

If you're a Texas voter who has cast your ballot by mail in recent years, you may have noticed some differences on your mail ballot materials this year. Voting by mail had substantial changes beginning with the March 2022 Primary Election. From changes in the application, to changes in the requirements on the Ballot Carrier Envelope, and finally, to new options for correcting a problem with your ballot, voting by mail is not the same as it was in the past.

It's important for all voters who are eligible to vote by mail to be aware of three substantial changes to the ballot by mail process in Texas. Understanding these three modifications of the election law will help you make sure your vote counts.

Change No. 1: Applications

Not everyone in Texas is eligible to vote by mail. If you fall into one of these five categories, you are able to request an application to vote by mail from your local election office. These include those who are:

- 65 years of age or older;
- Disabled or have a sickness/physical condition that would prevent you from entering the polling place without injuring yourself or needing assistance;
- Expected to give birth within three weeks before or after Election Day;
- Expected to be absent from your county during Early Voting and on Election Day; or
- Confined in Jail or Civilly Committed, but otherwise eligible to vote

With the new laws, be sure to fill out the application completely. One of the new requirements is that you must include an ID number on the application. This can be your Texas Driver License number, your Personal ID number or the last four digits of your Social Security Number. The vast majority of registered voters in Texas have both numbers on their voter registration record, but if you are unsure which number to put – you can feel free to put both just to be safe. The law only requires that one of the numbers matches a number on your voter registration record.

Remember: you will need to put this ID number on your application as well as your ballot carrier envelope.

Change No. 2: Ballot Carrier Envelope

Once you complete your ballot, put it in the white secrecy envelope and place it in the purple and white ballot carrier envelope. Do not seal the envelope yet.

There are several pieces of information that you must provide on your ballot carrier envelope before you seal the security flap. Just like you did on the application, you must put an ID number – your Texas Driver License, Personal ID number or the last four digits of your Social Security Number – in the space

provided under the security flap of the envelope. This is similar to showing your photo ID if you vote in person. It ensures that the person who was supposed to vote the ballot is, in fact, the person who completed and sent the ballot. These numbers are required in order for your vote to count.

After you fill this part out, you seal the envelope. The flap protects your personal information as it goes through the mail!

Be sure to sign the carrier envelope. If an assistant or witness helped you with the ballot and carrier envelope, they must fill out the section of the envelope with their information completely.

Please make sure to mail your ballot with plenty of time for the election office to receive it. Ballots must be received by 5 p.m. the day after Election Day and postmarked no later than 7 p.m. Election Day to be counted.

Change No. 3: Correcting your Ballot Carrier Envelope to make your vote count

In the past, if you made a mistake when voting by mail, your ballot was rejected, with few — if any — opportunities for a second chance. With the new laws, you have the ability to correct a problem within six days after Election Day. You can also vote in person instead of by mail, if you are aware of a problem by Election Day.

Adding a phone number or e-mail address to your carrier envelope is the best way for county officials to contact you regarding any issues with your ballot. The Early Voting Ballot Board will reach out if you provide your contact information on your mail ballot materials.

Many voters forgot to provide a personal ID number on the carrier in the March election. Correcting this is as easy as:

- Going to your elections office to certify your ID information within six days after Election Day;
- Going to www.votetexas.gov, and click 'Track My Ballot' to confirm your ID information within six days of Election Day; or
- Voting in person by the time polls close on Election Day.

By remembering a few key changes, you can make sure your vote will count. Fill everything out completely. Look over your application and ballot carrier envelope carefully. Within a few elections, you will know exactly what to do.