

## Vote 2010: Absentee ballot a choice for some

Written by Keesha Gaskins  
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Absentee ballots will be available starting **Friday, June 25th for the August 10, 2010, primary election**

. Let's talk about voting, voting qualifications and voting absentee. Voting is the first step to civic participation. There are multiple ways to exercise your right to vote in Minnesota. You may vote at the polls on Election Day, you may vote in-person as an absentee at the county auditor or city clerk's office before the election or mail in an absentee ballot.

July 20, 2010, was the last day to register to vote in order to appear on the list for your polling location. If you are not registered by July 20, 2010 then you will have to register via **same-day registration**

when you go to vote on August 10th.

To vote in Minnesota in the August 10 primary you must meet the following qualifications:

- You must be 18 on or before August 10, 2010
- You must be a citizen of the United States
- You must be a resident of the State of Minnesota by July 22, 2010
- You must be registered to vote (either pre-registered or on the day of elections)

You may **NOT** vote if:

- You are convicted of treason
- You are under guardianship of another person where a court of law revoked your right to vote
- You are found to be legally incompetent
- If you are currently under supervision (incarcerated, parole or probation) for a felony conviction. Once your time is served or you are "off paper" you may automatically vote.

### Absentee Ballot

If you know you will be away from your precinct, you are ill or disabled, prevented from going to the polling location by a religious holiday or belief or are serving as an election judge in another precinct – then you may vote by absentee ballot. You may apply and vote during normal office hours at your county auditor or municipal clerk's office before the election. You can do this on the **Saturday before the election** from 10 am to 3 pm, or on the Monday before until 5 pm.

### Absentee Ballot by Mail

If you choose to absentee vote by mail make sure you apply early so you can mail back or deliver your absentee ballot before Election Day. Call, write or fax your county auditor, city clerk or secretary of state's office for an application. You can also download an absentee ballot application at the Minnesota Secretary of State's website or at the League of Women Voters Minnesota website. In some places you can return your application by fax, check first.

### Military & Living Abroad

If you are in the military or reside outside the U.S., you will vote based on where you last lived in Minnesota. You or your parent, spouse, brother, sister, or child (at least 18 years of age) can apply for a ballot for you. If you are permanently unable to go to their polling places may request to be put on a permanent absentee ballot recipient list by completing a Permanent Absentee Ballot Application.

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### What if?

*If I vote by Absentee Ballot and then change my mind and want to vote for someone else? What prevents me from voting both by Absentee Ballot and in person?*

When you vote by absentee, absentee ballots are put in two envelopes, one inside the other. The outer envelope has the voter's name and identification on it. The inner envelope, which contains the actual ballot, is blank to protect the voter's privacy.

On Election day, the name on the outer envelope is compared to the Roster at the voter's polling place. If the voter signed the Roster, indicating that he or she voted in person, the absentee ballot is rejected. If not, the Election Judge enters "AB" on the signature line for that voter, and the envelope is opened revealing the second, blank envelope. The blank envelopes are saved in a pile, opened later, and the ballots are put in the optical scanner or counted.

If a voter comes to the polls after the Absentee Ballot is processed, he or she will NOT be able to vote in person. If the voter comes to the polls before the Absentee Ballot is processed, he or she may vote in person, and the Absentee Ballot will not be counted. **In many precincts, the Absentee Ballots are processed during quiet times in the afternoon on Election Day.** If you vote by Absentee Ballot and then change your mind and want to vote for someone else, you should go to the polls early in the day to do so.

If you know you won't be available or think you may not be able to make it to the polls on **August 10, 2010 request and absentee ballot application and VOTE!!**

### Links & Numbers:

**Minnesota Secretary of State** – [www.sos.state.mn.us](http://www.sos.state.mn.us) (612)-215-1440

**Minnesota League of Women Voters** – [www.lwvmn.org](http://www.lwvmn.org) (612)-333-6319

*Keesha Gaskins is the Executive Director for the League of Women Voters Minnesota and the League of Women Voters Education Fund. Gaskins holds a law degree from Northeastern University School of Law, and served as a law clerk for both the Minnesota Supreme Court and the Supreme Judicial Court for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. For more information, visit [vote.lwvmn.org](http://vote.lwvmn.org)*