

Voting by Absentee Ballot

By Phyllis Makuck

Voter Rights Coalition of Carteret County A NonPartisan Organization

The nonpartisan Voter Rights Coalition of Carteret County is doing a series of educational pieces on sections of North Carolina's new voting law. The most significant changes in the law relative to absentee voting are that voters must now use an official NC Board of Elections (BOE) request form to get an absentee ballot and must have two witnesses or a notary public present during voting.

Anyone who otherwise qualifies to vote in the county can choose to vote by absentee ballot in that county. Here are some of requirements to consider:

1. According to the BOE, "[e]ither the voter or the voter's near relative or qualified legal guardian may request an absentee ballot. A 'near relative' is defined as the voter's spouse, brother, sister, parent, grandparent, child, grandchild, mother-in-law, father-in-law, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, stepparent, or stepchild." Power of attorney has no legal standing in requesting and/or completing absentee ballots. An individual requesting an absentee ballot must meet the above requirements as a near relative regardless of power of attorney status.
2. The official request form must be completed and returned to the BOE no later than 5 p.m. on the Tuesday before Election Day. Handwritten requests will *no longer* be accepted. (See contact information below for getting the official request form.)
3. The request must contain the voter's full name, address, date of birth and an identification number (e.g., NC driver license number, NC DMV-issued identification card number or last four digits of social security number. In place of the identification number, one can attach a copy of a current and valid photo identification card or a document that shows the name and residential address of the voter such as a current utility bill, bank statement, paycheck, government check or other government document.)
4. The form asks for what election the ballot is being requested—e.g., primary, general election, special election, municipal election—and the date of the election. For November, that would be "General Election" on "November 4, 2014."
5. The voter, a near relative or qualified legal guardian must sign the official request form. If a near relative is making the request, his/her name, address, contact information and relationship to the voter must be provided.
6. The completed form may be returned to the county BOE by email (boemail@carteretcountync.gov), by fax (728-8571), by regular mail or in person (1702 Live Oak Street, Suite 200, Beaufort, NC 28516).
7. The BOE will check the request form against the current voter registration records and, if eligible, will promptly mail the absentee ballot. NC General Statute requires that ballots be *mailed* to the eligible voter requesting it and prohibits "handing over" official ballots once they are requested.
8. For this fall's election, absentee balloting materials, including an official absentee ballot with instructions and a "container-return envelope" will be available to be mailed to voters 60 days prior to the November 4 election.
9. The new law requires that *two* persons or one notary public witness the voter marking the ballot (or causing it to be marked per his/her instructions). A notary public is prohibited from charging a voter a fee to notarize an absentee ballot.

10. The ballot must be sealed in the "container-return envelope" and the Absentee Application and Certificate on the back of the envelope must be completed and signed. The two witnesses or one notary public must complete and sign the section designated for witnesses. If someone assisted the voter, he/she must also sign and date the certificate.
11. Absentee ballots must be returned to the county BOE in the envelope provided no later than 5 p.m. on Election Day. Ballots received after 5 p.m. on Election Day will be timely *only* if they are received by mail and bear a postmark that is dated on or before the date of the election and are received no later than 5 p.m. on the third day following the election.

Absentee ballot request forms are available at the County BOE office, 1702 Live Oak Street in Beaufort, or on the NC BOE website at www.ncsbe.gov/ncsbe/Portals/0/FilesP/AbsBallotReqFormv112013.pdf. The form can be downloaded, printed and copies reproduced. The nonpartisan Voter Rights Coalition will make absentee ballot request forms available at all of its events and is planning to mail them to those who voted by absentee ballot in the past General Election.

For information pertaining to military and overseas voters, go to www.ncsbe.gov/ncsbe/, "Resources" menu and click on "Military-Overseas."



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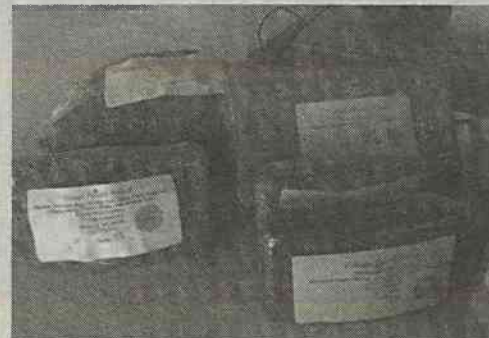
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