



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

September 18, 2024

**Contact:**

Misty Curn, Media Contact

701-328-5409 | micurn@nd.gov

## **The Privilege of Voting**

### **Editorial by North Dakota Secretary of State Michael Howe**

We hear it every two years -- *"This is the most important election of our lifetime!"*

In a sense, it is true. Not because of who the candidates may be or the issues facing voters, but because the most important election of our lifetime is always the "next election." Voting is a privilege that every United States citizen has and a responsibility every eligible voter should take seriously. You are responsible for choosing your leaders, your policies, and your future, no matter if it is a Presidential election or your local school bond election.

The North Dakota Office of the Secretary of State has the awesome responsibility of overseeing our state's election process in concert with 53 counties conducting the election. County auditors are responsible for finding election workers and securing polling locations, and these local election officials are the boots on the ground in your communities during the voting process. Every county conducts its elections within the confines of North Dakota law and under a uniform election system. Uniformity ensures that every county is using the same election equipment and following the same security processes. These processes include security measures, such as:

- Ballot handling equipment never being connected to the internet and having no component for such a connection,
- Requiring all eligible voters have a valid form of North Dakota identification before they can vote,
- Exclusively using paper ballots;
- Ensuring no one is ever mailed a ballot unless 1) they first request one through an absentee ballot application process and 2) their identification is proven, and
- Never using private money in the administration of a North Dakota election – it is illegal under state law.

It is important to note that North Dakota's election laws are different than the other states. In fact, there are 50 different states with 50 different sets of election laws. What you may see or hear in another state may not, and probably is not applicable to a North Dakota election. North Dakota is the only state without voter registration, and our robust voter ID law ensures that only North Dakota residents who are 18 years old or older and are United States citizens are participating in our elections. North Dakota's Central Voter File also ensures that one person = one vote, meaning every voter that is checked in at a polling location or returns an absentee ballot is marked as voted which is immediately shared with counties and polling locations across the State, prohibiting that voter from voting again in that election.

North Dakota has been proactive in enacting common-sense election integrity safeguards long before “election integrity” was cool. My predecessor, Secretary of State Al Jaeger, implemented the use of uniform election equipment across all 53 counties. The North Dakota Legislature has passed election laws to ensure the security and accuracy of our elections, and through those protections and provisions, voting in North Dakota remains accessible and secure.

Without North Dakotans running North Dakota elections, the ability to participate in democracy would not be possible. These 3,000+ election workers are made up of your family, friends, and neighbors, all in an effort to assist in providing you the opportunity to exercise your right to vote and have your voice heard. Please thank your local election workers for their efforts.

Start making your plan now for how you will cast your ballot:

- Absentee voting begins in North Dakota on September 26.
- In-person early voting can begin two weeks prior to Election Day if your county chooses to offer this option. and,
- November 5<sup>th</sup> is Election Day.

Visit [vote.nd.gov](http://vote.nd.gov) to request an absentee ballot application, explore your polling location options, check if your county offers early voting, and access a sample ballot.

Make a plan to vote! And remember, this is the most important election of your lifetime.

Michael Howe  
North Dakota Secretary of State