

**FULTON COUNTY
BOARD OF REGISTRATION AND ELECTIONS
POLICY REGARDING
ABSENTEE BALLOT DROP-OFF**

1. **Purpose.** The Fulton County Board of Registration and Elections (the "Board") is committed to establishing standards for the return of absentee by mail ("ABM") ballots. Recognizing that electors may not want, or may not have insufficient time, to return their ABM ballot via U.S. Mail or other authorized delivery service, this policy is designed to set a process and provide direction to election staff for the acceptance of ABM ballots at polling locations, certain locations with a deputy registrar, and drop boxes as authorized under Georgia laws and regulations.
2. **Advanced Voting Locations.** Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 21-2-382(a) and State Election Board ("SEB") Rule 183-1-14-.08, all advanced voting locations that are located in a government building, or also serve as an election day polling place, and which do not have a drop box or located in a building with a permanent registrar's office, are hereby established as additional registrar's offices for the purpose of receiving ABM ballots.
3. **Locations with a Drop Box.** Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 21-2-382(c) and following the requirements set therein, drop boxes are provided for the return of ABM ballots. For advanced voting locations that contain a drop box, the elector must utilize the drop box to return an ABM ballot.
4. **Main Registrar's Office, Government Center and Service Centers.** ABM ballots may be returned in person to a deputy registrar at the Fulton County Elections Hub and Operation Center ("Hub"), the Fulton County Government Center ("Government Center"), and the North Fulton Service Center or the South Fulton Service Center (together, "Service Centers"), as authorized in O.C.G.A. § 21-2-385(a). Election staff are authorized to set and advertise hours for the receipt of ABM ballots, which are outside the normal business hours of the Hub, Government Center and Service Centers, including the period following the close of the advanced voting period and prior to the closing of the polls on election day.
5. **Deputy Registrars Authorized to Accept ABM ballots.** Pursuant to O.C.G.A. §§ 21-2-382(a) and 385(a), electors may hand-deliver ABM ballots to the Board. As authorized by O.C.G.A. § 21-2-213, the Board delegates the authority to receive hand-delivered ABM ballots to deputy registrars and further appoints the poll managers and assistant managers of advanced voting locations as deputy registrars. Each such deputy registrar must meet the requirements and take an oath as specified in O.C.G.A. § 21-2-214.
6. **Procedure for Receipt and Transfer of ABM ballots.** Staff shall follow the standard operating procedures for receiving hand-delivered ABM ballots as approved and adopted by the Board. Any deputy registrar receiving a hand-delivered ABM ballot shall write the day and hour of receipt on a label to be affixed to the envelope, as specified per O.C.G.A. § 21-2-386(a)(1)(B). Following the delivery of the ABM ballots to the Hub, authorized staff shall complete the additional procedures as set in that same code section, to include verifying the date of birth, identification, and signing of the oath.

A condensed summary of the standard operating procedure for the receipt of ABM ballots and

transferring such ballots to the Hub is as follows:

- a. For locations with a drop box, ABM ballot drop-off must only occur during the hours of advanced voting. Voters may deposit ballots directly into the drop box and are not required to engage with poll workers. Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 21-2-382(c)(3), all ABM ballots deposited in the drop box shall be collected by a team consisting of at least two (2) people at the conclusion of each day of advanced voting. Upon removal of the ballots from the sealed container, the ballots will be placed into a sealed bag for transport, and the collection team shall complete and sign a ballot transfer form containing all information required in that code section. The collection team shall immediately transfer the ABM ballots to the Hub, where they are stored in a locked cage overnight. The following morning, authorized staff shall verify the seal number on the transport bag, break the seal, retrieve and count the ballots, sign the chain of custody form, log the ballots, apply a date and timestamp documenting receipt at the Hub, and store them in a locked cabinet until early processing commences.
- b. For advanced voting locations without a drop box, voters wanting to hand deliver an ABM ballot should provide directly to a deputy registrar at that location. In addition to the deputy registrar affixing a label with a time and date stamp to the outer envelope, the individual submitting the ballot shall fill-in and complete the remaining information requested on that label, to include the person's name, relationship to voter, signature, and contact information. The person submitting the ABM ballot shall then place it in a secured ABM ballot container designated for that purpose. When not in use, the container shall be securely stored within the enclosed polling area in a manner that is visible to poll watchers or other authorized individuals. The number of ABM ballots collected are to be recorded on a chain of custody form at the conclusion of each day of advanced voting, any additional day in which the Government Center or Service Centers are open for the receipt of ABM ballots, and following the close of polls on election day. The number of ballots collected each day shall be recorded on the chain of custody form by the deputy registrar. At least two (2) persons shall transfer the ABM ballots to the Hub, via a sealed bag for transport, along with the chain of custody form. Upon arrival at the Hub, the ballots will be stored in a locked cage overnight. The following morning, authorized staff shall verify the seal number on the transport bag, break the seal, retrieve and count the ballots, sign the chain of custody form, log the ballots, apply a date and timestamp documenting receipt at the Hub, and store them in a locked cabinet until early processing commences.
- c. For the Government Center and Service Centers, voters wanting to hand deliver an ABM ballot should provide directly to a deputy registrar within the Registrar's Office at that location. In addition to the deputy registrar affixing a label with a time and date stamp to the outer envelope, the individual submitting the ballot shall fill-in and complete the remaining information requested on that label, to include the person's name, relationship to voter, signature, and contact information. The person submitting the ABM ballot shall then place it in a secured ABM ballot container designated for that purpose. When not in use, the container shall be securely stored. The number of ABM ballots collected are to be recorded on a chain of custody form at the conclusion of each day in which the Government Center or Service Centers are open for the receipt of ABM ballots. At least two (2) persons shall transfer the

ABM ballots to the Hub, via a sealed bag for transport, along with the chain of custody form. Upon arrival at the Hub, the ballots will be stored in a locked cage overnight. The following morning, staff shall verify the seal number on the transport bag, break the seal, retrieve and count the ballots, sign the chain of custody form, log the ballots, apply a date and timestamp documenting receipt at the Hub, and store them in a locked cabinet until early processing commences.

- d. For the Hub, voters wanting to hand deliver an ABM ballot should provide directly to a deputy registrar within the Registrar's Office. In addition to the deputy registrar affixing a label with a time and date stamp to the outer envelope, the individual submitting the ballot shall fill-in and complete the remaining information requested on that label, to include the person's name, relationship to voter, signature, and contact information. The number of ABM ballots collected should be recorded. All ABM ballots hand delivered to the Hub shall be processed and stored in the same manner as ABM ballots returned by mail to the Hub are processed and stored.
7. **Procedure for Processing ABM ballots at the Hub.** Authorized staff at the Hub are responsible for retrieving from the locked cage all ABM ballots received by mail or hand-delivery and processing those ballots. Staff shall process ABM ballots in the manner specified in O.C.G.A. § 21-2-386 to include verifying the date of birth, identification, and signing of the oath. All accepted ABM ballots shall be securely stored and returned to a locked cage until such time designated to proceed with the opening and scanning of ABM ballots. To the extent it is logistically feasible, the locked cage containing ABM ballots should be placed in an area that is visible to the public during the normal operating hours of the Hub and during hours in which the public is permitted to be in the Hub to observe the election process. However, with the exception of authorized poll watchers or election monitors, no member of the public is permitted beyond the designated public viewing area.