



# **How Can I Vote if I Cannot Vote in Person Due to a Medical Emergency?**

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This publication explains how a voter who is homebound or in a health care facility, including a hospital, due to a medical emergency, can still vote. The process is slightly different in each county. In most counties, a voter experiencing a medical emergency needs someone to help them obtain and return their ballot.

## **How can I vote if I will not be able to vote in person?**

If a voter has a vote-by-mail ballot, they can complete the ballot, place it in the return envelope, sign and date the outside of the envelope, and mail it postmarked on or before 8:00 PM on Election Day. You can also have someone return it to any polling place, vote center, or drop box in the county by 8:00 PM on Election Day.

If a voter does not have a vote-by-mail ballot, they can request one up to seven (7) days before the election. If closer than a week, they can use the method described below:

## **How can I vote if I do not have a Vote-by-Mail ballot in time and Election Day is less than a week away, but I cannot leave my home or am hospitalized because of a medical emergency?**

California Law has special procedures to help a voter who is hospitalized, in a care facility or cannot leave their home because of a medical emergency and wants to vote. If you registered to vote at least 15 days before Election Day and are not able to vote in person because of a medical emergency and it is less than seven (7) days before Election Day, **you can request and complete an emergency medical ballot.**

## **What is an Emergency Medical Ballot?**

For the six days prior to an election, a registered voter who is unable to vote in person at a polling place or vote center due to confinement in a hospital, another facility or at home because of a medical emergency can fill out a form to authorize someone to go to the Elections Office to pick up a ballot for them.

Call [your County Elections Office](#) to find out about the special requirements for requesting an Emergency Medical Ballot. Some hospitals have volunteers who may help you get the Emergency Medical Ballot.

## **How do I request an Emergency Medical Ballot?**

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First, [contact your county elections officials or visit your county's elections website](#) to find out how (and when) your county offers Emergency Medical Ballot services. If your county requires you to submit an application, you can download, complete, print, and return the Secretary of State's EMB application to your county election officials:

<https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voter-registration/vote-mail#late><sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Recently, the California Secretary of State's (SOS') office published an online application which voters can use after the deadline to request a Vote-by-Mail ballot to obtain a ballot. This is called a Late Vote-by-Mail Ballot and it ensures that voters experiencing a medical emergency do not need to have their designated person pick up a form and bring it to them before they can start the process of obtaining an Emergency Medical Ballot. The SOS' office named the form a "Late Vote-by-Mail Ballot Application" because some counties allow voters who cannot vote in person for other reasons to take advantage of this process. Please note

If you do not have access to a computer or printer, you can write your own statement requesting an Emergency Medical Ballot. Make sure you state that you are in a hospital, care facility, or cannot otherwise leave your home because of a medical emergency, and you need an Emergency Medical Ballot because you cannot vote in person. If you're having someone pick up your Emergency Medical Ballot for you, make sure you authorize that person in your written request to do so, and have them write their name near that authorization.

Remember to sign your name. This certifies your request and authorizes the person picking up your Emergency Medical Ballot. If you are unable to sign your name, you can make a "mark" instead. Many voters use an "X" or an approved signature stamp, but you can use a different mark. Have the person helping you print your name next to your mark add their name as a "witness" somewhere near your mark. If you're using the Secretary of State's Emergency Medical Ballot application, there should already be a "Witness" line at the bottom for them to fill out. [Make sure your witness is 18 years or older and have the person helping you "witness" your stamp.](#)

## **I have completed my Emergency Medical Ballot. How do I return it?**

In the appropriate space on the provided envelope, write the name of the person whom you authorize to return your ballot. Sign and date the envelope. Place the ballot in the envelope and seal it. **The authorized person must sign and date the back of the envelope in the space provided and return it to the Elections Office or any polling place or vote center in the county by 8:00 p.m. on Election Day.** The envelope with the completed Emergency Medical Ballot may be deposited at a vote center, drop box, polling place or the Elections Office. However, please note that **it cannot be mailed.**

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that, even though it is called a "Late Vote-by-Mail Ballot" on the application form, **the ballot cannot be delivered or returned by mail.** – [\(Return to main document\)](#)

## **Who can help me vote?**

You may have another person help you read and mark your ballot. Others may not mark your ballot for you unless you ask them to do so.

**Disability Rights California operates a Voting Hotline to assist Voters with Disabilities. Please feel free to call for assistance: 1-888-569-7955.**