

Many Voters with Disabilities Can Vote by Mail Privately and Independently

January 2020, Pub. #7152.01

Background:

Vote-by-Mail has become ever more popular in California. However, voters with certain disabilities, for example vision and dexterity disabilities, are not able to vote privately and independently using a paper Vote-by-Mail ballot because they cannot read or mark it. Effective January 1, 2020 Remote Accessible Vote-by-Mail (RAVBM) must be available in every county in California. Prior to this mandate only certain counties offered this means of voting. This newly mandated method of access means voters with certain disabilities, such as vision and dexterity disabilities, can now vote privately and independently.

What is Remote Accessible Vote-by-Mail (RAVBM)?

Remote Accessible Vote-by-Mail (RAVBM) systems will allow voters with disabilities, many of whom often rely on others to assist them in reading and marking their ballot, to cast their vote privately and independently from home. This **IS NOT** internet voting.

How do RAVBM systems work?

Generally, a RAVBM system gives a voter with a disability an opportunity to download a ballot, allowing them to read it and mark it using their own assistive technology device. At that point, the voter with a disability has to print out their selections and return them to the County Elections Office. Disability Rights California published a [video demonstration of a RAVBM system](#).

How would a voter with a disability return their selections to the County Elections Office?

Voters will need to either mail it or drop it off at a polling place (or vote center) in the specially provided envelope you will receive from your County Elections Office and sign the envelope, which has specially punched holes to indicate where a person with a sight disability should sign.

What are the requirements for receiving a RAVBM ballot?

In some counties, a voter with a disability who would like to use the RAVBM system must, first, register as a Vote-by-Mail voter. **A voter may request a Vote-by-Mail Ballot or a RAVBM ballot up to seven (7) days prior to Election Day.**¹ Voters who reside in Voter's Choice Act counties,² other than Los Angeles,³ do not have to request a Vote-by-Mail ballot as they will automatically be receiving a ballot with the return envelope. All voters wishing to use the RAVBM system regardless of location must still however, request RAVBM up to seven (7) days prior to Election Day.

How many RAVBM systems are there in California?

Currently, the California Secretary of State has conditionally approved three systems, Democracy Live Secure Select 1.2.2, Five Cedars Group Alternate Format Ballot (AFB) v5.2.1 and Dominion ImageCast Remote 5.2.

How secure are RAVBM systems?

California has one of the most strenuous testing and certification programs in the country to ensure that your private and independent ballot is secure.

Individuals with Disabilities may also Contact Disability Rights California Voting Hotline for further information: 888-569-7955

¹ Some counties allow voters with disabilities to use RAVBM by going directly to the portal from the County Elections Office's website without a formal request. Individual counties can modify their website as needed. ([Return to Main Document](#))

² A [list of Voters' Choice Act](#) counties can be found on the Secretary of State's website. ([Return to Main Document](#))

³ Los Angeles County will be mailing every registered voter a ballot beginning in 2024. ([Return to Main Document](#))