

This page will be updated as we learn more

Contact Information 701-642-7700

lhage@co.richland.nd.us

**How is the Primary Election going to be run?**

Richland County is going to conduct this election by **mail balloting** in conjunction with the other 52 counties in North Dakota.

**Why is the Primary Election going to be run by mail balloting?**

As a county, we have always prided ourselves in offering voters as many options to cast their ballots as possible. For years Richland County has offered absentee voting both by mail and in person for forty days prior to each election. Richland County also has had thirteen polling sites open on Election Day. However, we don't know what is going to happen over the next few months with the COVID-19 Virus.

Our biggest concern, other than the safety of election workers and voters due to the COVID-19 Virus, is having anything disrupt or delay the Primary Election. While the Primary is important, it takes on additional significance because the June 9<sup>th</sup> election is also the General Election for the cities, school districts, and county measures. In Richland County, we include fourteen cities on our Primary Election ballots. Our six school districts run their own elections but will also be going entirely Vote by Mail for this June's election, per the Governor's Executive Order 2020-19.

We don't take this change lightly. However, given the deadlines established in law and the long lead time it takes to make an election successful, we need to change what we do for this Primary Election.

**How is Vote by Mail different from absentee voting?**

All counties in North Dakota offer **absentee voting** starting at 40 days prior to an election. In Richland County that means someone who wants to vote absentee because they are going to be gone or prefer that method of voting could either mail, fax, or e-mail us an application, and we would send them a ballot in the mail. The other method was they could stop in our office to apply for and receive a ballot at that time. Precincts, for in person voting, are open on Election Day only.

**In mail balloting**, all active voters in the central voter file are mailed an application which they need to complete and return to the county auditor to receive a ballot in the mail. Due to the unusual circumstances this year, the Secretary of State will mail applications out to all voters in the central voter file, both active and inactive. These applications need to be completed and sent back to the county auditor to receive a ballot. Normally one precinct is open on Election Day. This year, due to the unusual circumstances, no precincts will be open on Election Day, per the Governor's Executive Order 2020-13.

**Why was the decision to go mail balloting made in April?**

By the 64<sup>th</sup> day before the election, polling places need to formally be named. The 64<sup>th</sup> day is really a big milestone in election planning. That is the filing deadline for candidates and measures to be placed on the ballot. We also need to order our ballots in this week for all 31 ballot styles. We order absentee or mail ballots separately from Election Day ballots—absentee or mail ballots come pre-folded to save time. Election Day ballots are not folded because they are easier to use

with precinct scanners. At this point we either start preparing for a Mail Ballot Election or our normal election with Election Day Precincts.

### **Can I go to my regular precinct on Election Day?**

**No**, the Election Day precincts will not be open due to the COVID-19 emergency.

### **How will I get my Ballot?**

As mentioned above, the Secretary of State's Office will be mailing applications to all the individuals listed in the Central Voter File. These applications will be mailed to you between the 50<sup>th</sup> (April 20<sup>th</sup>) and the 40<sup>th</sup> day (April 30<sup>th</sup>) before the election. The application you receive will only have your name and residential address; you will need to complete:

- Select the election or elections you want to receive a ballot for
- The type of ID you are using, usually your North Dakota driver's license or ND non-driver's ID
- Your ID number
- Your ballot delivery address, if it is different than your residential address
- And you will need to sign and date your application

Then mail the completed & signed application to the Richland County Auditor to receive your ballot by mail.

### **Do I have to vote my ballot right away?**

No, you need to complete and have your ballot postmarked by at least the day before Election Day (postmark by June 8<sup>th</sup>).

### **What if I do not get an application from the Secretary of State?**

It is possible that you will not get an application from the Secretary of State. Usually the reason is you moved and have not updated your address with the North Dakota Department of Transportation or have moved too recently for that data to be updated and transmitted to the Central Voter File. You may be new to the state and have not been issued a driver's license or state issued non-driver's identification card.

Whatever the reason, if you don't get an application directly from the Secretary of State's Office, you can go online to [WWW.VOTE.ND.GOV](http://WWW.VOTE.ND.GOV) and fill out, print, sign, and mail your application to your county auditor. You can also call the Richland County Auditor's office (701-642-7700) and we will mail you an application.

### **So, what if I am filling out my ballot and I make a mistake?**

If you make a mistake when filling out your ballot you can request a replacement ballot. Call your county auditor's office and they will process another ballot for you.

### **Anything else I have to do with my ballot after voting?**

After voting, place your ballot in the secrecy envelope (brown), put the secrecy envelope containing your ballot in the return envelope (white) provided. **Be sure to date and sign the back of the return envelope and put postage on the envelope before mailing it back to the Richland County Auditor.**

Ballot envelopes that are returned to the county auditor without a signature will not be processed.

**What happens to my ballot when I mail it to the county auditor?**

When we get your ballot back from you, we record the receipt of the ballot. Signatures on the Vote by Mail application and the returned ballot envelope will be compared to make sure they match. It is important that **you** sign your application and **you** sign your return envelope to ensure your vote is counted.

**My son/daughter is my Power of Attorney. Can they apply for a ballot for me?**

Your vote is yours to cast. You need to apply for your ballot under your signature, you can have anyone help you with completing the application. We cannot send you a ballot based on a request from your Power of Attorney.

**How secure is my vote?**

We will only issue ballots based on your request for a Vote by Mail ballot. We compare your name, address, and ID number with the Central Voter File before sending you a ballot. We will not issue you a ballot without your signature. When we receive your ballot back, the Poll Judges will compare the signature on your application with the signature on the ballot return envelope.

All ballot return envelopes are reviewed by the Vote by Mail Board before being opened and processed. If that board cannot determine if the application and ballot envelope were signed by the same person, they will not process the ballot. They will instead refer the ballot to the County Canvassing Board, that meets six days following each election, for a final decision on whether to count the ballot.

**Will anyone know how I voted?**

No, the ballots are opened by Election Judges. They first separate the secrecy envelopes from the ballot return envelopes after examining the signatures. Once the ballot return envelopes are empty, they are set aside before ballots are removed from the secrecy envelopes and initialed by the Election Judges.

**When will my ballot be counted?**

For this Mail Election, the Governor's Executive Order 2020-13 has given us five business days before Election Day to process the mail ballots. The ballots may be opened and processed over this period; however, the ballot scanners will be locked so that no results can be tabulated until after 7:00 PM on Election Day.

**When and how will election results be released?**

Election results will be uploaded to the Secretary of States website after 7:00 PM on Election Day.