

## VOTING BY MAIL

**QUESTION: HOW SHOULD I RETURN MY VOTE BY MAIL BALLOT?**

**ANSWER: YOU HAVE A CHOICE OF METHODS AND LOCATIONS**



### REMEMBER THESE TIPS BEFORE SENDING YOUR BALLOT:

- Return the ballot to the county that issued it. Another county will not forward it for you.
- Properly seal the return envelope: the voter must write in the information requested on the outside flap and write in the voter's signature, where indicated
- If illness or physical disability prevents the voter from personally returning the voted ballot, the voter may choose an "Authorized Agent" to return the ballot on the voter's behalf, but must identify the agent on the flap of the ballot return envelope

### RETURN METHOD 1 — Mail it through the US Postal Service:

Allow enough time for the envelope to reach the Elections Office on time. It must be **physically received before 8:00 p.m. on Election Day**, regardless of postmark. The Elections Office recommends placing the ballot **in the mail by November 1**.

### RETURN METHOD 2 — Deliver it in person to one of the following official locations:

- San Mateo County Elections Office, 40 Tower Road, San Mateo 94402
  - Come into our office during regular business hours (8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday–Friday)
  - Outside business hours, use the outdoor drop-off bin in the lower parking lot (red-white-and-blue stripes, marked "Ballot Box") or drop it through the mail slot in our front office door
  - Until 8:00 p.m. on Election Day, deliver to either of these drop-off points
- San Mateo County Office of the Assessor-County Clerk-Recorder, at 555 County Center, First Floor, Redwood City 94063, during business hours (8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday), and until 8:00 p.m. on Election Day
- Office of any city or town clerk within San Mateo County, during its regular business hours (this varies, so confirm before you go there)
- Any polling place within San Mateo County on Election Day, from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

**QUESTION: DOES THE POSTMARK ON THE RETURN ENVELOPE MATTER?**

**ANSWER: NO**

Ballots must be physically received at the Elections Office by 8:00 p.m. on Election Day.

**QUESTION: WHAT IF I MAKE A MISTAKE ON MY RETURN ENVELOPE?**

**ANSWER: YOU MAY CORRECT IT OR REPLACE IT**

Each voter's Vote by Mail ballot return envelope is marked with a unique bar code that identifies the voter and the election. Therefore, strict rules apply if the original envelope needs to be replaced because of voter error, or loss or damage. **It is essential that the replacement envelope contain the required information, or the envelope will not be opened and the ballot will not be counted.**

If the voter makes a mistake or damages the return envelope:

- A mistake in the voter's hand-written information or signature may be crossed out or lined through, and be correctly rewritten next to the original, if space allows
- If there is damage to the bar code printed on the front of the return envelope, the voter must provide, on the front of the envelope, the voter's name and address (as entered on the voter's registration form)
- If the mistake or damage cannot be cured by these methods, the voter may obtain a replacement envelope from the elections official. The voter may obtain one in person at one of the two Voting Centers, or may ask that one be mailed out. When the replacement envelope is received, the voter may discard the original or may enclose it in the new envelope with the voted ballot
- When a replacement envelope is issued in this way, it does not include a new ballot

**QUESTION: WHAT IF I MAKE A MISTAKE ON MY MAIL BALLOT?**

**ANSWER: YOU MAY CORRECT IT OR REPLACE IT**

If the voter makes a mistake, there are several options, depending on the circumstances:

- **A small mistake may be clearly corrected and re-marked on the ballot:**
  - Cross-out the mistaken mark and make a correct mark
  - The correction must clearly indicate the voter's intent to anyone reviewing it.
  - The voter should not make any marks that will identify the voter (such as initials, or a signature or other identity information) which can disqualify the ballot from being counted

- **The voter may obtain a replacement ballot when the mistake is not minor:**
  - On the back of the return envelope, mark the "Spoiled" checkbox
  - Return it to the Elections Office and obtain a replacement, in one of several ways:
    - Return it by mail, if there's time to receive the replacement by return mail
    - Bring it to one of the two Voting Centers, and choose to obtain a replacement at that time or, instead, choose to cast a ballot on the eSlate voting machine at that time
    - Bring it to the voter's assigned polling place on Election Day to obtain and vote a replacement ballot or, instead, cast a ballot on the eSlate voting machine. The voter's assigned polling place can be identified at [www.shapethefuture.org](http://www.shapethefuture.org)

**QUESTION: WHAT IF I CAN'T SIGN MY NAME PROPERLY?**

**ANSWER: A WITNESS MAY ATTEST TO THE VOTER'S SIGNATURE MARKING**

When illness or injury prevents the voter from executing a normal signature, the voter may obtain the assistance of one person to witness the voter's substitute signature marking (such as an "X" or initials or a signature stamp), as directed on the ballot return envelope. The actual making of the mark or the stamping must be witnessed, and the witness must also sign the ballot return envelope, as indicated there, to attest that the person witnessed the voter make the mark on the envelope.

**QUESTION: WHAT IF MY BALLOT IS LOST OR DAMAGED?**

**ANSWER: A REPLACEMENT BALLOT IS AVAILABLE**

A replacement ballot may be obtained in person at either of the two Voting Center locations or by calling the Elections Office at (650) 312-5222 for instructions.