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County Elections Office Raising Awareness of New Vote-by-Mail Ballots

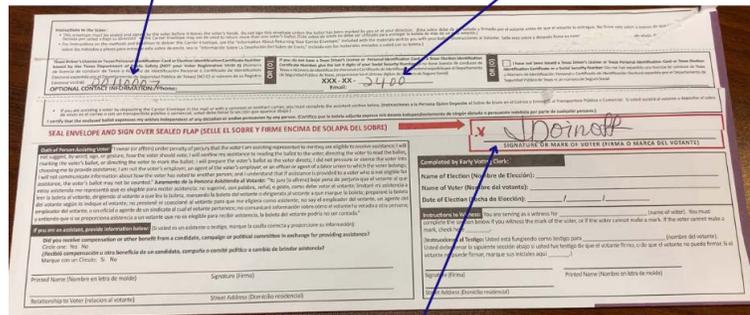
Hays County, Texas – Hays County Elections officials want voters to be aware of the new Texas vote-by-mail ballots and recent changes to the process of voting by mail to help ensure every vote counts.

According to Elections Administrator Jennifer Doinoff (formerly Anderson), the first step is to determine whether someone qualifies for a vote-by-mail ballot.

“To vote by mail in Texas you must qualify under one of the following categories,” she said. “Eligibility includes being age 65 or older, disabled (or have an illness) in a manner that prevents you from entering a polling location without injury to yourself, expected to give birth within three weeks before or after Election Day and confined in a jail or civilly committed but otherwise eligible to vote.”

Vote By Mail Ballot Example

Include your state-issued ID and last four digits of your Social Security Number on the carrier (return) envelope



Be sure to include your signature

If a voter meets any of those criteria, Doinoff said they can request that her office send a vote-by-mail ballot to their home address.

She added that changes to the ballot that resulted from legislative action modified the process.

“I want every voter who qualifies for using the vote-by-mail ballot option to be aware of the changes and what they can do to ensure their ballots get accepted and their votes are counted,” Doinoff said.

She explained that on the most important aspects of the new process is voters need to fill out the application completely.

“New voting laws require a ballot by mail voter to include their Texas-issued ID number, **OR** the last four digits of their Social Security Number (SSN) on the Application for Ballot by Mail Form,” she said. “The numbers provided **MUST** match the numbers on the voter’s registration file to be accepted.”

Many voters have both their ID and last four SSN digits on their voter registration file.

“We recommend entering both your Texas-issued ID and the last four of your Social Security Number on the application just to be safe,” Doinoff said. “You can also call the Hays County Election Office at 512-393-7310 to see what we have on file for you.”

She noted that the ID and SSN numbers will need to be entered on the voter’s **application** as well as on the **ballot carrier envelope**, which comes along with the ballot.

“Once the voter has completed this portion of the carrier envelope, they can seal the flap, sign over the flap in the red box and mail the ballot back to the Hays County Election Office,” she said. “Both the ID number and the signature are required for the ballot to be accepted.”

Doinoff emphasized that the new legislation offers voters the opportunity to correct any defects on their ballot in enough time to be counted.

“Make sure you include your phone number and email address under the flap so we can contact you if you need to make a correction on your ballot envelope,” she said. “The Elections Office, or the Early Voting Ballot Board, can contact you to certify your ID or sign your ballot should you forget those items before your submission.”

Doinoff said there are several ways to correct a ballot envelope:

- Go in person to your election office to certify your ID information within six (6) days after Election Day.
- Go to www.votetexas.gov, and click “Track My Ballot” to certify your ID information within six (6) days after Election Day.
- A voter may vote in person at any polling location, by cancelling their mail ballot.

She also wants voters to allow plenty of time to receive and vote when using the vote-by-mail system.

“By contacting the Elections Office early, that will help make sure you have enough time to receive the packet, complete the ballot, fill out all the information on the envelope, mail it back and make any corrections if necessary,” Doinoff said. “But one of the best ways to ensure your vote counts is to completely fill in all of the requested information on the ballot and the ballot envelope.”

She also reminds voters that annual vote-by-mail applicants can apply every year in January to receive ballots for that year. Ballots must be received by the Hays County Elections Office by 5 p.m. the day after Election Day and postmarked no later than 7 p.m. on Election Day to be counted.

“Our goal is to help all eligible vote-by-mail users to better understand the process,” Doinoff said. “Knowing this information will ensure that your ballot is accepted and counted in timely manner.”

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