STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS
STATE OF ILLINOIS

2329 S MacArthur Blvd.
Springfield, Illinois 62704
217/782-4141
Fax: 217/782-5959

James R. Thompson Center
100 W. Randolph Street, Ste 14-100
Chicago Illinois 60601
312/814-6440
Fax: 312/814-6485

BOARD MEMBERS
Charles W. Scholz, Chair
Ian K. Linnabary, Vice Chair
William J. Cadigan
Laura K. Donohue
William R. Haine
William M. McGuffage
Katherine S. O'Brien
Casandra B. Watson

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Steven S. Sandvoss

September 15, 2020

Accessible Vote by Mail Instructions for Election Authorities

The Illinois State Board of Elections (SBE) strongly recommends that election authorities participate in its accessible vote by mail (AVBM) program for voters with disabilities, including but not limited to blind and low vision voters, in the November 2020 General Election. This program allows voters to receive their ballot electronically from the SBE and vote privately and independently at no cost to election authorities. SBE encourages election authorities to consult with their local state's attorney about using this program as a method of providing reasonable accommodation to blind and low vision voters.

How to Begin Participation

To request participation in the SBE's AVBM program, simply contact Jordan Homer at the SBE at 217-785-4003 or jhomer@elections.il.gov. Once you have advised that your election authority is interested, the SBE will confirm your voting system vendor and provide you vendor-specific instructions for ballot style transfer.

Ballot Style Transfer

After confirming your participation, the SBE will need to receive electronic files of your jurisdiction's ballot styles.

- These files can come from you or your vendor, depending on your operations and whichever option is easiest for you.
- If you choose to send your jurisdiction's electronic ballot style files directly, please email them to Jordan Homer at jhomer@elections.il.gov.
- Ballot styles should be received by the SBE on or before **Friday, September 18th**.

Upon receipt, SBE staff will confirm that the files meet the required specifications and forward them to VotingWorks, whose staff will then upload and configure the files to their system. The accessible vote by mail ballots created will contain all of the same information as are on paper ballots.

The SBE has prepared universal instructions which are provided to AVBM voters when they access the system, but if you would like to include jurisdiction-specific information for the voter along with the ballot, please forward that electronically to Jordan Homer at the same time you forward your electronic ballot styles. This information should also be received by **Friday, September 18th**.

Processing Voter Requests

Voters will be making requests for an accessible vote by mail accommodation directly to their election authorities. If a voter contacts the SBE with this request, they will be referred back to their election authority.

- The SBE recommends that you do not place restrictions on the manner in which a voter may make this request (e.g. only in writing) but rather that you are prepared to take these requests in the form in which they are made (e.g. by phone, email, in-person, etc.).

- Regardless of the means by which a voter requests this accommodation, the Accessible Vote By Mail Form must be completed for every voter and sent to SBE.
  - o First, confirm that the voter is registered.
  - o Second, confirm that the voter has submitted a valid application to vote by mail.
    - If the voter has not submitted a valid VBM application, please instruct them to do so.
    - A voter may simultaneously apply to VBM and request this accommodation, though the application to vote by mail should be processed first.
  - o Third, complete the rest of the Accessible Vote By Mail Form, providing the following information about the voter:
    - Full name (Last, First, Middle);
    - Date of Birth;
    - Voter's email address;
      - This is the email address where the voter's ballot access link will be sent. Please confirm the address.
    - SUID;
    - Precinct number;
    - Ballot Style.

- The Accessible Vote By Mail Form should be electronically signed by the person providing the information to the SBE on behalf of the election authority.

- The SBE will **only** receive the Accessible Vote By Mail Form electronically by email sent to votingaccess@elections.il.gov.
  - o Note: The form contains a link at the bottom labeled "Submit". By clicking this form, an email will generate from your default email program. The email will be populated with the recipient address votingaccess@elections.il.gov and automatically attach the completed form.

Sending and Marking Ballots

- Within three (3) business days of receipt of the Accessible Vote By Mail Form, SBE staff will create a voter file in the VotingWorks system. This will generate an email to the voter from noreply@access.vote which includes a unique PIN number.
- After clicking the link (il.access.vote), the voter will be instructed to input their First Name, Last Name, Date of Birth, and Access PIN to sign in.

- o   Aside from the Access PIN, this is the same information which was provided to the SBE on the Accessible Vote By Mail Form.
- After following the link, the voter will access instructions for marking the ballot, printing the ballot, and returning the ballot. Instructions will be compatible with screen readers, and audio instructions will be available as well.
  - o   If your jurisdiction has provided jurisdiction-specific instructions, these will be populated for the voter.

- The voter will be supplied with the following instructions to mark their ballot:

  1. *Getting Started*
     Click the Continue link to begin voting your ballot.
  2. *Review Each Office or Question*
     You will be presented one office or question at a time. Read each one carefully.
  3. *Make Selections*
     You may indicate your choice by clicking on the option or options you prefer. Be sure to only vote for the number of options you are allowed to.
  4. *Navigate the Ballot*
     Use the Next and Previous buttons to move to the next or previous office/public question. After the last item on the ballot, you will have the option to review all of your selections.
  5. *Review the Ballot*
     When ready, you may review each of your selections. Be sure to review carefully. After reviewing, you may complete the online marking and move to the ballot download step.
  6. *Download the Ballot and Return Material*
     At this last step, you will be able to download your marked ballot and all necessary documents required for the proper return of your ballot. Be sure you review everything carefully and follow all return instructions.

- As a voter navigates the ballot, they will be warned of over- and undervotes and the consequences thereof before moving on to the next office/public question.

Returning the Ballots

The election authority should <u>mail</u> return and certification envelopes directly to AVBM voters, which the voter can use to return the ballot.

- If the election authority has mailed a VBM ballot and packet to an AVBM voter before the request has been made, treat the paper VBM ballot as a spoiled ballot.
- The SBE recommends maintaining a master list of AVBM voters in conjunction with the VBM lists per your jurisdiction's protocols.
- AVBM Ballots may be returned in the same manner as VBM ballots. (Please refer to Vote by Mail Ballot Processing Guidelines published by the SBE on August 5, 2020, and published to the SBE's website.)
- The SBE recommends exercising consideration and discretion in evaluating the locations of the signatures on returned AVBM ballots, while staying within the requirements of Articles 2B and 19 of the Election Code.

Tabulating AVBM Ballots

Once received by your office, completed AVBM ballots should be remade by two judges, one from each political party, in the following manner (10 ILCS 5/24B-10.1):

- Use an official ballot sheet of the same ballot style.
- Mark the duplicate ballot with a specialized pen.
- One judge reads the candidates/referenda choices to be marked on the duplicate sheet while the other judge marks the ballot sheet according to the instructions that are described on the polling place Instruction Card.
- Check the duplicate ballot sheet by exchanging duties, i.e., the judge who marked the ballot sheet reads the names of the candidates/referenda choices marked.
- Consecutively number each pair of duplicate ballot sheets. The first damaged ballot sheet is marked "Damaged Ballot No. 1" and the corresponding duplicate sheet is marked "Duplicated Damaged Ballot No. 1" The next pair is marked "Damaged Ballot No. 2," and the corresponding duplicate sheet is marked "Duplicated Damaged Ballot No. 2." Continue the process until all duplicated ballot sheets have been marked. Likewise, the first pair of overvoted ballot sheets are marked "Overvoted Ballot No. 1," and "Duplicated Overvoted Ballot No. 1." Continue the process until all duplicated overvoted ballots are marked and numbered consecutively. Use a pen with red ink to identify the ballot sheets.
- Make sure to initial both the original ballot sheet and the duplicated ballot sheet.
- Place the original ballot sheet(s) in the envelope for duplicated ballots and place the duplicated ballot sheet in the ballot return box with the other valid ballot sheets. Contact election authority on re-tabulation.

Frequently asked questions about the AVBM program were included in SBE's Accessible Vote by Mail Available in Illinois publication dated September 9, 2020. Please refer to that publication for more information or contact the State Board of Elections.

Jordan Homer
SBE ADA Coordinator
217-785-4003
jhomer@elections.il.gov