

CHAPTER 16.1-11.1 MAIL BALLOT ELECTIONS

16.1-11.1-01. Counties may conduct mail ballot elections - Polling places - Records.

1. The board of county commissioners of a county may conduct an election by mail ballot. The mail ballot election must include city elections administered by the county auditor and may include any other election administered by the county auditor pursuant to an agreement with the governing body of a political subdivision within the county. The board shall designate one or more polling places in the county to be open on the day of the election for voting in the usual manner. The county auditor shall place a notice at all polling places in the county used at the last statewide election which states the location of the polling places open for the election. The county auditor shall keep a record of each mail ballot provided to qualified electors and provide to the election board at each polling place open on the day of the election a list of every person who applied for a mail ballot.
2. The board of county commissioners of a county may conduct an election partially by mail ballot. If the board of county commissioners chooses to conduct an election partially by mail ballot, the commission may use mail ballots for any precinct in which fewer than four hundred votes were cast for the office of governor at the last general election at which that office was on the ballot.

16.1-11.1-02. Application for mail ballots.

The county auditor shall mail an application form for a mail ballot to each active voter listed in the central voter file for the county and each qualified individual eligible to vote in the state for the first time on one date no sooner than the fiftieth day before the election and no later than the fortieth day before the election. The county auditor, for two consecutive weeks after the date on which the mail ballot applications are mailed, shall publish in the official newspaper of the county an application form for a mail ballot and a notice that additional mail ballot applications may be obtained from the election official. The application form for a mail ballot must be in substantially the form provided in section 16.1-07-06.

16.1-11.1-03. Mail ballot distribution.

The county auditor shall mail to each qualified applicant an official mail ballot with a return identification envelope, voter's affidavit, and instructions according to section 16.1-07-08.

16.1-11.1-04. Voting by electors.

Upon receipt of a mail ballot, an elector shall mark it, sign the return identification envelope, and comply with the instructions provided with the ballot. The elector may return the completed ballot to the county auditor by mail or, before five p.m. on the day before the election, to any other place of deposit designated by the auditor. If the elector returns the ballot by mail, the elector shall provide the postage, and the ballot must be postmarked no later than the day before the election.

16.1-11.1-05. Replacement ballots.

An elector may obtain a replacement ballot if a mail ballot is destroyed, spoiled, lost, or not received by the elector. The elector seeking a replacement ballot shall make the elector's request of the county auditor or appropriate election officer no later than four p.m. on the day before the election. After submission to the appropriate election officer, a voter's marked mail ballot may not be returned to the voter for any reason other than to complete any missing information required on the affidavit on the back of the return envelope.

16.1-11.1-06. Canvass of votes - Mail ballot precinct.

The county auditor shall appoint a mail ballot precinct election board for the purpose of counting mail ballots in the same manner as prescribed in section 16.1-07-12.1. The board may begin scanning the ballots at any time beginning three business days before election day and

the closing of the polls on election day. Results from the mail ballot precinct may be counted, canvassed, or released under chapter 16.1-15 as soon as any precinct within the county, city, or legislative district closes its polls on the day of the election. The county auditor shall designate a location for the closing, counting, and canvassing process under chapter 16.1-15, which location must be open to any person for the purpose of observing. The board shall comply with the requirements of sections 16.1-15-04 through 16.1-15-12 as applicable. A county conducting a mail ballot election constitutes one voting area, and ballots need not be sorted according to precinct or ward unless necessary for the administration of the election.

16.1-11.1-07. Counting of mail ballots.

A mail ballot may be counted only if:

1. The ballot is returned in the return identification envelope with a postmark or official date stamp of at least the day before the election and received prior to the meeting of the canvassing board;
2. The envelope is signed by the elector to whom the ballot is issued; and
3. The signature has been verified by the election board with the signature on the elector's mail ballot application form.

16.1-11.1-08. Election laws applicable.

When applicable, all election procedures provided in this title must be followed. The only difference between mail ballot voting and absentee voting is, for mail ballot voting, the application for the ballot is mailed to each active voter listed in the central voter file for the county administering an election by mail and each qualified individual eligible to vote in the state for the first time.