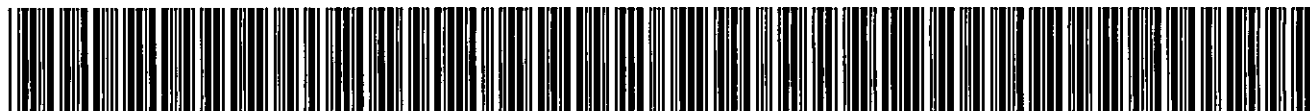


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*How to vote  
by Absentee Ballot  
in Massachusetts*

20  
**ELECTIONS**  
A  
Publication of State  
Secretary of State  
Michael J. Conolly

*It's your turn now*  
Be sure to  
**VOTE!**



The Elections Division staff and other employees of the Secretary of State's office urge you to vote.

# How to vote by Absentee Ballot



## Reasons for voting absentee

You may vote absentee if you are registered and will be unable to vote at the polls on election day because of

- absence from your city or town
- physical disability
- religious beliefs

Illegal absentee voting is punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and up to a year in prison.



## Applying for an absentee ballot

You must apply for an absentee ballot from your city or town clerk no later than noon of the day before the election. Applications may be mailed or hand delivered and you may use any form of written communication (letter or postcard), or the official application form.

If you are applying for an absentee ballot for a primary and are a registered independent or unregistered, indicate which party's ballot you desire.

To be counted, a completed ballot must be received by the time the polls close on election day.

## Requesting to vote by mail

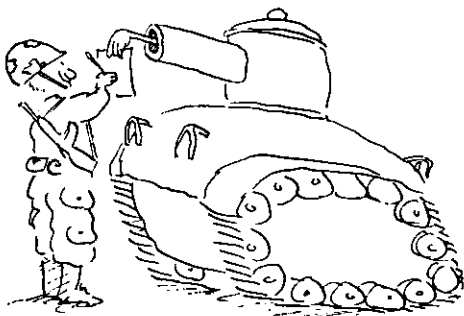
A ballot will be sent to any address you specify, including your own home. Be sure to apply early because the ballots must be sent by mail and returned by mail.

Include on the application

- your name as registered
- your registration address
- ward and precinct, if you know them
- the precise address to which you wish the ballot sent
- in a primary election, the party ballot you wish
- your own signature

## Requesting to vote in person

If you prefer, you may request to vote in person before election day. You may vote at your city or town hall before election day at a time arranged with the clerk, but application for your ballot must be made no later than noon of the day before the election. A voter may apply for an absentee ballot and then vote over-the-counter during the same visit.



## Applying to vote if you are absent from the state, in the armed services, or a prisoner

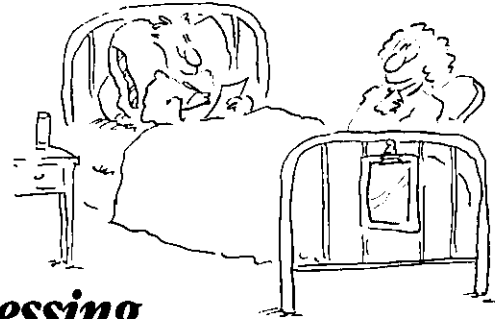
Registered and unregistered residents of Massachusetts outside the state and residents on active duty in the armed forces and merchant marine and their spouses or dependents, and prisoners, may vote absentee. They may request an absentee ballot from the city or town where they legally reside (if outside the U.S., where they resided last before leaving).

If you are applying for an absentee ballot for a primary and are a registered independent or unregistered, indicate which party's ballot you desire.

A parent of a registered voter who is a student at a Massachusetts college or university may apply for an absentee ballot on the student's

behalf, to the clerk or election commission of the city or town where the student is registered.

In all cases, unregistered voters must register in person when they return to the state, since this does not establish permanent registration.



## Witnessing

Most absentee voters must have their absentee ballots witnessed. You vote privately, alone, except for the presence of a witness. No one, including the witness, may see how you vote or discuss your choices. Any person 18 years of age or older may be the witness. A candidate may not witness your ballot.

Ballots must be filled out, witnessed and mailed to your city or town clerk or election commission.

If you are outside the United States, or on your city or town list of permanently disabled voters (see below), you do not need to vote in the presence of a witness; you merely sign the envelope yourself.

Temporarily disabled voters must have their ballot envelopes witnessed.

## Unable to mark ballot?

If you cannot mark the ballot due to physical disability or inability to read or to read English, it may be marked for you by any person whom you choose. This person must sign both your name and his own on the envelope and add a statement giving the reason why you were unable to mark the ballot yourself. If you are unable to find assistance, ask your city or town clerk for help.

## What if I am permanently physically disabled?

If you are permanently physically disabled and cannot cast your vote at the polling place, you may file a letter from your physician with your city or town clerk, stating that you are permanently unable to cast your vote at the polling place because of physical disability.

A completed application for an absentee ballot, for you to sign and return, must be mailed by the city or town clerk to you at least 28 days before every primary and election.

## Returning your absentee ballot

**Mail your ballot** Absentee ballots must be mailed both ways. Ordinarily, it is illegal for ballots to be hand carried to the voter, or from the voter to local election officials.

Only in special circumstances can an absentee ballot be hand carried to and from patients in a health care facility. Check with local election officials for details.

**Deadline** Return your absentee ballot promptly. In order to be counted, absentee ballots must be received by the time the polls close on election day. (Exception: at a state general election, absentee ballots mailed outside the United States on or before election day need not be received until the tenth day after the election.)

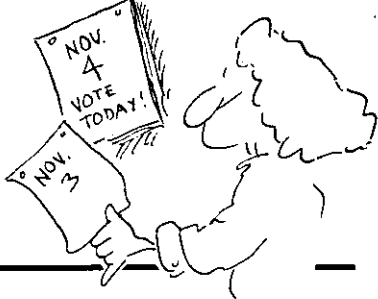
**Postage** Return postage must be paid by the voter. The only exceptions are for those on active duty in the armed forces and merchant marine and their spouses and dependents, and for citizens outside the U.S. if the ballot is mailed from a U.S. post office.



Cartoons by Chris Demarest  
Photo by T.C. Fitzgerald

# '86 Elections Calendar

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**August 16**

Required Saturday voter registration session,  
12 noon to 8 pm

**August 19**

Last day to register to vote\* or change party  
enrollment before State Primary

**September 16**

**STATE PRIMARY**

**October 4**

Required Saturday voter registration session,  
12 noon to 8 pm

**October 7**

Last day to register to vote\* before State  
Election

**November 4**

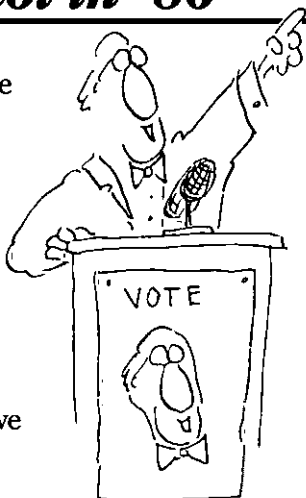
**STATE ELECTION**

*\* Registration is open during normal business hours  
throughout the year in most City or Town Clerk's  
or Election Commission's offices. See "Are there  
registration deadlines?" on the other side of this  
pamphlet.*

## ***On the ballot in '86***

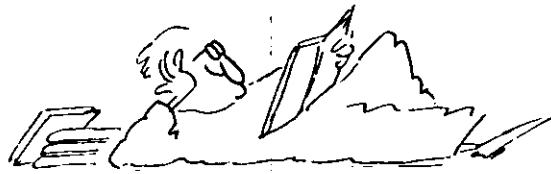
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- U.S. Representative
- Governor\*
- Lt. Governor\*
- Secretary of State
- Attorney General
- Treasurer
- Auditor
- Governor's Council
- State Senator
- State Representative
- District Attorney
- Sheriff
- County Commissioner



*\* Governor and Lt. Governor run as  
team in State Election*

# Publications about Elections



How to Vote in Massachusetts  
*(Available in English, Spanish and Portuguese)*

How to Vote Absentee in Massachusetts  
*(Available in English, Spanish and Portuguese)*

Your Rights as an Elderly or Disabled Voter  
*(Available in English, Spanish and Portuguese)*

Boards of Registrars and Election Commissions  
*(Their duties, how to become a member)*

Local Lists  
*(An explanation of street and voting lists)*

Don't Stand There . . . Run!  
*(A guide to potential candidates for national, state and county offices)*

Ballot Questions  
*(How to get a question on a state or local ballot)*

Petition Series  
*(Detailed information about each kind of ballot question)*

Local Charter Procedures

Election Officers  
*(Clerks, inspectors, wardens – who may be one, what the duties are)*

Vacancies in Elective Office  
*(How a position is filled)*

Redistricting in Massachusetts

Residency for voting purposes  
*(What is legal residency in Massachusetts for voting purposes)*

Special Voter Registration Sessions  
*(How to request)*

Running for Office as a Sticker or Write-in Candidate

Election Day Legal Summary

P.D. 43 Elections Statistics  
*(How each of the state's cities and towns voted in the last election)*

Legal Remedies for Election Problems

Massachusetts General Laws  
*(Compilation of those laws which pertain to elections)*

Enrollment Figures  
*(February and August)*

Maps

- Congressional
- Senatorial
- Representative

## Lists

- Elected Officials
  - Congressional
  - Constitutional Officers
  - Senators in General Court
  - Representatives in General Court
- Counties, Cities and Towns in Massachusetts
- Districts
  - Congressional
  - Senatorial
  - Representative
  - Councillor
  - District Attorney
- Selectmen
- City and Town Clerks
- Mayors
- County Officers

*These publications are available at the State Bookstore, Room 116, State House, Boston, and at the Elections Division, Room 1705, One Ashburton Place, Boston.*



***For further information,  
please contact:***

**Michael J. Connolly,**  
Massachusetts Secretary of State  
**Elections Division**  
Room 1705, One Ashburton Place  
Boston, MA 02108  
(617) 727-2828,  
or  
1-800-462-VOTE (toll-free)  
*and, for the hearing impaired, a TDD number:*  
1-800-462-8685