

ELECTION FACTS

Let's Talk about . . . VOTE BY MAIL MYTHS!

As Election Day, November 8, 2022 approaches, common myths about mail-in voting are gaining in circulation. Here are the facts you should know about voting by mail.

MYTH: I have to vote by mail this November.

FACT: Due to newly passed legislation, all registered voters in Illinois will be mailed a vote by mail application. Voters will only be mailed a ballot, if they sign and return the application. If the voter wishes to vote in person, either early at the Grundy County Courthouse, or on Election Day at their polling place they can do that. Vote by Mail is only an option! Illinois voters also now have to option to apply to be placed on the Permanent Vote by Mail list if they so choose.

MYTH: There are fewer safeguards in place for voting by mail, compared to voting in person.

FACT: There are multiple safeguards in place no matter which voting method is used. Vote by Mail ballots must have a signed ballot certification. This signature is confirmed by Ballot Processing Judges. Signature comparison is also used for verification for in person voting, meaning the same safeguards are used for voting by mail and in-person voting.

MYTH: If a vote by mail application is sent to a deceased individual or a voter who no longer resides at that address, the mail ballot can be fraudulently voted.

FACT: Only an application is being mailed, not a ballot. If a ballot did get mailed to someone who is deceased or no longer lives at that address, each mail ballot must be returned in an authorized ballot return envelope and must be enclosed in a signed certification envelope. This signature is compared to the signature on file at the County Clerk's office for the voter by Ballot Processing judges, from both political parties. If the signature does not match, the ballot is rejected.

MYTH: Vote by Mail makes it easy for a person to vote more than once in the same election.

FACT: Once a voter applies for a vote by mail ballot and the ballot envelope is returned, it is entered as returned into the voter registration system. If a voter tried mailing a second ballot, or tried to vote in person, the system would not allow it as that voter would already be marked as "Voted".

MYTH: If I apply and get mailed a ballot, I won't be allowed to vote at my polling place.

FACT: If a ballot is mailed to a voter and they either choose to not return it or if the ballot has not been received back to the County Clerk's office, the voter may still vote at their polling place. They either need

to surrender the unused mail ballot to the election judges or they may vote by affidavit, stating they did not receive and or use the mail ballot that was sent to them. If the mail ballot is received after the voter votes in person, the system would not allow it to be counted.

MYTH: If I leave something blank on my ballot, my ballot will not be counted.

FACT: If a voter does not choose to vote for a contest, no vote is recorded for that contest only. The rest of the ballot still counts. You may vote for as many or as few contests on your ballot as you choose.

MYTH: Vote by Mail ballots that arrive after Election Day are thrown out.

FACT: IL Election Officials process and count all valid vote by mail ballots that are postmarked on or before Election Day, and that arrive within 14 days after the election.

MYTH: Vote by Mail ballots and early votes are only counted if there is a close race.

FACT: Every valid ballot cast in Grundy County will be counted, no matter the outcomes. Mail ballots have to be postmarked by Election Day and returned within 14 days of the election. All mail ballots that should be counted, will be counted before results are final.

MYTH: If ballots are mailed to more voters, people will ask for 'replacement ballots' and vote multiple times or duplicate the ballot and vote multiple times.

FACT: Ballot envelopes are sent to the individual voter. Upon return, that ballot is marked as returned and the system would not allow for another ballot for that voter to be accepted. If a duplicate ballot was requested and more than one is returned, it would be rejected. If criminal intent is suspected, the voter could be prosecuted.

MYTH: Vote by Mail ballots can be intercepted and anyone could vote someone else's ballot.

FACT: Voter validation is key, and the signature verification is the best and required practice. This means every ballot returned is enclosed in a signed and sealed ballot certification envelope. Ballot Processing Judges, from each political party, work in teams of three to verify voters' signatures. The voters' signatures on the ballot certification envelope are compared and verified to the voters' signatures on the vote by mail application, and also on that voter's registration file. If all three judges agree the signature does not match, the ballot is rejected and the voter is notified within two days and is given a chance to rectify the issue and validate their identity if needed. This period extends to 14 days after Election Day, in order to allow all votes to be counted. Also, if a voter does not receive their ballot, or loses it, they may simply contact their local election office for a replacement. Most importantly, stealing a mail ballot is a crime, and punishable by law.

MYTH: If you mail out ballots non-citizens will be able to vote and so will deceased people.

FACT: Ballots are mailed to only registered, active voters. The question of U.S. citizenship is handled during the voter registration process, which occurs before a ballot could be mailed. Illinois has automated processes that regularly match death records to the voter registration lists to prevent ballot going to a deceased voter.

MYTH: Once I mail my ballot, someone could tamper with it before it is delivered.

FACT: Any ballot delivered to the County Clerk's office that is open, or has been opened and resealed, is automatically rejected by the Ballot Processing judges. If rejected, the voter is notified and has a chance to review the ballot and confirm it is theirs, and it would then be counted.

MYTH: If my vote by mail ballot is rejected after it is received, my vote will never count.

FACT: If your ballot is rejected by the Ballot Processing judges, you will be sent a notification by mail. You will have the opportunity to rectify the issue. If valid, your vote will be counted.

MYTH: Voters move around and do not update their addresses, leaving ballots floating around that other people could use.

FACT: All Official Election mail, including vote by mail ballots are non-forwardable. Illinois utilizes automated address updates through voter registration procedures and updates from the U.S. Postal Services National Change of Address (NCOA) database. Also, Illinois is a member of the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC) to share data and ensure proactive address updates among member states. All these efforts help to keep election official records updated. And again, if someone attempts to vote another person's ballot, it is a felony, and punishable by law.

MYTH: If people cannot make an effort to vote in person, they do not deserve to vote.

FACT: Voting is a right afforded to all citizens, regardless of whether they cast their ballot from home or a local polling location. Studies show mail-in voting increases voter turnout. Vote by Mail voters have more time to review their ballot and conduct research on candidates and policies in the comfort of their home. Also, data shows that higher use of mail ballots helps to close the disabled voter participation gap.

MYTH: It is so easy to divert ballots. People who do it will only get a slap on the wrist if caught.

FACT: In Illinois, if you intentionally tamper with or divert a mail ballot, it is a Class 3 felony, punishable by a \$25,000 fine and up to 5 years in jail FOR EVERY BALLOT TAMPERED WITH!

- Voting by mail is safe and supported by all political parties.
- Studies consistently find there is no evidence mail ballots increase voter fraud.
- U.S. military members have been voting by mail since the Revolutionary War.

As the election authority for Grundy County, nothing is as important as ensuring that voters have faith and confidence in the security of our elections, knowing that their votes are accurately counted and the integrity of the process will be protected.

Voters are encouraged to call or go directly to the County Clerk's Office, or to the County Clerk's website and verified social media pages to ensure voters are getting accurate election information.

THE LAST DAY TO REQUEST A VOTE BY MAIL BALLOT IS NOVEMBER 3, 2022.

CALL THE GRUNDY COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE WITH ANY QUESTIONS
OR CONCERNS YOU MAY HAVE!

(815) 941-3222, Option #1
elections@grundycountyil.gov

