

What Happens After You Vote in North Carolina?

Most of us are pretty familiar with how to vote, whether it's by an absentee by mail ballot through early voting or voting in person on election day. We know we need two witnesses to witness us filling out our ballot and design our absentee by mail ballot. We know that during early voting, we can select any polling place in our county, but on election day, we must go to our assigned polling place. We also know that we can use online resources like the League of Women Voters nonpartisan online voter guide, vote for one.org To learn more about candidates get early voting hours and locations in our county. Check our voter registration and more. But what happens after we vote? What does the tabulation process look like? Who does it involve? It's more important than ever that North Carolinians understand this process. Where do our election results come from? Election disinformation and misinformation is taking root. There are substantial forces in our state who had been hard at work. These folks want you to believe that our elections lack integrity, that the people who run our elections don't deserve our trust. This cynicism and distrust. These are forms of voter suppression. Democracy simply cannot function in the absence of voter competence. The truth is, many safeguards are in place to ensure that voters voices are heard and that our elections are free and fair. We're going to go over this process so you can better understand how this all works in the days leading up to and following an election. Then, armed with this knowledge, you can help inform your fellow community members. It is so important that we counter the myths and better educate those around us. You don't have to be a member of the League of Women Voters to get involved in this important work. grassroots efforts to undermine elections are happening now. They are potentially stripping you and your loved ones of the power of your vote. Stand Up Against those forces and dispel those myths. Let's talk about absentee by mail ballots a hot topic in 2020 due to COVID and an option that will likely be popular in the fall of 2022 as well. Let's talk about the elements of the absentee ballot container envelope. There's the voters signature and the printed name, address and signature of two witnesses or the name signature and official stamp of a notary public. These are must. The witnesses can and will be contacted if there are any questions about the status of the voter who submitted that ballot. If you received assistance to vote, and this happens a lot with hospital patients or nursing home residents. The assistant must sign the envelope, but this is not required. As plenty of voters mark their ballot without assistance. When voters mail back their absentee by mail ballots or hand deliver them to their county board of elections. How can they feel sure it was delivered and that it will be counted. The voters absentee container envelope has a barcode on it that is scanned when delivered. You can check the status on the ballot tracks portal on nc.spe.gov. Valid tracks along with a voter search tool will let you know what is happening to your ballot upon its delivery to the board of elections. Once it's returned and received at your county board of elections. The first step is an examination of the container envelope by the board of election staff. They look to see that all the information the voter was supposed to provide is entered. If there are any missing or questionable items, the staff will reach out to the voter in writing with an explanation of the problem we found and let the voter know what options there are to correct it. A person's ballot will not be approved and the envelope will not be opened until the corrections are made. After your container

on the web has passed this initial review it is presented to the five members of your county board of elections. The board members make the final decision about whether to approve an absentee by mail container envelope and ballot. This final decision is done during public meeting starting this year on October 4. This process by law must start five weeks before the election. During this process, your voter record will be updated and you will be able to check your absentee by mail status on the voter search tool at NC SP e.gov that you can request an absentee ballot and then decide not to use it in 2020. A lot of folks wanted to have one just in case but they ultimately felt safe enough to go and vote in person either during early voting or on election day. What happens to unmarked absentee ballots and these cases, your voter records does not show that you have requested an absentee ballot so none of the polling place workers will know that you have received a ballot when you show up to vote in person. You do not need to get permission to vote in person and more importantly you do not need to bring your absentee ballot with you in fact, leave it at home don't create confusion. Once you have voted up, go home and destroy that absentee ballot. Let's play devil's advocate for a moment. You might be wondering what if someone else finds a voters unmarked absentee by mail ballot? Here's the answer. All absentee ballots that are mailed or accompanied by an envelope that matches that particular ballot. Your absentee ballot can only be returned in the envelope that was in the packet delivered along with the ballot. So if someone finds a stray ballot, it cannot be returned without that envelope. Secondly, if someone were to try to impersonate you and complete the container envelope for two witnesses, and your signature along with your ballot, the election reconciliation process would know that two people tried to vote in your name. This would be investigated as a criminal case as a felony by law enforcement. Once your absentee by mail ballot is received and accepted by the board of elections, you will be marked as voted in your voter record. Therefore your name will not appear in the poll book at early voting sites in your county or on election day. If there is some confusion and that voter tries to vote on election day, they will only be able to vote with a provisional ballot. All provisional ballots are investigated before canvass and eligible to be counted only if there is no previous record of a vote either by mail or at an early voting location. Your vote is protected if there is some confusion about whether your absentee ballot was returned and accepted. And the clock is ticking for voting in person. Should there be a delay in recording your absentee by mail vote and you go ahead and vote in person. The Board of Elections will be able to contact you for an explanation and will retrieve your absentee ballot and destroy it to the only your in person ballot will be counted. There are safeguards to prevent double voting. Remember that is a felony. Use the absentee tracking valid tracks and voter search to help you stay informed about the status of your absentee ballot. You can always call your county board of election if you have any questions or concerns. Let's say you do opt to vote absentee by mail your county board of elections has reviewed and accepted your absentee ballot. Then what at some point after the absentee review process begins but before election day in November, election officials are authorized to begin opening the container envelopes and scanning the ballots. This process mirrors what happens when someone goes at an early voting site. They mark their ballot and the ballot is scanned into the tabulator and stored until after the election. All voted ballots are stored in a secure location following all MC State Board of election protocols. The tabulator both for absentee by mail ballots and early voting ballots keeps a record of the votes marked on the ballot on election night at 730 or shortly thereafter. After all the polls have closed, the results of the tabulator are run and the votes are reported to the public. No results are allowed to be released until after all voting is completed. North Carolina is fortunate that election officials are permitted to begin processing absentee ballots before election day. It makes the process of learning the election results go faster. let's reiterate. This is

a transparent process. voters don't have to sit around and wonder for example, if their ballot made it through the mail system and arrived at its destination. Voters can check the online status of their returned absentee ballots using both the ballot tracks tool and the voter search tool. They can also use the voter search tool to see that their early voting ballot was entered as a voted ballot. Remember that before the votes are officially finalized at canvass all ballots are considered absentee ballots. After Canvass you can check to see that you voted at a one stop early voting site or by mail. Additionally, voters can attend the review meetings that will be scheduled weekly before the election. Check your County Board of Elections website for days and times. Sometimes you can access these meetings remotely. Because many people in North Carolina vote early either in person or using the absentee by mail method. A large portion of the votes are already counted and ready to be released at about 730 On election night. But what if someone goes on Election Day? Much of the actual counting of the votes takes place after the polls close at 730 on election night. The process takes place during the canvass, which is the normal reconciliation process all elections. This is also open to the public and we encourage you to attend those meetings at your county board of elections. Canvass is the normal process where all the ballots voter records and vote counts are processed and finalized to come up with the final results of an election. canvass takes place over 10 days following the closing of the polls on election day. During canvass, the sample audit counts a hand count on the ballot are done to make sure that the tabulators were accurately reporting the votes that were marked on ballots. All of the ballots voted and voted on voted authorization to vote forms are reconciled to make sure all the numbers are provisional ballots are counted the absentee by mail ballots that had not been received. Or tabulated prior to the election are evaluated through and counted. All of these ballots must have been postmarked on or before Election Day. candidates whose results were within a certain

percentage. Canvass is the time when any irregularity can trigger an investigation of the election by the state Investigation Division. After canvass, the state board of elections certifies all election contests and the winners are officially No. Let's talk a little bit about hand to eye recounts either the standard county audit process or in the case of close elections where a recount is requested by one of the candidates. Each ballot is analyzed by two bipartisan workers, one from each party to examine and count the vote recorded on the ballot marked by each voter. The ballot itself preserves the record of the voters selection and as permanent, small variances are expected. Between the canvass results and the recount results in a 2016 statewide recount in the State Auditor's race. Uber trailed by about 6000 votes before the recount, after the recount would won by about 6050 votes out of more than 4.5 million cast in that election. We have heard so much about election security or lack thereof about hacking and rigging. Know that there has been no evidence of hacking in North Carolina even though we do have proof that the Russians tried to access our election in 2016 at polling locations, no computers tabulators or other voting machines are connected to the internet. Your votes are recorded directly from your ballot and do not go through an internet connection. The state board of elections is aware that this can happen and are looking for it. They are on BART a take our elections very seriously. Additionally, most counties in North Carolina use hand marked paper ballots. The few counties that are not are using electronic voting machines that produce a paper version of the marked ballot. These paper ballots can be audited and recounted after the election if there are questions or concerns the best protection for any election system is the vigilance and participation of voters. Know what should happen when you go vote. Rely on trusted official sources of information at the polls on your ballot before you go. Help election officials follow all the policies that have been set up to ensure a safe election and report any problems you may

observe. Lastly, attend any and all meetings at your board of elections where they process your votes. By exercising patience, we can be sure every vote is counted and that all of our voices are heard in every election. The League of Women Voters in North Carolina has put together a webpage with lots of information about how to observe County Board of election meetings and how to submit a report so that others can gain from your being there. There are videos and fact sheets on election security in North Carolina. There are links to investigative reports showing that election deniers theories though gaining steam across the United States are fraudulent. Please refer to this page often and share it with your networks. Here are some additional resources, we encourage you to check out the State Board of Elections website ncspe.gov. Request your absentee ballot very easily the deadline is November 1. But of course we recommend you act sooner using the online portal. Also check out ballot tracks the voter lookup tool, and here's a number that is an election protection hotline should you encounter any problems? So what should your next steps be? Make a voting plan soon if you haven't done that already use [voteone.org](https://www.voteone.org) the League of Women Voters nonpartisan voter guide it will tell you where you can early vote and win where your election day polling places located information about the candidates and more. It'll also show you what your ballot will look like. Contact the league if you have questions, communications at [LwV and c.org](https://www.lwv.org). We're happy to help or call your county board of elections office. Find all county board of election links using the State Board of Elections website. Some of this can be a bit nuanced. Can my spouse drop off my absentee by mail ballot at the county board of elections office? For me the answer is yes. Can you register to vote when you go to early vote in person? The answer is yes. But you must have resided in the county where you are registering for at least 30 days prior to election day. And you must prove your residence by showing a particular document with your current name and address such as a North Carolina driver's license or a copy of a current utility bill. urge everyone you know to make a voting plan this is definitely an election where you don't want to leave your planning to the last moment. Please share this information widely committed to being the go to source for rational helpful information on voting among the people in your network. So often people don't know the answers to basic questions but they're too embarrassed to call an election official and ask let them know that they can lean on you. You can even look to see a friend voted by using the North Carolina state board of elections voter lookup tool that'll let you know who might need an extra push to get to the polls. Keep in mind these key dates when it comes to our general election 2022

Thank you for voting in this election, and thank you for encouraging others to do the same.