

A blue-tinted photograph of the John F. Kennedy statue in Philadelphia, showing the statue from the waist up, looking upwards and to the right, with its arms outstretched. The background shows the building facade.

General election

# mail-in ballot guide

for Philadelphia voters



City of  
Philadelphia

For the general election, you can vote in-person, by absentee ballot, or by mail-in ballot.

**In Philadelphia, every registered voter is allowed to vote by mail-in ballot.**

Philadelphians can use this guide to learn more about:

1. **The 2020 general election.**
2. **Applying for a mail-in ballot.**
3. **Voting by mail-in ballot.**

**This guide was updated on September 25, 2020.** For the most up-to-date information, visit [philadelphiavotes.com](https://philadelphiavotes.com) or contact the Philadelphia County Board of Elections at (215) 686-3469.

## 8 Check the status of your mail-in ballot.

Once you submit your mail-in ballot, you can check its status by going to [pavoterservices.pa.gov](https://pavoterservices.pa.gov). You can also call the Pennsylvania Department of State at 1 (877) 868-3772.

If you provided an email address when you applied for your mail-in ballot, you should receive an email when your completed mail-in ballot is received.

**Step 7** *(Continued)*

***Designating someone to return your ballot***

If you're physically unable to return your own ballot, you may choose another person (or "designated agent") to drop it off. To do so, you must complete a designation and certification of agent form.

Your designated agent must return this form and your sealed ballot to the Philadelphia County Board of Elections. If you have questions about choosing someone to return your ballot, contact the board at (215) 686-3469

**Current voting deadline**

If you can't return your mail-in ballot by the deadline, you can vote at your polling place on election day. To do this, you should bring your mail-in ballot and "Voter Declaration" envelope to the polling place so they can be voided by the Judge of Elections. If you can't return your mail-in ballot and "Voter Declaration" envelope, you can still vote by provisional ballot.

To confirm, contact the Philadelphia County Board of Elections at (215) 686-3469.

# 1

## About the 2020 general election

## Important dates

Please register to vote, apply to vote by mail, and turn in your mail-in ballot **as early as possible.**

While the mail-in ballot process is secure, you shouldn't wait until the final deadlines to apply for and return your ballot.

### October 19, 2020

Last day to register to vote in the general election

### October 27, 2020

The Philadelphia County Board of Elections must receive your application for a mail-in ballot by 5 p.m.

### November 3, 2020: Election Day

If you're mailing your ballot, you should mail it as early as possible. It must be postmarked by Election Day.

You can also deliver your ballot to the Philadelphia County Board of Elections office, satellite office, or drop box. It must be received no later than 8:00 p.m. on Election Day.

### Some election-related dates could change.

You can confirm the deadlines or where to return your ballot by visiting [philadelphiavotes.com](https://philadelphiavotes.com) or contacting the Philadelphia County Board of Elections at (215) 686-3469.

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## Turn in your mail-in ballot.

### By mail

You can return your ballot by mail. The postage is prepaid. The last day to have your ballot postmarked is Election Day. If you plan to return your ballot by mail, please do so as early as possible.

### In person

Most voters must return their own ballots. However, if you have a physical disability, you may choose someone to return your ballot for you.

### *Returning your own ballot*

You can drop off your ballot at one of the following locations:

- The Philadelphia County Board of Elections (City Hall, Room 130, Philadelphia, PA 19107)
- A satellite election office
- A drop-off box

### Exact drop-off locations are still being determined.

If you have questions about where to return your ballot, visit [philadelphiavotes.com](https://philadelphiavotes.com) or contact the Philadelphia County Board of Elections at (215) 686-3469.

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## Sign the “Voter’s Declaration” on the back of the envelope.

### If you complete your ballot on your own:

Sign the **left** side of the envelope in the rectangle marked with an X and labeled “Voter.”

Write in the date when you completed your ballot, your name, and your address on the horizontal lines above the labels.

### If someone completed your ballot for you:

Sign the **right** side of the envelope in the rectangle marked with an X and labeled “Voter.”

The person who assisted you should write the date when your ballot was completed. They should also enter their address and signature on the horizontal lines above the labels “Date” and “Witness.”

## On the ballot: Candidates

You’ll vote for the following types of candidates.

- **President of the United States**, who’s the head of government and the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces.
- **Attorney General of Pennsylvania**, who’s the state’s top law enforcement official.
- **Pennsylvania Auditor General**, who ensures the state’s money is spent legally.
- **Pennsylvania Treasurer**, who manages and invests the state’s money.
- **Pennsylvania State Senators**, who are members of the upper chamber of state government in Harrisburg. The state’s 50 senators pass laws and the state budget, and confirm nominations by the governor.
- **Pennsylvania House of Representatives**, who are members of the lower chamber of state government in Harrisburg. The state’s 203 representatives pass laws and the state budget.

### On the ballot: Questions

There will be four questions on the ballot. For each question, you can vote “yes” or “no.”

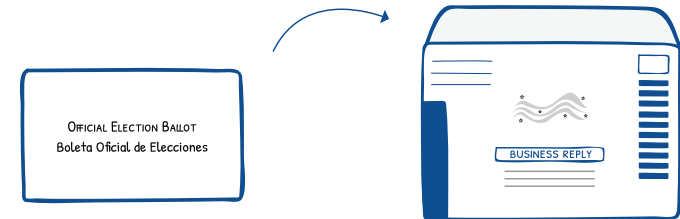
If you vote “yes” to the ballot questions one, two, and three, it means you want to change the City of Philadelphia’s Home Rule Charter. The Charter sets the rules for City government.

Below are summaries of the ballot questions in the order they’ll appear on your ballot.

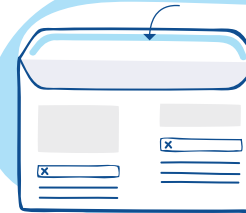
- 1. Stop and frisk:** If you vote “yes,” you want the Philadelphia Police Department to end the practice of unconstitutional stop and frisk. That means that a police officer could not stop someone because of their race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religious affiliation or expression, or other protected characteristics. Rather, the officer must have reasonable suspicion that the person is engaged in criminal activity.
- 2. Office of the Victim Advocate:** If you vote “yes,” you want the City to create an office that would advocate for the rights of crime victims.

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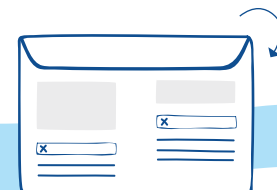
### Place your sealed ballot in the larger “Voter Declaration” envelope.



- 1.** Place your sealed ballot in the larger “Voter Declaration” envelope. Don’t put anything else inside.



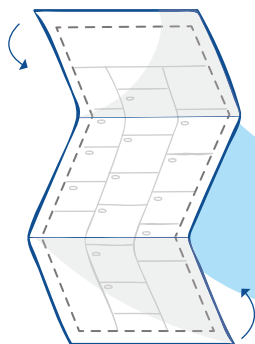
- 2.** Wet the glue on the envelope fold.



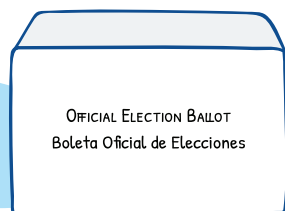
- 3.** Close the mailing envelope to seal it.



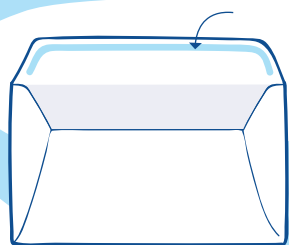
- 4.** Write your address in blue or black ink in the upper left corner of the envelope.

**4 Place your ballot in the smaller secrecy envelope.**

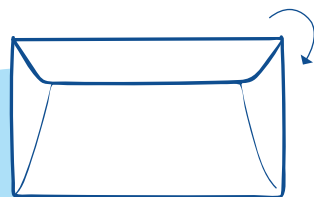
**1.** Refold the ballot as it was sent to you.



**2.** Place it in the smaller envelope that's labeled "Official Election Ballot." Don't put anything inside or write on the envelope.



**3.** Wet the glue on the envelope fold.



**4.** Close the secrecy envelope to seal your ballot.

**NOTE:** Ballots returned without the secrecy envelope will **not** be counted.

- 3. Citizens Police Oversight Commission:** If you vote "yes," you want the City to create a Citizens Police Oversight Commission as a permanent part of City government. The commission would work to improve police officer conduct and hold the Philadelphia Police Department accountable for officers' actions.
- 4. Borrowing money:** If you vote "yes," you want the City of Philadelphia to borrow \$134 million to spend on:
- Transit.
  - Museums.
  - Streets and sanitation.
  - Municipal buildings.
  - Parks and recreation.
  - Economic and community development.

Contact information  
for local election offices

You can find information about elections and voting in Philadelphia at philadelphiavotes.com. If you registered to vote in another Pennsylvania county, you can find your local election office at votesPA.com.

Philadelphia County Board of Elections

If you have questions about the general election, contact the Philadelphia County Board of Elections at (215) 686-3469. Interpretation services are available.

Philadelphia Voter Registration Office

If you have questions about registering to vote or confirming your voter registration, contact the Philadelphia Voter Registration Office at (215) 686-1591. Interpretation services are available.

Philadelphia City Commissioners

You can also contact the Philadelphia City Commissioners. The three commissioners are the elected officials in charge of elections and voter registration in Philadelphia. Go to philadelphiavotes.com to learn more.

Step 3 (Continued)

→

President of the United States	
Vote for 1	
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	_____
<input type="radio"/>	_____
<input type="radio"/>	_____

Pay attention to how many votes you're permitted to cast per category. For example, this illustration says "Vote for 1."

If you vote for more than what's asked of you, your vote won't be counted.

If you decide to **not** vote for a candidate or ballot question, that's okay. Your ballot will still be counted.

→

Questions	
#1	_____
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
-----	
#2	_____
<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No

←

To vote "yes" on a ballot question, fill in the "yes" oval.

To vote "no" on a ballot question, fill in the "no" oval.

You can only vote "yes" or "no."



2 Read the instructions.

The instructions will be labeled “Instructions for voting by mail-in or absentee ballot.” They’ll remind you of the mail-in ballot deadline and explain how to complete your mail-in ballot.

3 Fill out your ballot.

Your mail-in ballot will be two-sided. You should only use blue or black pen ink to complete your ballot.

If you make a mistake on your ballot, don’t cross out anything or make a note. Instead, call the Philadelphia County Board of Elections at 215-686-3469 to request a replacement ballot.

You should complete your ballot in privacy, unless you’re receiving assistance.



Fill in the oval next to the candidate you want to vote for.



If you’d like to write in a candidate, fill in the oval next to “Write-in.” Then, write their name to the right of the oval.

# 2

## Applying for a mail-in ballot

If you're a registered voter, you can apply to vote by mail-in ballot.

## 1 Choose how you'd like to apply.

### Online

To apply online, go to [votesPA.com/ApplyMailBallot](https://votesPA.com/ApplyMailBallot). The online application will be available in English and Spanish.

### By mail

There are two ways to get a paper application.

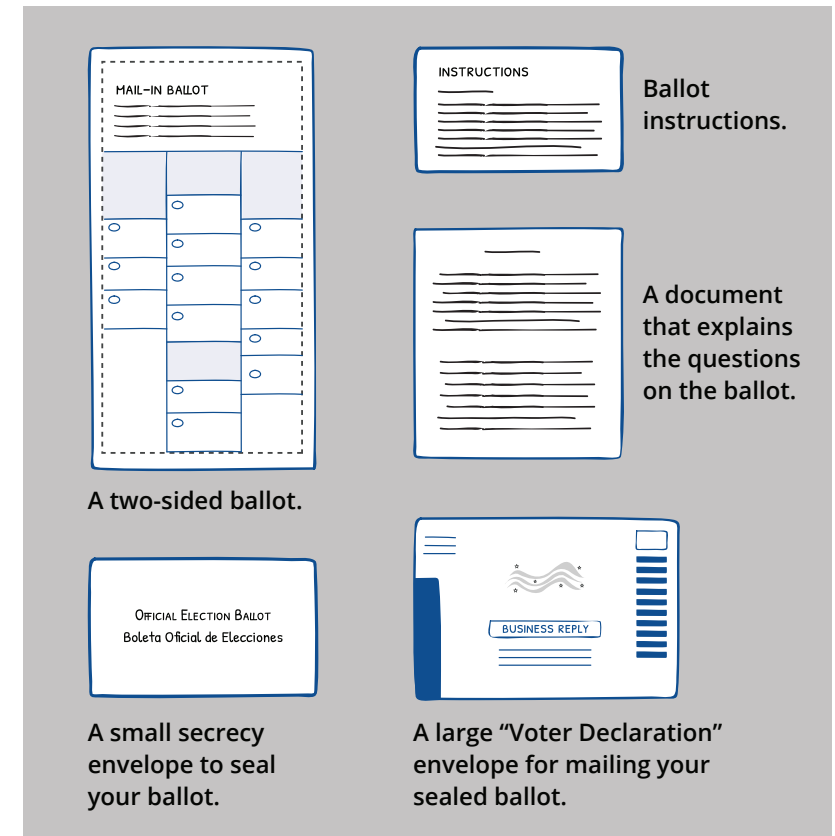
You can:

- Go to [votesPA.com/ApplyMailBallot](https://votesPA.com/ApplyMailBallot) to download and print an application. On this site, you can also request to have an application mailed to you.
- Contact the Philadelphia County Board of Elections at (215) 686-3469 to request to have a form mailed to you. You can also contact a City Commissioner.

The paper application will be available in English, Spanish, Chinese, and Vietnamese.

## 1 Receive your ballot in the mail.

After you apply, you'll receive your mail-in ballot at the address you submitted. Inside, you should find:



If you're missing something, call the Philadelphia County Board of Elections at (215) 686-3469.

If you don't receive your mail-in ballot, check its status at [pavoterservices.pa.gov](https://pavoterservices.pa.gov) or contact the Philadelphia County Board of Elections at (215) 686-3469.

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## Voting by mail-in ballot

### 2 Complete and submit your application.

If you need help filling out your application, call the Philadelphia County Board of Elections at (215) 686-3469.

The application asks you to provide information about yourself, including:

- **Contact information:** You can include a phone number and email in the “About you” section. If you provide an email address, you’ll get notifications about the status of your application and your mail-in ballot. It’s also helpful to include this information in case an election official needs to contact you. Your information isn’t shared outside the election office.
- **Address:** You must write your address exactly as you registered to vote. You can check your voter registration at [pavoterservices.pa.gov](https://pavoterservices.pa.gov) or call the Pennsylvania Department of State at 1 (877) 868-3772.
- **Identification:** You’ll be asked to provide your Pennsylvania (PA) driver’s license or PennDOT-issued photo identification number. Or, you can provide the last four digits of your Social Security number.

To learn about acceptable forms of ID, call the Pennsylvania Department of State at 1 (877) 868-3772.

**Step 2** *(Continued)*

If you're filling out your application on paper, keep the following in mind:

- You must fill in your paper application using a black ink pen. Please write clearly.
- You'll need an envelope and postage stamp to mail your application.

**Current application deadline**

You should apply as early as possible. Applications for mail-in ballots must be in the physical office of the Philadelphia County Board of Elections by 5 p.m. on Tuesday, October 27, 2020. The office is located at City Hall, Room 130, Philadelphia, PA 19107.

**If your application arrives after the deadline, the postmark won't be accepted as meeting the application deadline, and you won't be able to vote by mail.**

To confirm deadline information and how to submit your application, please contact the Philadelphia County Board of Elections at (215) 686-3469.

**3****Check the status of your application.**

Once you submit your mail-in ballot application, you can check its status by going to [pavoterservices.pa.gov](https://pavoterservices.pa.gov). You can also call the Pennsylvania Department of State at 1 (877) 868-3772.

If you apply online, you'll be able to view the status of your application within 48 hours after submitting it.

In addition, if you provide an email address when you apply, you should receive emails from Pennsylvania Voter Services. These messages will alert you to the status of your application and tell you when you should receive your ballot in the mail.