

NEW JERSEY 2020 PRIMARY ELECTION

As directed by Governor Murphy, County Clerk Mary Melfi and her staff are mailing out Vote by Mail Ballots to registered Republican and Democratic voters in Hunterdon County. That's the **actual ballots**.

She is also mailing out applications to obtain a Vote by Mail Ballot to Unaffiliated and Inactive voters. That's an **application** to receive a Vote by Mail Ballot.

The Executive Order requires that the County Board of Elections place one voting booth in each Municipality. This voting booth will only be set up for audio voting for sight impaired voters.

If a voter is uncomfortable using a Vote by Mail Ballot, they can go to the polling place on Tuesday July 7th and vote by Provisional Ballot. This is a paper ballot that the voter will complete in private location at the polling place and will hand to the poll workers. As in normal elections, at the close of polls, one of our police officers will drive two of the poll workers (when possible 1 Republican and 1 Democrat) to the County Board of Elections, to submit all election materials including the Provisional Ballots.

Because it was unknown if the Riegel Ridge Community Center (our normal voting location) would be open to the public at the time I had to choose the polling place and because there will only be one voting booth.....I chose to have the poll placed at the Municipal Building. So for this Primary Election, July 7, 2020, the one voting location will be in the meeting room at the Holland Township Municipal Building at 61 Church Road.

Each County is required to place 5 Vote by Mail drop boxes around the County.

County Board of Elections Supervisor, Beth Thompson notified me that the Holland Township Municipal Building will be one of those locations.

Around June 14th the County will be installing this box (which I understand weighs hundreds of pounds) in front of the Municipal Building near the front doors where it will be in view of one of our surveillance cameras. Any voter, from any town in Hunterdon County can deposit their Vote by Mail Ballot in our drop box.

This drop box will be locked and will only be emptied by members of the Hunterdon County Board of Elections.

So, there are 3 ways a voter can cast their vote:

- 1) put their Vote by Mail Ballot in the mail
- 2) vote by Provisional Ballot at the Municipal Building on July 7th
- 3) drop their Vote by Mail Ballot in the drop box in front of the Holland Municipal Building once it has been installed

Here's the reason why Unaffiliated voters will receive an **application** for a Vote by Mail Ballot and not the actual Ballot:

The "Democratic and Republican Primary" is the opportunity for Democratic and Republican voters to choose their candidates to run in the General Election in November.

If a voter does not register as a Republican or a Democratic they are an Unaffiliated Voter. In New Jersey there are no Independent Voters, only Independent Candidates.

An Unaffiliated Voter can vote in the Republican and Democratic Primary but, they have to affiliate with the Republican or a Democratic Party at the time they vote.

Normally one can do that on Primary Election Day when they go to the polls. On Primary Day when a voter goes to their District, a poll worker checks them in. In the Poll Book a voter is listed as a D, R or U. If the voter is registered as a Republican the voting machine is set so the voter can only vote for Republican candidates. If the voter is registered as a Democrat the machine is set so they can only vote for Democratic candidates.

If a voter is Unaffiliated the poll worker asks the voter which party they would like to affiliate with and the machine is set to that party. And the voter is then listed as a voter in that party.

That voter can switch back to an Unaffiliated Voter if they complete a form to do so. We have those forms at the Municipal Building and on the Holland Township website.

Since most unaffected voters don't want to affiliate, they don't vote in the Primary. But for this Primary, the opportunity will be given to them when they receive the application for a Vote by Mail Ballot.

On the application they will state the party they would like to affiliate with and mail in the form. The appropriate Vote by Mail Ballot (Republican or Democrat) would be mailed to them.

If a voter would prefer to vote in person, they can come to the Municipal Building and vote by Provisional Ballot. The poll workers will be there to assist the voter and to accept the completed Provisional Ballot. The polling place will be open as usual from 6:00 am to 8:00 pm.