

A photograph of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris standing behind a dark podium. Joe Biden, on the left, is wearing a dark blue suit, a white shirt, and a blue tie. He is looking down at something on the podium. Kamala Harris, on the right, is wearing a blue blazer over a white top and a pearl necklace. She is smiling and looking towards the right. The background is dark with some blurred lights and flags.

GCDP

GREENVILLE COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY

2020 VOTERS' GUIDE

Everything you need to know to be prepared for November

A VOTERS' GUIDE

The election of 2020 is likely to be the most important one we've ever faced. The situation and problems with getting out the vote are made worse by our COVID-19 reality, and – just as bad – are attempts to suppress turnout, limit new voter registration, and undermine/disrupt postal service. Though it might feel overwhelming, this changed voter reality demands that we keep up and adjust as everything keeps shifting between now and Nov. 3. We hope this guide helps and, again, shows how crucial it is to know your rights and know how to vote.

Compiled by Terry Barr

Voter Eligibility

First things first. Are you registered to vote? Have you moved since the last time you voted? Did you get married? Have you voted before? Have you been convicted of a felony?

Check your registration: If you're registered but haven't voted in a few years, check your registration at [SCVotes.gov](https://www.scvotes.gov). You just need to enter your name, county and birthdate.

Check your name: When you vote you will need to show a form of photo ID. If you need to change your ID, **do it now!** Rules have changed at the DMV due to COVID and you must now make an appointment. Allow extra time to get this done.

Check your address: If you've moved into the county from outside of the state or Greenville County, you must get a new registration. If you've moved from within the county, you can update your existing registration. Call the Election Office for more information: 864.467.7250.

Have you been convicted of a felony?: You can vote if you are not on parole or probation. Your rights are not automatically reinstated, you must register again and you

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When's the deadline?

We've had Election Day – Nov. 3 – imprinted on our brains for four years. But there are a lot of important dates over the next three months. Here they are. Write 'em down!

Think you've got everything covered? **Check your voter registration** today and be sure you are current, listed at the right address, under the right name (did you get married? divorced?). [SCVotes.gov](https://www.scvotes.gov)

NOW

If you're sure you want to vote absentee, request your ballot now. [VoteBlueSC.com](https://www.votebluesc.com)

SEPT.

24

Absentee ballots will be mailed. Once a ballot has been mailed to you, you cannot vote in person.

28

In person absentee voting begins at County Square and four (expected) satellite locations.

OCT.

2

The last day to register. If you are 17 but will be 18 on or by Election Day, you can register to vote. But do it before 10/2. [VoteBlueSC.com](https://www.votebluesc.com)

20

Have you moved? If so, this is your last day to change your address.

24

State law says you can request an absentee ballot as late as the Friday before Election Day. But county Election Officials say that is **too late** to ensure the ballot can make a round-trip back to the county by Tuesday. They say request your ballot no later than Oct. 24.

27

Under current state law, absentee ballots must be **received** by Nov. 3. The county Election Office strongly suggests you mail yours a week in advance.

NOV.

3

Election Day. Polls are open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

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Voter Registration Events

Many organizations are trying to help register voters working within the need for social distancing.

The Young Voter Coalition is a coalition of Upstate organizations dedicated to getting more young people involved in voting and the political process. They are knocking on doors and dropping off voter registration forms throughout August. [Connect with them on Facebook.](#)

The Democratic Black Caucus of Greenville County is organizing an large voter engagement initiative that will run for a dozen days over the next few months. Located at County Square, Suite 400, the DBC will be registering votes, helping voters confirm their status, offering training on voting machines, and checking polling places. Everyone will be masked and socially distanced. The events will be held from 10-2 p.m. on the following dates:
August 24, 25, and 26
September 2, 3, 4, 25, and 30
October 1, 27, 28

The GCDP will be organizing registration events at satellite locations to assist the DBC every Saturday from 8/29 - 9/26 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. **Locations TBA.**
For information email:
gcdpcomm@greenvilledemocrats.com

Continued from previous page

may be required to show documentation that you have completed your entire sentence. If you have been convicted of a misdemeanor, you may vote so long as you aren't in jail.

Are you 17?: You can register to vote now if you will be 18 by Election Day. You will need your Social Security number to complete your application. Ask your mom.

Voter Registration

There are several ways to register to vote. But we should anticipate delays because of reduced staffing due to COVID. So don't wait. **Do it now.**

Register online: If you are a US Citizen, and have a current Driver's License, Election Director Conway Belangia says you can now complete your voter registration completely online. Your digital signature will be pulled in electronically from the DMV. This is the fastest way to register and will be processed with four business days). Go to [VoteBlueSC](#) to register.

Register by mail or at a registration event: You can register on a paper form, which you can download [here](#). You will need to attach a copy of your drivers' license, sign and date the application, and mail it back to the Greenville County Election Office at 301 University Ridge, Suite # 1900, Greenville, SC 29601.

If you have not received your voter registration card by two weeks Election Day, call 864-467-7250 to check your status.

Voter ID

No matter where you vote or when, you will need to have one of five forms of identification.

- Current SC Drivers' License
- SC DMV Identification Card
- SC Voter Registration Card with photo
- Federal Military ID
- Current and valid US Passport

If you do not have one of these forms of ID with you, you will still be permitted to cast a provisional ballot. However, that ballot will only count if your ID is verified at the County Board of Election offices prior to certification of the results. These deadlines may vary and you should contact the Board of Elections (864-467-7250) if you are unable to produce a valid form of photo ID.

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Absentee Voting

Once the province of students, home-bound citizens, traveling businessmen and ex-pats, absentee voting has become more and more essential in recent years. This year, it is critical. And it is also mired in controversy and a political punching bag. **Thirty-three states, including the Southern states of Florida, North Carolina, Georgia, and Virginia will require absentee ballots for everyone with either no excuse or COVID as an excuse.** Only eight states, including SC, require a non-COVID excuse this year. The state Legislature returns next month and will take this up.

There are currently 18 valid excuses for voting absentee in South Carolina. The most common include being a student outside of your county of residence, work, having a physical disability or being over 65. No documentation is required for back up. **Find all 18 excuses here.**

In the meantime, new problems have arisen with the Postal Service leadership doing all it can to slow down the mail, reduce the capabilities of mail sorting, and even removing physical mail boxes from communities across the country.

What does this all mean to you? If you are capable of voting absentee, request your ballot early, complete it early, and return it early. Consider returning it directly to County Square but if you're mailing, leave plenty of time – at least 10 days – for it to be delivered.



Absentee by Mail

The first step to obtaining an absentee ballot is to request an application. **Do this online at VoteBlueSC.com.** If you have a printer, you can request an application be emailed to you. If not, you can request the application come by mail. Allow extra time for this. If you do not have access to the Internet, call the office at 864-467-7264.

The request form must be filled out and returned to the county elections office address on the form. You can submit your application for an absentee ballot now, but ballots will not be sent out until the third week in September when all candidate information is complete.

Once your absentee ballot has been mailed to you, you cannot vote in person absentee or at the polls on Election Day.

If you don't receive your absentee ballot by the first week of October, call the Election Office at 864-467-7264.

If you can, complete your ballot as soon as it's received and get it in the mail. Before you return it make sure you have signed it and signed the ballot envelope. If information is missing or incomplete, the Election Office will – time permitting – make an attempt to call voters and correct the problem. But that may not be possible within two weeks of the election.

Ballots must be **received** at the Election Office by Election Day to be counted.

Absentee in Person

South Carolina does not have Early Voting, although we have gotten in the bad habit of using the term.

Absentee Voting in Person will begin October 5 at County Square. There will also be a number of satellite locations, as there were for the primary, throughout the county. Those locations and their schedules have not yet been released.

You will need to bring Voter ID and must follow social distancing requirements and wear a mask. You should expect lines and be prepared to stand outside at County Square.

Resources

[The Greenville County League of Women Voters](#)

[The South Carolina Election Commission voter information page](#)

[Greenville County Election Office](#)

**South Carolina Voter Protection Hotline:
855-785-0222, [website](#) and [Facebook Page](#)**

[Greenville County Democratic Party website](#)

[How does South Carolina rank nationally on mail-in voting? Is a D good?](#)

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Voting on Election Day

No one can say right now what we may experience on Election Day. We don't know if the virus will "disappear" or be raging. We don't know if a large number of voters will be able to cast their ballot by mail or if the lines at the normal polling places will be long with uncomfortable wait times.

For those who choose to and those who have no choice only two things are certain:

It will be like no other Election Day most of us have seen and no matter what **we must vote**.

Polls, Workers and Watchers

Election Director Conway Belangia expects to have 150 polling places open for voting. As with every election there will be some changes, so it's important to check your polling place. Don't assume you are voting at the same place as last time.

A key factor in how long the lines and the waits may be at each location are the number of poll workers. Belangia says he would like to have 2000 poll workers optimally; he'd be comfortable with 1600; he can squeak by with 1250.

This is where you come in. There are several roles where your help is going to be needed.

1. **The county needs poll workers.** This is a long-day and requires a three-hour training class. You do get paid (\$135 total), and you are doing your civic duty. Those who routinely sign on as poll workers say it is very rewarding. The county would like to get more younger people to sign on. So if your work schedule is flexible, or you are not currently working, consider helping us fill this need. Belangia will be conducting 170 (no that's not a typo) training sessions from Sept. 8 through Oct. 24.
2. The GCDP needs **poll watchers**. Poll watchers represent the party and are at polling places to observe the election. You are the party's eyes and ears: machines break down, lines are around the corner, people are turned away, voter suppression activities going on outside the polling place. These are things we want to know about. Poll watchers must be certified by the party. In some cases, we may be able to schedule you for a half day, instead of the 6 am to 8 pm shift the poll workers sign up for.
3. We also need volunteers to sign up as **drivers** to be on call to drive voters to the polls. Our hope is that we have enough drivers to try and assign you rides closer to your home. And we'll need **runners** to deliver snacks and water



Election Day Volunteers

The election of our lives is just around the corner and we need to be ready! We need to have poll watchers at each of 151 polling places as well as drivers and runners to help get people to the polls and assist the party. We need your help. Complete this form and a member of the GCDP team will be in touch with you with details.

Name *

First Last

Email *

Mobile Phone Number *

- ### -

Town or community where you reside *

Roles we need volunteers for (check all that you are interested in)

☐ Poll watcher

☐ Driver

☐ Runner

☐ Poll worker

Hours you are available (different roles have different hours.)

☒ All Day

☐ Afternoon (1 PM - 7:30 PM)

☐ Morning (6 AM - 1 PM)

Submit

to polling places and also to collect any information necessary to bring back to the party's "boiler room."

If you can volunteer any of these roles, [click on the image above](#) to complete this quick form. If you select poll worker, the information you provide will be forwarded to the county Election Office.

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How secure is your absentee ballot?

By LAURA HAIGHT

We have all heard it. The constant railing against mail-in voting, the fear-mongering about rigged elections, massive fraud, and, of course, the efforts by the administration to hog-tie the Postal Service at a critical time. All at the same time that Democrats are trying hard to get the COVID exemption for absentee voting extended to all South Carolinians for the November election.

So, we went to the source – Greenville County Election Director Conway Belangia – to get his take on election security. Belangia has been in charge of Greenville County elections for 26 years, and he prides himself on running thorough, fair, free elections. In 2018, Belangia was recognized with the Moore Award from the South Carolina Association of



Registration and Election Officials for exemplifying the spirit of the organization through “continued unselfish giving of time and effort to make the Association a more educated, concerned group that promotes training and education in voter registration and election administration.”

The first thing we asked Conway to explain was the security steps around mail-in absentee voting. Can any of these things that are being tossed around actually happen?

Security Check #1: You must apply for an absentee ballot. You can do this online at www.votebluesc.com or by calling the election office at 864-467-7264 or emailing absentee@greenvillecounty.org. You’ll want to include your address, date of birth, phone number, and the reason for voting absentee.

Security check #2: When you receive your absentee application you’ll notice they are numbered. Each has a unique number assigned to the specific voter. That makes it impossible, Conway says, for someone to copy a single application ‘hundreds of times’ or just pick up multiple applications.

Once you receive the application, complete it and return in the provided envelope, which has the same unique number associated with it. Before you mail in the application be certain you really want to vote absentee by mail. Once your absentee ballot has been mailed to you, you cannot vote absentee in person or at the polls on Election Day.

Conway says absentee ballots will start being mailed out around September 24. Allow about a week and if you haven’t received your absentee ballot by the first few days of October, contact the Election Office. When you receive your ballot, complete it and mail it back as early as you can. High turnout is expected – and hoped for – so it’s important that the Election Office get a steady stream of incoming ballots rather than a flood within a week to 10 days of the election.

The ballot currently requires a witness signature. “We’ve been requesting the Legislature remove that,” Conway explained, “because it serves no useful purpose.” That will be one of the Election-related items under consideration when the Legislature returns to wrap up its session in September. You can also return your ballot in person by taking it to the Election Office at County Square. You must complete the yellow form included with the ballot and sign it if you are dropping it off. If you are asking someone else to drop it off, you must include their name and your signature. **Security Check #3.** This check on the return of absentee ballots in person is one reason why Conway is opposed to drop boxes, although there is a move afoot to push for them in this election. See story on Page 7.

Security check #4, when your ballot is received, the signature on the back of the envelope is checked against the signature in the voter file by Election Office personnel. “We are not handwriting experts,” admits Conway, “but we have some things we look for.” If

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The case for drop boxes

By RUTH TODD

GCDP, 1st Vice Chair

There are many pros to having ballot drop boxes and some cons... you decide.

The South Carolina Election Commission's Executive Director, [Marci Andino, and other SC election officials, have sent a letter to Gov. Henry McMaster](#), Senate President Harvey Peeler, and House Speaker Jay Lucas asking for changes for the upcoming election.

The four most important changes are: 1) no-excuse absentee voting; 2) removal of the witness requirement; 3) allowing opening of the ballots to begin the Friday before the election; 4) allowing drop boxes for submission of absentee ballots.

During the 2020 primary, Andino stated that mail-in absentee voting was up 213 percent. Fear of this creating a backlog in the US Postal Service system is increasing as the agency runs out of funding and unfunded overtime is disallowed by new leadership. The SCDP's Director of Voter Protection, Shaundra Scott, is [pushing for changes](#) that were in place during the June primaries, and many are the same as Andino's. [National election officials are confident in the security of ballot drop boxes.](#) Also, SC state officials are confident in the security of the drop boxes with added security protocols.

The public press for drop boxes is an area of concern for Conway Belangia, Greenville County Election Director, who says state law prohibits them. Some counties have said they intend to use drop boxes under a "pandemic law" exception. Conway, however, is not down with that. "We have the laws there to protect the vote," he says, citing the restrictions on returning ballots is what guards against the harvesting of ballots (the issue that resulted in North Carolina's 9th congressional district result being overturned in 2018). "Drop boxes are not part of that process."

Pros to having ballot drop boxes: 1) Increases voter confidence that their ballot is received; 2) Removes issue of late delivered ballots not getting to County Square in time; 3) Increases health safety by reducing lines for absentee in-person voting and Election Day voting.

Cons: 1) Potential of damaged or stolen drop boxes 2) Need to hire security to watch the boxes or install monitoring systems.



To have ballot drop boxes, one box for every 15,000-20,000 registered voters is recommended.

That would be 16 boxes around the county to accommodate our 313,000 registered voters. Population concentrations and demographics would also be a placement consideration.

Who are you voting for? Bookmark our candidate information page

Educated and empowered voters make smart decisions and lend their talents and time to helping the candidates of their choice to success in November. The GCDP has a [web page listing all the candidates who are running this year with links to connect you to their campaigns and social media sites.](#)

We are adding information about volunteer opportunities and virtual events candidates are participating in, as we become aware of them.

All information was provided by the candidates or their campaigns and this page is continually being updated as more information is received. [Watch video from our April Virtual Breakfast](#) where candidates introduced themselves and their campaigns.

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How secure is your absentee ballot? (Con't)

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a signature is missing or there's a question about it, election office staff will try to contact the voter to see how to rectify the issue. "With the kind of volume we're expecting," Conway says, "the only time we'll be able to do that is for ballots received 3-4 weeks before Election Day. Within two weeks, contacting individual voters is unrealistic." If you forget to sign the ballot envelope and the ballot is received inside that two-week window, your ballot will go in the "Do Not Count" box.

Under law, absentee ballots cannot be opened until the morning of Election Day. The Election Commission has asked for permission from the Legislature to start getting those ballots ready to be counted at least the day before. Whether that is approved or not, the process will be the same: Signed outside envelopes are separated from the ballot envelope. Now there is no way to link the ballot back to the ballot envelope and the voter. "That protects the secrecy of the ballot," Conway explains. Ballots will be separated to be scanned and tabulated, by feeding them through the same optical scanners voters use at the polling places. With as many as 40,000 absentee ballots possible in November, Conway knows it's going to be a long night and fears that the counting of ballots could run into the early morning Wednesday or beyond.

Unlike many others, Conway is not concerned about lapses in Postal Service impacting the election. Conway praises the Postal Service's efforts during the June primary. "They worked their butts off," he says, including some post offices hand delivering ballots to the Election Office on Primary Day. "They understand," he says, "they are part of the process." Still, he suggests making sure you have mailed your ballot back at least a week before Election Day.

And don't wait until the week before the election to request your absentee ballot. By law, the office is required to mail ballots out until 5 p.m. the Friday before the election. But, Conway notes, in reality "that ballot is probably not going to make it to the voter and back to us by the close of the polls on Tuesday."

Voting is a right and a privilege

Voting is your right. If you are properly registered, are at the right polling place, and are in line by 7 p.m., you **MUST** be allowed to vote. If you are denied your opportunity to vote, contact the GCDP office at 864-232-5531. The state Democratic Party also has a voter suppression hotline at 855-785-0222.

Do not leave your polling location while you call; stand your ground. If you have to leave, ask for a provisional ballot and then follow up with the Election Commission the next day to ensure that ballot gets counted. Document anything you are told and ask for the names of the poll workers you interact with.

Above all VOTE.
Help and encourage others to VOTE.
Be safe and preserve our democracy.

Make a plan for

ELECTION DAY



Find some
Friends



Agree on
a time



Decide who's



driving and



your polling places.



out a route.



Pick everyone up and go



And don't forget your mask!



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Furman's Straight Talk Series Takes On Voting

The Riley Institute and OLLI @ Furman's 10th Annual Straight Talk Series is going viral. Straight Talk 2020: Voting in America, a series of three in-depth conversations premieres Tuesday, Sept. 1 from 6:30 to 7:30 pm, with **Lurching Forward: 244 Years of Fighting for the Right to Vote**. Expert panelists including Michael Waldman, president of the Brennan Center for Justice, will discuss the ongoing battle for voting rights and voter suppression.

Session two on Sept. 8, **The Dark Art of Politics: When Politicians Choose the Voters**, the role of the Census in determining representation in

Congress will be covered as well as redistricting and gerrymandering. Panelists include; Allison Riggs, interim director of the Southern Coalition for Social Justice, and SC Representatives Gary Clary and Gilda Cobb-Hunter, both of whom support the establishment of an independent voting redistricting commission in South Carolina.

The third and final session on Sept. 15 is **Democracy at Risk: Safeguarding Votes, Voters and Election Integrity**. It will explore what the Constitution says about how we elect our president and the cost of declining trust in our democratic institutions. Robert Costa, moderator and managing editor of Washington Week on PBS, and Indiana University President Michael McRobbie are among the panel's experts.

For more information on the series and a [link to register](https://riley.furman.edu/riley/critical-issues/straighttalk/voting-america), visit <https://riley.furman.edu/riley/critical-issues/straighttalk/voting-america>. The series is free.



Aim higher with advocacy for #EveryoneVotes in November

BY LAURA HAIGHT

Over the past few months, we've been asking you to call and write your elected officials and demand full mail in (absentee) voting for everyone in November.

Now we think we'd better up our game. The Legislature returns in September and will take up Election issues.

It's time to put the pressure on the leadership. Please write letters or postcards to:

Gov. Henry McMaster, State House, 1100 Gervais Street
Columbia, SC 29201

Speaker of the House, Rep. Jay Lucas, Suite 506, Blatt
Building, Columbia, SC, 29202



President of the Senate, Sen. Harvey Peeler, Jr., Suite 213,
Gressette Building, Columbia, SC 29201

Majority Leader of the Senate, Sen. A. Shane Massey,
Suite 311, Gressette Building, Columbia, SC 29201

Talking point: The right to vote and to representation is the foundational right of our Constitution. The state Election Commission has asked for full mail-in voting and other changes for this election. Heed their call and ensure all South Carolinians can vote without risking their health in November.

[Find more talking points online](#)