

When can you vote by mail in South Florida? How do you get a ballot? Here are the steps

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Some registered voters prefer to vote by mail. Perhaps you want to take your time with the ballot at home. Or maybe you'll be out of town and can't get to an early voting site or to your precinct on Election Day, Nov. 5. Here's what to know about mail-in ballots in South Florida:

WHAT'S THE DEADLINE TO GET A VOTE-BY-MAIL BALLOT?

● Voters have until 5 p.m. 12 days before the Nov. 5 general election to request a mail ballot from their county elections office. This year, that means your request for a mail ballot must be received by your county's election department by **5 p.m. Oct. 24**.
● If you're not a registered voter already, the deadline to register for the election is **11:59 p.m. Oct. 7**.

HOW CAN I GET A MAIL BALLOT?

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY: The Miami-Dade Elections Department offers several ways to request a vote-by-mail ballot form. The fastest means to obtain a mail ballot is to request one online or call.

● **Online request.** The county has an online portal to request a ballot.
● **Phone request.** A request can also be made by calling the elections office at 305-499-8444

If you wish to email, fax or mail in your request to obtain the **Statewide Vote-By-Mail Ballot Request Form** in English, Spanish or Creole. You can access that form on Miami-Dade's election website at www.miamida.de.gov/global/elections/vote-by-mail.page.

● **Email request.** The filled-out ballot request form can also be emailed to votebymail@miamida.de.gov.

● **Fax request.** The filled-out ballot request form can be faxed to 305-499-8401.

● **Mail request.** The filled-out ballot request form can be mailed or taken in person to: Miami-Dade Elections Department 2700 NW 87th Ave., Miami, FL 33172 or the Stephen P. Clark Center for countywide elections only at 111 NW First Street, Lobby, Miami, FL 33128.

BROWARD COUNTY: The process to request a ballot in Broward is similar.

● **Online request.** Broward has an online portal to request a vote-by-mail ballot.

● **Phone request.** Requests for a vote-by-mail ballot can be made by phone to 954-357-7055.

● **Fax request** for a ballot to 954-357-7070.

● **Mail request** for a ballot to Supervisor of Elections, P.O. Box 29001 Fort Lauderdale, FL 33302. You can also go in person to one of the main Supervisor of Election sites and get or fill out a form at: SOE at Spectrum, 4650 NW 21st Ave., Fort Lauderdale, FL 33309; SOE at Lauderhill Mall, 1519 NW 40th Ave., Lauderhill, FL



A voter deposits a ballot in a mail collection box outside Miami Beach City Hall during early voting for the general election on Oct. 28, 2020, in Miami Beach.

33313; SOE at Broward County Governmental Center, 115 S Andrews Ave Room #110, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301. A list of other sites is on Broward's Supervisor of Election website at www.browardvotes.gov/About-Us/Contact-Our-Office.

● **Email request** for a ballot to votebymailrequest@browardvotes.gov.

MONROE COUNTY: The Florida Keys elections office offers an online portal at www.keyselections.org to help you receive a mail-in ballot and to address other voting questions.

WHAT WILL I NEED TO REQUEST A MAIL-IN BALLOT?

In general, you will need one of three identifiers to register for a ballot: a driver's license number, state-issued ID number or the last four digits of your Social Security number.

HOW LONG IS YOUR BALLOT REQUEST VALID?

Voters can choose to receive a vote by mail ballot for a specific election or for all elections in which they are eligible to vote through the end of the calendar year of the next regularly scheduled general election. Then, they will need to renew for the next election cycle.

Unless you specified you only wanted a mail-in for a specific election, let's say the primary, you should also receive one for the coming general election, too, since it falls within the same cycle year. Miami-Dade and Broward will send out requested ballots by mail on Sept. 30. Delivery can take a few days to arrive in your mailbox.

CAN A DESIGNEE REQUEST OR DROP OFF A BALLOT FOR SOMEONE ELSE?

A voter can designate an immediate family member like the voter's spouse, parent, child, grandparent,

grandchild, or sibling, according to Miami-Dade and Broward. The voter's legal guardian or a designee for a voter with a disability can also request the ballot on their behalf.

The following additional information is required for the request if the request is made on behalf of the voter:

The requesting person's address; driver's license number or state identification card or the last four digits of the elector's Social Security number. Also, the requesting person's relationship to the voter and signature if the request is written.

The ballot will have rules for how it must be dropped off or returned.

WHAT ARE SOME TIPS WHEN FILLING OUT MY BALLOT?

A vote-by-mail ballot comes with instructions on how to correctly fill it out and mail it back to the elections office.

But here are some key tips given by the Miami-Dade and the Broward elections departments:

● **Complete and return** the vote-by-mail ballot as soon as possible. Don't risk having it arrive, or not, by the deadline.

● **Mark your ballot** in secret

● **Use a black or blue** ballpoint pen to complete your ballot

● **Sign your name** inside the red signature box on the back of the Voter's Certificate envelope.

● **Florida law** doesn't require a witness to complete a ballot certificate.

WHAT IF YOU FORGET TO SIGN YOUR BALLOT OR SIGNATURE DOESN'T MATCH?

If you forgot to sign the envelope or the signature doesn't match, Florida law allows you to submit an affidavit to cure your vote-by-mail ballot. The affidavit must be completed and submitted to the Elections Department along with a copy of your identification,

by 5 p.m. on the second day after an election.

HOW CAN I RETURN MY BALLOT?

The vote-by-mail ballot must be received by your local elections office by 7 p.m. on Election Day. This year that means Nov. 5.

You can't drop your a ballot off at your designated voting precinct on Election Day. If you wait until Election Day to return it, it can only be submitted at your county's elections office.

● **Miami-Dade:** There are several ways you can return your ballot in Miami-Dade. First, you can return it by mail to Vote-by-Mail Ballot Section, Supervisor of Elections, P.O. Box 521250, Miami, FL 33152. The Elections Department must receive the ballot before 7 p.m. Election Day, so remember to mail the ballot early. Don't wait until the last minute.

The ballot can physically be turned in at any early voting location during operating hours — there are drop boxes so you don't have to stand in line — or dropped off at the Miami-Dade Elections Department, 2700 NW 87th Ave. in Doral, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

● **Broward:** The ballot can be mailed to the Elections Department and must be received before 7 p.m. on Election Day. Mailed ballots must be addressed to P.O. Box 29001, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33302.

Ballots can also be turned in to early voting locations and directly to the Broward County Supervisor of Elections, at 1501 NW 40th Ave. in Lauderhill.

● **Monroe:** Instructions on which Monroe Supervisor of Elections office to return the ballot can be found when you receive one. It can also be turned in at early voting locations and at the Monroe

Supervisor of Elections offices.

HOW TO TRACK YOUR BALLOT

You can track the status of your mail-in ballot in Miami-Dade and Broward. You can find out whether you have a request on file, the date the ballot was mailed to you, the date your ballot was received by the Elections Department and if, after you returned the ballot, if the vote was counted.

If there was something wrong with your signature, you will be given a link to fix the problem along with the affidavit to submit to fix your signature. You can

also check on other things like your registration status and sign up for notifications.

CHANGE YOUR MIND AND WANT TO VOTE ON ELECTION DAY?

If you change your mind and want to vote on Election Day at your polling place and you haven't mailed in your ballot, bring your vote-by-mail ballot with you to the polling place for it to be canceled before you vote with a regular ballot in a booth.

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until losing reelection to U.S. Rep. Carlos Gimenez in 2020.

There's also a handful of offices on the ballot that Miami-Dade and Broward residents have never voted on before. In Miami-Dade, voters will choose their county sheriff, tax collector and supervisor of elections. The duties to be fulfilled by those offices previously fell under the purview of the county mayor.

Broward voters will have the chance to choose their tax collector — a job that previously fell under

the county government's responsibility.

Voters who want to vote by mail but haven't requested ballots yet will have until 5 p.m. on Oct. 24 to do so. For those who aren't registered to vote, the deadline to do so for the November election is Oct. 7 by 11:59 p.m.

There's still the option to vote early in person. Both Miami-Dade and Broward will open their early voting sites on Oct. 21, and voters will have until Nov. 3 to cast their ballots at an early voting center ahead of Election Day.

Max Greenwood:
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Voting in 2020. This year, several offices in Miami-Dade and Broward will be voted on for the first time.

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