**COLUMBIA, SC** (May 18, 2022) – On May 13, 2022, Governor McMaster signed into law legislation passed by the General Assembly that establishes early voting and makes significant changes to the absentee voting process.  The State Election Commission wants voters to be aware of how these changes affect absentee voting in the June Primaries.

The following is a list of some of the more significant changes to the process.  For complete details and to see the new absentee process step-by-step, visit the [Absentee Voting page at scVOTES.gov](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.scvotes.gov%2Fabsentee-voting&data=05%7C01%7CRF.Padgett%40saludacounty.sc.gov%7C3998d714ddc04a3e780308da399dcd2a%7Ce9f8d01480d84f27b0d6c3d6c085fcdd%7C0%7C0%7C637885647150610429%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=HOmvvl7hM%2F7eqmJa699P4dXwdWqvJPgS%2BuINE%2BocE9U%3D&reserved=0).

* In-Person Absentee Voting is no longer authorized by law.  All absentee voting is done by mail.
* While you must be qualified to vote absentee, early voting is available to all voters (see below).
* Absentee Reasons
	+ Voters aged 65 or older, voters with disabilities and military voters are unchanged.
	+ Being absent from the county for any reason has been added.
	+ Voters who are absent from the county, have employment obligations, are attending a person with an illness or disability, or are in jail pending trial must be unable to vote during the entire early voting period and on election day.  Previously, the voter had to be absent only on election day.
* Absentee Applications
	+ County offices will soon begin issuing applications with the new absentee reasons.
		- The old application will continue to be accepted through May 31.
		- After May 31, only new applications will be accepted.
		- The deadline to return a new application is June 3.
	+ The application deadline for all elections is now 11 days prior to an election instead of 4 days.
	+ Absentee applications must be requested by phone, mail or in person (online, fax and email requests are no longer allowed).
	+ Absentee applications must be returned by mail or in person (fax and email returns are no longer allowed).
	+ Family members and authorized representatives are now limited to five application requests in addition to their own per election.  Previously, there was no limit.  There are additional changes to rules for others requesting and returning a voter’s application.
* Ballot Return
	+ Photo ID is now required when returning a ballot in person.
	+ Family members and authorized representatives are now limited to five ballot returns in addition to their own per election.  Previously, there was no limit.  There are additional changes to rules for others returning a voter’s ballot.
	+ Returning more than five ballots for other voters is now a felony crime punishable by up to a $1,000 fine or five years in prison, or both.
	+ There are no changes to the witness requirement in effect for the June Primaries.  New witness requirements go into effect in July.

**Early Voting**

Any voter can visit an early-voting location in their county and vote like they would at their polling place on Election Day.

* Early-voting for June Primaries:
	+ Period:  Tuesday, May 31 – Friday, June 10.  Closed Saturday and Sunday, June 4 – 5.
	+ Hours:  8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
	+ Locations:
		- All County Voter Registration and Elections Offices.
		- Counties may establish up to seven total locations.  Any additional locations will be determined by the counties no later than May 24 and posted to scVOTES.gov.
* Early-voting for June Runoffs:
	+ Period:  Wednesday, June 22 – Friday, June 24.
	+ Hours and Locations:  Same as Primaries.
* [Photo ID is required to vote at an early voting location.](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.scvotes.org%2Fnode%2F235&data=05%7C01%7CRF.Padgett%40saludacounty.sc.gov%7C3998d714ddc04a3e780308da399dcd2a%7Ce9f8d01480d84f27b0d6c3d6c085fcdd%7C0%7C0%7C637885647150610429%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=VugyhOPKyaGRrzEErUJBnkM9F%2F7qta52XR4v1AWezNk%3D&reserved=0)

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