

GFWC Community Service Program: Civic Engagement and Outreach ~ 2020-2022

Diane Murphy, Chairman | dmm7852@gmail.com | H. 781-986-4745 C. 617-435-7417

**The time is now to do your civic duty **VOTE!!!****  
**It has been said that my vote doesn't count, it is only one vote.**  
**Well thankfully there was one vote that counted, and WOMEN won the right to vote...**

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The date was August 18, 1920, and the man was Harry Burn, a 24-year-old representative from East Tennessee who two years earlier had become the youngest member of the state legislature. The red rose signified his opposition to the proposed 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which stated that “[t]he right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.” By the summer of 1920, 35 states had ratified the measure, bringing it one vote short of the required 36. In Tennessee, it had sailed through the Senate but stalled in the House of Representatives, prompting thousands of pro- and anti-suffrage activists to descend upon Nashville. If Burn and his colleagues voted in its favor, the 19th Amendment would pass the final hurdle on its way to adoption.

**On this 100<sup>th</sup> year anniversary do not forget to vote!!!**  
**November State Election voter registration deadline: **October 24, 2020****  
**Below are the various ways to vote along with the voting process.**

## **The Voting Process**

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### **Where to vote...**

Every precinct in Massachusetts is assigned a specific polling place. When you register to vote, you should receive an acknowledgement notice from your local election official informing you of your polling place. If you are casting your ballot in person, you must do so at the polling place assigned to your precinct. In towns, polling places are designated by the selectmen; in cities, polling places are designated by the city council. You may find your polling place [here](#).

### **When to vote...**

In all state elections and primaries, polling places must be open from 7 a.m. until 8 p.m., though towns are allowed to open as early as 5:45 a.m. Voters who are in line when polls are closed at 8 p.m. must be allowed to vote. For municipal elections, polling hours will vary by city and town. Check with your local election official for polling hours for your municipal election.

### **How to vote...**

#### **Check-In**

When you enter your polling place, you must get in line to check-in. Some polling places may house more than one precinct, so be sure to check that you are in line for the correct precinct. When you approach the check-in table, you will be asked to state your address and then your name. If you are an unenrolled (commonly referred to as independent) voter or a member of a political designation and you are voting in a primary, you will also be asked which party's ballot you wish to choose. Poll workers are required to repeat this information back to you.

There are a few reasons that you may be required to show identification when you check-in. If you registered by mail and it is your first time voting in a federal election in Massachusetts, you may be required to show identification under the [Help America Vote Act of 2002](#). You may also be asked

to show identification if you are an inactive voter, you are casting a challenged ballot, or you are casting a provisional ballot. Please see "Showing Identification" below, for more information on these types of ballots.

### **Mark Your Ballot**

After a poll worker has checked you in, you will be handed your ballot. If you are voting on a ballot which will be inserted into an optical scan machine, you will also be handed a secrecy sleeve with which to cover your marked ballot. You may proceed to an available voting booth where you may mark your ballot in private. Ballots are marked by the voter filling in ovals, connecting arrows, or marking an X next to candidates and questions. Read the top of your ballot for instructions on how to fill it out properly.

If you require assistance marking your ballot due to physical disability, inability to read or inability to read English, you may bring anyone of your choosing into the voting booth with you. Alternatively, you may ask for the assistance of two poll workers (by law, the poll workers assisting you should be of different political parties). If you would prefer to mark your ballot independently, you may use the AutoMARK Voter Assist Terminal, which is available in every polling place. The AutoMARK will read the ballot to you and mark the choices that you indicate. For more information on using the AutoMARK, please see [here](#).

### **Check-Out**

When you have finished marking your ballot, you must proceed to the check-out table, where you will once again be asked for your address and then your name. Again, if you are and unenrolled (commonly referred to as independent) voter or a member of a political designation and you are voting in a primary, you will be asked to inform the poll worker of the ballot that you chose. The poll worker must repeat all of this information back to you.

### **Cast Your Ballot**

Once you have checked out, you may proceed to the ballot box, where you will insert your ballot. Most cities and towns in Massachusetts use optical scan ballots, which means that you will likely be inserting your paper ballot into a machine which will tally your ballot. If your town continues to use paper ballots which are tallied by hand at the end of the night, you will fold your ballot as indicated and insert it into the ballot box. In either case, a poll worker will be stationed near the ballot box to instruct you on how to cast your ballot.

At the close of polls, poll workers will remove the ballots from the locked ballot box. In communities which hand count their ballots, tellers will tally the votes by hand. In communities which use optical scan machines, poll workers will print out the machine tally, hand count any write-in ballots or ballots which could not be counted by the machine and compile an unofficial tally. In all communities, the ballots must then be sealed in containers and the tally must be announced. This entire process is open to public viewing.

### **Showing Identification...**

You may be asked to show identification at the check-in table for any of the following reasons:

- You are voting for the first time in Massachusetts in a federal election.
- You are an inactive voter.
- You are casting a provisional or challenged ballot.
- The poll worker has a reasonable suspicion that leads them to request identification.

You will not be required to present photo identification. For a full listing of acceptable forms of identification, please see our page on [Identification](#).

### **Voting from a Previous Address...**

State law allows voters who have moved within Massachusetts to vote in state elections and primaries from a previous address for up to six months, as long as they have not registered at a new address.

If you have moved from one community in Massachusetts to another, and you have not registered to vote at your new address, you may vote at your previous polling place. Please note that this does not apply to local elections.

### **Not on the List of Voters...**

If your name does not appear on the list of voters and your registration cannot be verified, you have the right to cast a provisional ballot. For more information, see our page on [provisional voting](#).

**Voting by mail** is available to all voters for all elections in 2020. You do not need an excuse to vote by mail this year.

To vote by mail, all you need to do is:

1. **Complete** a [Vote by Mail Application](#);
2. **Deliver** your application to your [local election office](#);
3. **Vote** when your ballot arrives;
4. **Return** your ballot.

To ensure timely delivery of your ballot, it is recommended that you **submit your application for a November ballot no later than October 20**. Applications received after October 28 cannot be accepted.

State Election ballots need to be postmarked no later than **November 3** and must be back at your local election office no later than **November 6**.

Apply early, in order to have enough time to return your ballot.

**Absentee voting** is available for all elections, for those voters who qualify. To qualify for an absentee ballot, you must:

- Be away from your city/town on Election Day; or
- Have a disability that keeps you from voting at your polling place; or
- Have a religious belief that prevents you from voting at your polling place on Election Day

### **Absentee vs. Early Voting**

Massachusetts has absentee voting for all elections and early voting for some elections. The two systems overlap in several ways, but the most important difference is that absentee voters must have an excuse (listed above), while there is no excuse needed in order to vote early.

In general, most voters who do not vote on Election Day in 2020 will cast an early ballot, either by mail or in person, but there are certain circumstances when it would be appropriate to apply for an absentee ballot instead of an early ballot.

You should complete an absentee ballot application if you are:

- A military voter on active duty;
- A Massachusetts citizen residing outside of the United States;
- A voter who has been admitted to the hospital within 1 week of the election;
- A voter who has been quarantined within 1 week of the election;
- A voter who is incarcerated.

### **Applying for an Absentee Ballot**

Absentee ballots must be requested in writing at least 4 business days before Election Day. Applications are available for download below, but any written request is acceptable if it has your signature on it, or the signature of a member of your family who has making the request on your behalf.

Applications can be submitted by mail, email, or fax. If you are emailing your application, you may either scan or take a photo of your signed application and email it to your local election office, or you may sign your application using a mouse, finger, or stylus and email the completed and signed attachment. Typed signatures are not acceptable.

If you would like an absentee ballot application mailed to you, you may call 1-800-462-VOTE (8683) or email [elections@sec.state.ma.us](mailto:elections@sec.state.ma.us).

If you do not have an absentee ballot application, you may write a letter to your local election official requesting an absentee ballot. Make sure to include your name, your address, the place you would like the ballot mailed, and your signature. If you are requesting a primary ballot and you are unenrolled (independent), be sure to indicate which party's ballot you want to have mailed to you.

Find contact information for your local election official in our [Directory](#).

### **Emergency Absentee Ballots**

If you have been admitted to a healthcare facility or you are instructed to quarantine in your home within 1 week of the election, you may use the absentee ballot application to designate someone of your choice to deliver a ballot to you.

The person you designate to deliver your ballot will need to bring the signed application to your local election office, pick up your absentee ballot, bring it to you, and return it for you by the close of polls on Election Day. Emergency ballots may be requested up until the close of polls.

### **Returning your Ballot**

Ballots may be returned by mail or in person to your city/town hall. If your city/town has provided a secure ballot drop box, ballots can be submitted to that drop box.

Typically, ballots returned from inside the country must reach your local election office by the close of polls on Election Day in order to be counted. For the 2020 November State Election only, ballots will need to be postmarked by Election Day and reach your local election office no later than November 6 in order to be counted.

For 2020 mail-in ballots, postage on ballots is pre-paid.

For More information you can contact the Massachusetts Secretary of State at:

<https://www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/eleidx.htm>

or **contact them at Main Number:**

Toll Free: 1-800-392-6090 (within Massachusetts only)

Telephone: 617-727-7030

Fax: 617-742-4528

E-mail: [cis@sec.state.ma.us](mailto:cis@sec.state.ma.us)

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VOTE  VOTE  VOTE  VOTE  VOTE  VOTE 