



NASS Survey Question: What is the number of days prior to an election that you are allowed to open absentee ballots?

Conducted: 5-11-06

Summary:

38 states/territories responded.

- 28 of the 38 respondents cannot open absentee ballots until Election Day.
 - 9 of these respondents added they could open ballots during poll hours
 - 6 of these respondents added that they had to wait until the polls closed.
- 9 can open prior to Election Day.
 - 1 upon receipt of the ballot,
 - 2 at least 7 days prior to the election
 - 6 less than 6 days prior to the election

State	Day Absentee Ballots can be Opened
Alabama	Election Day, beginning at noon
Alaska	Election Day, after the polls close
American Samoa	Election Day
Arizona	
Arkansas	Election Day
California	California law allows an election official to open and "process" absentee ballots beginning seven days before an election. "Process" means that the ballot can be opened and run through a reader even though no tabulation or vote totals may be run until the polls close on election night.
Colorado	Can begin 10 days prior to the election. No results can be disclosed until after 7pm on Election Day. (C.R.S. 1-8-302(2)).
Connecticut	Election Day - noon
Delaware	
DC	Election Day
Florida	Four days prior to the election
Georgia	Election Day, beginning at noon
Guam	
Hawaii	
Idaho	Election Day is the norm, law not specific
Illinois	Election Day – after the polls close
Indiana	Election Day
Iowa	They may open affidavit envelopes and remove the secrecy envelopes on the day before election day, but they may not open the secrecy envelopes until election day. All absentee ballots must be tabulated by 10 pm on election day.
Kansas	
Kentucky	Election Day – after 10am

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Louisiana	Election Day – start between 1pm and 8pm, time determined by Parrish
Maine	Maine does not allow absentee ballots to be opened or processed before election day. They may only be opened and processed after the polls open (between 6 and 10 am) on election day, at the times indicated on the posted Notice of Election. If no times are posted, then they may only be opened and processed after the polls are closed and all persons standing in line have voted (after 8 pm).
Maryland	
Massachusetts	
Michigan	Election Day – after 7am
Minnesota	
Mississippi	Election Day – after the polls close
Missouri	Not earlier than the fifth day prior to an election, absentee ballots may be prepared for tabulation. (115.300 RSMo) Counting can not begin until election day.
Montana	Can't be opened before Election Day.
Nebraska	Not earlier than the Thursday before Election Day – just to flatten them for counting – can't count until Election Day
Nevada	
New Hampshire	Opened on Election Day. Processing begins at 1pm at all polling places
New Jersey	
New Mexico	
New York	Election Day – after the polls close
North Carolina	Election Day
North Dakota	Election Day
Ohio	
Oklahoma	The absentee ballot affidavit may be opened and inspected three days before the election to determine it meets all qualifications in the law (notary, signed, etc.) The Absentee ballots themselves may be opened beginning at 7:00 a.m. the morning of the election
Oregon	
Pennsylvania	
Puerto Rico	
Rhode Island	
South Carolina	Election Day – can begin opening and tabulating at 9:00am. No results released until polls close.
South Dakota	Election Day
Tennessee	Election Day
Texas	
Utah	Election Day
Vermont	Election Day – beginning at 5am
Virgin Islands	
Virginia	Absentee ballots may not be opened until after the polls close at 7:00 on the night of an election. If the locality has a CAP (Central Absentee Precinct) the absentee ballots may be fed into the counter on the day of the election.
Washington	Authorized to open absentee ballots upon receipt of the ballots, rather than a set number of days before the election
West Virginia	Election Day – after the polls close at 7:30pm
Wisconsin	Election Day
Wyoming	Election Day

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