

Pandemic Election Preparedness Project

*How prepared is the United States to conduct a safe election in
November 2020 with an ongoing pandemic?*





Vote-by-Mail Criteria

Scoring Categories	Allocated Points
1. Universal Vote-By-Mail*	
A. Voters automatically receive a ballot	10.0
B. State conducted universal vote-by-mail in the 2016 election	3.0
2. Requesting an Application for Absentee Voting (<i>select one</i>)	
A. All registered voters receive an application	5.0
B. No excuse is required for an application	2.0
C. Excuses for COVID-19 concerns are permitted to request an application	1.0
3. Completing a Mail Ballot	
A. Ballot does not require a witness signature	3.0
4. Submitting a Mail Ballot (<i>select one</i>)	
A. Ballot is accepted if postmarked by election day and received beyond 5 or more days from election day	3.0
B. Ballot is accepted if postmarked by election day and received within 5 days from election day	2.0
5. Channels for Submission (<i>select one</i>)	
A. Drop off boxes, mail, and in-person channels are available	3.0
B. Mail and in-person channels are available	2.0
6. Special Scoring	
A. Voters can submit an application for an absentee ballot via three or more channels	1.0
B. Voters need a notary or two witnesses to complete an absentee ballot	-3.0
C. Voters are required to provide a copy of photo ID for the mail application and/or ballot	-1.0
D. Mail ballots are due before close of polling	-1.0

State Letter Grades by Points

22 – 15



A

14 – 10



B

9 – 6



C

5 – 0



D

< 0



F

*Note that states which receive points for instituting universal vote-by-mail are not scored on any criteria involving applications



Vote-by-Mail Criteria

Supporting Definitions

1. Universal Vote-By-Mail

A. Voters automatically receive a ballot (10 pts)

There is a statewide law stating that every registered voter will receive a ballot without requesting one, or enough counties have adopted universal vote-by-mail that the policy could reasonably be considered "universal" in the state.

B. State conducted universal vote-by-mail in the 2016 election (3 pts)

There is a statewide law stating that every registered voter will receive a ballot without requesting one, or enough counties have adopted universal vote-by-mail that the policy could reasonably be considered "universal" in the state, AND the universal vote-by-mail policy was implemented in time for the 2016 general election.

2. Requesting an Application for Absentee Voting

A. All registered voters receive an application (5 pts)

One of the following is true:

- There is a statewide law stating that every registered voter will receive an absentee ballot application without requesting one.*

OR

- The Secretary of State has clarified that all registered voters will receive an absentee ballot application for the November election.*

This sub-category does not apply to states where the Secretary of State mailed absentee ballot applications to all registered voters for the primary but has not publicly stated their intent to do so for the general election, or to states where counties within the state are taking it upon themselves to send absentee ballot applications.

B. No excuse is required for an application (2 pts)

No excuse is required in order for a voter to request an absentee ballot, or that excuse can be for any reason.

C. Excuses for COVID-19 concerns are permitted to request an application (1 pt)

An excuse is required, but either COVID-19 concerns fit under the currently accepted excuses or statewide elections officials have publicly stated that COVID-19 concerns will be an acceptable excuse in the November general election.



Vote-by-Mail Criteria

Supporting Definitions

3. Completing a Mail Ballot

A. Ballot does not require a witness signature (3 pts)

A mail ballot will be considered valid without requiring the signature of any person other than the voter.

4. Submitting a Mail Ballot

A. Ballot is accepted if postmarked by election day and received beyond 5 or more days from election day (3 pts)

A mail ballot will be considered valid if postmarked by Election Day and the deadline for it to be received is more than 5 days after Election Day.

B. Ballot is accepted if postmarked by election day and received within 5 days from election day (2 pts)

A mail ballot will be considered valid if postmarked by Election Day, but must be received within 5 days or less from Election Day. If a state requires that a mail ballot is received by the close of polling on Election Day, they will receive no points under this category.

5. Channels for Submission

A. Drop off boxes, mail, and in-person channels are available (3 pts)

According to state law or through an announced policy of the state election official, drop-off boxes are made available on Election Day (and/or during early voting) where voters can drop their mail or absentee ballots. This is inclusive of "in-person absentee" voting and in-person drop-off boxes in all-mail states. The state also has an in-person option which requires more than simply dropping the mail ballot off at a box, and allows a voter to mail in their mail ballot.

B. Mail and in-person channels are available (2 pts)

There is an in-person option for submitting a mail ballot that requires more than simply dropping the ballot into a box and allows a voter to mail in their mail ballot. A state which requires a voter to return a mail ballot through the mail will receive no points in this category.



Vote-by-Mail Criteria

Supporting Definitions

6. Special Scoring

A. Voters can submit an application for an absentee ballot via three or more channels (1 pt)

While all states typically allow a voter to request a mail or absentee ballot application through the mail and in-person at their local elections office, this sub-category applies to states who have additional methods of requesting an application, such as calling their elections office, emailing the state or their local official, or through fax.

B. Voters need a notary or two witnesses to complete an absentee ballot (-3pts)

Voters must have their ballot notarized, or must have their ballot witnessed by 2 other persons.

C. Voters are required to provide a copy of photo ID for the mail application and/or ballot (-1 pt)

A photocopy of a government-issued photo I.D. is required either at the point of mail/absentee ballot application or with the mail ballot itself. This sub-category is inclusive of states where an I.D. is required for a smaller category of voters, such as first-time voters or voters who did not provide their I.D. at the point of voter registration. This sub-category is not inclusive of states that require an I.D. at the point of voter registration, only those which require it at the point of absentee ballot application or with the mail ballot itself.

D. Mail ballots are due before close of polling (-1 pt)

Mail ballots must be received at some point prior to the close of polls on Election Day. This sub-category is not inclusive of states that require the ballot to be submitted by the close of polling, but is inclusive of states that have a deadline at some point prior to the close of polls. If a state requires that the mail ballot be received prior to the close of polling, but will allow a voter to submit in person up to the close of polling, they would still be considered to have a deadline prior to the close of polling.