

## ELECTION CONNECTION 2026

The state-wide election process has already begun, the Federal Primary election is set for June 2, 2026 and the Federal General election for November 3, 2026.

In Montana, we use a **STATE-WIDE DATABASE (Elect MT)** to handle our voter registration, elections and to keep track of every single ballot issued and returned. Registered voters across the state of Montana can view their sample ballots for the June 2<sup>nd</sup> Primary election through the voter information website: [voterportal.mt.gov](http://voterportal.mt.gov).

I thought it would be good to cover some regularly asked questions with some answers in this edition.

**Q: I moved within the last year, do I need to re-register?**

**Answer:** Yes, if you have moved, please fill out a new registration card and either mail it or drop off in person to the election office.

**Q: I recently changed my name; do I need to re-register?**

**Answer:** Yes, to be able to verify voter eligibility.

**Q: How does absentee voting work?**

**Answer:** Absentee voting is when voters receive their ballots by mail. Individuals must complete the Application for Absentee Ballot in order to receive their ballot in the mail. Ballots will be mailed to the elector 25 days before the election. Ballots are issued and **ONE UNIQUE LABEL** is printed for each **ACTIVE** voter that we place on the affirmation envelope for return with the voter's signature and birth year. That label contains: the voter's name, the voter's county registration number, the precinct, and ballot number as well as a bar code with a nine-digit number that is unique to that voter and no one else in the entire State of Montana. **ONE VOTER, ONE LABEL, ONE BALLOT!** Once the election office receives the voted ballot, the election office will do the verification in processing the ballot. (13-13-205, 13-13-214).

**Special Note:** Absentee voters **cannot** vote at the polls unless it is provisional.

**Q: How can I obtain an absentee ballot?**

**Answer:** Current and new registrants may request an application for an absentee ballot by mail, phone, or in person. Completed applications can be mailed directly to the election administrator or delivered in person to the election office 30 days prior to a federal election. For the Primary election, this would be May 4, 2026 (*registration forms postmarked by this date and received within 3 days are accepted for regular registration*). Those wishing to register or change voter information after this date need to register and request an absentee ballot in person at the Election Office. (13-2-301). **Special Note:** May 4, 2026, Absentee Ballots are made available at the election office for in-person absentee voting at the election office (13-13-205)

**Q: Do you have to update your absentee status every year?**

**Answer:** No, you will continue to receive an absentee ballot. To be **removed** from the absentee list, the voter needs to submit a request to be removed to the county election administrator.

**Q: When are the ballots due?**

**Answer:** Voted ballots are due back to the election's office or to a polling place by 8:00pm on election day. **Post mark does not count!**

**Q: Can I bring in someone else's ballot?**

**Answer:** Yes, someone else can bring in another person's ballot. The voter needs to sign the signature envelope and provide their birth year. These will be compared to the signature we have on file for validation.

*Absentee ballots can also be dropped at any polling location for delivery to the election office.*

**Q: What happens with the ballots when received in the election office?**

**Answer:** Once a ballot is received in the office, they are stamped and verified. Verification is done by trained election staff that scans the unique nine-digit bar code on the return envelope which in turn connects to the voter; and then signatures and birth years are examined for accuracy and authenticity. **EVERY** signature and birth year is verified. If the signature and birth does **not** match the voter's record, the ballot is **rejected**, and the voter is contacted.

**Q: What are the deadlines for the close of regular registration; Can I register and vote after the close of regular registration?**

**Answer:** Close of regular voter registration is 30 days prior to election. Late registration begins the next day. For the Primary Monday May 4, 2026, at 5pm is the close of voter registration; and late registration begins on Tuesday May 5, 2026. Yes, during late registration those wishing to register or change their information and vote in the election may do so by obtaining their ballots **in person** at the election office on or before 5pm on the Friday before the election, - May 29, 2026 Saturday before the election- June 1, 2026 and or before noon on election day. (13-2-301, 13-2-304)

**Q: Upon receiving a ballot, can a voter void the original?**

**Answer:** Yes, a voter can request a new ballot for various reasons: voter made a mistake or damaged the ballot, ballot did not get to the voter in a timely manner or was damaged in the mailing process, ballot was never received at the election office.

**Note: WE CANNOT VOID** a ballot once it is received in the election office.

**Q: What forms of ID are acceptable to vote?**

**Answer:** All voters will be required to show one form of photo identification at the polls on Election Day. Acceptable forms of identification must be **current** and are as follows:

Driver's License, MT State ID, Military ID Card, Tribal Photo ID, US Passport, MT Concealed Carry Permit

**Q: Can an individual vote without any form of identification?**

**Answer:** Yes. There are a few different ways a voter can still vote.

- A voter can supply a photo ID, such as a Costco card, library card, etc, along with one of the following: paycheck, government check, utility bill, bank statement and/or any government form, showing the electors physical address.
- If the voter does not have any of the above forms, the voter can request a "Polling Place Elector ID" form from the judge
- Or the elector can vote a provisional ballot and provide one of the items listed above to the Elections office by 5:00 pm the day after the election.

Don't forget; you as the voter are able to check your status, your information and follow your ballot from the time it was mailed for absentee voters to the time it is received and accepted through My Voter Page located on the Secretary of State's website (<https://app.mt.gov/voterinfo>) or you can click on the link located on our website [www.prairiecounty.org/election](http://www.prairiecounty.org/election). Because we strive to ensure safe and secure elections, we encourage voters to contact the election office with any questions or concerns because this ensures you are getting accurate and precise information. You can reach us by phone 406-635-5575, email at [clerksoffice@prairiecountymt.gov](mailto:clerksoffice@prairiecountymt.gov), or in person at the office.

**Submitted by: Election Administrator- Shari Robertson**