

Summary

Table 14: How States Verify Voted Absentee/Mail Ballots

Updated August 07, 2025

Related Topic: Elections



Voting Outside the Polling Place Report

This table is part of NCSL’s Voting Outside the Polling Place report.

The most common method to verify that absentee/mail ballots come from the intended voter is to conduct signature verification. When voters return an absentee/mail ballot, they must sign an affidavit on the ballot envelope. When the ballot is returned to the election office, election officials have a process for examining each signature and comparing it to other documents in their files that contain the voter signature—usually the voter registration record.

If a ballot is missing a signature or the signature does not match the one on file, some states offer voters the opportunity to “cure” their ballots. The election official will contact the voter explaining the problem and asking them to verify their information and that that they did in fact cast the ballot. See [Table 15: States with Signature Cure Processes](#) for more details.

Some states have other methods for verifying absentee/mail ballots, such as requiring voters to provide a copy of an identification document or to have the absentee/mail ballot witnessed or notarized.

Thirty-two states conduct signature verification on returned absentee/mail ballots:

- Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Washington and West Virginia.

Ten states, the Virgin Islands and Washington, D.C., verify that an absentee/mail ballot envelope has been signed but do not conduct signature verification:

- Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Georgia, Maryland, Nebraska, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Virginia and Wyoming.

Eight states require the signature of a witness in addition to the voter’s signature:

- Alabama (two witnesses or a notary), Alaska (witness or notary), Arkansas, Louisiana, Minnesota (witness or notary), North Carolina (two witnesses or a notary), South Carolina and Wisconsin.

Three states require the absentee/mail ballot envelope to be notarized:

- Mississippi, Missouri and Oklahoma.

Arkansas requires a copy of the voter's identification document, which could be a valid photo ID or a copy of a current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck or other government document that shows the name and address of the voter, be returned with the absentee/mail ballot (108-00 Code Ark. R. § 010 (section 810)). North Carolina also requires a copy of the voter's ID to be returned with their ballot, or the voter may fill out an ID exemption form and include that in the return envelope with their ballot. And Georgia requires the voter's driver's license number or state identification card number, which is compared with the voter's registration record. Note: Minnesota and Ohio also require this information, though Minnesota also requires a witness signature, and Ohio conducts signature verification.

States also verify absentee ballot applications; see [Table 8: How States Verify Absentee Ballot Applications](#) for further details.

Note: The federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA) places additional identification requirements on first-time voters who registered by mail. That information is not included in the table below.

How States Verify Voted Absentee/Mail Ballots

State	Does the State Require Signature Verification?	Are Notary or Witness Signatures Required?	Details on How Absentee/Mail Ballots Are Verified
Alabama Ala. Code §17-11-7 §17-11-10	No.	Yes; either two witnesses older than 18, or a notary public must sign the return envelope.	Absentee ballot return envelopes are printed with an affidavit which must be signed by the voter and either two witnesses or notary public. If the witnessing of the signature and the information in the affidavit establish that the voter is entitled to vote by absentee ballot, then the election officials shall certify the findings, open each affidavit envelope, and deposit the plain envelope containing the absentee ballot into a sealed ballot box.
Alaska Alaska Stat. §15.20,081(d)	No.	Yes; an attesting signature is	Absentee ballot return envelopes must be signed by the voter under penalty of perjury and a witness over 18 or an

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§15.20.203		needed by a witness older than 18 or an official authorized to administer oaths.	authorized official. Ballots are not counted if the voter or the official or witness authorized by law to attest the voter's certificate failed to properly sign the certificate on the outside of the return envelope.
Arizona Ariz. Rev. Stat. §16-547 §16-550 §16-552(B)	Yes.	No.	Absentee ballot return envelopes must be signed by the voter under penalty of perjury. Upon receipt, the voter's signature on the affidavit is compared to the signature on the voter's registration record. The vote is counted only if the signatures correspond and if the affidavit is found to be sufficient.
Arkansas Ark. Code Ann. §7-5-409(b)(4), 7-5-412, 7-5-416	Yes.	Yes. The absentee ballot return envelope must be signed by a witness who is at least 18 years old. There is an exception to the witness requirement for voters who are residents of long-term care facilities, who are sick or physically disabled, are absent on Election Day	The voter statement on each absentee ballot must be signed by the voter under penalty of perjury. The voter must also provide verification of registration, which can be a copy of a photo ID, a current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck or other government document that shows the name and address of the voter, with the returned absentee ballot. If the county board of election commissioners determines that the absentee application and the voter's statement do not compare as to name, residential voting address, date of birth, and signature, the absentee ballot shall not be counted.

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		due to religious observance, are active armed service members or are living overseas.	
California Cal. Elec. Code §3011 § 3019	Yes.	No.	The identification envelope must be signed by the voter under penalty of perjury. Upon receipt of a mail ballot, the elections official compares the signature on the identification envelope with either of the following to determine if the signatures compare: (1) The signature appearing on the voter's affidavit of registration or any previous affidavit of registration of the voter. (2) The signature appearing on a form issued by an elections official that contains the voter's signature and that is part of the voter's registration record. If upon conducting the comparison of signatures the elections official determines that the signatures do not compare, the identification envelope shall not be opened, and the ballot shall not be counted.
Colorado Colo. Rev. Stat. § 1-7.5-107.3	Yes.	No.	The self-affirmation on the return envelope must be signed by the voter. Election judges compare the signature on the self-affirmation on each return envelope with the signature of the eligible elector stored in the statewide voter registration system. If the election judge determines the signatures do not match, two other election judges of different political

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			party affiliations shall simultaneously compare the signatures. If both other election judges agree that the signatures do not match, the county clerk and recorder shall send to the eligible elector a letter explaining the discrepancy in signatures and a form for the eligible elector to confirm that the elector returned a ballot to the county clerk and recorder. If the eligible elector returns the form indicating that the elector did not return a ballot to the county clerk and recorder, or if the eligible elector does not return the form within eight days after Election Day, the self-affirmation on the return envelope shall be categorized as incorrect, the ballot shall not be counted, and the county clerk and recorder shall send copies of the eligible elector's signature on the return envelope and the signature stored in the statewide voter registration system to the district attorney for investigation.
Connecticut Conn. Gen. Stat. §9-137 §9-140a §9-150a(d) §9-359a	No.	No.	The statement on the inner envelope of an absentee ballot must be signed by the voter under penalties of false statement. If the statement on the inner envelope is not signed as required, the ballot is rejected.
Delaware	No.	No.	Absentee ballot return envelopes are printed with an oath that must be signed by the voter under penalty of

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Del. Code Ann. tit. 15, §5505(b)(4) §5514			perjury. If a ballot is returned without a signature on the oath or if the envelope is open or appears to have been tampered with, it is not counted.
District of Columbia D.C. Mun. Regs. Tit. 3, § 720.11	No.	No.	An absentee ballot shall be counted provided that the voter signs the absentee ballot envelope to certify that the voter has voted the ballot, that the voter's information is correct, and that the voter is a qualified elector.
Florida Fla. Stat. §101.64 §101.65(7) §101.68(1)(c)	Yes.	No.	Absentee ballot secrecy envelopes are printed with a voter's certificate which must be signed by the voter. Election officials compare the signature of the elector on the voter's certificate with the signature of the elector in the registration books or the precinct register to see that the elector is duly registered in the county and to determine the legality of that vote-by-mail ballot.
Georgia Ga. Code Ann. §21-2-384 §21-2-386(a)(1)	No.	No.	Absentee ballot return envelopes are printed with an oath which must be signed by the voter under penalty of false swearing. A voter must also provide the number of their driver's license or identification card. Election officials confirm the oath was signed and compare the voter's driver's license number or state identification card number to the voter's registration information. Ballots with missing information or information that does not conform to the voter's record are rejected.

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Hawaii Hawaii Rev. Stat. §15-6 § 11-104 § 11-106	Yes.	No.	Mail ballot return envelopes are printed with an affirmation statement to be signed by the voter. The return envelopes are checked for a signature on the affirmation statement and whether the signature corresponds with the reference signature image.
Idaho Idaho Code § 34-1004 §34-1005 §34-1009	Yes.	No.	Absentee ballot return envelopes are printed with an affidavit on the back, which the voter must sign. The county clerk compares the voter's signature on the affidavit to the signature from the voter's registration. The ballot may be challenged if the affidavit is insufficient, and ballots ruled insufficient shall not be opened.
Illinois Ill. Rev. Stat. ch. 10, §5/19-5 § 5/19-8(g)	Yes.	No.	Absentee ballot return envelopes are printed with a certification that the voter must sign under penalty of perjury. The election judge or official shall compare the voter's signature on the certification envelope of that vote by mail ballot with the signature of the voter on file in the office of the election authority. If the election judge or official determines that the signatures do not match, or that the vote by mail voter is not qualified to cast a vote by mail ballot, then without opening the certification envelope, the ballot is rejected.
Indiana Ind. Code § 3-11-4-21, 3-11.5-4-5	Yes.	No.	Absentee ballot return envelopes are printed with an affidavit on the back, which the voter must sign and date under penalty of perjury. County

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			election board members compare the signature on the absentee ballot envelope with the signature on the voter's absentee ballot application or electronic poll book, and signatures deemed genuine are accepted. If the date of the signature on the affidavit is inaccurate, the ballot is rejected.
Iowa Iowa Code §53.16 §53.18	Yes.	No.	Absentee voters sign an affidavit on the ballot envelope. Affidavits are reviewed for completeness, and those with defects are not counted. A return envelope is considered to contain a defect if it appears that the signature on the envelope has been signed by someone other than the registered voter, in comparing the signature on the envelope to the signature on record of the registered voter named on the envelope.
Kansas Kan. Stat. Ann. § 25-433 § 25-1136(b)	Yes.	No.	The absentee ballot envelope contains a declaration that must be signed by the voter under penalty of election perjury. The voter's signature is compared with the signature on the elector's registration records. Absentee ballots that are not signed are not counted.

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Kentucky Ky. Rev. Stat. §117.085(7) §117.087(3)(c)	Yes.	No.	The return envelope is printed with a space for the signature of the voter. Signatures on the outer envelope are compared with the signature of the voter on the registration card, unsigned ballots or those with signatures that do not match are not counted.
Louisiana La.-Rev. Stat. Ann. §18:1306(E) §18:1313(G)	No.	Yes; the absentee ballot return envelope must be signed by a witness. Effective July 1, 2025, witnesses must be at least 18 years old.	Absentee ballot return envelopes bear a certificate and affidavit which must be signed by the voter under penalty of perjury and a witness. The name on the certificate is compared with the names on the absentee-by-mail voter report. If a majority of members of the counting board determine that an absentee ballot is invalid, the ballot is rejected and not counted.
Maine Me. Rev. Stat. Ann. tit. 21-A § 754-A § 756 § 759	Yes.	No.	An affidavit is printed on the return envelope, which must be signed by the voter. The clerk compares the signature on the envelope with the signature of the voter on the absentee ballot application. The absentee ballot is rejected and not counted if the signatures do not appear to have been made by the same person or if the affidavit is not properly completed.
Maryland Md. Election Code Ann. § 11-302 COMAR 33.11.04.05	No.	No.	An oath prescribed by the state board is printed on the ballot envelope and must be signed by the voter. A team of election officials verify that the oath is signed, and the return envelope

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			sealed. Ballots are rejected if the voter failed to sign the oath.
Massachusetts Mass. Gen. Laws Ann. ch. 54, § 94	Yes.	No.	The absentee ballot envelope contains an affidavit that the voter must sign. The signature on the absentee envelope is compared with the signature on the absentee ballot application. If the ballot envelope was not signed by the same person who signed the absentee ballot application or the affidavit is incomplete, it is rejected.
Michigan Mich. Comp. Laws § 168.764a §168.766 §168.766a	Yes.	No.	Absentee ballot return envelopes are printed with a statement that must be signed by the voter. The signature on the absentee envelope is compared to the signature on file. If the signature on the envelope does not agree sufficiently with the signature on record, the ballot is rejected.
Minnesota Minn. Stat. § 203B.07.203B.121	No.	Yes; the absentee ballot envelope must be signed by either a witness who is at least 18 years old and a U.S. citizen or by a notary public or other individual authorized to administer oaths.	A certificate of eligibility to vote by absentee is printed on the back of the return envelope and must be signed by the voter and a witness. Voters must also provide a Minnesota driver's license number, state identification number or the last four digits of the voter's Social Security number. Election judges of different political party affiliations examine absentee ballots. If the voter's driver's license number, state identification number or the last four digits of the voter's social security number on the ballot does not match the information provided on the absentee ballot application, the

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			election judges must compare the signatures on the ballot and application. Ballots that fail to meet the requirements (signature, eligibility, etc.) are rejected.
Mississippi Miss. Code Ann. § 23-14-631 § 23-15-633 § 23-15-635 § 23-15-639 § 23-15-641	Yes.	Yes; absentee ballot envelopes must be signed by a notary public or other official authorized to administer oaths.	The absentee ballot envelope contains a certificate that must be signed by the voter and an attesting witness who is authorized to administer oaths. Absentee ballots are not counted if the envelope is not signed by the voter and an attesting witness. Election officials compare the signature on the ballot envelope with that on the absentee ballot application. If the signatures match, the ballot is counted. If the signatures do not match, the ballot is rejected.
Missouri Mo. Rev. Stat. §115.283 §115.291 §115.295	No.	Yes; absentee ballot envelopes must be signed by a notary election official, or other officer authorized to administer oaths.	Absentee ballot return envelopes are printed with a statement that must be signed by the voter under penalty of perjury. The affidavit of each person voting an absentee ballot shall be subscribed and sworn to by the election official receiving the ballot, a notary public or other officer authorized to administer oaths. The ballot is rejected if the statement is not completed.
Montana Mont. Code Ann. §13-13-201 §13-13-241	Yes.	No.	An affirmation is printed on the return envelope and must be signed by the voter. The signature on the ballot envelope is compared with the signature on the absentee ballot application or the voter's registration form. If the signatures match, the

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			ballot is counted. If the signatures do not match and the signature is not cured, the ballot is handled as a provisional ballot.
Nebraska Neb. Rev. Stat. § 32-947	Yes	No.	The absentee ballot envelope contains an oath that must be signed by the voter under penalty of election falsification. The local election official verifies the signature on the envelope with the signature on the voter registration records.
Nevada Nev. Rev. Stat. § 293.269927	Yes.	No.	The return envelope must be signed by the voter. Election officials check the signature on the absentee ballot envelope against the voter registration signature or other signatures available in the clerk's records using either an electronic or manual process. A ballot with a signature that matches signatures in the voter's record are processed and prepared for counting.
New Hampshire N.H. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 657:7 § 657:17 § 659:50	Yes.	No.	The voter signs an affidavit on the absentee ballot envelope under penalty of voting fraud. Election officials compare the signature on the affidavit with the signature on the absentee ballot application. If the affidavit is not properly executed or not signed by the proper person, the ballot is rejected.
New Jersey N.J. Rev. Stat. § 19:63-13	Yes.	No.	The inner envelope is printed with a certificate that the voter must sign and place in the outer envelope. Election officials compare the signatures on the

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§ 19:63-17			envelope with the signature and information in the request for a mail-in ballot and in the statewide voter registration system. Signatures that do not match are rejected.
New Mexico N.M. Stat. Ann. § 1-6-8 § 1-6-14	No.	No.	Absentee ballot mailing envelopes contain a form that must be signed by the voter under penalty of perjury. The voter must also include the last four digits of their social security number on the form on the mailing envelope. If the signature is missing or the last four digits of the voter's social security number is missing or does not match the information available to the county clerk, the ballot is rejected.
New York N.Y. Election Law § 7-122 § 8-410 § 9-209	Yes.	No.	Absentee voters sign an oath on the inner envelope containing their ballot. The central board of canvassers compares the signature on the envelope to the signature in the registration poll record. If the signatures correspond, the ballot is accepted.
North Carolina N.C. Gen. Stat. § 163-231 § 163-234	No.	Yes; absentee ballot envelopes must be signed by a notary public or by two witnesses who are at least 18 years old.	The absentee ballot contains a certificate that the voter must sign. The certificate must be witnessed by two people at least 18 years old or by a notary public. The two witnesses must indicate their addresses. Ballots that do not meet the witness requirements or if the voter did not sign the certificate are deemed invalid and are not counted. Voters must also include a copy of an acceptable photo ID or fill

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			out an ID exemption form and include that in their ballot envelope.
North Dakota N.D. Cent. Code §16.1-07-08 §16.1-07-12	Yes.	No.	Return envelopes are printed with an affidavit that the voter must sign under the penalty of possible criminal prosecution for making a false statement. Election officials compare the signature on the affidavit to the signature on the absentee ballot application. If they do not correspond or the affidavit is found to be insufficient, the ballot is rejected.
Ohio Ohio Rev. Code Ann. §3509.04 §3509.06(D)	Yes.	No.	Ballot return envelopes are printed with an identification statement requiring both the voter's signature under penalty of election falsification and the voter's Ohio driver's license number or state identification card number or the last four digits of the voter's Social Security number. In lieu of providing either of those numbers, a voter may enclose a copy of an eligible ID. The voter must also fill out their address or address confidentiality program number and date of birth on the return envelope. Election officials compare the signature on the return envelope with the signature on the voter's registration form to determine eligibility. Election officials also confirm that the other information on the signed statement matches the information in the statewide voter registration database.
Oklahoma	No.	Yes; absentee ballot	Absentee ballot return envelopes are printed with an affidavit that the voter

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Okla. Stat. tit. 26 §14-107 §14-108 §14-108.1 §14-123		envelopes must be notarized.	must sign. The affidavit must be witnessed by a notary. Notary publics must maintain a log of all absentee ballot affidavits that they witness and may not notarize more than 20 absentee ballot affidavits for a single election without the written approval of the election board. The county election board reviews each ballot to verify that the affidavit was properly executed and determines whether improperly executed affidavits should be accepted or rejected pursuant to law.
Oregon Or. Rev. Stat. § 254.431 § 254.470	Yes.	No.	The return identification envelope must be signed by the voter. The county clerk compares the signature on the return identification envelope with the signature on the elector's registration record. Ballots are only counted if they are signed and the signatures match.
Pennsylvania Pa. Stat. tit. 25 § 3146.4 § 3146.6(a) § 3146.8	No.	No.	The return envelope is printed with a declaration that must be signed by the voter subject to the penalty of unsworn falsification to authorities. The county board verifies the proof of identification and compares the information on the return envelope with the information in the "registered absentee voters file" and list of absentee voters. All ballots that are verified shall be counted.
Puerto Rico	No.	No.	None specified.

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P.R. Code Ann. tit. 16 § 4736			
Rhode Island R.I. Gen. Laws §17-20-2.1 §17-20-21 §17-20-23 §17-20-26	Yes.	No	Mail ballot envelopes are printed with a certificate that must be signed by the voter under penalty of perjury. Election officials compare the name, residence and signature on the certificate with the signature on the absentee ballot application with the information and signature in the central voter registration system to ensure they are identical. Ballots that can be reasonably identified to come from the correct eligible voter are certified.
South Carolina S.C. Code Ann. §7-15-220 §7-15-230	No.	Yes; absentee ballot envelopes must be signed by the voter and a witness who is at least 18 years old. Military and overseas voters are exempt from the witness requirement.	Absentee ballots must be returned with an oath that is signed by the voter and a witness. No ballot is counted unless the oath is properly signed.
South Dakota S.D. Codified Laws Ann. § 12-19-4 §12-19-10	Yes.	No.	Return envelopes are printed with a statement that must be signed by the voter. Election officials compare the signature on the statement with the signature on the absentee ballot application. Ballots must be complete and accurate to be opened.

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Tennessee Tenn. Code Ann. § 2-6-202 § 2-6-204 § 2-6-309	Yes.	No.	<p>The absentee ballot contains an affidavit that the voter must sign under penalty of perjury. The election administrator compares the voter's signature on the absentee ballot application and the absentee ballot envelope to the signature in the registration record. If the administrator determines that the ballot is not entitled to be cast under this title, the administrator shall mark the absentee ballot envelope "Rejected," write the reason for the rejection on the envelope and sign it.</p>
Texas Texas Elec. Code §86.013 §87.027 §87.0271	Yes.	No.	<p>Absentee ballot carrier envelopes are printed with a certificate that must be signed by the voter. A signature verification committee compares the signature on the envelope with the signature on the voter's ballot application or any other signature on file for the voter.</p>
Utah Utah Code Ann. § 20A-3a-204 § 20A-3a-401	Yes.	No.	<p>The back of the return envelope is printed with an affidavit that must be signed by the voter. Poll workers compare the signature on the mail ballot envelope to the signature in the voter's registration record. If the signatures do not match or the voter is ineligible, the vote is disallowed.</p>
Vermont Vt. Stat. Ann. tit. 17 § 2542 § 2546	No.	No.	<p>The return envelopes for mail ballots are printed with a certificate that must be signed by the voter. Election officials determine that the certificate has been properly completed and</p>

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§ 2547			signed before counting the ballot. If the certificate is not signed it is marked as “defective” and not counted.
Virgin Islands V.I. Code Ann. tit. 18 § 665 § 666	No.	No.	Absentee ballot return envelopes contain an affidavit that must be signed by the voter under penalty of perjury. If properly executed, the affidavit is prima facie evidence of the voter's qualification to become a voter.
Virginia Va. Code§24.2-706 §24.2-707 §24.2-709.1 §24.2-711.1	No.	No	The return envelope is printed with a statement that must be signed by the voter subject to felony penalties for making false statements. The statement also requires the voter to fill out the last four digits of their social security number and their birth year. If the affirmation on the envelope is completed as required, the ballot is counted.
Washington Wash. Rev. Code §29A.40.091 §29A.40.110 §29A.60.165	Yes.	No.	A declaration is provided with the absentee ballot, which must be signed by the voter under penalty of perjury and returned with the ballot. Election officials compare the signature on the declaration with the signature in the voter's registration file. All personnel assigned to verify signatures must receive training on statewide standards for signature verification. Signature verification may be conducted by an automated verification system approved by the secretary of state.

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West Virginia W. Va. Code. § 3-3-5 § 3-3-10	Yes.	No.	The absentee return envelopes must be signed by the voter. Election officials may challenge an absent voter's ballot if the signature of the person voting an absentee ballot is not in the same handwriting as the signature in the voter's absentee application or registration record.
Wisconsin Wis. Stat. §6.87 §6.88	No.	Yes; absentee ballots must be signed by the voter and a witness 18 years or older.	The absentee ballot includes a certificate that must be signed by the voter under penalty for making false statements and a witness. If the certificate is insufficient, the ballot is rejected.
Wyoming Wyo. Stat. § 22-9-111 § 22-9-121	No.	No.	Absentee ballot return envelopes include an affidavit that must be signed by the voter under penalty of perjury. If the affidavit on the absentee ballot envelope is not legally sufficient, the ballot is rejected.

Note: This page should be used for general informational purposes only.

Our organization does not run elections and cannot provide legal advice. If you are a voter looking for assistance, please contact your local election official. You can find your local election official's website and contact information by using this database from the [US Vote Foundation](#).

Related Resources

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NCSL Election Resources

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summaries and other publications.

Elections

Updated September 02, 2025

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Elections, Legislators

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Elections

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