of one last name for a person who has two last names and it does not otherwise differ in multiple, significant and obvious respects from the signatures of the voter available in the records of the clerk” [LEO]. There is also **not** a reasonable question of fact if “there are only slight dissimilarities between the signature used for the mail ballot and the signatures of the voter available in the records of the clerk” [LEO].

Any rejected mail ballots must be placed in a separate envelope with the reason for rejection noted. If the signature is verified, the mail ballot is either placed in a secure container or delivered to the mail ballot central counting board. The LEO must keep records of the chain of custody for all mail ballots ([NAC 293.334](#)).

What Happens If My Signature on the Mail Ballot Does Not Match or If I Forgot to Sign My Ballot?

The LEO must establish procedures to contact voters as soon as possible who need to provide a missing signature or confirm their signatures. This includes contacting the voter by mail, telephone, or electronic means. Voters can confirm their identity by answering questions, providing personal data, or showing proof of valid identification (see subsection 7 of [NRS 293.269927](#)).



So What About the Results of the Ballots – When Are They Tabulated and Released?

To keep up with the volume of mail ballots, counting can occur under the direction of the LEO and the mail ballot central counting board as mail ballots are received by the county. The results of the mail ballot vote in each precinct must be certified and submitted to the LEO, who shall have the results added to the votes of the precinct that were not cast by mail ballot.

The returns of the mail ballot vote must be reported separately from the other votes that were not cast by mail ballot in the precinct unless reporting the returns separately would violate the secrecy of a voter's ballot ([NRS 293.269935](#)). To protect voter secrecy, results must NOT be reported separately if a precinct has fewer than 10 election returns from early voting or fewer than 10 returns of mail ballots. Instead, these returns must be reported in combination with the regular votes of the precinct ([NAC 293.357](#)).

Please note that **no voting results of mail ballots may be released until all polling places are closed and all votes have been cast on Election Day**. Any person who disseminates to the public in any way information pertaining to the count of mail ballots before all polling places are closed and all votes have been cast on Election Day is guilty of a misdemeanor (see subsection 3 of [NRS 293.269935](#)).



What Safeguards Are Used to Protect the Integrity of Mail Ballots, Signature Verification, Ballot Tabulation, and Reporting?

The LEO must ensure that mail ballots are safeguarded and delivered securely for counting. The LEO must also ensure that the procedures for handling mail ballots are followed to maintain the integrity of the election process. These safeguards include:



Election Employee Audits—The LEO shall perform periodic audits of each employee in the elections office whose regular duties include checking signatures on mail ballots. If the LEO finds in the course of conducting those audits that an employee has an irregular acceptance or rejection rate, the LEO must retrain the employee or prohibit the employee from checking signatures on mail ballots ([NAC 293.336](#));



Testing of Electronic Sorting and Image-Capturing Devices—If the LEO uses an electronic device to sort mail ballots, the LEO must test the electronic device before it is used to ensure that the electronic device properly sorts mail ballots. Moreover, the LEO must test any electronic device used to capture an image of a voter's signature on a mail ballot before it is used to ensure that the device is able to clearly and accurately capture the digital image of a signature on a mail ballot ([NAC 293.336](#));



Daily Audits of Electronic Devices—The LEO must conduct daily audits of electronic devices used to verify signatures by appointing a team of bipartisan election board officers to manually review a random sample of one percent of the mail ballots received in the previous 24-hour period. If the device fails the audit, it must be immediately stopped, and the Secretary of State must be notified ([NAC 293.339](#));



Signature Verification Devices Connected to Closed, Secure Network—Electronic devices used to verify signatures on mail ballots must only be connected to a computer network on a closed, secure network behind a firewall. Detailed maintenance logs must be kept ([NAC 293.338](#));



Emergency Procedures—Each LEO must submit a plan to the Secretary of State setting forth the procedures for the processing and handling of mail ballots in case of an emergency. This plan must be submitted not later than 90 days before each election ([NAC 293.321](#)); and



Reporting to the Secretary of State—From the 45th day before an election through the 7th day following the election, LEOs must inform the Secretary of State daily about each registered voter to whom a mail ballot was sent, each mail ballot received, and whether the signature verification process has been completed ([NAC 293.345](#)).

Can I Track My Mail Ballot to Make Sure It Has Been Received and Counted?

All voters may track the status of their mail ballots at <https://www.nvsos.gov/votersearch/>. Through this website, voters can also track their voting history (including when ballot materials were mailed), find polling locations, and download and print a sample ballot.



For more information regarding mail ballots, along with other election information, please visit your [county's election website](#) or the Office of the Secretary of State at <https://www.nvsos.gov/sos/elections>.



ABOUT THE GUINN CENTER

The Kenny Guinn Center for Policy Priorities is a nonprofit, nonpartisan policy research center addressing key challenges faced by policymakers and all Nevadans.

Our staff researchers, together with academic partners and independent experts across the state, tackle policy issues that range from taxation to water use, healthcare to education, and everything in between. We identify and analyze the complex problems we face as a state and inform decision-makers about actionable, data-driven, and effective policy solutions.

We invite you to join us in creating a brighter future for the Silver State by supporting our mission, signing up for our newsletter, or getting in contact.

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