

Mail-in ballots for North Dakota June primary now available

By: Mary Steurer, North Dakota Monitor

North Dakota election officials on Thursday will start mailing absentee ballots for the June primary election.

To vote absentee, voters must first send an application for a ballot to their county election official. Some North Dakota counties automatically send applications to eligible residents.

Once voters' applications are approved, they will be mailed a ballot.

Voters have multiple options for voting absentee. They can drop off their ballot at specific drop-box locations, or return it directly to their county election auditor.

Voters can also mail absentee ballots to their county auditor offices. Mail-in ballots won't be accepted at polling places on Election Day.

Starting this year, the deadline for

mail-in ballots is stricter. All ballots must be received by Election Day — June 9 — to be counted.

Previously, mail-in ballots could be counted after the polls closed as long as they were postmarked at least one day before Election Day and delivered within 13 days of the election. The North Dakota Legislature eliminated that grace period last year to mirror an executive order by President Donald Trump.

The new rule does not apply to military absentee voters. They just have to mail their ballots by the time polls close on Election Day, and their ballots must arrive by the time the canvassing board meets. The state began sending absentee ballots to North Dakota residents living overseas last week.

Deputy Secretary of State Sandy Mc-

Merty said the agency recommends that voters who wish to vote by mail fill out and send their ballots as soon as possible. The time it takes to mail ballots "can vary significantly" around the state, she said.

McMerty told the North Dakota Monitor previously that the Secretary of State's Office doesn't expect the deadline change to cause any issues, citing figures from the 2024 election.

"We don't foresee significant barriers to voters as 0.1% of absentee ballots in the general election were postmarked prior to Election Day and delivered to the county after Election Day," she said.

According to data published by the agency, about 30% of ballots cast in the 2024 primary election were absentee.

For more information on how to vote in North Dakota, visit the Secretary of State Office's website.

The March 2025 executive order that prompted North Dakota lawmakers to change the state's process for voting by mail is being challenged in federal courts. More than a dozen states still allow mail-in ballots to be counted after Election Day.

The Supreme Court in late March heard arguments in a lawsuit challenging the practice in Mississippi. It has yet to issue a ruling.

In March, Trump issued another election-related executive order establishing new rules for voting by mail in federal elections. The order directs the U.S. Postal Service to mail ballots only if voters are on the Trump administration's own voter lists. Since the order applies to federal elections, it would



Ballots that had arrived by mail or were set aside on Election Day sit on a table at the Cass County Courthouse on Nov. 18, 2024, waiting to be reviewed. (Photo by Jeff Beach/North Dakota Monitor)

not apply to the June primary. A group of Democratic states have filed a lawsuit over the order, which is pending in federal court.

North Dakota Monitor reporter Mary Steurer can be reached at msteurer@northdakotamonitor.com.

Public input sought on disability priorities for 2027

BISMARCK, N.D. — The North Dakota Protection & Advocacy Project (P&A) is inviting public input on the issues most important to people with disabilities as the agency identifies its 2027 focus areas.

Each year, P&A is required to select focus areas that guide the administration of services, the use of agency resources and case selection criteria.

Input from people with disabilities, family members, advocates, service providers and community partners helps ensure the agency's work reflects the most pressing needs facing North Dakotans with disabilities.

The public comment period will be open May 1-31, 2026. Comments will be accepted through an online survey at www.forms.nd.gov/260474288984877.

To encourage additional discussion, P&A will also host two town halls on May 14 to highlight the agency's current work and provide an opportunity for participants to share concerns, emerging issues and priorities for the coming year. All are welcome to attend, and no registration is required.

Town Hall Schedule:

- Virtual Town Hall: May 14, 2026,

noon-1 p.m. CT

Join via Microsoft Teams: <https://teams.microsoft.com/join/23034875391379?p=o4MC-JpWE63zHxLndKH>

Join by phone: 701-328-2950; ID: 111 155 995#

- In-Person Town Hall: May 14, 2026, 5:30-6:30 p.m. CT

Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library, Room C

515 N. Fifth St., Bismarck, ND 58501

P&A's mission is to champion equality and inclusion for people with disabilities in all aspects of life. Established in 1977, P&A is a federally mandated, independent state agency advancing the human and legal rights of people with disabilities.

Donating trees, benches now easier in ND parks

BISMARCK, N.D. — North Dakota Parks and Recreation is making it easier than ever to leave a lasting legacy within our state parks with the launch of a new, streamlined online donation process for its popular tree program and newly introduced bench program. The updated system allows residents and visitors to conveniently honor loved ones or commemorate special moments while enhancing the beauty and accessibility of North Dakota's state parks.

For many years, supporters have helped shape our state parks through generous tree or shrub donations, creating living tributes that continue to grow and benefit park landscapes. The department extends its sincere appreciation to those who have contributed to this long-standing tradition. Building on that legacy, the new Donate a Bench program offers an additional way for individuals to create meaningful, lasting connections within the parks.

"Our parks are built on the generosity of people who care deeply about these places," said Cody Schulz, North Dakota Parks and Recreation director. "By simplifying the process and bringing it online, we're making it more accessible to honor a loved one, celebrate a milestone, or give back in a way that will be enjoyed for years to come."

Donate a Tree & Shrub Program

The Donate a Tree or Shrub program remains a thoughtful way to honor or remember a loved one while contributing to the long-term health and beauty of our state parks. Donations support the planting of native, resilient species that provide shade, wildlife habitat, and ecological benefits.

Through the new online system, participants can easily select a park with personal significance, choose a preferred species or allow staff to determine the best ecological fit. They can also arrange for recognition through a certificate, park plaque, or inclusion in an online commemorative registry. Tree and shrub donations range from \$325 to \$375.

New Donate a Bench Program

The newly launched Donate a Bench program allows individuals to commemorate a special person or occasion with a custom bench placed in a scenic state park location. Each bench includes installation and an engraved plaque recognizing the donor's contribution.

Following their purchase, donors can work with park staff to select a placement that complements the natural setting while creating a welcoming place for visitors to rest and reflect. Benches are available for \$2,500 for a 10-year placement term.

Additional Ways to Give Back

Monetary gifts can be made in person

at any state park office, through the reservation system or through the online store, with contributions directly supporting park improvements, programming, and conservation efforts.

Volunteers also play a vital role in the success of North Dakota state parks. Opportunities range from trail main-

tenance and campground assistance to supporting events and educational programs. Individuals, families, and groups are encouraged to get involved and share their passion for the outdoors.

For more information or to begin a donation, visit the North Dakota Parks

and Recreation website or call the main office at 701-328-5357.

The mission of the North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department is to enrich generations through experiences that connect people and places.



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Community Announcements

Each week we will highlight an event or happenings at a non-profit that is sponsored by area businesses. This week is **Langdon American Legion Post #98**. This information is brought to you by the sponsors below.

Mother's Day

Breakfast

Celebrate Mom with a delicious homemade breakfast!

Sunday, May 10, 2026
8:00 AM- 1:00PM
American Legion, Langdon

Menu
Pancakes • Scrambled Eggs • Sausage • Coffee • Juice



If your non-profit, group, or civic organization would like to reserve the Community Announcement space, send your information to ads@theborderlandpress.com



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