

# **CITIZEN ADVOCACY CENTER**

## **GUIDE TO THE NOVEMBER 3, 2020, GENERAL ELECTION**



### **INTRODUCTION**

The election on November 3, 2020, is unlike any in modern history. In light of the global pandemic, the Illinois General Assembly passed a number of measures to ensure a fair and accessible election with safe voting options for all eligible Illinois voters. This guide serves to help eligible Illinois residents register and vote this fall.

First and foremost, the Citizen Advocacy Center encourages every eligible Illinois voter to vote by mail in this election. Vote by mail ballots should be mailed back or submitted to dropboxes where available as soon as possible to avoid delays with the U.S. Postal Service.

### **LESSONS FROM THE MARCH PRIMARY**

Although many states had implemented social distancing and stay-at-home measures by early March, three states—Illinois, Florida, and Arizona—continued with primary elections as scheduled on March 17th, 2020. Initial analysis indicates that these measures, as well as individual concern over disease transmission, may have depressed voter turnout in Illinois.

For example, over 700,000 Chicagoans voted in the Democratic primary in 2016; however, only around 460,000 Chicagoans voted in the presidential primary in 2020, numbers that are typically seen in Chicago’s mayoral elections, rather than its presidential elections.

Notably, despite hosting their primaries on the same day, Florida and Arizona actually saw a higher voter turnout for their 2020 Democratic Primary than their 2016 Democratic Primary. This increase has been attributed to the adoption and promotion of safer voting measures, such as early voting and voting-by-mail.

On June 16th, 2020, Governor J.B Pritzker signed S.B.1863, otherwise known as the “Omnibus Election Bill,” into law. The measure aims to expand voter turnout for the General Election on November 3rd by expanding early voting and voting-by-mail accessibility, while safeguarding voting procedures.

188 Industrial Dr., Suite 106

Elmhurst, IL 60126

Phone (630) 833-4080

Fax (630) 833-4083

CAC@citizenadvocacycenter.org

CitizenAdvocacyCenter.org

## WHAT IS ON THE BALLOT ON NOVEMBER 3RD, 2020?

Elections will be taking place on a federal, state, and local level during the General Election Day on November 3rd.

**At the federal level**, the presidency will be contested. The Class 2 United States Senate Seat representing Illinois, currently held by Senator Dick Durbin, will also be contested. All eighteen of Illinois's seats in the House of Representatives are up for re-election.

**At the state level**, all 118 seats in the Illinois House of Representatives are up for election. Twenty out of the fifty-nine seats in the Illinois State Senate are up for election. Three out of the seven seats in the Illinois Supreme Court are up for reelection.

**At the local level**, 10 seats are up for election in the Illinois Appellate Court and various county-level offices are up for election, as well as Sanitary District Commissioners and Trustees.

There will also be a statewide **referendum** on a proposed amendment to the Illinois Constitution known as the **Illinois Fair Tax**. The amendment would allow the General Assembly to impose a graduated income tax rate, setting different rates for different annual income brackets; the Illinois Constitution currently requires a flat rate.

The General Assembly also passed a bill setting initial income tax rates that would go into effect if voters approve the amendment. Rates would not change or slightly decrease for incomes below \$250,000 per year.

To determine how your tax bill would be affected, visit <https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/gov/fairtax/Pages/default.aspx>.

For the referendum to pass, either 60% or more of the referendum's respondents must vote "yes," or a simple majority of all voters participating in the election must approve of the measure.

## HOW HAS COVID-19 AFFECTED THE GENERAL ELECTION?

On March 27, 2020, President Trump signed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, which provides \$400 million in emergency funds to states "to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the coronavirus for the 2020 federal election cycle." Of the \$400 million, Illinois received \$16.7 million in funding.

Distributed by the United States Election Assistance Commission, this funding will go directly towards implementing contingency measures to protect both voters and polling station workers while also maintaining the overall integrity and security of the voting process. This includes expanding voter registration, increasing access to safer early voting and vote-by-mail options, ensuring that at-risk populations aren't deprived of the right to vote, and enforcing strict social distancing guidelines at in-person polling places. Illinois currently plans to use the financial assistance provided by the CARES Act to implement the measures of the Omnibus Election Bill.

## **HOW CAN I REGISTER TO VOTE?**

### **Online Voter Registration**

Any eligible voter with a state ID or driver's license may register to vote online. Any eligible voter without a state ID or driver's license must print the application form, sign it, and mail it to their local election authority.

The voter registration application is offered at: <https://ova.elections.il.gov/Step0.aspx>.

To register to vote in Illinois ahead of this election you must be a U.S. citizen, be at least 18-years-old on or before November 3, live in your election precinct at least 30 days prior to the election, must not be serving a sentence of confinement in any penal institution as a result of a conviction, and must not claim the right to vote in any other state or territory.

The deadline for online voter registration in Illinois is October 18, 2020.

## **HOW CAN I VOTE SAFELY DURING A PANDEMIC?**

In anticipation of social distancing guidelines and the difficulties of in-person voting, Illinois passed S.B. 1863, or the Illinois Omnibus Election Bill, which expands access to mail-in-voting and early voting options for the November 3 General Election.

Ballots cast via vote by mail and early voting will not be counted until Election Day. Individuals cannot change their vote after they have voted early. Voters may cast only one ballot.

### **Voting by Mail**

Voting by mail allows voters to cast ballots via mail (or in dropboxes) on or before November. Voting by mail is the safest method this year. CAC encourages all Illinois voters to vote by mail and to mail ballots as early as possible.

To vote-by-mail, you must first submit a vote-by-mail application. The Omnibus Election Bill required electoral authorities to send vote-by-mail ballot applications to any voters who have voted in the last three years (during the 2018 General Election, the 2019 Consolidated Elections, or the 2020 primaries) by August 1st, 2020. Voters who have either changed their address or registered to vote for the first time since the March primary will also receive a vote by mail application.

If you have not yet received and/or submitted a vote by mail application, visit the following site to obtain an application: <https://elections.il.gov/ElectionOperations/VotingByMailAgreement.aspx>.

The Illinois Omnibus Election bill allows individuals to return the application to their local electoral authority (typically the county clerk) either electronically (e.g via email) or via mail.

Vote-by-mail ballot applications must be sent to local electoral authorities by October 29, 2020. However, due to current and expected U.S. Postal Service delays, CAC recommends all voters submit applications and return ballots as soon as possible.

To determine the contact information and address of your local electoral authority, please visit <https://elections.il.gov/ElectionOperations/ElectionAuthorities.aspx?MID=2C1Ps4pEwUQ%3d&T=637285894791710658>.

Local election authorities will begin sending ballots on September 24 and respond to new applications as they are received.

All vote by mail ballots must be postmarked by November 3rd (Election Day), but CAC highly recommends ballots be returned as soon as possible.

**Please note:**

- 1. Your ballot envelope must be sealed.**
- 2. Your ballot envelope must contain your signature and not significantly differ from your recorded signature.**

In the event a ballot is rejected, the voter will be notified within two days. If the ballot was rejected due to a problem with the signature, the voter can submit a statement and have their ballot counted before the end of counting provisional ballots. If the ballot was rejected due to problems with the envelope, the voter may request another vote-by-mail ballot or vote in person before the end of Election Day.

## **Early Voting**

Early voting allows voters to cast a ballot before Election Day on November 3rd. By spreading out the number of people at polling stations during a given interval instead of concentrating all voters in polling stations on Election Day, early voting reduces human-to-human contact and the consequent risk of COVID-19 transmission.

Early voting in Illinois begins September 24, with additional sites open by October 19, or 15 days before the General Election. During the initial period, early voting may only be available at the office of your county clerk or local electoral authority, though some localities offer several sites. Check with your local election authority, which in most cases is the county clerk.

By October 19, early voting locations will expand. Besides the office of the electoral authority, early voting will take place at locations either designated as temporary polling places available for early voting or permanent polling places available for early voting.

To determine the location of polling places available for early voting in your jurisdiction, visit: <https://www.elections.il.gov/VotingAndRegistrationSystems/EarlyVotingLocationsSearch.aspx?MID=A3RIOjKplz4%3d&T=637195138764049766>.

Voters cannot both vote early and cast an in-person ballot on Election Day on November 3.

## **WHAT OTHER MEASURES DOES THE ILLINOIS OMNIBUS ELECTION BILL CONTAIN?**

The Illinois Omnibus Election Bill turns Election Day (November 3rd) into a State Holiday, enabling local institutions like schools to serve as polling places.

Additionally, the Omnibus Election Bill offers local electoral authorities the option to implement curbside voting. Curbside voting allows voters to drive outside the building of the polling place, get handed a ballot, and fill out the ballots in their cars. There will be at least 2 election judges from opposite political parties per vehicle, allowing the voter to mark the ballot without interference.

The Omnibus Election Bill also allows local authorities to create local “collection sites,” which would consist of boxes in local areas, where voters would place their completed ballots. This would provide voters with an alternative to mailing their ballots.

## **IMPORTANT DATES & DEADLINES**

Dates pertaining to voter registration:

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Event</b>
October 6, 2020	In person voter registration closes for local election officials
October 18, 2020	Last day of online voter registration

Dates pertaining to voting-by-mail:

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Event</b>
September 24, 2020	First day ballots may be sent to voters
October 29, 2020	Last day to request a ballot application from election authorities
November 3, 2020	Last day that ballots can be postmarked

Dates pertaining to early voting:

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Event</b>
October 19, 2020	First day of early voting
November 2, 2020	Last day of early voting

\*\*\*\*\*

This brochure is meant to provide a general guide to the November 3, 2020, election in Illinois and should not be taken as legal advice.

The Citizen Advocacy Center (CAC) is an award winning, non-partisan, 501(c)(3) nonprofit, free community legal organization. Founded in 1994, dedicated to building democracy for the 21st century by strengthening the public's capacities, resources, and institutions for self-governance.

If you are interested in more information, becoming a volunteer, or making a tax-deductible contribution to the Center, please feel free to contact us at:

188 Industrial Dr., Suite 106  
Elmhurst, IL 60126  
Phone: (630) 833-4080  
Fax: (630) 833-4083  
E-Mail: [cac@citizenadvocacycenter.org](mailto:cac@citizenadvocacycenter.org)  
Website: [citizenadvocacycenter.org](http://citizenadvocacycenter.org)

©2020. Citizen Advocacy Center. All rights reserved. No part of this brochure may be reproduced in any form or by any means without the prior, written permission of the Citizen Advocacy Center.