Put On Your Own Oxygen Mask First: A (Maryland) Voting Logistics Guide

The Presidential Election is just around the corner! Here's what you need to know:

Official Sources:

- State Board of Elections (SBE) website: https://elections.maryland.gov/
- SBE page about the 2020 elections (recommended): https://elections.maryland.gov/elections/2020/index.html
- Montgomery County Board of Elections (BoE): https://montgomerycountymd.gov/elections/

Are you eligible to vote?

You may vote if you:

- Are a U.S. citizen,
- And will be 18 on or before election day.

Are you registered to vote?

Check at https://voterservices.elections.maryland.gov/VoterSearch.

If you're registered, skip to Step Two. If not, read on:

Step One: Register to Vote

There are multiple ways to register to vote:

- ~~Online (**Recommended**): https://voterservices.elections.maryland.gov/OnlineVoterRegistration (Requires Driver's License/MVA ID number and last 4 digits of your Social Security Number [SSN].) You must complete the registration process by **October 13ᵗʰ**.~~
- ~~Paper Form (For use if you don't have one or both of the above ID numbers): https://elections.maryland.gov/voter_registration/documents/English_Internet_VRA.pdf. The paper form can be returned:~~
    - ~~By mail, postmarked by **October 13ᵗʰ**. (Not recommended, due to time constraints)~~
    - ~~In-person at the BoE's office (18753 N. Frederick Ave, Suite 210, Gaithersburg, MD 20879), by close of business on **October 13ᵗʰ**. (Check the BoE's hours of operation first)~~
    - The paper form cannot be faxed or emailed as it requires an original signature.
- Same Day Registration (SDR) at an Early Voting site or Election Day Vote Center: Bring an ID and proof of residence (Driver's License/MVA ID will serve for both). See below for more information on Early Voting and Election Day Vote Centers. This is a more involved process than registering in advance, and does not allow you to request a mail-in/absentee ballot. Use it only if you miss the October 13ᵗʰ advance registration deadline.

Step Two: Vote!

There are two ways to vote: "Vote-by-Mail"/absentee, and in-person.

"Vote-by-Mail"/Absentee Voting

To vote by mail/vote absentee, you must request a ballot. (In the June primary, ballots were sent out automatically. This will *not* happen for the upcoming General Election). **The Montgomery County Board of Elections must *receive* your request by October 20th.**

Requesting a Ballot

There are multiple ways to request a ballot:

- Online (**Faster**): If you're registering to vote online, you can request a ballot as part of the voter registration process. If you're already registered, go to https://voterservices.elections.maryland.gov/onlinemailinrequest. You will need your Driver's License/MVA ID number and the last 4 digits of your Social Security Number (SSN).
- Paper Form: https://elections.maryland.gov/voting/documents/Absentee_Ballot_Application_English.pdf ID numbers are only required if you request Internet Delivery (see below). The paper form can be returned:
    - ~~By mail~~ (Not recommended, due to time constraints)
    - In-person
    - By fax
    - As an attachment to an email (I.E. Print the form, sign it, scan it, and email the scan)

Except for in-person requests, the Board of Elections must *receive* your request by **October 20th**. (Postmarks don't count for this one!) You may request a ballot in person until 8:00pm on November 3rd (Election Night).

Receiving Your Ballot

There are also multiple ways to receive your ballot:

- By mail (preferred)
- In-person*
- Via the Internet†
- By fax†

*To receive your ballot in-person, you must request it in-person. The other delivery methods may be requested by any request method

†**Note on Internet and Fax Delivery:** These methods, while available to everyone, are intended for overseas voters who will not receive a mailed ballot in time to return it, and for people with disabilities that prevent them from marking a ballot by hand. **Please do not request internet or fax delivery if these situations do not apply to you**, as ballots printed on ordinary paper cannot be scanned by the ballot scanners, and must be hand-copied onto machine-readable cardstock ballots by bipartisan teams of canvassers. This in turn places the canvassers at risk and delays the results.

Completing Your Ballot

Mark your ballot according to the directions printed on it. Make sure to vote both sides of both sheets. If you make a mistake, contact the Board of Elections for a replacement. Do not sign your ballot or make any other (potentially identifying) marks outside the ovals (and the write-in space, if you're writing-in). Sign the *return envelope* in the box under the privacy flap. If someone assisted you with marking your ballot, have them fill out the included "Certification of Person Assisting Voter" and include it in the return envelope. If your return envelope says "ID required", include a copy of a suitable ID in the return envelope.

Returning Your Ballot

Again, there are multiple methods:

- By mail. Your ballot must be postmarked by Election Day (November 3rd). Since many mailboxes are collected at midday, dropping your ballot in a mailbox on Election Day may be too late!
- In person at a drop box. You must be in line for the drop box at 8:00pm on Election Night (November 3rd). Many drop boxes are available now, with an additional wave available by October 17th, and a final wave opening by October 24th. All drop boxes, once installed, will remain available until the last voter in line at 8:00pm on November 3rd has deposited their ballot. Drop boxes are/will be installed at Early Voting Centers, MCPS high schools, and some other sites, mainly (but not exclusively), community recreation centers. The closest drop box to RRUUC is at Walt Whitman High School. A full list of drop box sites, with addresses and installation dates, is available at https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/Elections/dropbox.html and https://elections.maryland.gov/elections/2020/2020_lists.html.

Voting In Person

Early Voting

Early Voting will run from Monday October 26th to Monday November 2nd, from 7:00am to 8:00 pm each day. Everyone in line at 8:00pm each day will be allowed to vote. There are 11 Early Voting sites in Montgomery County, mostly at Community Recreation Centers. You can vote at any Early Voting site in your county. The closest Early Voting site to RRUUC is the Jane E. Lawton Community Recreation Center in Chevy Chase. (It, like all the Early Voting sites, will also be open on Election Day [November 3rd].) A full list of Early Voting sites, with addresses is available at https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/Elections/VotingServices/vote-centers-2020.html and https://elections.maryland.gov/elections/2020/2020%20Early%20Voting%20Centers.pdf (PDF).

Election Day

Due to a shortage of poll workers and voting sites, Maryland will not be using its traditional system of neighborhood polling places (precincts). Instead, on Election Day (November 3rd), **every early voting site**, **every public high school**, and some additional sites (39 in total) will be Vote Centers. **You can vote at any Vote Center in your county.** The closest Vote Center to RRUUC is Walt Whitman High School. A full list of Election Day Vote Centers, with addresses, is available at

https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/Elections/VotingServices/vote-centers-2020.html and https://elections.maryland.gov/elections/2020/2020_lists.html.

The polls will be open from 7:00am to 8:00pm. Everyone in line at 8:00pm will be allowed to vote.

Not a Marylander?

- DC: https://dcboe.org/
- Virginia: https://elections.virginia.gov/

This 2020 voting guide was created by Hugh Abrams-Helde for RRUUC. While I am a temporary employee of the Montgomery County Board of Elections, this guide was produced on my own time and is not endorsed by the BoE.