



Safe at Home

MINNESOTA SECRETARY OF STATE

Steve Simon

Safe at Home Biennial Voting Report April 2017

Voting Activity January 1, 2015 - December 31, 2016

Cost of Report Preparation

The total cost for the Office of the Secretary of State to prepare this report was approximately \$2,017.55. Most of these costs involved staff time in analyzing data and preparing the written report. Incidental costs include paper, copying, and other office supplies.

Estimated costs are provided in accordance with *Minnesota Statutes*, Section 3.197, requiring the cost for preparing a report to be provided at the beginning of a report to the legislature.

Safe at Home Program Overview

The Safe at Home address confidentiality program is managed by the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State (OSS). The program, which began September 1, 2007, is open to survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and those who otherwise fear for their safety. Participants in Safe at Home are assigned a designated address (a P.O. Box in St. Paul) that can be used for all of their interactions with others. The designated address allows the participant to go about their daily life without disclosing their actual home, employment or school address. All private and public entities in the state of Minnesota must accept the Safe at Home address as a participant's actual address. Safe at Home receives participants' mail, forwards all of their First Class Mail to them and assists them with their interactions with third parties should problems arise when giving the Safe at Home address to others. Staff also works with third party stakeholders to ensure legal compliance and that their business practices accommodate the safety needs of Safe at Home participants. During the calendar year of 2016, Safe at Home served a total of 3,134 participants and applicants.

Safe at Home Voting Process Overview

Safe at Home participants vote by absentee ballot through the Safe at Home office. As of December 31, 2016, there were 653 program participants registered as absentee voters through Safe at Home. The voting process is governed by *Minnesota Statutes*, section 5B.06 and *Minnesota Rules*, section 8290.1300. The voting experience under Safe at Home is time-consuming and somewhat cumbersome. It is, however, the only way participants can vote safely, without the need to share their name and address with others outside of the Safe at Home office.

The current process works as follows:

- Upon enrollment each applicant is given the opportunity to register as an ongoing absentee voter through Safe at Home. (Should an applicant decline registration at that time, Safe at Home extends other opportunities for registration during their participation in the program.)
- At least 60 days before an election or within two business days after the scheduling of a special election, all registered Safe at Home absentee voters are identified by the Safe at Home office.
- OSS communicates to the appropriate election administrator of the jurisdiction the number of ballots needed for program participant voters whose records are not challenged. This communication is made without disclosing names or specific addresses of program participants.
- The ballots are mailed to the Safe at Home office.
- When Safe at Home receives a blank ballot, it is sent to the voter along with voting instructions, a tan ballot envelope, an absentee ballot return envelope and a postage-paid return envelope addressed to Safe at Home.
- The voter returns the completed ballot to Safe at Home in the envelopes provided.
- When the ballot is received, Safe at Home staff perform name, signature and identification number matches and determine whether the certificate on the absentee ballot signature envelope was properly completed.
- The signature envelope with the voter's name and address is separated from the tan ballot envelope containing the absentee ballot.
- The tan ballot envelope, which remains sealed at all times, is placed in an envelope containing a certification by staff that the ballot was cast by a Safe at Home participant, and whether the certificate on the absentee ballot signature envelope was properly completed. The certification envelope does not contain the participant voter's name or actual address, but it does contain the voter's local jurisdiction information.
- The completed certification envelope is sent to the appropriate county auditor, who sends the ballot to the appropriate absentee ballot board. Election judges on the absentee ballot board are required to accept the ballot if the certification indicates the return envelope was properly completed.

Annual Review

Pursuant to *Minnesota Rules*, section 8290.1300, subpart 11, by March 31st of every year Safe at Home is required to determine whether any program participant that cast an absentee ballot also has a record in the statewide voter registration system as having cast a ballot in that same election, thereby indicating they voted twice. This annual check is performed manually by Safe at Home staff. If a Safe at Home participant is found to have voted twice, the appropriate county attorney must be notified.

Checks performed for the March 31, 2015 and March 31, 2016 deadlines indicated that none of the Safe at Home participants who had cast absentee ballots in any election during the preceding

12 months were also recorded in the statewide voter registration system as having voted using the traditional, non-Safe at Home voting process in that same election.

Voting Activity

The following two tables show voting activity for Safe at Home voters during 2015 and 2016.

Table 1

Safe at Home Voting Activity Calendar Year 2015	
Money spent on materials for absentee voter registration, materials for voter outreach, ballot mailing materials, and postage.	\$1,935.72
School District Elections (including special primaries and special elections)	
Number of participant registered voters who received a ballot for a school district election	227
Number of participant registered voters who returned a ballot for a school district election	14
Special Elections (municipalities and legislative districts, including special primaries)	
Number of participant registered voters who received a ballot for a special election	3
Number of participant registered voters who returned a ballot for a special election	0
General Elections (municipalities and townships)	
Number of participant registered voters who received a ballot for a general election	141
Number of participant registered voters who returned a ballot for a general election	8

Table 2

Safe at Home Voting Activity Calendar Year 2016	
Money spent on materials for absentee voter registration, materials for voter outreach, ballot mailing materials, and postage.	\$6,238.00
Special Elections (school districts, municipalities and legislative districts, including special primaries)	
Number of participant registered voters who received a ballot for a special election	63
Number of participant registered voters who returned a ballot for a special election	9
Township Elections	
Number of participant registered voters who received a ballot for a township election	26
Number of participant registered voters who returned a ballot for a township election	1
2016 State Primary	
Number of participant registered voters who received a ballot for the 2016 Primary	623
Number of participant registered voters who returned a ballot for the 2016 Primary	97
2016 State General Election	
Number of participant registered voters who received a ballot for the 2016 General Election	655
Number of participant registered voters who returned a ballot for the 2016 General Election	327