

Dear Evacuee Voter:

The Secretary of State and his staff would like to extend their sympathy to all Texans affected by Hurricane Harvey. As emergency relief efforts continue, we would also like to provide information with regards to voting in the upcoming November 7, 2017 election. We appreciate that many voters are going through a difficult time.

Our office has been in frequent contact with local election officials in Texas since the storm. We are currently evaluating the status of local offices, voting supplies, machines, and polling places. As we learn more about the situation in all affected areas, we will provide updated information. This FAQ outlines what we think will be the most common questions for you to review and see what fits your situation. We recommend reviewing all of the information and questions below.

TEXAS RESIDENCE ISSUES FOR HARVEY EVACUEES

If a voter is able to return to their home, they may vote as usual in their county polling place. We understand that this is not possible for everyone affected by the storm, but suggest that voters check with their county, via phone or online, for the latest local information regarding polling places and early voting.

We realize that evacuation is a difficult experience and that voters may not be certain of their future living arrangements, neither short nor long term. Regarding residence, our answer to evacuees is the same as to any voter -- the voter is the one who decides what the voter considers to be home. The voter will need to make decisions by certain deadlines, as all regular deadlines are still in place and have not been waived. Voters who have been displaced have several options for voting in the November election.

Question 1: I am a registered Texas voter, and I am currently an evacuee living with my family elsewhere in Texas (outside of my home county). My future is so uncertain; I am not sure what to say on the forms.

Answer: Our advice to such individuals is that they evaluate all the facts known to them, given the overall uncertainty, then decide what they consider to be their permanent address at that time:

1. The address of the voter's regular home in the affected county (if the individual intends to return to that address);
2. The address of the family member with whom they are currently staying; or
3. An address they are going to be relocating to (as long as that address is for a location they have actually been to before).

What this means for you:

- If you want to register at the family home where you currently live as an evacuee or at an address you plan to be living at soon, you can register to vote at that address in time for the November election. You must register to vote by **Tuesday, October 10, 2017**. If you mail your voter registration application, it must be postmarked by this date.
- If you want to remain registered at the place you normally live that is in a county affected by the storm, even if you are temporarily away from that home due to storm damage, and want to apply for a ballot by mail, please see Question 2.

Question 2: It is important to me to maintain my residence in the affected area, even though my home is currently uninhabitable and do not know when I can go back to that residence. How can I vote?

Answer: The law allows you to still claim your old address as your home if you have an intention to return to that address and can conceivably do so at some point in the future. What is important is that you can truthfully state that this place was your home in the past, and your intention is to return.

The best option if you consider yourself to be only temporarily away from your residence in the area affected by the hurricane and want to remain registered at that address is to vote by mail.

Voters wishing to vote by mail must submit an Application for a Ballot by Mail to their county election office (the county in which they are registered to vote and in which they wish to stay registered to vote). The application must be **received** no later than **Friday, October 27, 2017**. The application may be mailed, faxed, or emailed to the early voting clerk. We recommend that voters [contact their county early voting clerk to confirm the current preferred method submitting an Application for a Ballot by Mail.](#)

If you are applying to vote by mail because you are temporarily **outside of your home Texas county**, then on the Application for a Ballot by Mail, you should check the box on the form indicating that you have an expected absence from the county, and you will need to provide a mailing address for the ballot that is **outside of your home county**.

Note that voters who are 65 or older on election day or who have a disability also are eligible to apply for a ballot by mail, and, if not able to receive the ballot at their normal residence address, may have their ballot mailed to the address of a nursing home, hospital, or other care facility at which they are staying or the address of a relative at which they can receive the ballot. Here is a link to the [Application for Ballot by Mail \(PDF\)](#).

Question 3: What are some deadlines or other procedures do I need to keep in mind?

Tuesday, October 10, 2017: Last day to register to vote in a new county for a full ballot for the November 7, 2017 election. If mailed, the application must be postmarked by this date.

Monday, October 23 – Friday, November 3, 2017: Early voting by personal appearance. If you are still in your home Texas county, you can vote at any location in the county during the early voting period.

If you are outside your home Texas county, and want to vote where you are currently staying, you can go to the early voting clerk's office and apply for a "limited ballot," which will contain those offices or proposition that are in common between your home Texas county and the new county in which you are currently staying. However, **note that you should only do this if you want to have your registration in the old county cancelled and to be registered to vote in the new county, where you are currently staying.** Submitting an application for a limited ballot will register you in the new county and cancel your registration in the old county.

Friday, October 27, 2017: Last day for the early voting clerk to **receive** an Application for a Ballot by Mail.

November 7, 2017: Election Day. Polls are open from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Question 4: I am an evacuee living with family in another state. How does that affect your advice?

If you want to remain registered in Texas and vote a Texas ballot, our answers are still the same as noted above.

If you want to register and vote in the other state where you are currently residing, you will need to contact election official in that state to learn about requirements for registering to vote and voting in that state.

For a list of [contact information for other states](#), please see the site for the Federal Election Commission.

Question 5: I am an evacuee living with family or friends outside the United States. How does that affect your advice?

Answer: If for military or other reasons, you have left the United States, you may use the Federal Postcard Application (FPCA). A link to the [Federal Postcard Application is available on the FPCA website \(PDF\)](#).

Additional information regarding the Federal Postcard Application and the Federal Voting Assistance Program is available from the [FVAP website](#).

Question 6: How can I vote if I am staying in a shelter?

Answer: Given the temporary nature of living at a shelter, you may not want to register to vote using the shelter address. However, if you consider the shelter to be your home for now, then you can register at that address. If the shelter cannot receive mail, then you may wish to use a P.O. Box or other mailing address to which your new voter registration certificate can be mailed. If the shelter can receive mail, a person could put that address as their mailing address on the voter registration application. This will then allow the voter to ask for a ballot to be sent to that address. Note that only if the address of the shelter is an individual's official mailing address on the list of registered voters can an individual request that a ballot be sent to that address.

We note that it may be a good idea for evacuees currently living in shelters to allow some time for the situation to become more stable. (For example, many are in the process of being transferred to hotel rooms or considering other options.)

Any evacuee can call our office at 1-800-252-VOTE (8683), and we will make every effort to provide advice to fit their specific situation. If you are in communication with someone who has access to a telephone but not the internet because of power outages, we recommend either calling our toll-free number, or listening to local radio for announcements from county officials about when their county offices will be open for routine business. For assistance, you may also [email our office](#).

Question 7: How do I find out if I am registered or where I am registered? What do I do if I am not registered to vote?

Answer: If you want to make sure you are registered (and where), you can [look yourself up on our website](#). If you are not registered to vote, make the best choice you can based on the facts known to you about what your residence address and mailing address are, then apply and register to vote as usual on or before **Tuesday, October 10, 2017**. Apply to vote by-mail if needed.

Question 8: I am not sure whether where I am staying right now is in the same county where I am registered to vote. How can I find that out?

Answer: On our regular Voter FAQ, we have links to help identify which county you are in

- [Where to Vote](#)
- [FAQs](#)

As further explained in the general voter FAQ, under Texas law, if you move around within the same county, you can return to the location serving your precinct and vote. If you are still in the same Texas county you are registered in, a good choice is to vote early by personal appearance. Early voting by personal appearance locations are set up to serve **all** voting precincts within that Texas county. If you want to vote on election day, please be aware that many counties will be re-evaluating where to locate polling places; therefore, your traditional polling place (i.e., "where we have voted for years") might be

moved to another location. You should look on a county's website line for lists of current polling locations (for early voting and election day).

You can also go on our website to [find your polling place](#).

Question 9: What are the deadlines to return my by-mail ballot?

If the carrier envelope containing the voted ballot **does not** bear a cancellation mark or a receipt mark, the ballot **must arrive** before the time the polls are required to close **on Election Day (November 7, 2017)**.

If the carrier envelope bears a cancellation mark of a postal service or a receipt mark or of a courier indicating a time not later than **7:00 p.m.** at the location of the election on Election Day, then the ballot **must** be received by 5:00 p.m. on **Wednesday, November 8, 2017**.

Question 10: Will my ballot be counted?

Answer: The good news for Hurricane Harvey evacuees is that if their ballot is submitted correctly and in a timely manner, then it will be counted. However, we must likewise caution evacuees that:

- all regular statutory deadlines are still in place, and have not been waived; and
- most election procedures require your hardcopy signature (or that of a witness, if you are unable to sign).

Even during this difficult time, it is still the voter's responsibility to make certain decisions as to what he or she considers home in time to vote, and to file the necessary paperwork. As to your ballot being counted, Texas counties count ballots mailed to them from applicants from all over the world.

Question 11: Where can I find additional information?

Answer: Go to votetexas.gov, call us at **1-800-252-VOTE (8683)**, or [email us](#). We try to have as much information as possible available on our website. Please remember that it might not be possible for us to modify our online advice for Hurricane Harvey situations on every page of our website.

We also recommend checking the [list of counties with their own websites at our directory](#).

The county's own website (if any) will usually provide the best and most up to date information for voting in that county

The events that brought you to these questions are extraordinary. However, in terms of election law, you are just like many other Texas voters who are on the move. We are confident that we can find the procedures you need to help you vote, and we appreciate your thinking about voting during this trying time.

Sincerely,

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