



Minnesota Elections Administration Township Election Manual

Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State
Elections Division

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Introduction

This manual is designed to support town clerks and staff in administering town elections. It should be used alongside the OSS publication **Minnesota Election Laws**. All citations refer to Minnesota election statutes or rules, which can be accessed through the [Office of the Revisor of Statutes](#). If you are using an interactive electronic version of this guide, you may click on citations to view the current law or rule.

Town clerks play a central role in the administration of elections, completing a series of required tasks throughout the election cycle. To reflect this, the guide is organized in a way that generally follows the election calendar. Election administration calendars are available on the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State's [Election Calendars webpage](#).

For a broader overview of election administration in Minnesota, the following publications may be helpful:

- County Election Administration Guide
- Election Judge Guide
- City Clerk Election Guide
- School District Election Guide
- Voting Equipment Testing Guide
- Absentee Voting Administration Manual
- Mail Ballot Precinct Voting Manual
- Mail Elections Administration Manual
- Recount Guide
- Post-Election Review Guide
- Campaign Manual
- Presidential Nomination Primary Election Administrator Guide

These guides, along with training materials and other publications, are updated periodically. Current editions are available on the OSS [Election Guides webpage](#).

If you have suggestions on how this manual can better support township clerks, please contact the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State at 651-215-1440 or elections.dept@state.mn.us.

Note: This manual uses the word “town” because that is the term used throughout Minnesota election laws. The term “township” has the same meaning.

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Abbreviated State Election Cycle Administration Calendar

This abbreviated calendar lists important deadlines related to a state election year. Each listing includes citations to Minnesota Statutes or Minnesota Rules. Full text of the Minnesota Election Statutes and Rules can be found at the [Minnesota Office of the Revisor of Statutes](#). This calendar is not intended to provide legal advice and should not be used as a substitute for legal guidance. Readers should consult with an attorney for advice concerning specific situations.

When a statutory reference is to a certain number of days before an election or other event, start counting from the day before the event. When determining the days after the event, start counting from the day after the event. If the last day falls on a weekend or legal holiday, that day is usually omitted. For example, if a deadline falls on a Sunday, that day is omitted, and Monday becomes the day of the deadline.

The complete detailed version of the Election Calendar and other calendar styles are available at the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State [Election Calendars webpage](#).

Abbreviated Calendar

January

- Terms begin for town officers elected in November general election – 1st Monday in January following the year of election. [Minn. Stat. 367.03](#)
- Last day to change precinct boundary prior to March Town election (Towns with March Elections) – at least 10 weeks before the date or the next election. [Minn. Stat. 204B.14, subd. 4](#)
- Candidate filing period for Towns with March Elections – opens 70 days before and closes 56 days before the March Town Elections. Clerk's office must remain open for filing activities from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. on the last day. [Minn. Stat. 205.13, subd. 1a](#)
- Withdrawal period ends for Towns with March Elections – candidates may withdraw until 5:00 p.m. two days after filing closes. [Minn. Stat. 205.13, subd. 6](#)
- If a town decides to designate a different building for its March elections than for state elections, the county must update the polling location in SVRS to reflect the correct voting site. After the township election concludes, contact the County Auditor to revert the polling location in SVRS to the state and county elections site.
- The Auditor should always select the Permanent option when updating polling places; the Temporary designation is reserved for emergency situations on election day.
- Always double-check an address using the Poll Finder to ensure the changes have been made in the Statewide Voter Registration System.

Note: If the town conducts mail balloting for state elections, these steps are not necessary. This process applies only to towns that use different buildings for different types of elections.

February

- Absentee voting available for March Town Elections – during the 30 days before the March Town Elections. [Minn. Stat. 203B.05, subd. 2](#); [Minn. Stat. 203B.085](#); [Minn. Stat. 204B.35](#)
- Voter pre-registration closes for March Town Elections – at 5:00 p.m. for applications delivered to election offices. 11:59 p.m. for online applications. 21 days before the March Town Elections. [Minn. Stat. 201.061, subd. 1](#)

March

- Clerk's office open for absentee voting (if applicable) – 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on the Saturday before the March Town Elections. [Minn. Stat. 203B.085](#)
- MARCH TOWN ELECTION DAY (Towns with March Elections) – 2nd Tuesday in March. [Minn. Stat. 205.075, subd. 1](#)
- Annual Town Meeting is often held after voting hours if the town has annual March general elections.
- Canvass March election results – within two days of election. [Minn. Stat. 205.185, subd. 3](#)
- Bad weather alternate for March Town Elections and annual town meeting – 3rd Tuesday in March. [Minn. Stat. 365.51, subd. 1](#)
- After contest period: Terms begin for town officers elected at March Town elections – newly elected town officers must file oath of office within 10 days of receiving certificate of election. Certificate cannot be given until the time of contest is over. Clerk cannot provide certificate of election without the candidate providing a certification that all required campaign reports have been filed. [Minn. Stat. 367.25, subd. 1](#)

June

- Absentee voting available for State Primary Election – during the 46 days before the election. [Minn. Stat. 203B.05, subd. 2](#); [203B.085](#); [204B.35](#)

July

- Last day to publish notice of town officers to be elected at November elections (towns with November elections) – at least two weeks before the first day to file. [Minn. Stat. 205.13, subd. 2](#)
- Filing period for Towns with November Elections – opens 112 days before and closes 98 days before the 1st Tuesday after the 1st Monday in November. [Minn. Stat. 205.13, subd. 1a](#); [Minn. Stat. 447.32, subd. 4](#)
- Withdrawal period ends for Towns with November Elections – until 5:00 p.m. two days after filing closes. [Minn. Stat. 204B.12, subd. 1](#); [Minn. Stat. 205.13, subd. 1a](#)
- Voter pre-registration closes – at 5:00 p.m. for applications delivered to election offices. 11:59 p.m. for online applications. 21 days before the state primary. [Minn. Stat. 201.061, subd. 1](#)

August

- County voting locations open for voting before election day – 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on the Saturday before and until 5:00 p.m. on the day before the state primary. [Minn. Stat. 203B.085](#)
- Town clerk's office open for absentee voting if authorized under Minn. Stat. 203B.05 – same hours as above.
- State Primary Day – 2nd Tuesday in August. [Minn. Stat. 205.065, subd. 1](#); [Minn. Stat. 204D.03](#)

September

- Absentee ballots available for State General Election – at least 46 days before the general election. [Minn. Stat. 203B.05](#); [Minn. Stat. 203B.085](#); [Minn. Stat. 204B.35](#)

October

- Voter pre-registration closes for State General Elections – at 5:00 p.m. 21 days before the general election. [Minn. Stat. 201.061, subd. 1](#)

November

- Town Elections Held with the State General Election – towns holding elections for offices and questions in conjunction with the state general election must follow state-mandated voting hours. Minn. Stat. 205.175
- State General Election Day – 1st Tuesday after the 1st Monday in November. [Minn. Stat. 204D.03](#); [Minn. Stat. 205.065, subd. 1](#)
- Canvass the town office and question results – between the 3rd and 10th day following the November general election. [Minn. Stat. 204C.33, subd. 1](#); [Minn. Stat. 205.185, subd. 3](#)

December

- Last day to publish notice of town officers to be elected at March elections (towns with March elections) – at least two weeks before the first day to file. [Minn. Stat. 205.13, subd. 2](#)

List of Election Activities by Month

January

- November elected town officials take office.
- Confirm the town's contact information with all the county auditors that fall within your town's boundaries.
- Confirm town's election schedule.
- Inform county auditors of potential special elections, vacancies, changes in election schedules, or mail balloting.
- Review election supplies for March town elections and absentee voting.

February

- Absentee voting for March town elections begins.
- Master lists received from the auditor's office for March town elections AB administration.
- Check for meeting restrictions on statewide caucus date.

March

- Town elections and canvass board meetings.
- March elected town officials take office.
- Review HR policies for election judge hiring and appointment.

April

- Annual updates to election year materials, guides, and calendars posted online.

May

- Election-related paper materials delivered to county auditors.
- Party election judge lists shared with municipalities.

June

- Absentee voting for primary elections begins.
- Review emergency plans for election day.

July

- Primary absentee voting continues.
- Election judge training conducted.
- Prepare candidate packets and filings.

August

- Primary elections.
- Campaign finance reporting.
- Prepare general election ballots.

September

- Review retention of previous election materials.
- Absentee voting for general elections begins.

October

- Absentee voting continues.

November

- State General Election.
- Conduct canvass meetings and issue certificates of election.

December

- Prepare candidate packets for March elections.
- Publish Notice of Filings and filing period dates.
- Polling place resolutions or ordinances due by December 31.

Election Administrator Training and Certification

Town clerks who serve as local election administrators must be trained and certified before they may administer elections. Training may be provided by the county auditor or by the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State.

Initial Certification

To receive initial certification, a clerk must successfully complete five hours of election training. Certification is valid for the election cycle in which it is earned and through the subsequent election cycle. An election cycle begins on January 1 of an even-numbered year and ends on December 31 of an odd-numbered year.

[Minn. Rule 8240.0200](#)

Annual Certification Maintenance

To maintain certification to administer elections, town clerks must complete four hours of election training during the election cycle following their initial certification and every two years thereafter.

[Minn. Rule 8240.0300](#)

Train the Trainer Certification

If designated by the county auditor to train election judges, the clerk must complete a “train the trainer” course conducted or approved by the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State before each state primary election.

[Minn. Rule 8240.1100](#)

Emergency Training

A clerk who has taken office less than six months before an election may administer that election after completing two hours of emergency training conducted by the home county auditor or by the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State.

[Minn. Rule 8240.2700](#)

Township Clerk Election Training Topics

Training for township clerks covers:

- Candidate filings
- Campaign practices
- Campaign finance
- Election calendar
- Ballot preparation
- Election judge recruitment and duties
- Notice requirements
- Voting systems
- Mail elections
- Absentee voting
- Security practices
- Post-election duties

Township Governance and Election Options

Organization of the Board

When a township was established, Minnesota Statutes provided for an elected three-member board of supervisors with staggered three-year terms and elected clerk and treasurer offices with staggered two-year terms. Under this “regular plan,” annual elections are held on the second Tuesday in March. Most towns follow this pattern, but additional options are provided for in Minnesota law. [Minn. Stat. 205.075](#); [Minn. Stat. 367.30](#)

The question of adopting a given option for town board organization must be voted on at the town’s general election. The board may submit the question, or residents may petition for an option to be placed on the ballot. A petition requires signatures of town electors equal to 15 percent of those voting in the last town election. [Minn. Stat. 367.31](#)

When a town votes on whether to adopt or reject an option, the town clerk must promptly send a certificate to the county auditor and the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State. The certificate must include the election date, the question that was on the ballot, and the vote results. [Minn. Stat. 367.31](#)

There are four optional plans for organization of the town board:

- Option A: a five-member board
 - Option B: appointed clerk and/or treasurer
 - Option C: appointed town administrator
 - Option D: combined clerk and treasurer
- [Minn. Stat. 367.30](#)

For complete information regarding town options, the text of the ballot question, and phase-in or abandonment of an option, see [Minn. Stat. 367.30–367.36](#).

Election Date and Length of Terms of Office

Towns may hold their general elections either annually in March or every other November. The second Tuesday in March has been the traditional town annual meeting and Election Day. Statutes permit towns to move their elections to the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November, every other year, even or odd, with four- or six-year overlapping terms. A town that has adopted the November date for town elections using four-year terms may also adopt a resolution establishing six-year terms for supervisors.

Changeover to the November Election Day may be proposed by the board or by a resolution submitted at the annual meeting. The ordinance or resolution must include a plan for lengthening or shortening terms and staggering them, and it must be passed by the voters at the next town general election.

A town that has moved its town elections to November, after conducting at least two elections on that date, can adopt a resolution to move town elections back to the second Tuesday in March each year. The resolution must be adopted by a unanimous vote of town supervisors and include a plan to shorten or lengthen terms. The resolution to return to March elections becomes effective after being passed by the voters at the next town general election.

[Minn. Stat. 205.075, subds. 1–2](#); [Minn. Stat. 367.03](#)

Precincts

What Are Election Precincts?

“Precincts” are the basic geographical units for organizing and administering elections. Precinct boundaries are partially designed by the town board and partially the result of various requirements in state statutes. At a minimum, each town must contain at least one precinct, and additional precincts are necessary if the town is divided by a county, congressional, or legislative boundary. Within these broad requirements, towns may create as many or as few precincts as suit the community. Precincts are not tied to population size; however, precincts larger than 2,000 to 2,500 registered voters can become difficult to manage. [Minn. Stat. 204B.14](#)

Precinct Boundary Changes

The town board may make precinct boundary changes at any time except:

- After January 1 of a year ending in zero until after legislative redistricting, except for certain annexations or to divide an existing precinct.
- After June 1 of a state election (even-numbered) year.
- Within 10 weeks before the next election.

[Minn. Stat. 204B.14, subds. 3–4](#)

Precinct lines must not cross city, ward, county, county commissioner, legislative, or congressional district boundaries. When municipalities are further subdivided into two or more precincts, the boundary between precincts must follow “visible, clearly recognizable physical features” or jurisdictional boundaries.

Recognizable physical features include streets, rivers, and railway rights-of-way. Precinct boundaries may also follow school district boundaries that lack a recognizable physical feature. If necessary, two precincts may share a boundary that is not located on a recognizable physical feature, provided that the combined boundary follows visible or jurisdictional lines. In this case, it is no longer required that the precinct names reflect their adjoining relationship (for example, 1A and 1B).

[Minn. Stat. 204B.14, subd. 6](#)

The town clerk (or county board for unorganized territories) must provide the following notification after a boundary change occurs:

- Immediately notify the county auditor and the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State.
File a corrected base map with the county auditor and the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State within 30 days after the boundary change.
- Post a notice of the change for at least 56 days; the change cannot take effect until that posting period has elapsed.

If polling locations change, coordinate with the county auditor to notify affected voters and households.

[Minn. Stat. 204B.14, subd. 5](#)

The county auditor must use the corrected map filed by the town clerk to update the precinct finder in SVRS. The corrected map and precinct finder must be made available for inspection. If a municipality changes a precinct boundary (or if an annexation affects a boundary), the auditor must notify each school district with territory affected by the change at least 30 days before the effective date. [Minn. Stat. 204B.14, subd. 5](#)

A boundary change that results from a municipal boundary adjustment becomes effective for any regularly scheduled election held more than 21 days after the effective date of the change. If the change is effective less than 21 days before a regularly scheduled election, it takes effect the day after that election. [Minn. Stat. 204B.14, subd. 4a](#)

Maps and Data

Map information sent to the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State is used to update the statewide database of precinct and election district boundaries. This data is used by a variety of state agencies and is available to the public for download at the [Shapefiles webpage](#).

A variety of maps formatted for 8½ x 11-inch printing are available for download on the [Data & Maps](#) section of the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State's website. Printed maps are also available from the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State for the cost of production. Information on pricing and a downloadable order form can be found on the [Ordering Maps](#) webpage. [Minn. Stat. 204B.146](#)

Polling Places

Designation

The town board must designate a polling place for each precinct by passing a resolution or ordinance. This designation must be made by December 31 and at least 90 days before any election in the upcoming year. For example, because town elections are held on the second Tuesday in March, any polling place change must be adopted in early December of the prior year. [Minn. Stat. 204B.16, subd. 1a](#)

When a polling place location changes, the governing body must notify affected households by non-forwardable mail at least 25 days before the election. This mailing must go to every household with at least one registered voter. See Voter Notification section. [Minn. Stat. 204B.16, subd. 1a](#)

The polling place designation remains active until the governing body changes it. Notify the county auditor immediately when a polling place is designated or changed so county staff can update the polling place in SVRS and assist with voter notification. [Minn. Stat. 204B.16, subd. 3](#)

Requirements for Polling Places

All polling places must be:

- Fully accessible. See the Polling Place Accessibility section. [Minn. Stat. 204B.16](#)
- Large enough to support election activities.
- Free of any non-election activities on Election Day.
- Smoke-free. [Minn. Stat. 144.414](#)
- Alcohol-free and not connected to an area where liquor or cannabis is served.
- Located within the precinct except:
 - Towns in the metropolitan area may locate a polling place outside the precinct if it is within one mile of the precinct boundary or is part of a combined polling place. [Minn. Stat. 200.02, subd. 24](#) [Minn. Stat. 204B.16, subd. 1](#)
 - Towns outside the metropolitan area may locate polling places up to five miles outside the precinct boundary. [Minn. Stat. 200.02, subd. 24](#) [Minn. Stat. 204B.16, subd. 1](#)
 - The metropolitan area includes Anoka, Carver, Chisago, Dakota, Hennepin, Isanti, Ramsey, Scott, Sherburne, Washington, and Wright counties. [Minn. Stat. 473.121](#)

Note: If a polling place is located in a school, contact the school district at least once a year to confirm that their security requirements have not changed.

Emergency Polling Place Designation

Determining an Emergency

A local election official may declare an emergency if the polling place is unsafe, insecure, or unusable. [Minn. Stat. 204B.175](#)

Selecting a New Location

Select a new polling place that is as close as possible to the original polling location and that meets accessibility requirements. If no accessible site is available within the precinct, select a site outside the precinct without the usual distance limitations. [Minn. Stat. 204B.175](#)

Immediate Notification

When an emergency move occurs, the local election official must immediately notify:

- The county auditor
- The Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State

Include the reason for the change and the new polling place address. Notice should also be posted on the government website if available, provided to local media, and given to election judges. [Minn. Stat. 204B.175](#)

Election Day Notices

Post a notice in large print at the original polling place if practicable.

- Use sturdy poster-type paper.
- Cover the notice with weather-resistant material.
- Attach it securely to all public entry doors.
- The notice must state the location of the new polling place.

Post a similar notice at or near parking spaces used for curbside voting if practicable. [Minn. Stat. 204B.295](#)
[Minn. Stat. 204B.175](#)

Language requirements in [Minn. Stat. 204B.295](#) apply to both types of notices.

Combined Polling Places

Establishing a Combined Polling Place

Municipalities may combine polling places under certain conditions. The governing body must approve the combination by ordinance or resolution and file a copy with the county auditor. If multiple municipalities are involved, all governing bodies must approve. [Minn. Stat. 204B.14](#)

The combined polling place must be a single accessible location staffed by a single team of election judges. Separate ballot boxes and separate returns must be maintained for each precinct involved. [Minn. Rule 8230.4365](#)

A single precinct-count voting system and memory unit may be used. The results must print separately by precinct. A separate summary statement must be produced for each precinct and voted ballots must be separated and sealed by precinct. [Minn. Rule 8230.4365](#)

Deadlines to Establish Combined Polling Places

A combined polling place may be established no later than:

- November 1 if a presidential nomination primary occurs in the following year.
- May 1 of any other year.

Combined polling places may involve:

- Two contiguous precincts in the same township
- Up to four contiguous municipalities outside the metro area located in the same county, congressional district, and legislative district
- Non-contiguous precincts in multiple counties with approval from all governing bodies and the Secretary of State
- Mail election precincts, where one centrally located polling place may be designated

See the Mail Elections Voting Manual on the OSS [Election Guides webpage](#). [Minn. Stat. 204B.45](#) [Minn. Stat. 204B.14](#)

Withdrawing from a Combined Polling Place

A municipality wishing to withdraw must file a resolution with the county auditor no later than:

- October 1 if a presidential nomination primary is scheduled the following year
- April 1 of any other year [Minn. Stat. 204B.14, subd. 2](#)

Voter Notification for Polling Place Changes

When a polling place changes, the municipality must notify affected households with at least one registered voter by non-forwardable mail no later than 25 days before the next election. [Minn. Stat. 204B.16, subd. 1a](#)

Notification options include:

- Requesting the county auditor to mail Postal Verification Cards to households with at least one registered voter in the affected precincts.
- Requesting the county auditor to mail Postal Verification Cards to each registered voter in the affected precincts.
- Purchasing address labels from the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State to send notifications directly to households or individual registered voters.

Polling Place Accessibility

Federal and state law require polling places to be fully accessible and usable by elderly voters and voters with disabilities. [Minn. Stat. 204B.16](#)

Minimum accessibility requirements include:

- Paved parking with extra-wide disability parking
- Curb cuts or temporary ramps
- A paved route to the entrance
- Entrances and doorways at least 32 inches wide
- Walkways and hallways at least 36 inches wide
- Hallways free of protruding objects
- Handrails on all stairs
- Signs directing voters to accessible entrances
- Signs explaining available assistance
- At least one wheelchair-accessible voting station with a flat writing surface 34 inches high

An assistive voting device is required for federal, state, county, city, and school district elections. Towns with more than 500 registered voters must also provide an assistive device for standalone town elections. A town must use an assistive device if voters at the previous annual town meeting approved it. [Minn. Stat. 206.57, subds. 5 and 5a](#)

A voter does not need a disability to use this device.

Other accommodations include:

- Voting by absentee
- Curbside voting by a team of election judges
- Assistance by a person of the voter's choice [Minn. Stat. 203B.02](#) [Minn. Stat. 204C.15](#)

Election judges handling curbside voting only need to be from different political parties if required for that election.

When using a large building such as a school or sports complex, accessible parking should be located near the entrance closest to the polling room. If permanent accessible parking is far from the polling location, set temporary accessible parking next to the nearest entrance to the polling room.

Municipalities should periodically inspect polling locations for continued accessibility. The OSS Polling Place Accessibility Diagnostic Tool on the Election Guides webpage provides inspection guidance.

Polling Place Materials

Town clerks must provide all required election materials at the polling place. This includes ballots, ballot boxes, voting equipment, rosters, posters, flags, envelopes, seals, and other supplies. A sample supply list is located in Appendix 2 of this guide. [Minn. Stat. 204B.28](#)

Displaying the U.S. Flag at Polling Places

Requirement

The U.S. flag must be displayed at the entrance of every polling place. Election judges must display the flag upon arrival and keep it displayed throughout voting hours. Judges must sign the flag certification statement on the precinct summary statement. [Minn. Stat. 204C.08, subd. 1c](#)

Half-Staff Orders

If the flag is on a fixed pole or indoor stand that cannot be lowered, it may be displayed at full height during a half-staff order. A black mourning streamer may be attached to the top of the flag as an optional sign of respect.

Elections During Public Health Emergencies

In a public health emergency, election judges should:

- Maintain physical distancing
- Frequently sanitize hands and high-touch surfaces
- Wear face coverings when recommended
- Follow federal, state, and county guidance

Adjust polling place layouts to support distancing and clear traffic flow. Provide hand sanitizer near entrances and consider well-ventilated locations. Expand curbside voting capacity when needed by assigning additional judges and clearly marking curbside areas.

Election Judges

Election Judge Qualifications

An election judge must be:

- Eligible to vote in the State of Minnesota
- Able to read, write, and speak English
- Appointed by the appointing authority (county, city, township, or school board)
- Trained and currently certified as an election judge
- Individuals applying to be election judges need to declare their party affiliation if they are affiliated with a major political party. [Minn. Stat. 204B.19, subd. 2](#) [Minn. Stat. 204B.21](#) [Minn. Stat. 204B.25](#)

An exception to the requirement that all election judges be trained and certified is provided for precincts in which fewer than 100 people voted at the last state general election. In these precincts, having only two of the required number of election judges trained is sufficient if they are not from the same major political party. If electronic voting equipment is in use in the precinct, such as in a statewide election, it is highly recommended that all election judges be trained and certified. [Minn. Stat. 204B.25, subd. 3](#)

An election judge cannot be:

- A candidate in that election (i.e., running for an office on a ballot used in that precinct. An individual actively campaigning as a write-in candidate is a candidate)
- The husband, wife, parent (including stepparent), child (including stepchild), brother, sister (including stepsibling) of or domiciled with (permanently or temporarily) a candidate
- The spouse, parent, stepparent, child, stepchild, brother, sister, or stepsibling of another judge in the same precinct
- A challenger

Individuals who are related to each other may serve as election judges in the same precinct if they serve on **separate shifts** that do not overlap. [Minn. Stat. 204B.19](#)

Student Election Judge Trainees

High school students 16 and 17 years of age can be election judge trainees. Students who are 18 years of age or older can serve as regular election judges.

To serve as trainee election judges, students must:

- Be a United States citizen
- Be at least 16 years of age
- Serve in the county where they reside or an adjoining county
- Be in good academic standing
- Have permission from their school and parents

Trainee election judges can serve for all elections. They serve without party affiliation and must be paid at least two-thirds of the minimum wage. They cannot serve past 10:00 p.m. and cannot number more than one-third of the election judges in any one precinct. Trainee election judges, like other election judges, are not required to serve the entire day.

Because trainee judges serve without party affiliation, they cannot perform tasks that must be carried out by two judges of different political parties, such as curbside voting. Trainee election judges can perform any other election judge tasks and should be assigned duties just as other election judges are assigned. Trainees do not count toward the minimum number of election judges required to serve. [Minn. Stat. 204B.19, subd. 6](#) [Minn. Rule 8240.1655](#)

Appointing Election Judges

County Lists

Each major political party furnishes electronic lists of potential election judges to the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State by May 1 of even-numbered years. The Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State provides these lists to county auditors by May 15. County auditors must promptly forward the lists to city and township clerks. [Minn. Stat. 204B.21](#)

The party lists are used to appoint election judges to serve at elections in their jurisdictions over the next two years. If there are not enough people on the lists from your municipality, or if no lists have been received, the governing body may appoint other people who meet the qualifications. [Minn. Stat. 204B.21](#) [Minn. Rule 8240.0300](#)

Appointment by Town Board

The clerk recommends election judges for appointment (including health care and absentee ballot boards if applicable), and the town board makes the appointments at least 25 days before the election. The town board may pass a resolution authorizing additional election judges within 25 days before the election if needed. If there are not enough people on the list, the town board may appoint others who meet the qualifications. The town board may evaluate applicants to ensure they are capable of performing the duties. [Minn. Stat. 204B.21, subd. 2](#)

Note: The clerk may suggest that the town board include language in the resolution allowing substitutions as necessary.

Party Balance

At least two election judges in each precinct must serve with a different major political party designation for most elections. The remaining election judges may serve without a major party affiliation. No more than half of the judges in a precinct may belong to the same major political party. The major parties of Minnesota are the Republican Party of Minnesota and the Minnesota Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party.

An individual appointed from a source other than the list must provide their major political party affiliation or a statement that they do not affiliate with any major political party. Town elections not held in conjunction with a statewide election are exempt from this requirement. [Minn. Stat. 204B.21, subd. 2](#) [Minn. Stat. 205.07, subd. 4](#) [Minn. Stat. 204B.19, subd. 5](#)

Required Number of Election Judges

A minimum of four election judges must be appointed for each precinct in the state general election. For precincts with fewer than 500 registered voters (as of 14 weeks before the state primary), at least three election judges must be appointed. In all other elections, a minimum of three election judges is required.

In a combined polling place (where multiple precincts or municipalities share a voting location), at least one election judge must come from each city or town involved. However, there must be at least three judges total. Additional judges may be added as needed, including extra judges to assist with counting ballots after voting ends.

An election judge may serve for all or part of Election Day if the minimum number of judges required is always present. [Minn. Stat. 204B.22](#)

Head Judge

When the town board appoints election judges, one judge must be designated as the head judge. The head judge must serve all day and remain present unless another trained judge is designated to fill in during any absence. It is recommended to have an alternate or co-head judge at each polling place.

The head judge assigns duties among the judges and is responsible for ensuring all required tasks are completed. Head judges complete an additional hour of training every two years to maintain certification. [Minn. Stat. 204B.20](#) [Minn. Rule 8240.1750](#)

Election Judge Vacancies

If an election judge does not appear at the polling place or is unable to perform duties, the remaining judges may appoint a qualified person to fill the vacancy. The appointee does not need to reside in the precinct but must meet the general qualifications to serve. The clerk may also fill vacancies as they occur. [Minn. Stat. 204B.23](#)

- An election judge appointed after the training period ends and who has not completed the basic training course must complete the emergency training course before serving. [Minn. Rule 8240.1900](#)
- A head election judge appointed after the training period ends and who has not completed the head election judge course must complete the emergency head election judge course before serving. [Minn. Rule 8240.1950](#)

Compensation

The town board sets compensation for election judges, but it must be at least the state minimum wage. Training and work-related travel time must be included, along with mileage reimbursement. Judges may volunteer their time without pay by submitting a written statement no later than 10 days before the election. [Minn. Stat. 204B.31](#)

Time Off from Work

Individuals who wish to serve as election judges may take time off from work without loss of pay. Prospective judges must give their employer at least 20 days' written notice and a certificate from the appointing authority showing their work hours and rate of pay. The employer may deduct the amount paid by the township for overlapping hours.

Example: If an employee normally works eight hours per day at \$10 per hour (\$80 total), and the township pays \$5 per hour for election judge service (8 hours x \$5 = \$40), the township will pay \$40, and the employer pays the remaining \$40. Alternatively, if the employee uses vacation time, they may keep the township's pay for serving.

Employers may limit the number of employees serving as election judges to no more than 20% of staff at a single worksite. [Minn. Stat. 204B.195](#)

Election Judge Training

Certification and Administration

All election judges must successfully complete training. Student election judge trainees (16–17-year-olds) complete the same training as other election judges. County auditors are responsible for training election judges or delegating the responsibility to town clerks. If the clerk conducts election judge training, the clerk or a designee must attend an adult education training conducted or approved by the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State. [Minn. Stat. 204B.25](#) [Minn. Rule 8240.1100](#) [Minn. Rule 8240.1655](#)

Through the county auditors, the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State distributes copies of the Election Judge Guide, links to training videos, a customizable slide presentation, and other materials to towns. Current editions of guides and training materials are available at the [Election Judge Training webpage](#).

Clerks must ensure that at least one Election Judge Guide is available in each polling place on Election Day. The training authority, whether auditor or clerk, must develop a training plan that outlines staff and resources, dates, topics, and materials to be used. This plan must be available for public inspection. [Minn. Rule 8240.2000](#) [Minn. Rule 8240.2400](#)

Trainers must maintain records of training completed by each election judge and issue certificates upon successful completion. [Minn. Rule 8240.2100](#) [Minn. Rule 8240.2300](#)

Time spent attending or conducting election judge training may count toward a clerk's election administrator certification or biennial maintenance requirement. Township clerks and deputies are encouraged to participate in election judge training. [Minn. Rule 8240.2700, subp. 7](#)

The training includes the following phases:

- Basic training course: All election judges must complete a two-hour basic training course every two years.
- Maintaining certification: Judges must successfully complete the basic training course every two years to remain qualified.
- Additional training: Judges administering health care facility voting or serving as head judges must complete additional training. [Minn. Rule 8240.1300](#)

Election Judge Training Plan and Course Content

Each training authority must prepare a training plan available for public inspection. The plan must include:

- Names of persons conducting training
- Number of sessions planned
- Projected attendance at each session
- Training materials and methods used
- Outline of each course's content [Minn. Rule 8200.2400](#)

Election judge training is two hours long and covers the following topics:

- Use of equipment (tabulator, assistive voting device, electronic rosters)
- How to find answers in training materials
- Opening polls
- Election judge duties
- Closing polls
- New laws, rules, forms, and procedures
- Major problems noted at prior elections
- Head judge responsibilities [Minn. Stat. 204B.25](#) [Minn. Rule 8240.1600](#)

Additional training requirements may be adopted if reasonably related to the ability to perform election judge duties. [Minn. Stat. 204B.25, subd. 2](#) [Minn. Rule 8240.1600, subp. 2](#)

Head Election Judge Training

In addition to regular election judge training, head election judges must complete an extra hour of training covering:

- Duties before Election Day
- Training and assignment of judges
- New laws, rules, forms, and procedures
- Preparations before polls open
- Polling place setup and opening activities
- Using training materials to resolve questions on Election Day
- Supporting teamwork among judges
- Use of voting equipment
- Handling emergencies
- Preparing and returning election materials [Minn. Rule 8240.1750](#)

Health Care Facility (HCF) Absentee Voting Election Judge Training

If a town has a health care facility, special outreach is required by the full-time clerk responsible for absentee balloting. See the [Absentee Voting Administration Manual](#).

Tools for confirming Health Care Facility locations:

- [Healthcare Facility Directory](#)
- [Veterans Homes](#)
- [Women's Shelters](#)

To be certified as an HCF absentee election judge, an individual must complete one additional hour of training every two years, covering:

- Eligibility for absentee voting from HCFs
- Application process and proof of residence
- Voter registration
- Providing assistance to voters
- Voting procedures
- Facility information and contact persons
- Transporting materials and voted ballots

[Minn. Rule 8240.1800](#)

Absentee Ballot Board Election Judge Training

To serve on a town's absentee ballot board, individuals must be appointed under [Minn. Stat. 204B.19–204B.22](#) and trained in absentee ballot handling and processing. Training is recommended to be at least one hour and cover all steps of absentee ballot management.

There are no provisions allowing deputy town clerks to serve on absentee ballot boards. [Minn. Stat. 203B.121](#)

Election Notices and Publication Requirements

Candidate Filing Period Notice

Clerks must publish a notice of filing dates at least two weeks before the first day to file affidavits of candidacy. The town must publish a notice in the official newspaper stating the first and last dates on which affidavits may be filed in the clerk's office and the closing time for filing on the last day.

Important: The clerk's office must be open for filing from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. on the last day of the filing period.

The clerk must post a similar notice 10 days before filing opens. The notice must list separately any office(s) where candidates can file affidavits to fill unexpired terms at a special election. The notice must state the opening date, closing time on the last day, and where candidates may file affidavits of candidacy. [Minn. Stat. 205.13, subds. 1a & 2](#)

Election Notice to County Auditor

Before every municipal election, the town clerk must give the county auditor at least 84 days' written notice. The notice should include the election date, the offices to be voted, and the title and language for each ballot question. This information allows the auditor to set up the election and polling place rosters in SVRS, provide accurate public information, coordinate absentee voting, and begin ballot layout. [Minn. Stat. 205.16, subd. 4](#)

If a special election is cancelled under [Minn. Stat. 205.10, subd. 6](#), the clerk must also give at least 84 days' written notice to the county auditor. [Minn. Stat. 205.16, subd. 4](#)

For mail elections, additional notice of the mail procedures must begin at least six weeks before the election. See the [Mail Elections Administration Manual](#). [Minn. Stat. 204B.45, subd. 2](#)

Electronic Voting System Notice Requirement

Notice of Public Accuracy Test (PAT)

Public notice of the time and place of the Public Accuracy Test (PAT) must be published at least five days in advance in the official newspaper. The PAT must be conducted at least three days before the equipment is used and observed by at least two election judges from different major political parties. [Minn. Stat. 206.83](#)

More information about Public Accuracy Testing appears in the Voting Equipment Testing section of this manual.

Notice to Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State of Use of New Equipment

When using new voting equipment, the clerk must submit a plan for the equipment to the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State more than 60 days before the first election in which it will be used. The plan must include information about the acquisition of facilities, computer time, and professional services. It must be signed and notarized before submission. The Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State will review and respond within 20 days regarding sufficiency. [Minn. Stat. 206.58](#); [Minn. Stat. 206.80](#); [Minn. Stat. 206.82](#)

Notice to Public of New Voting System

The governing body of a municipality must provide information to the public about the use of a new voting system at least 60 days prior to the election. A demonstration system must be available in a public place for six weeks before the first election at which it will be used. [Minn. Stat. 206.58](#)

Notice to Secretary of State of Change in Plan

The clerk or auditor must notify the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State of any plan changes before May 1 each year following a general election year. [Minn. Stat. 206.82](#)

Public Notice of Election

In the metropolitan area (as defined in [Minn. Stat. 200.02, subd. 24](#)), town clerks must publish notice of the election two weeks in advance and may also post it.

All election notices must include:

- The election date
- Voting hours
- All polling place locations
- A list of all offices and questions on the ballot [Minn. Stat. 205.16, subd. 1](#)

In non-metropolitan areas, the town board may decide to forgo publication of the election notice. In that case, the clerk must post a notice at least 10 days before the election and have a copy available for public inspection in the clerk's office. [Minn. Stat. 205.16, subd. 1](#)

If the election is held in March, the notice may be combined with the notice of the annual meeting. It must include the alternate date for bad weather. [Minn. Stat. 365.51, subd. 2](#)

Notice of Mail Balloting Procedures

In a township conducting a mail election under [Minn. Stat. 204B.45](#) or [Minn. Stat. 204B.46](#), notice of the election and mail procedures must be given at least 10 weeks prior. See the [Mail Ballot Precinct Voting Manual](#) and [Mail Elections Administration Manual](#).

Sample Ballot

For town elections in metropolitan counties not held with a statewide election, the clerk must publish a Notice to Voters under [Minn. Stat. 204D.16](#) at least two weeks before the election in the official newspaper and make it available for public inspection in the clerk's office. A sample ballot must also be posted in each polling place on Election Day. [Minn. Stat. 205.16, subs. 2 & 3](#)

Towns outside metropolitan counties (as defined in [Minn. Stat. 473.121](#)) are not required to publish the Notice to Voters or a sample ballot. [Minn. Stat. 205.16, subd. 2](#)

Note: Providing an electronic sample ballot file to the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State is optional for elections not held in conjunction with state elections. [Minn. Stat. 205A.07, subd. 2](#)

Candidate Filing

Filing Period

Candidate filing is the process through which candidates have their names placed on the ballot. Town clerks are the filing officers for town offices, meaning the clerk or designated deputy administers candidate filing. If a town clerk has not appointed a deputy, the town treasurer performs the filing duties when the clerk is absent. Arrangements may also be made with the county auditor to receive town filings. [Minn. Stat. 205.13, subd. 1](#); [Minn. Stat. 367.033](#)

Candidates must file during a two-week filing period. While one person may generally only hold one elected office at a time, Minnesota law allows a rare exception permitting a person to serve on both a town board and a school board simultaneously. In towns holding their elections in March or for special elections not held with another election, the filing period opens 70 days before and closes 56 days before Election Day. In all other towns, affidavits of candidacy must be filed during a two-week period that opens not more than 112 days before and closes not less than 98 days before the general election. The clerk's office must be open for filing from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. on the last day of the filing period. [Minn. Stat. 205.13](#)

Note: The clerk is also responsible for accepting hospital district filings, which occur not more than 112 days nor less than 98 days before the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November of a general election year. [Minn. Stat. 447.32, subd. 4](#)

If a candidate is absent from the state during the filing period, they may file an affidavit, filing fee, or required petition during the seven days before leaving the state, with a written explanation for their absence. [Minn. Stat. 205.13, subds. 1a & 1b](#)

The clerk must publish notice of filing dates, location, and closing time at least two weeks before filing opens and post a similar notice 10 days before filing opens. [Minn. Stat. 205.13, subd. 2](#)

Candidate Eligibility

To be eligible for a town office, a person must:

- Be eligible to vote
- Be 21 years old when assuming office
- Have resided in the town for at least 30 days before the election [Minn. Stat. 204B.06, subd. 1](#)

Filing Process

A candidate for a town office must file an affidavit of candidacy with the town clerk, unless arrangements are made with the county auditor. Steps for filing include:

- Filing a completed, signed, and notarized affidavit of candidacy with the town clerk during the filing period
- Presenting valid proof of residence matching the address on the affidavit
- Paying the filing fee or submitting a petition in lieu of the fee
- Ensuring the affidavit includes:
 - Contact phone number
 - Nongovernment-issued email or statement of no email
 - True name or commonly known name, and optional phonetic spelling or pronunciation guide
 - Current residential or campaign address
- A filing officer must not accept affidavits with mismatched addresses between the document and identification
- Filing fees for town offices are \$2 [Minn. Stat. 204B.06](#); [Minn. Stat. 204B.10](#); [Minn. Stat. 204B.11, subd. 2\(d\)](#) [Minn. Stat. 205.13, subds. 1, 3 & 4](#)

Alternatively, five or more voters may “draft” a candidate by filing an application on behalf of an eligible voter, accompanied by the filing fee or petition. A candidate filing for multiple seats must specify which seat they seek.

Affidavits are numbered in the order received. When two or more candidates have similar names, up to three distinguishing words may be added to the ballot. Disputes about names or filings are handled through the error and omissions process under [Minn. Stat. 204B.44](#).

The clerk must notify the official preparing the ballot of candidate names and updates within one business day of receipt or immediately after the filing period closes unless another timeline is agreed upon.

Candidate names appear in upper- and lower-case letters. Clerks should confirm spelling and capitalization with candidates before they leave. A copy of the affidavit form is available at the [Become a Candidate webpage](#).

Withdrawal

A candidate may withdraw by filing an affidavit of withdrawal with the filing officer. The affidavit must request removal of the candidate’s name from the ballot, and the filing fee is nonrefundable. Town candidates have until 5:00 p.m. two days after the close of filing to withdraw. [Minn. Stat. 205.13, subd. 6](#)

A copy of the Affidavit of Withdrawal is available on the [Candidate Withdrawal webpage](#).

Non-Partisan Vacancy in Nomination

A non-partisan vacancy in nomination occurs when:

- A candidate for a non-partisan office with one or two filers withdraws under [Minn. Stat. 204B.12, subd. 1](#)
- A candidate for a nonjudicial nonpartisan office with one or two filers or a primary nominee dies on or before the 79th day before the general election

Vacancies are filled by filing an affidavit of candidacy with fee or petition per [Minn. Stat. 204B.06](#), [204B.09](#), and [204B.11](#). All required filings must occur within five days of the vacancy, and there is a two-day withdrawal period following the last filing day.

Town Write-In Procedures

In town and school district elections, candidates may conduct write-in campaigns without prior approval from the governing body. Write-in candidates are not required to file affidavits or pay fees. Counting procedures depend on whether a resolution under [Minn. Stat. 204B.09, subd. 3](#) has been adopted.

Counting Write-In Votes

If No Resolution is Adopted

If the governing body has not adopted a resolution governing the recording of write-in votes, all valid write-in votes must be individually recorded and counted.

If a Resolution is Adopted

If the governing body (such as a town board or school board) has adopted a resolution under [Minn. Stat. 204B.09, subd. 3](#), the process for counting write-in votes is as follows:

- Write-in votes will only be individually recorded if the total number of write-in votes for the office is equal to or greater than the lowest number of votes received by a ballot candidate.
- The resolution must have been adopted before the first day of the filing period for the election.
- The clerk must have notified the county auditor of the resolution's adoption.
- A resolution remains in effect until a new resolution on the same subject is adopted.

Campaign Practice and Financial Reporting (Campaign Manual)

As candidates file, the clerk must give them a copy of the Minnesota Campaign Manual, available at the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State [Election Guides webpage](#). This Manual explains campaign financial reporting requirements found in [Minn. Stat. Chapter 211A](#) and campaign practices requirements found in [Minn. Stat. Chapter 211B](#) that apply to municipal candidates. [Minn. Stat. 211B.14](#)

Although the clerk does not interpret or enforce campaign finance laws, the clerk must:

- Provide each candidate with a copy of the Minnesota Campaign Manual, financial reporting form, and Certificate of Filing form at the time of filing.
- Receive financial reports from candidates and committees according to the campaign finance reporting schedule described in the Minnesota Campaign Manual. With the clerk's permission, these forms may be filed electronically.
 - The campaign report filing schedule begins once a committee or candidate files an initial campaign finance report, due within 14 days after receiving contributions or making expenditures exceeding \$750.
- Collect Certification of Filing forms from all candidates and committees within seven days after the election.
- Make financial reports available for public inspection.
- Post financial reports on the town website, if maintained, for four years as soon as received but no later than 30 days after receipt.
- Provide the Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board with the link to the financial reports section of the website.

If a candidate or committee has filed an initial report but fails to file a subsequent campaign finance report when due, notify the candidate or committee of the failure. If no response is received within 10 days of notification, file a complaint with the Minnesota Court of Administrative Hearings.

Issue Certificates of Election only to winning candidates who have filed Certification of Filing forms. [Minn. Stat. 13.601, subd. 1](#); [Minn. Stat. 211A.02](#); [Minn. Stat. 211A.05](#); [Minn. Stat. 211B.14](#)

For information on campaign practices for state office candidates or constitutional amendment campaigns, contact the [Minnesota Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board](#) or call (651) 296-5148.

Campaign Complaints

Complaints regarding campaign finance or practice violations under [Minn. Stat. Chapters 211A and 211B](#) are handled by the [Court of Administrative Hearings \(CAH\)](#). To initiate a complaint, a completed form must be filed with the OAH, where the matter will be reviewed and may proceed to a hearing. [Minn. Stat. 211B.32](#)

In addition to receiving required financial reports under [Minn. Stat. 211A.02](#), clerks must notify a candidate or committee that has filed an initial report if a subsequent report is missing. If the missing report is not filed within 10 days after notification is mailed, the clerk must file a complaint with the Court of Administrative Hearings. [Minn. Stat. 211A.05, subd. 2](#)

Ballot Questions

What Are Ballot Questions?

The town board may decide to place certain questions on the ballot that the voters are authorized or required under law to vote on. Such questions generally are limited to:

- Changing the township election date from March to November
- Allowing Sunday liquor sales
- Separating from a statutory city
- Dissolving the town
- Reversing a subordinate service district
- Changing options for organizing the township board
- Issuance of bonds
- Other subjects as authorized by state statute. [Minn. Stat. 205.075](#); [Minn. Stat. 340A.416](#); [Minn. Stat. 365.51](#); [Minn. Stat. 340A.504](#); [Minn. Stat. 365A.06](#); [Minn. Stat. 365.44](#); [Minn. Stat. 367.30](#); [Minn. Stat. 367.36](#); [Minn. Stat. 475.58](#)

Petitions

Special elections may be held in a town on a question on which the voters are authorized by law to pass judgment. A special election may be ordered by the town board on its own motion or upon receipt of a petition signed by a number of voters equal to 20 percent of the voters at the last town general election, if the question has not been submitted to voters within the previous six months. Specific directions for all petitions used in elections are provided in [Minn. Rule Chapter 8205](#), which addresses petition form, circulation, signing, filing, and verification. [Minn. Stat. 205.10](#)

Advisory Elections

Occasionally there will be calls for an “advisory” election on a given topic. The Attorney General has previously ruled that unless authorized by specific law, advisory elections violate Minnesota law. [Minn. Stat. 205.10, subd. 1](#)

Bond and Levy Referendum Ballot Notices

A bond referendum is held to determine if the jurisdiction should be authorized to sell bonds to obtain funds to finance a project, such as a new building. A levy referendum is held to determine if the jurisdiction should be authorized to levy additional property taxes to fund general operational expenses.

Levy referendum ballots may also require notice of the maximum amount of the increased levy as a percentage of market value and the amount that will be raised by the new referendum tax rate in the first year it is to be levied. [Minn. Stat. 275.61](#)

For all bond or levy referendums that will have the effect of raising property taxes, the ballot must include the notice:

“BY VOTING “YES” ON THIS BALLOT QUESTION, YOU ARE VOTING FOR A PROPERTY TAX INCREASE.”
[Minn. Stat. 275.60](#)

Ballot Preparation

Printing Arrangements

Contact the county election official to confirm specific responsibilities for printing ballots for the town. During state election years, the county auditor will provide instructions on how ballot preparation will be coordinated with the town.

The official administering the election must identify a ballot printer early and begin working with the printer before the filing period closes. After the filing period and withdrawal period close, the election official must finalize ballot preparation. Ballots must be prepared in time to have a supply available for absentee voting at least 46 days before an election, except for March town elections, which require ballots at least 30 days before Election Day. [Minn. Stat. 203B.081](#); [Minn. Stat. 204B.35](#)

The official charged with ballot preparation must provide written instructions for the printer regarding candidate name rotation and ballot layout. Towns are exempt from the requirement to have a legal advisor approve rotation of names or ballot layout. If the printing contract exceeds \$1,000, the election official may require the printer to furnish a bond, letter of credit, or certified check to ensure the ballots are prepared according to furnished instructions and Minnesota election law. [Minn. Stat. 204D.04, subd. 2](#)

Each precinct must be provided with at least 100 ballots for every 85 individuals who voted in that precinct at the previous election for the same office or on similar questions, or 10% more than the number of votes expected to be cast in that precinct—whichever is greater. The auditor or clerk must certify the number of ballots provided to each precinct and include this number in the summary statement. [Minn. Stat. 204B.28, subd. 3](#); [Minn. Stat. 204B.29, subd. 1](#)

When determining ballot quantities, also consider turnout statistics from previous elections:

Example: If 20 voters participated in the last similar election:

Option 1: $20 \div 85 \times 100 = 24$ ballots

Option 2: $20 + 10\% = 22$ ballots

Result: Order at least 24 ballots (the greater of the two).

Also consider campaign activity or public interest that may increase turnout. [Minn. Stat. 204B.29, subd. 1](#)

A major decision to make in advance is whether to use an electronic voting system to count vote totals or a traditional hand-count process. Even when an electronic system is normally used for state elections, it may be more convenient and cost-effective to hand count ballots in low-turnout elections. Even with hand counting, ballots must be in optical scan format to accommodate use of an assistive voting device, except in towns with fewer than 500 registered voters as of June 1. These towns are not required to use optical scan ballots or an assistive voting device if their election is not held in conjunction with a federal, state, county, or school district election.

Ballot Layout

By May 1 of state election years, the [Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State](#) will distribute example ballots to auditors. County auditors must provide copies to municipal clerks holding elections that year. [Minn. Stat. 204D.09, subd. 1](#); [Minn. Rule 8250.1810, subp. 18](#)

Optical Scan Ballot Layout

Ballots must be prepared by the county auditor according to the rules for optical scan systems and packaged in groups of 25, 50, or 100. [Minn. Rule 8250.1810](#)

Paper Ballot Layout

When no optical scan system or assistive voting device is used, ballots must be prepared as prescribed by the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State. [Minn. Stat. 205.17, subd. 1](#)

Proofing Tips

- Check ballot header language for accuracy.
- Check the layout matches the example ballot.
- Check the headings on the ballot.
- Check order of offices on the ballot.
- Check the “vote for” number on each office.
- Ensure candidates are listed in proper order for each race.
- Confirm candidate names are spelled correctly.
- Verify capitalization of candidate names.
- Review both front and back sides of the ballots.

Court Remedy for Errors and Omissions

Any individual may file a petition to correct any of the following errors, omissions, or wrongful acts which have occurred or are about to occur:

- An error or omission in the placement or printing of the name or description of any candidate or question on any official ballot, including the placement of a candidate who is not eligible to hold the office.
- Any other error in preparing or printing any official ballot.
- Failure of the chair or secretary of a major political party to execute or file a certificate of nomination.
- Any wrongful act, omission, or error of any election judge, municipal clerk, county auditor, canvassing board member, the secretary of state, or any other person charged with an election duty.

[Minn. Stat. 204B.44](#)

The petition must describe the error, omission, or wrongful act and the correction sought by the petitioner.

- The petition is filed with a judge of the Minnesota Supreme Court in the case of a state or federal election, or with a district court judge in the case of a county, municipal, or school district election.
- The petitioner must serve a copy of the petition on the officer, board, or person charged with the error, omission, or wrongful act; all candidates for the office; and any other party required by the court.

Upon receiving the petition, the court must immediately set a hearing and order the respondent to correct the error or perform the required duty, or show cause for not doing so. If a candidate's eligibility is questioned, the court may order the candidate to appear and provide evidence of eligibility.

The court must issue findings and a final order for relief as soon as possible after the hearing. Failure to obey a court order is considered contempt of court.

Any service required on a candidate may be made by electronic mail sent to the address provided on the candidate's affidavit of candidacy under [Minn. Stat. 204B.06, subd. 1b](#), or by other lawful means.

If all candidates for an office and the responsible officer or board unanimously agree in writing that an error, omission, or wrongful act occurred and agree on the appropriate correction, the officer or board must correct the error without a court order. The written agreement must specify:

- How the correction will occur.
- How voters who have received or returned incorrect ballots will be notified.
- What steps affected voters may take to receive a corrected replacement ballot.

The responsible officer or board must notify the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State in writing within one business day of receiving the agreement and may not distribute corrected ballots for two business days unless the Secretary of State waives this notice period.

Nothing in this process prevents any person from filing a petition alleging that the written agreement itself constitutes an error, omission, or wrongful act requiring court correction.

A candidate who does not join the agreement and does not prevail in court may be ordered to pay the prevailing party's costs unless the court finds their position was substantially justified or that payment would cause undue hardship.

Election officials may also correct an official ballot without a court order if it does not comply with [Minn. Stat. 204B.35–204B.37](#).

Optical Scan and Assistive Voting Systems

What Are Voting Systems?

All voting systems used in Minnesota must meet federal standards and be certified by the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State before use.

Optical Scan

Optical scan voting systems are electronic ballot counters that read the marks voters make on paper ballots, similar to standardized testing. They quickly produce vote totals for complex ballots. Current law permits only optical scan systems and hand-counted paper ballots. [Minn. Stat. 206.57, subd. 6](#)

Optical scan systems are available in two configurations:

- **Precinct ballot counters** — sit on the ballot box and scan ballots as voters insert them.
- **Central count systems** — used to scan and tabulate ballots collected from multiple precincts. [Minn. Stat. 206.56, subd. 8](#); [Minn. Stat. 206.57](#)

Certified Optical Scan Systems in Minnesota:

- M100
- Accu-Vote
- DS200
- VerityScan
- ImageCast Evolution

Assistive Voting Device

Each precinct must have at least one assistive voting device that allows voters with disabilities to mark their ballot privately and independently. These devices mark but do not count ballots. Towns with fewer than 500 registered voters holding stand-alone elections are not required to have an assistive voting device unless:

- Voters at the annual town meeting decide to use one, or
- The cost of using the device does not exceed \$150. [Minn. Stat. 206.57](#)

Jurisdictions that purchased assistive voting devices with federal funds must make them available to other jurisdictions holding stand-alone elections. The lending jurisdiction may not charge rent but may request reimbursement for actual direct and prorated indirect costs. [Minn. Stat. 204B.18, subd. 1](#)

Certified Assistive Voting Devices in Minnesota:

- AutoMARK
- ImageCast Evolution
- Verity TouchWriter
- OmniBallot

State Cooperative Purchasing Venture (CPV)

The Minnesota Department of Administration and the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State manage purchasing agreements with certified vendors to provide affordable access to voting systems for local

governments. Local entities may join the [CPV program](#) for a nominal fee to purchase at state prices without competitive bidding.

For questions about current state voting equipment contracts, contact the Office of State Procurement at osphep.line@state.mn.us and reference Contract Release #V-55(5). Prices listed under the contract are ceilings, and entities are encouraged to negotiate additional discounts. Licensing terms were not negotiated by the state and should be reviewed and negotiated individually.

Programming and Ballot Layout

Voting systems must be programmed for each election. Programming must align precisely with ballot printing and include office order, candidate names, rotation, questions, and registration counts. Candidate information must be provided to the programmer within five days after the withdrawal period closes. If entered into the Election Reporting System (ERS), the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State electronically transfers candidate data to vendors.

Vendors must return completed programming to the jurisdiction at least 21 days before the election. [Minn. Rule 8220.0850](#)

Note: ERS is not available for March township elections.

Voting Equipment Testing Requirements

State law requires two rounds of testing for optical scan and assistive voting equipment before Election Day. Contact your county election official to confirm specific responsibilities.

Preliminary Testing

Preliminary testing verifies that voting systems correctly mark and count ballots, including those marked using assistive technology. The test must include:

- Pre-audited ballots with predetermined valid votes for each candidate and question.
- Ballots with overvotes to ensure proper rejection.
- Ballots marked with electronic or audio-assisted technology.

Public Accuracy Test (PAT)

The Public Accuracy Test must be conducted at least three days before voting equipment is used. Public notice must be published at least five days in advance in official newspapers. The test must be open to observers and conducted by at least two election judges from different major political parties. [Minn. Stat. 206.83](#)

Jurisdictions with three or fewer precincts must test all precincts. Larger jurisdictions must test at least three precincts, covering each congressional, legislative, county, school, and ward district. Errors found during testing must be corrected, and a successful errorless count completed before the equipment can be used.

All programs and test ballots must be sealed, retained, and disposed of as required for paper ballots. For detailed procedures, see the [Voting Equipment Testing Guide](#). [Minn. Rule 8220.1550](#)

Note: [Minn. Rule 8220.1550](#) will be updated to reflect recent legislative changes. The statute takes precedence over any conflicting rule language.

Absentee Voting

Some absentee voting information is provided in this guide. More details can be found in the [Absentee Voting Administration Manual](#) available on the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State's Election Guides webpage.

Preparing to Administer Absentee Voting

Voters must not be required to visit more than one location to cast an absentee ballot. For example, if a county and municipality both have elections on the same day, the county auditor administers absentee voting for the municipality's residents. The county auditor is always responsible for absentee voting for military and overseas (UOCAVA) voters. [Minn. Stat. 203B.081, subds. 1 & 3](#)

In-person absentee voting locations must remain open throughout the absentee voting period. Additional in-person absentee locations that provide only "direct balloting" during the 18 days before an election are required to be open only during those 18 days.

Early voting under [Minn. Stat. 203B.081, subd. 1a](#) and [Minn. Stat. 203B.30](#) will be implemented before the 2026 state elections. The Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State will provide administration instructions at that time.

Permanent Absentee Voter List

Voters may opt in to the permanent absentee voter list to automatically receive an absentee ballot for each election, including town elections. Ballots are mailed before each election. To be added, voters must submit a request to their county election office. If a ballot is returned as undeliverable, the town clerk must notify the county to remove the voter from the list.

Permanent absentee ballots can only be mailed to a voter's residence. To send a ballot elsewhere for a single election, voters may file a separate absentee ballot application before ballots are mailed—at least 46 days before the election.

Voters without mailboxes or needing ballots sent elsewhere for multiple elections should not join the permanent list and instead apply separately each time.

Absentee Voting During State Elections

The county auditor administers absentee voting for county, state, and federal elections, including UOCAVA voters. A town may be designated by the county auditor or give notice that it will administer absentee voting for its residents. [Minn. Stat. 203B.081, subds. 1, 6 & 7](#)

Counties must establish ballot boards to process returned UOCAVA, regular absentee, and mail ballots. If a town is designated under [Minn. Stat. 203B.05](#), its absentee voting location must be set at least 14 weeks before the election. Notice of the location, hours, and dates must be given to the county and Office of the Secretary of State at least two weeks before absentee voting begins.

Absentee Voting During Special and Municipal Elections

When a town election is held separately from a state election, the town administers its absentee voting, except for UOCAVA ballots, which remain the county auditor's responsibility. The county may agree to administer absentee voting if requested by the town. [Minn. Stat. 203B.05, subd. 2](#)

The absentee voting location for stand-alone municipal elections must be determined at least 14 weeks before the election, with notice to the county and Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State at least two weeks before absentee voting begins. [Minn. Stat. 203B.081, subs. 1, 6 & 7](#)

Process Overview

There are two absentee voting processes:

- The Minnesota process ([Minn. Stat. 203B.04–203B.15](#))
- The UOCAVA process for military and overseas voters ([Minn. Stat. 203B.16–203B.27](#))

Clerks administering absentee voting are subject to the same polling place prohibitions as election judges. During absentee voting, the election office is considered the voter's polling place.

Anticipating Absentee Volume

Use data from similar elections and feedback from county officials to estimate expected absentee voters. Include voters on the permanent absentee list, local population changes, and health care facilities. Some counties use formulas to assist with these projections.

Absentee Ballot Return Deadline

Absentee ballots returned in person or by an agent must arrive by 5:00 p.m. on Election Day. Ballots returned by mail, delivery service, or agent under [Minn. Stat. 203B.11, subd. 4](#) must arrive by 8:00 p.m. on Election Day.

Delayed Ballots

Ballots must be available at least 46 days before an election (30 days for March town elections). If the vendor is delayed, absentee voting must still begin on time using substitute ballots. Substitute ballots must resemble official ballots and include "Substitute" printed above "Official Ballot." They must be accompanied by a notarized affidavit explaining the delay. [Minn. Stat. 204B.35, subd. 4](#); [Minn. Stat. 204B.39](#)

Absentee Ballot Boards

Each county or municipality must authorize an absentee ballot board by ordinance or resolution to process regular absentee ballots. Counties must also establish a UOCAVA ballot board. Boards must include a sufficient number of election judges. [Minn. Stat. 203B.121](#)

Ballot Board Duties:

- Accept or reject returned absentee ballots.
- Open accepted envelopes and securely store ballots for counting.
- Hand-count or tabulate accepted ballots.
- Complete summary statements as instructed by the local election official.

Detailed administration procedures are available in the [Absentee Voting Administration Manual](#).

Election Day

Voting Hours & Postponement

Polling places for state primaries and general elections must be open from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Towns with fewer than 500 residents may adopt a later start time, approved at the annual town meeting, but not later than 10:00 a.m. [Minn. Stat. 204C.05](#)

For metropolitan area township elections, polling hours must be from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. For towns outside the metropolitan area, polling hours must be from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. The “metropolitan area” includes Anoka, Carver, Chisago, Dakota, Hennepin, Isanti, Ramsey, Scott, Sherburne, Washington, and Wright Counties. [Minn. Stat. 205.175, subd. 1](#)

Voters waiting in line at closing time must be allowed to register and vote. Those arriving after closing time cannot vote.

Local elections not held with a state or federal election may be postponed due to inclement weather. The jurisdiction with the largest area has the authority to make this decision after consulting other affected officials. The decision must apply to all precincts and be made by 6:00 p.m. the day before the election. The postponed election must be held on the following Tuesday and may be postponed again if necessary. [Minn. Stat. 204C.05](#); [Minn. Stat. 205.07, subd. 1a](#); [Minn. Stat. 205.105](#); [Minn. Stat. 205.175](#)

Bad Weather

If bad weather occurs on the day of the March town meeting and election, the board may postpone to the third Tuesday in March. If bad weather continues, the meeting may be postponed again within 30 days. Once voting has begun, it must be completed the same day. No alternate date is provided for town elections held in November. [Minn. Stat. 365.51, subd. 1](#)

Activity In or Near the Polling Place

Authorized Persons in the Polling Place

The head election judge manages the polling place. Only trained and appointed election judges may serve. Each official must wear a badge identifying their role but not their political affiliation. [Minn. Stat. 204C.06, subd. 2](#); [Minn. Stat. 204B.19–204B.25](#)

Authorized persons include:

- Persons assisting or vouching for voters
- Observers authorized by the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State, county auditor, or clerk
- Peace officers requested to maintain order
- Children accompanying voters
- Authorized challengers
- Teachers and students participating in mock elections
- Members of the news media
- Individuals filing written complaints

[Minn. Stat. 204C.06](#)

Media Access

News media representatives may observe voting if they present photo identification and credentials. They must not:

- Approach within six feet of voters or judges
 - Converse with voters
 - Make lists of who has voted or not voted
 - Interfere with the voting process
- [Minn. Stat. 204C.06, subd. 8](#)

Prohibited Polling Place Activities

Not allowed in or near the polling place:

- Disorderly or intoxicated persons
- Campaigning or campaign materials
- Smoking
- Lingering or gathering within 100 feet of the building (except for exit polling)

Campaigning, signs, and materials are prohibited inside the polling place and within 100 feet of the building.

Voters may bring personal reference materials, like sample ballots, but may not display them publicly. [Minn. Stat. 204C.06](#); [Minn. Stat. 204C.13, subd. 2](#); [Minn. Stat. 211B.11](#)

Election Materials and Equipment Security

Election judges must monitor all election materials and voting equipment throughout the day. Any tampering attempts, suspicious activity, or seal issues must be reported to the local election official. Disorderly individuals may be removed by peace officers if necessary. Incidents must be logged. [Minn. Stat. 204C.06, subds. 5 & 6](#)

Election Judge Neutrality and Code of Conduct

Election judges must remain impartial. They cannot discuss political opinions, candidates, or ballot questions. Judges should refer voters to written ballot instructions. Judges must also maintain confidentiality, respect voter privacy, and ensure accessibility. [Minn. Stat. 204B.19, subd. 5](#); [Minn. Stat. 204C.10\(e\)](#)

Election Day Registration

Voters may register at their polling place on Election Day. Plan for at least 20% of voters to register. Judges handling registration cannot handle ballots for those voters. Rosters and registration materials must be returned to the county auditor within 48 hours. [Minn. Stat. 201.061](#); [Minn. Rule 8200.5300](#)

Challengers

Authorized challengers may observe voting and challenge voter eligibility through election judges. They must present proof of Minnesota residency and written appointment. They cannot talk to voters, inspect materials, or influence voting. [Minn. Stat. 204C.07](#); [Minn. Stat. 204C.12](#)

Emergencies

If emergencies occur, officials have discretion to relocate polling places, enlist additional judges, or copy needed materials. Voting must continue without undue delay. [Minn. Stat. 204B.16, subd. 7](#); [Minn. Stat. 204B.30](#)

Public Counting and Summary Statements

After polls close and all voters in line have voted, counting begins and is open to the public. Election judges prepare and sign three copies of the summary statement, listing all ballot totals, voters, and ballots handled.

[Minn. Stat. 204C.19](#); [Minn. Stat. 204C.24](#)

After the Election

Receiving Materials

For county, state, and federal elections, at least one election judge from each precinct must deliver the following items to the county auditor or clerk (who then delivers them to the auditor) after counting is complete but no later than 24 hours after polls close:

- Two sets of summary statements
- All voted and spoiled ballots [Minn. Stat. 204C.27](#)

The county auditor must remain in the office on election night until all returns have been delivered. The auditor must prepare a record of all materials received, including the time of delivery, the name of the person delivering, and the number of ballots delivered versus returned. Discrepancies must be noted, and all envelopes must remain sealed and stored securely. [Minn. Stat. 204C.28, subd. 1](#)

At least one election judge must also deliver the following to the clerk within 24 hours:

- Remaining summary statements and returns
- Unused and spoiled municipal ballots
- Completed voter registration applications
- Voter rosters
- Voting systems

The clerk must return rosters and voter registration applications to the county auditor within 48 hours. [Minn. Stat. 204C.27](#)

Canvass of the Returns

The town board serves as the canvassing board for town elections. The board must meet to canvass and declare results within three to ten days after a November township election or within two days after an election held on another date. [Minn. Stat. 205.185, subd. 3](#)

Steps to canvass results include:

- Preparing a canvass report (may be generated from ERS for November elections)
- Taking the oath of office
- Reviewing abstracts and write-in reports
- Signing abstracts once results are confirmed
- Breaking ties by lot if needed
- Correcting judge counting errors per law
[Minn. Stat. 204C.38](#); [204C.39](#)

Role of the Town Canvassing Board

The canvassing board certifies vote totals but does not determine who will serve. Under [Minn. Stat. 351.02](#), a vacancy occurs only when an incumbent fails to qualify after the term begins. If a person refuses the oath or fails to qualify, the vacancy is created at that point.

If more than one year remains in the term, the town board must appoint a replacement per [Minn. Stat. 367.03, subd. 6\(b\)](#).

Recounts

Recounts may be conducted after certification to verify vote totals. Recounts are limited to verifying counts and may not include rejected absentee envelopes or duplicated ballots. ([Minn. Stat. 203B.121, subd. 2](#); [204C.35, subd. 3](#))

Procedures are in [Minn. Rules 8235](#) and the [Minnesota Recount Guide](#).

Publicly Funded Municipal Recounts

A publicly funded recount may occur if the margin between candidates meets specific thresholds:

- More than 50,000 total votes cast: < 0.25% difference
 - 400–50,000 total votes cast: < 0.5% difference
 - Fewer than 400 votes cast: < 10 votes difference
- [Minn. Stat. 204C.36, subd. 1](#)

Discretionary Municipal Recounts

Candidates may request a recount at their own expense if the vote difference is larger. The requesting candidate must provide a bond or cash surety.

If the recount changes the winner or reveals a margin greater than the acceptable voting system error rate, the town covers the costs. [Minn. Stat. 204C.36, subd. 2](#)

Ballot Question Recounts

Voters may request a recount on a ballot question by filing a petition with 25 signatures and a written request with the clerk. The recount is publicly funded if the margin meets the same thresholds as above. Otherwise, the requester must file a bond. [Minn. Stat. 204C.36, subd. 3](#)

Contest of Election

A contest of election challenges results in district court and may be filed by a candidate or voter. Grounds include irregularities in conduct, canvassing, or material violations of election law.

The notice of contest must be filed within seven days of canvass (five days for primaries). ([Minn. Stat. 209.02](#); [Minn. Stat. 209.021](#))

If an election is contested, the clerk cannot issue certificates of election until resolved by the court. ([Minn. Stat. 205.185, subd. 3\(b\)](#))

Security and Storage of Election Items for a Contest

There are numerous statutes and rules regarding the retention and safeguarding of election materials.

Secured and Sealed in Ballot Boxes and Precinct Supply Boxes

Ballots and Voting Materials

- All ballots cast and counted in original sealed envelopes.
[Minn. Stat. 204C.27](#), [204C.28](#), [209.05](#); [Minn. Rule 8235.0400](#), [8235.0600](#)
- All defective ballots not counted in original sealed envelopes.
[Minn. Stat. 204C.23](#), [204C.25](#), [204C.27](#), [204C.28](#)
- All spoiled and unused ballots.
[Minn. Stat. 204C.27](#), [204C.28](#)
- All absentee and mail ballot return envelopes.
[Minn. Stat. 203B.08](#), [203B.12](#)

Election Results & Reporting

- All precinct summary statements.
[Minn. Stat. 204C.27](#), [204C.28](#)
- Any voting machine tape reports recording votes cast on Election Day.
[Minn. Stat. 204C.27](#), [204C.28](#)
- All county canvassing board reports.
[Minn. Stat. 204C.33](#)

Voting Systems & Security

- All electronic voting systems and counting programs.
[Minn. Stat. 206.57](#)
- All records of access to ballots.
[Minn. Stat. 204C.28](#)

Voter Registration & Rosters

- All polling place rosters and completed election day registration applications.
[Minn. Stat. 204C.27](#)
- All lists submitted by residential facilities and educational institutions.
[Minn. Stat. 135A.17](#), [201.061, subd. 3](#)

Election Day Operations

- All county auditor records of materials delivered post-voting.
[Minn. Stat. 204C.28](#)
- All precinct incident logs.
[Minn. Stat. 204C.27](#), [204C.28](#)
- All election day challenges to voters.
[Minn. Stat. 204C.12](#)

Absentee Voting

- All absentee ballot applications.
[Minn. Stat. 203B.06](#)

Other Materials (Varying Retention Schedules)

Pre-Election Testing

- Pre-election accuracy test results, including copies of any machine tapes generated as part of the process.
[Minn. Stat. 206.83](#)

Voter Registration Records

- All voter registration applications.
[Minn. Stat. 201.081](#)
- Notices of late, incomplete, and deficient registrations.
[Minn. Stat. 201.061](#); [Minn. Rule 8200.2900](#), [8200.3100](#), [8200.3110](#)
- Notices of ineligibility for registration.
[Minn. Stat. 201.061, subd. 7](#)
- Reports of deceased voters, name changes, felony convictions, guardianships, and commitments.
[Minn. Stat. 201.13](#)
- Notices of challenge removal.
[Minn. Rule 8200.3550](#)
- Notices of application removal.
[Minn. Rule 8200.3700](#)
- Challenges to voter registration.
[Minn. Stat. 201.195](#)

Post-Election Audits

- Copies of post-election machine audits and verification reports.
[Minn. Stat. 206.89](#)

During a Contest Period, It Is Advised To:

- Communicate with all staff about the importance of preserving and protecting election items.
- Search all offices, premises, and networks to ensure all documents and materials are secured.
- Keep ballots locked at all times except when conducting official or court-ordered tasks.
 - No fewer than two election staff should enter the ballot room at any time.
 - Maintain a room-access log including date, time, and purpose.
 - Visual guards ([Minn. Stat. 209.05](#)) may not enter the ballot storage room.
- Post a copy of the town's security policy on the ballot storage room door.

Certifying Results

The clerk must certify the results of the town election to the county auditor. If a question on the ballot involves intoxicating beverages or a change in the form of township government, the clerk must promptly notify the county auditor and certify to the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State the form of the question and votes for and against the proposition. [Minn. Stat. 204C.40](#); [Minn. Stat. 205.185](#); [Minn. Stat. 340A.416](#)

Campaign Finance Reporting

The clerk shall ensure that candidates have certified that all campaign financial reports required by [Minn. Stat. 211A.02](#) have been submitted, including the Certification of Filing. The Certification of Filing is due no later than seven days after the general or special election. [Minn. Stat. 211A.02](#); [Minn. Stat. 211A.05, subd. 1](#)

If a candidate or committee fails to file a campaign finance report when due, the clerk shall notify the candidate or committee of the failure. If no reply is received within 10 days after notification is mailed, the clerk must file a complaint with the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH). [Minn. Stat. 211A.05, subd. 2](#)

Certificate of Election

After the time for recounts and contesting election results has passed (and after any contests have been resolved), and after confirming that all required campaign financial reports due from the successful candidate are on file, the clerk shall issue a certificate of election to the successful candidate. A clerk or auditor who issues a certificate of election to a candidate who has not certified that all campaign finance reports have been filed is guilty of a misdemeanor.

Note: The candidate with the second-highest number of votes does not receive a certificate of election if the winner declines the office or resigns. That situation is handled as a vacancy as described in the next section. [Minn. Stat. 205.185](#); [Minn. Stat. 211A.02](#); [Minn. Stat. 211A.05](#)

Oath of Office

Every person elected or appointed to any public office shall take and subscribe an oath or affirmation to support the U.S. Constitution and the Constitution of Minnesota, and to discharge faithfully the duties of their office to the best of their judgment and ability. This requirement applies to every official, commissioner, or member of a public board or body before transacting any of the business or exercising any privilege of such office.

Unless otherwise specified in law, town officials take and subscribe their oath of office before any officer authorized to administer oaths and file their oath with their town clerk or recorder.

Newly elected town officers must complete the oath of office within 10 days of receiving their certificate of election. Certificates of election cannot be issued until the contest period has passed and the candidate has submitted their Certification of Filing form. [Minn. Stat. 367.25, subd. 1](#)

How the Oath Must Be Administered

Minnesota law classifies the act of administering an oath or affirmation as a notarial act. As a result, clerks must ensure that the oath is administered either in person or through a remote platform that complies with [Minn. Stat. 358.645](#). Common video conferencing tools such as Zoom do not currently meet the requirements of the statute and cannot be used to conduct a valid oath of office.

The following legal provisions apply:

- **Administering an oath is a notarial act.** Minnesota Statutes define notarial acts to include administering oaths and affirmations. [Minn. Stat. 358.52, subd. 6](#)
- **The person taking the oath must appear in person or meet remote notarization requirements.** Because the oath of office is a written statement that is filed with the township, it qualifies as a record under Minnesota law. The person taking the oath must either appear in person before the notarial officer or follow the remote online notarization procedures outlined in [Minn. Stat. 358.645](#) and [Minn. Stat. 358.56](#).

- **Oaths of office are considered records.** Minnesota law defines a record as any information that is stored and retrievable—such as documents filed with the town clerk. The oath of office is a signed document that is filed with the town and therefore meets this definition.
[Minn. Stat. 358.52, subd. 11](#)

Town clerks must ensure the oath is administered lawfully. If using remote procedures, verify that the platform meets Minnesota's remote notarization standards. Contact your county auditor or legal counsel with any questions about compliance.

Record Retention

The clerk is responsible for custody of the ballots and returns in town elections. The clerk must secure all materials used in the election, including optical scan testing materials and the voted ballots, for 22 months following the election.

Abstracts filed by canvassing boards shall be retained permanently by the officer with whom those abstracts are filed (e.g., the town clerk). These abstracts are permanently retained because they contain the original signatures of the canvassing board. [Minn. Stat. 138.163](#); [Minn. Stat. 204B.40](#)

Note: The county auditor is responsible for ballot retention when federal, state, or county offices and town offices are part of a combined optical scan ballot.

Post-Election Review

For the state general election, the county canvass board will select precincts by lot for a post-election review. Details can be found in the [Post-Election Review Guide](#). The county auditor is the post-election review official unless the auditor designates the town clerk as the review official within 24 hours after the county canvass of the state general election. [Minn. Stat. 206.89](#)

Vacancies in Elective Offices

Occurrences

Vacancies in elective offices can occur due to the incumbent's ineligibility or relocation out of the district. A vacancy also occurs when an elected individual declines or refuses to serve. A resignation creates a vacancy when the letter of resignation is received and accepted by the authorized officer, body, or board. Preparations for a special election may begin immediately after the written resignation is received by the appropriate official under [Minn. Stat. 351.01](#); [Minn. Stat. 351.01, subd. 2](#); [Minn. Stat. 351.02](#); [Minn. Stat. 351.055](#)

Filling Vacancies

The town board shall fill the vacancy by appointing an eligible individual. The appointee serves until the next annual town election, when a successor is elected for the unexpired term. Filings for that position are taken during the usual filing period.

If a vacancy occurs with more than one year remaining in the term and on or after the 14th day before the first day to file an affidavit of candidacy, the elected person takes office after the seven-day contest period and serves the remainder of the term.

A special election may also be called if the town board or appointment committee fails to fill the vacancy. [Minn. Stat. 367.03, subd. 6](#)

If a special election is held to fill a vacancy, candidates must file for the specific office to fill the unexpired term. Regular election laws and deadlines apply as far as practicable. Precincts, polling places, and election judges remain the same as the last general election unless changed by law. [Minn. Stat. 204D.18](#); [Minn. Stat. 205.02](#); [Minn. Stat. 204D.24](#)

Other Elections

Mail Ballot Precincts and Mail Elections

[Minn. Stat. 204B.45](#) allows municipalities or counties to conduct elections by mail for certain precincts. [Minn. Stat. 204B.46](#) allows special elections by mail for ballot questions normally voted on at polling places. Manuals are available on the [Election Guides webpage](#).

Mail Ballot Precincts

Mail balloting is permitted for:

- Towns of any size not in a metropolitan county as defined in [Minn. Stat. 473.121](#).
- Towns with fewer than 400 registered voters by resolution and county auditor approval.
- Precincts with fewer than 100 registered voters.
- Unorganized territories if authorized by the county board.

Mail ballots may be used for any municipal, county, or state election. The governing body or county board must authorize mail balloting at least 90 days before the first use and specify the applicable elections. The county auditor(s) must approve before procedures are used.

The **Notice of Special Mail Election Procedures** must be given at least 10 weeks before the election. Ballots are mailed no more than 46 days and no later than 28 days before the election, with a subsequent mailing up to 14 days before Election Day for newly registered voters. A ballot board must process returned ballots within 5 days of receipt, or within 3 days if received fewer than 14 days before Election Day. [Minn. Rule 8210.3000](#)

Mail Election Questions

Counties, municipalities, or school districts submitting ballot questions may conduct elections by mail with no polling place other than the clerk or auditor's office.

The county auditor must receive 84 days' notice, and a public notice must be posted at least six weeks before the election. Ballots are mailed 46 to 14 days before Election Day, and a second mailing is sent for late registrants. Rejected ballots must remain sealed, and the voter must be contacted when possible. Accepted ballots may be opened starting the 19th day before the election. [Minn. Stat. 204B.46](#)

Town Special Elections

A special election is any election not regularly scheduled, held to fill vacancies or vote on ballot questions. These are conducted in the same manner as regular town elections unless otherwise directed by law. A special election may be canceled by resolution at least 84 days before Election Day, with notice provided. [Minn. Stat. 205.10](#); [Minn. Stat. 205.16, subd. 4](#)

State Elections

Town clerks share responsibility for state elections with county auditors and the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State. State primary and general elections are held in even-numbered years; the Presidential Nomination Primary occurs in presidential election years.

Presidential Nomination Primary

Held in presidential election years, conducted as the state primary unless otherwise specified. Major party chairs may submit a preferred date by March 1 of the preceding year; if not, it defaults to the first Tuesday in March.

State Primary Election

Held the second Tuesday in August to nominate candidates for the general election. [Minn. Stat. 204D.03](#)

Notices must be issued by the Secretary of State and county auditors at least 16 weeks before the election, followed by public posting requirements. Candidate certifications must be submitted 42 days before the primary. No write-ins are permitted, and voters must select candidates within one party column only. [Minn. Stat. 204B.33](#); [Minn. Stat. 204B.36](#); [Minn. Stat. 204D.08](#)

Nonpartisan offices appear on the ballot only when more than twice the number of seats available have filed. [Minn. Stat. 204D.07](#)

State General Election

Held the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. Offices include state and county officials, judges, legislators, congressional members, and presidential electors. Constitutional amendments may also appear.

[Minn. Stat. 204D.13](#); [Minn. Stat. 204D.15](#); [Minn. Stat. 447.32](#)

Summary Statements and Returns

Officials responsible for printing ballots must provide three or more blank summary statement forms per precinct, furnished with the ballots. Judges deliver at least three completed copies to the clerk.

[Minn. Stat. 204C.24](#); [Minn. Stat. 204C.26](#); [Minn. Stat. 204C.28](#)

Canvassing

State election results are declared by county canvassing boards and the State Canvassing Board.

[Minn. Stat. 204C.32](#); [Minn. Stat. 204C.33](#)

School District Special Elections

School district special elections must occur on one of five uniform election dates:

- Second Tuesday in February
- Second Tuesday in April
- Second Tuesday in May
- Second Tuesday in August
- First Tuesday after the first Monday in November

Concurrent elections must share polling locations and absentee administration according to the election hierarchy:

1. Federal/State
2. County
3. Municipal (city or town)
4. School District

When jurisdictions overlap, the higher-level jurisdiction administers absentee voting. Towns may bill school districts for shared costs following the [Cost Allocation Procedure](#).

Glossary

Absentee ballot board: A special board of election judges and deputy auditors or deputy city clerks, that handles all processing of absentee ballots.

Agent delivery: A process by which during the seven days preceding an election, and up until 8:00 p.m. on Election Day, specific eligible voters designate someone to serve as an agent to pick up and return absentee ballots to them. [Minn. Stat. 203B.11, subd. 4](#)

Assistive voting device: An electronic ballot marker with a touch screen, keypad, keyboard, earphones, or any electronic ballot marker that assists voters to use an audio or electronic ballot display to cast votes. [Minn. Stat. 206.56, subd. 1](#)

Ballot, Spoiled: A ballot returned due to an error made by the voter. The voter can exchange this for a new blank ballot.

Ballot, Defective: A ballot is defective if the voter overvoted, voter's intent cannot be determined during counting, or if the voter has written their name, ID number, signature on the ballot. A ballot may be defective in whole (as in cross-party voting in a primary) or as in a single office or ballot question (as in voting for too many candidates for one office).

Ballot, Duplicate: A ballot created by an election judge or ballot board team to replace a ballot that cannot be scanned by a ballot counter.

Ballot box: Secure box used to hold voted ballots. The ballot counter (tabulator) sits atop the ballot box.

Ballot counter: Electronic optical scan device that counts paper ballots. Also known as a tabulator.

City: A home rule charter or statutory city. [Minn. Stat. 200.02, subd. 8](#)

Clerk: Statutes refer to "municipal" clerks meaning either the city clerk or town clerk or a designee. References to school districts mean the school district clerk or a designee. Not all clerks are given the title of clerk in their job descriptions but are assigned the duties listed for clerks in election laws.

Challenger: An individual with written authorization to be present in a polling place to question the eligibility of voters based on personal knowledge. A challenger must prove they are a resident of Minnesota by providing the Head Judge with one of the proofs of residence acceptable for election day registration under and complete an Oath of Challenge to Voters Eligibility form to challenge a voter's eligibility.

Cross-party voting: Voting for candidates of more than one party when a candidate appears on the ballot under a political party designation. "Cross-party" voting is not allowed in a partisan primary.

Exit polling: Individuals may conduct exit polls, surveys of voters, anywhere outside of the room being used as the polling place. An individual conducting an exit poll may only approach a voter as they leave the polling place after having voted to ask them to complete a written anonymous questionnaire.

General election: An election held at regular intervals on a day set by law at which voters of the state or any of its subdivisions choose by ballot public officials or presidential electors. [Minn. Stat. 200.02, subd. 2](#)

Governing body: The board of commissioners of a county, the elected council of a city, or the board of supervisors of a township. [Minn. Stat. 200.02, subd. 10](#)

Health care agent delivery: When a patient in a healthcare facility authorizes a person to pick up and return absentee ballots for the patient.

Health care facility: A hospital, residential treatment center, or nursing home licensed under [Minn. Stat. 144A.02](#) or [Minn. Stat. 144.50](#). [Minn. Stat. 203B.01, subd. 4](#)

Mail Balloting: A method of voting that a qualified jurisdiction has chosen to be used for its regularly scheduled elections.

Mail Election: A special election for question(s) (one exception) submitted to the voters of a county, municipality or school district with no polling place other than the office of the auditor or clerk.

Metropolitan Area: The counties of Anoka, Carver, Chisago, Dakota, Hennepin, Isanti, Ramsey, Scott, Sherburne, Washington and Wright. [Minn. Stat. 200.02, subd. 24](#)

Metro Towns: Towns located in the “metropolitan area” as defined above.

Municipality: Any city or town. [Minn. Stat. 200.02, subd. 9](#)

Non-partisan: In a non-partisan primary or a non-partisan general election, voters may vote for any candidates. In a non-partisan election, individual candidates are listed without party designation, unless a local city charter creates other options.

Partisan: In a partisan primary, voters may only vote for candidates within one major political party. In a partisan general election, voters may vote for any candidates regardless of the party affiliation of the candidates. Individual candidates are listed with party designation.

Posted: “Posted” notice refers to the posting of a copy of the notice in a manner likely to attract attention by affixing the notice to a wall, post, or bulletin board, etc. [Minn. Stat. 645.12](#)

Precinct: The basic geographical units for organizing and administering elections.

Primary: An election at which voters choose the nominees for the offices to be filled at a general election. [Minn. Stat. 200.02, subd. 3](#)

Prior registration: The registration record of an individual at the individual’s most recent prior residential address.

Published: “Published” notice means the publication in full of the notice in the regular issue of a qualified newspaper, once each week for the number of weeks specified. [Minn. Stat. 645.11](#)

Roster: The document provided to each precinct listing the voters registered in that precinct with current residence address and date of birth.

Summary Statement: The precinct summary statement is the official record of the numbers of voters and vote totals for the precinct. In precincts using an electronic ballot counter, the machine tape is the summary statement.

Town/Township: "Township" and "Town" are used interchangeably in the guides and laws. Both are acceptable and refer to town guidance, laws, and rules.

Voter Registration Application (VRA): Application used to register to vote or to update an existing registration.

Vouching: An Election Day procedure that permits an individual to register to vote and to cast a ballot if another authorized individual swears an oath that the individual resides in that precinct. Election Day voter vouchers within a polling place are limited to eight voters they may vouch for, however, that limitation does not apply to employees of residential facilities vouching for residents of those facilities.

Vouching, Registered Voter in the Precinct: A registered voter in the precinct or a voter who registers on Election Day in the precinct who can attest to a new registrant's residence allowing them to register in the same precinct on Election Day. A voter may vouch for a maximum of eight people. Vouched-for voters cannot vouch for new voters on Election Day.

Vouching, Employee of a Residential Facility: An individual who proves that they are an employee of a residential facility in the precinct and attests to know a new registrant's residence at the facility. The employee voucher may vouch for an unlimited number of residents of the facility.

Witness: A United States citizen over the age of 18 by election day signs an absentee ballot envelope to document that the ballots inside were marked by the voter entitled to cast the ballots.

Please refer to [Minn. Stat. 200.02](#) for other definitions that may be used in this Guide.

Appendix 1

Election Resources

County Auditor

County auditors are required to train town clerks and election judges prior to the state primary. Training will address election laws and procedures; duties of township clerks and duties of election judges; and related subjects. [Minn. Stat. 204B.28](#)

Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State

The Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State supports county auditors' training program by training the auditors (or their designees) in the administration of election laws and the training of local election officials and election judges. As part of the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State training programs, the office meets with election officials to present information about new laws and rules, and to discuss proposals for laws and for amendments to rules. The office also collaborates with other programs and conferences offered for election officials by their own associations. [Minn. Stat. 204B.27](#)

Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State Publications

To assist county auditors, municipal clerks, and other election officials in their duties, the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State makes available the following publications:

Minnesota Election Laws - A compilation of Minnesota's election laws with annotations by the Attorney General. Printed in odd-numbered years, copies and updates are sent to county auditors for distribution to town clerks; it is updated online for even-numbered years. In all matters, the law and rule are the final authority. [Minn. Stat. 204B.27](#)

Minnesota Election Judge Guide – Explains election judge duties and procedures.

Minnesota County Election Administration Guide – Provides county election calendar, procedure summary and references to Minnesota election laws and rules.

Minnesota Absentee Voting Administration Manual – Provides absentee voting calendar, procedure summary and references to Minnesota absentee election laws and rules.

Minnesota City Clerk Election Guide – Provides city election calendar, procedure summary and references to Minnesota election laws.

Minnesota Town Election Administration Manual – Provides town election calendar, procedure summary and references to Minnesota election laws.

Minnesota School District Election Guide – Provides school board election calendar, procedure summary and references to Minnesota election laws.

Minnesota Campaign Manual – Summarizes campaign financial reporting and fair campaign practices references to Minnesota election laws.

Minnesota Mail Ballot Precinct Voting Manual – Provides Mail Ballot Precinct voting procedures summary and references to Minnesota Election Laws.

Minnesota Mail Voting Administration Manual – Provides Mail Election procedures summary and references to Minnesota Election Laws.

Minnesota Election Recount Guide – Provides procedural summary for election recounts and references to Minnesota Election Laws.

Minnesota Post Election Review Guide – Provides procedural summary for post-election reviews and references to Minnesota Election Laws.

Minnesota Voting Equipment Testing Guide – Provides procedural information for voting equipment testing.

Presidential Nomination Primary Election Administration Guide – Provides procedural summary and references to Minnesota election laws for the presidential nomination primary.

Appendix 2

Example Polling Place Supply List

This list is provided as an example only. Depending on your voting equipment, or arrangements your office may have with other units of government, you may not use certain items and/or you may use items not listed.

- Alphabetical tabs for paper rosters – 1 set
- Assistive voting device
- Bag of rubber bands & paper clips
- Ballot counter & power cord
- Ballots
- Ballot marking pens
- Ballot marker boxes/strings
- Ballot receipts for registered voter
- Blank cardboard pieces for signs
- Certificate of registered voter for curbside voting
- Clipboard
- Deceased voter forms
- Demonstration ballot
- Duplicated ballot envelope
- Duty cards
- Election Judge Manual(s) – add phone numbers on the back
- Election day registration applications
- Extension cords
- Flag(s) and stand
- HAVA Election Complaint Form
- Highlighter
- “I Voted” stickers
- Identification Badges
- Incident logs
- Key(s) to polling place; ballot box
- Letter opener
- Magic marker
- Magnifying lens
- Masking tape
- Oath of election judge form
- Oath of challenge to voter’s eligibility form
- Official certification sheet
- Opening/closing the polls checklist
- Payroll/timesheet records for election judges
- Poll closing sign for last voter in line at 8 p.m.
- Polling place posters and signs
- Precinct finder
- Precinct list of persons vouched for Form
- Precinct map
- Precinct rosters
- Results tape envelope
- Rubber fingers
- Sample ballots
- Scissors
- Secrecy cover or folder for ballots
- Security seals for ballot transfer case
- Spoiled ballot envelope
- Voter registration tally sheet
- Voter registration bags
- Oath of Vouching to Voter’s Eligibility
- Precinct List of Person’s Vouched for Form
- Residential Facility Precinct List of Persons
- Voter Receipts – differentiate between school districts within the same precinct
- Vouched for Form
- Write-in tally sheets/summary statements
- Greeter lists

Additional Forms and Resources

The Minnesota Township Association has developed forms to utilize in Town Elections.

These forms are developed and maintained by Minnesota Township Association. ALL forms can be found at [Elections | MAT Information Library](https://www.mntownships.org/information-library/elections) (<https://www.mntownships.org/information-library/elections>).

Helpful Links

Quick access to key online resources referenced throughout this manual.

Election Administration Resources

Election Calendars

Deadlines and timelines for election administration:

<https://www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/election-administration/election-calendars/>

Election Guides Webpage

All official OSS election manuals and guides, including:

- Absentee Voting Administration Manual
- Mail Ballot Precinct Voting Manual
- Mail Elections Administration Manual
- Recount Guide
- Voting Equipment Testing Guide

<https://www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/election-administration/election-guides/>

Election Judge Training Resources

Training information and materials for election judges:

<https://www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/election-administration/election-judge-training/>

Polling Places, Maps, and Accessibility

Polling Place Accessibility Diagnostic Tool

<https://www.sos.mn.gov/media/3e3d3vpo/polling-place-accessibility-diagnostic-tool.pdf>

Shapefiles and GIS Data

Precinct data in GIS format:

<https://www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/data-maps/shapefiles/>

Maps for Download

Congressional, Senate, and Legislative maps:

<https://www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/data-maps/>

Ordering Printed Maps

<https://www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/data-maps/ordering-maps/>

Candidate and Voter Resources

Become a Candidate Information

Forms, filing information, and candidate guidance:

<https://www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/become-a-candidate/>

Candidate Withdrawal Information

Guidance on withdrawing from the ballot after filing:

<https://www.sos.mn.gov/election-administration-campaigns/become-a-candidate/candidate-withdrawal/>

Health Care Facility Resources

Health Care Facility (HCF) Directory

<https://www.sos.mn.gov/elections-voting/other-election-resources/health-care-facility-directory/>

Minnesota Veterans Homes

<https://mn.gov/mdva/homes/>

Day One Services (Women's Shelters Resource)

<https://dayoneservices.org/partners/>

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