

U.S. SENATOR BEN CARDIN



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Fellow Marylander:

Have you voted yet?

For most of my life, since I was eligible to vote, every election I took pride in the ritual of arriving early at my local polling place, standing in line with my neighbors, talking about the issues of greatest concern to us as a community, and casting my ballot.

This year, faced with a global pandemic that forces all of us to take extra precautions to keep our family and community safe, Myrna and I voted absentee. We filled out our ballots in the safety and quiet of our home and then located a nearby, official drop box and delivered our ballot. The process was simple, unrushed and secure.



Why did we do things differently this year? I know there are some people in our community who have difficulties with absentee voting, have concerns about security, or simply like the ritual of voting in person. I fully understand. This year is different, though.

We are in the middle of a pandemic – a global health crisis that is still dangerous to our community. The more of us who can utilize absentee ballots, the less people who need to vote during the early voting period October 26 through November 2, or on Election Day, November 3. The less people who need to be at the polling locations on a single day, the more ability officials have to maintain physical distancing and the safer it is for voters and poll workers.

If you choose to vote by mail or absentee this year, you are in good company. As many as [half of all Marylanders plan to vote by mail](#) this year.

Let's start from the beginning. Are you one of the more than 4 million Marylanders registered to vote? Or did you move here recently? Maybe you just turned 18 and are newly eligible. In Maryland, the deadline to [register to vote or update your voter registration](#) information is October 13. Although you also may register to vote in person on Election Day.

Last month, the Maryland Board of Elections (BOE) mailed out paper applications for absentee ballots to eligible Maryland voters. Requests for absentee ballots are also available [online at the Board of Elections website](#). According to the BOE, you must request a mail-in ballot from the State Board of Elections or [your local board](#) before October 20.

Once you receive your ballot, first, confirm it is correct for your district. Next, fill it out and send it back quickly. Your mail-in or absentee ballot must be postmarked or placed in a designated drop box by 8pm on Election Day, November 3.

If you are sending your ballot back via the U.S. Postal Service, [please mail it with plenty of time to get to your local board of elections](#). Each county also has official drop boxes that provide a safe way to deliver your ballot directly.

You can track your application for an absentee ballot, find out if your ballot has been mailed and even see when it has been received, using [this link at the Board of Elections website](#).

If you are going to vote in person this year, be prepared. Things will look a little different.

During the early vote period of October 26 through November 2, there will

be close to [90 voting centers available](#). You must go to a location in the county you live, but you do not have to go to an assigned location or precinct.

On Election Day, November 3, there will be more than [300 vote centers around the state](#). Again, you must go to one in the county in which you live, but you can go to any location in your county.

While it is more centralized, due to COVID-19 there are fewer locations to physically vote during early voting and on Election Day. This is yet another reason why I strongly suggest you consider absentee voting. Can't decide? Fill out an absentee ballot and drop it off at a voting center during early voting or Election Day.

Whatever way you plan to vote, make a plan and carry it out. Make sure you, your family and friends and coworkers also are registered to vote and that they have a plan. Understand how you will vote, when you will vote and be mindful of the deadlines.

Also different from previous years, I am asked more frequently "will my vote count?" There is so much misinformation being spread around the internet, even more than previous years. Some may be good intentioned, other information is malicious and meant to distract and sway voters with faulty information.

Voters in Maryland can be on the lookout for such bad activity and report these deceptive practices to law enforcement. Maryland Attorney General Brian Frosh has asked voters to report any issues regarding polling locations, voter fraud, voter intimidation, as well as online activity to the State Board of Elections at 1-800-222-8683 or email them at info.sbe@maryland.gov.

Maryland voters also should know that the national, nonpartisan [Election Protection coalition](#) works year-round to ensure that all voters have an equal opportunity to vote and have that vote count. Made up of more than 100 local, state and national partners, Election Protection uses a wide range of tools and activities to protect, advance and defend the right to vote.

Voting is one of the fundamental rights afforded to citizens in our system of government. It's the most definitive way we have for voters to express their preference for who will lead our country, our state and our local communities. It really does make a difference in the lives of every person in this country.

Thank you for being an active participant in our community. Thank you for

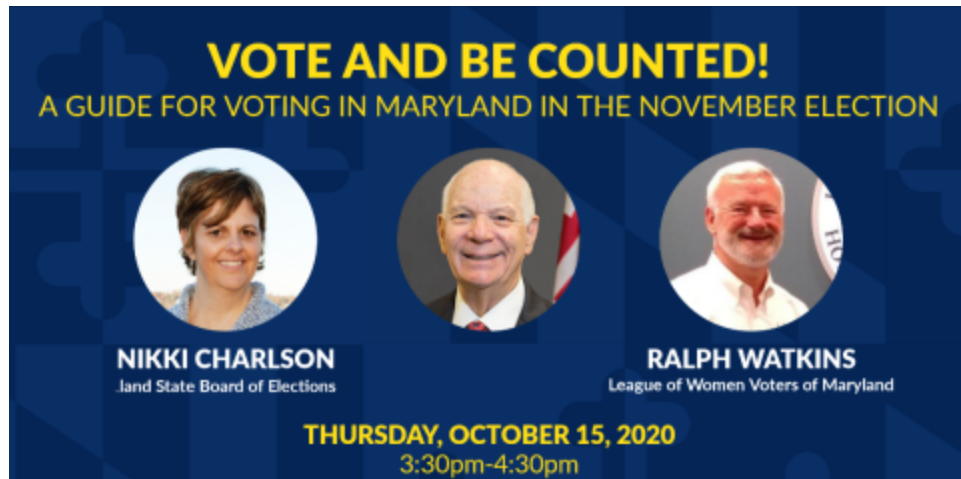
voting.

Sincerely,

Ben

Ben Cardin

P.S. If you would like to learn more about how to vote in Maryland, tune in Thursday at 3:30pm (ET) for my Facebook Live conversation with the Maryland Board of Elections and League of Women Voters of Maryland. We'll talk specifics and how to make sure your vote is counted. Also available on YouTube.



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AND GUESTS FOR A VIRTUAL CONVERSATION

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