

HOW TO MAKE YOUR VOTE COUNT

Your election ballot tells us how you want your vote counted. To do this, we must clearly understand your voter intent. If this cannot clearly be determined, then the integrity of the election process, as well as the law, requires that the ballot or a portion of a ballot be set aside. That means that vote cannot be counted. The following information guides you through the Vote by Mail voting process to ensure your vote can be properly counted.

Clearly Mark Your Ballot

For your ballot to be read accurately and completely, you must completely fill in the box next to your candidate or YES/NO measure choice. Other marks may NOT be counted.

Right →

Wrong {

COMMISSIONER FOR NATIONAL PASTIMES
Vote for ONE

LANCE ARMSTRONG
Cyclist

KAREEM ABDUL JABBAR
Basketball Center

TED WILLIAMS
Baseball Outfielder

PEGGY FLEMING
Figure Skater

JIM THORPE
Olympian

Write-in

Vote for... how many?

For most races, your choice is ONE but for others, like some city council or school and special districts, you may be able to vote for two or three candidates. You may vote for fewer candidates than allowed, but if you vote for more candidates than allowed, your vote(s) in that race will not be counted.

Voting for a Write-in candidate?

REMEMBER – Only votes for *qualified* write-in candidates are counted. If you have a question about which candidates are qualified for the ballot, call 784-6675.

For your write-in vote to be counted, you must completely fill in the box next to the Write-in line and print or write legibly the name of the qualified write-in candidate on the line next to the oval.

Dale Earnhardt
Write-in

Made a mistake on your ballot? **Go to the next page** →

I made a mistake. How do I fix it?

Ask for a new ballot...

You are entitled to a maximum of three opportunities to cast a ballot, including the original ballot issued (Elections Code §14288). You may bring your mismarked ballot to the Elections Office (675 Texas Street, Suite 2600, Fairfield) and exchange it for another one (Elections Code §3014).

Or call us at 784-6675 and we will cancel your ballot and send you a new one. When we send you a new ballot, we will send you a new return envelope. **Do not use the first envelope to return a second or third ballot.** The return envelope has information we need to quickly verify the ballot and your signature.

Correct your mistake...

Another way to correct a ballot is to make a distinct "X" through the mismarked oval, mark your preferred choice, and print or write legibly "Yes" next to the name of your candidate or measure choice. **Do not put your initials or name on the ballot. Identifying marks will void your ballot and we cannot count it** (Elections Code §14287).

The example at the right shows how a voter "corrected" his or her vote. If our Vote by Mail Ballot Review Board can agree on how you intended to vote, we will correct your vote using statewide-accepted procedures. Mismarked ballots are among the last counted because of the extra processing involved. *To make sure your ballot is counted as soon as possible, ask for another one if you mismark or otherwise spoil it.*

COMMISSIONER FOR NATIONAL PASTIMES
Vote for ONE

LANCE ARMSTRONG
Cyclist

KAREEM ABDUL JABBAR
Basketball Center

TED WILLIAMS
Baseball Outfielder *Yes*

PEGGY FLEMING
Figure Skater

JIM THORPE
Olympian

Write-in

I've marked my ballot. Now what?

Things to do...

- Fold the ballot along the same folds as it came to you.
- Place the ballot in the return envelope provided. This envelope has identification information unique to you that we use in processing your returned ballot.
- Sign your name and verify your residential address** in the spaces provided on the envelope. It is important to let us know when you change your residence address. ***If you do not sign this envelope, we cannot count your ballot.***
- Mail your ballot in time for it to reach us by 8 p.m. on Election Day. If you haven't put it in the mail by the Thursday prior to the election, you can bring it into the Elections office, take it to a curbside drop-off location, or return it to at any polling place in the county on Election Day.

Things NOT to do...

- DO NOT** use a return envelope with your spouse's or roommate's name and ID on it. We may not be able to count either ballot.
- DO NOT** cross out the bar codes on the envelope. The bar codes speed processing and counting of your ballot.
- DO NOT SIGN YOUR NAME OR PUT MARKS THAT WILL IDENTIFY YOU ON THE BALLOT. This includes initials, phone number, Social Security Number, and any other unique identifying mark.** Signing your name on your ballot will totally disqualify it (Elections Code §15154).



Some final thoughts...

Your ballot must be postmarked on or before Election Day and received no later than seven days after Election Day (Elections Code §3020).

Most voters put their Vote by Mail ballot in the mail but you may bring it into the Elections Office, take it to a curbside drop off location, or return it to any polling place in the county on Election Day. If you put it in the mail, no postage is necessary.

If you are ill or disabled, you may authorize another person to return your ballot. This person may be your spouse, child, parent, grandparent, grandchild, brother, sister, or a person residing in your household.

You must print or write legibly in the box on the return envelope who is returning your ballot, and you must sign in the space provided (Elections Code §3017).

You may vote at your regular polling place by surrendering your Vote by Mail ballot. You must take your ballot to *your* regular polling place and give it to a precinct officer who will write "SPOILED" on it and issue you another ballot. If you do not have your Vote by Mail ballot, you may vote a provisional ballot (Elections Code §3015-3016).

Top Reasons Vote by Mail Ballots are not Counted

1. **The return envelope is not signed.** Without a signature to compare against your voter registration card, we cannot count the ballot. If we have time, we will send a signature cure letter to you or try to call you, but mail service is not always timely.
2. **The signature on the return envelope is significantly different than the signature on the voter's registration card.** Signatures change over time so, if yours has changed, please re-register.
3. **We received your ballot after the close of polls.** Every election, dozens of Vote by Mail ballots are returned after Election Day and these, by law, cannot be counted. As soon as you have marked your ballot, please return it. If you wait until a day or two before the election to make your choices, bring your ballot to the Elections Office, take it to a curbside drop-off location, or return it to any polling place in the county on Election Day.