

LIFE AFTER PRISON: KNOW YOUR VOTING RIGHTS

A step-by-step guide to
voting while justice-impacted
in Massachusetts.



If you are
incarcerated or
incarcerated or
have a record,
lose your right
to vote.

FALSE



**In Massachusetts,
incarceration does
not automatically
strip your right to
vote. Many people
currently in the legal
system maintain full
voting rights.**

The 3 Foundational Pillars of Eligibility



U.S. Citizen



**Massachusetts
Resident**



**Age
Requirement**

At least 16 years old to
register; 18 years old to
vote by Election Day.

The Eligibility Diagnostic Matrix

Custodial Status	Can I Vote?	Key Condition
Pre-Trial Detainee	 Eligible	Retains full voting rights regardless of pending charges severity.
Serving Misdemeanor	 Eligible	Misdemeanor convictions do not disqualify you.
Civilly Committed	 Eligible	No restriction (if no concurrent felony sentence).
Completed Felony / Probation / Parole	 Eligible	Rights restored immediately.
Incarcerated on Felony	 Disqualified	See next slide for the specific boundaries of this restriction.

Defining the Felony Exception

Under the 2001 Constitutional Amendment, the scope of disqualification is strictly limited.



Key Insight: You are only disqualified if you are **actively serving** a sentence for a felony conviction on Election Day.

Immediate Restoration of Rights

Finished serving a felony sentence? Your voting rights are restored immediately upon release.



This immediate restoration applies even if you are:



On probation.



On parole.



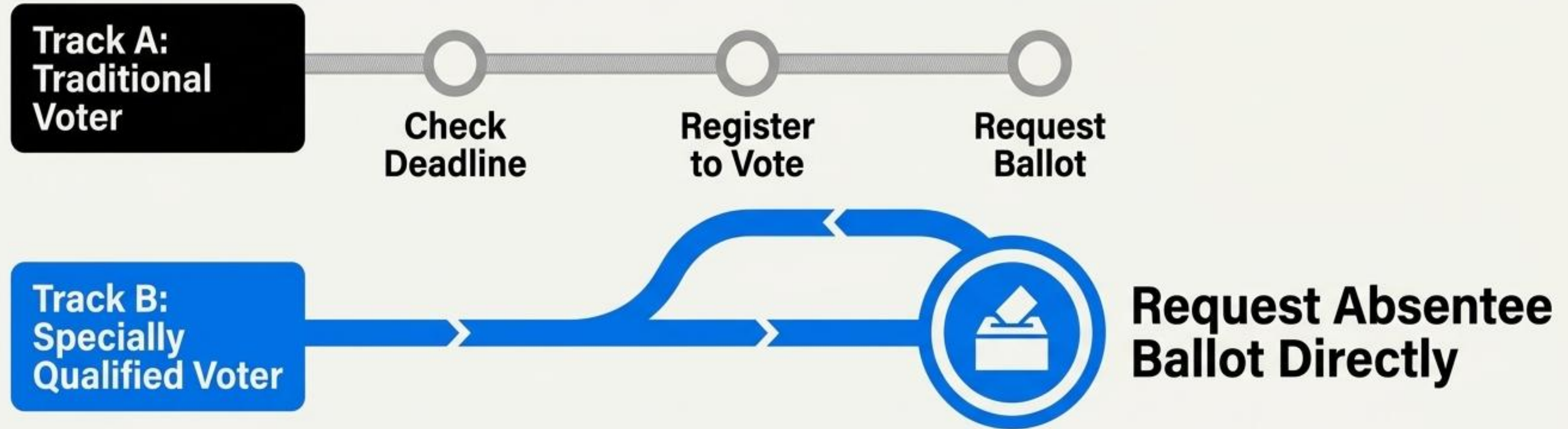
Incarcerated awaiting trial on a separate charge.



Serving a separate misdemeanor.

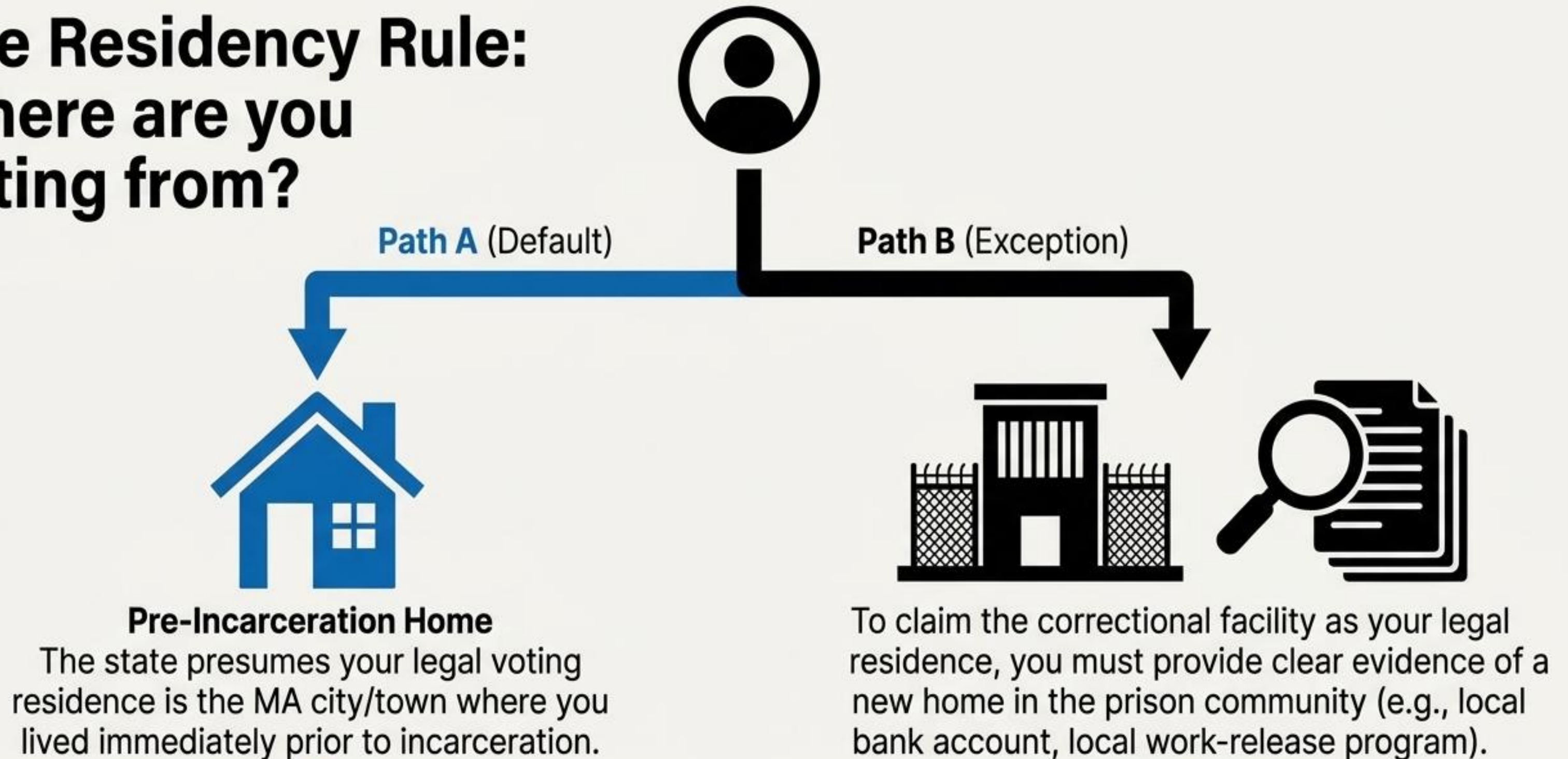
The Specially Qualified Voter Advantage

Eligible incarcerated voters do not face traditional registration barriers. You are classified as a Specially Qualified Voter.



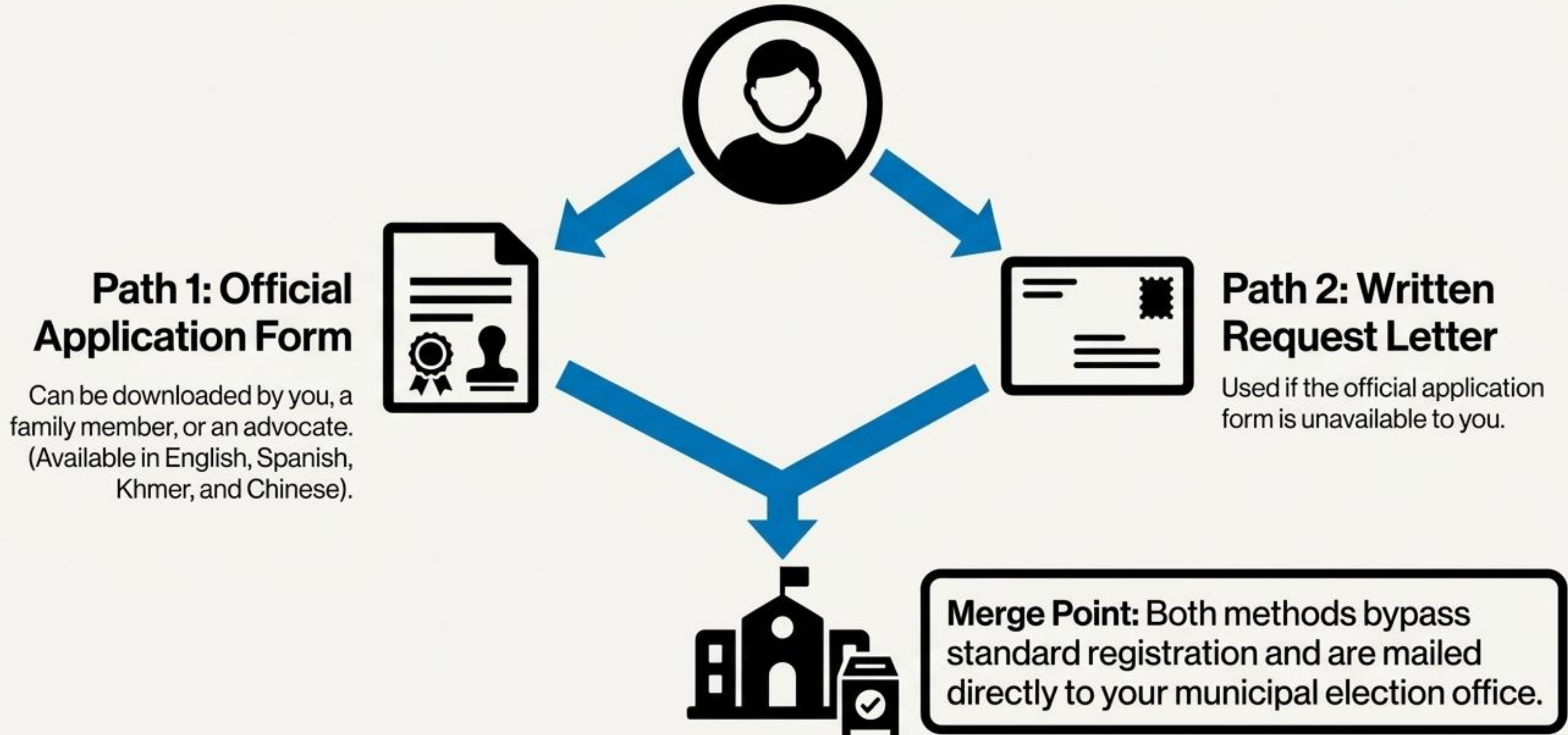
The Advantage: You do not need to complete a separate voter registration process prior to voting. You can request and cast an absentee ballot directly.

The Residency Rule: Where are you voting from?



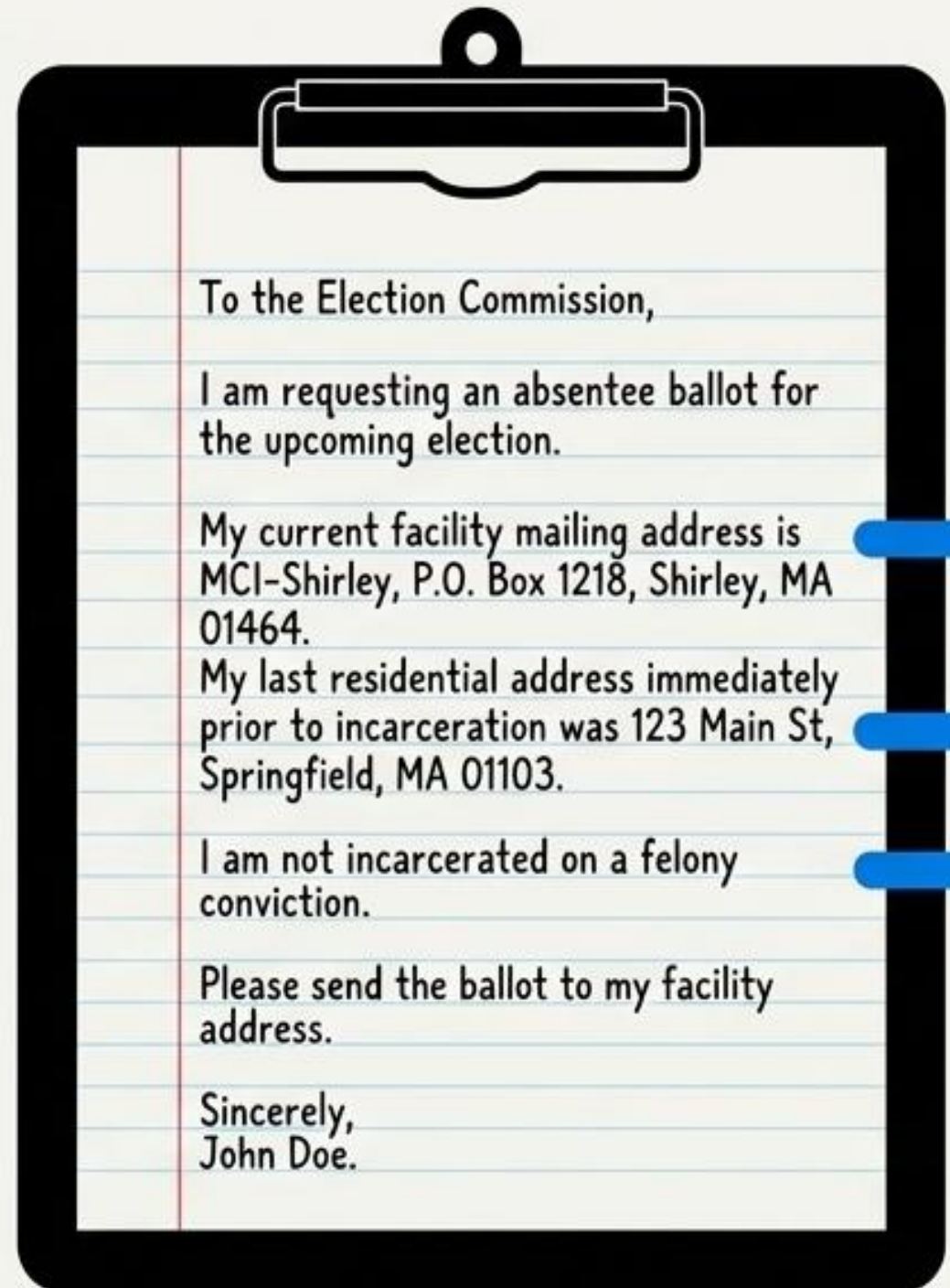
Out-of-State Caveat: Lived outside MA right before incarceration? You must contact the election clerk in your prior state.

Two Paths to Request Your Ballot



Anatomy of a Written Request Letter

If you cannot get the official form, your handwritten letter must include these 3 elements:



To the Election Commission,

I am requesting an absentee ballot for the upcoming election.

My current facility mailing address is MCI-Shirley, P.O. Box 1218, Shirley, MA 01464.

My last residential address immediately prior to incarceration was 123 Main St, Springfield, MA 01103.

I am not incarcerated on a felony conviction.

Please send the ballot to my facility address.

Sincerely,
John Doe.

1. Current place of incarceration and exact facility mailing address (so they can mail you the ballot).

2. Last residential address lived at immediately prior to incarceration (to establish your voting district).

3. An explicit written declaration: I am not incarcerated on a felony conviction. (Must be stated exactly).

Routing Your Request Correctly



Use the Secretary of the Commonwealth's Find My Election Office tool to verify the address.

Official Statutory Deadlines

Stop 1: Request Deadline



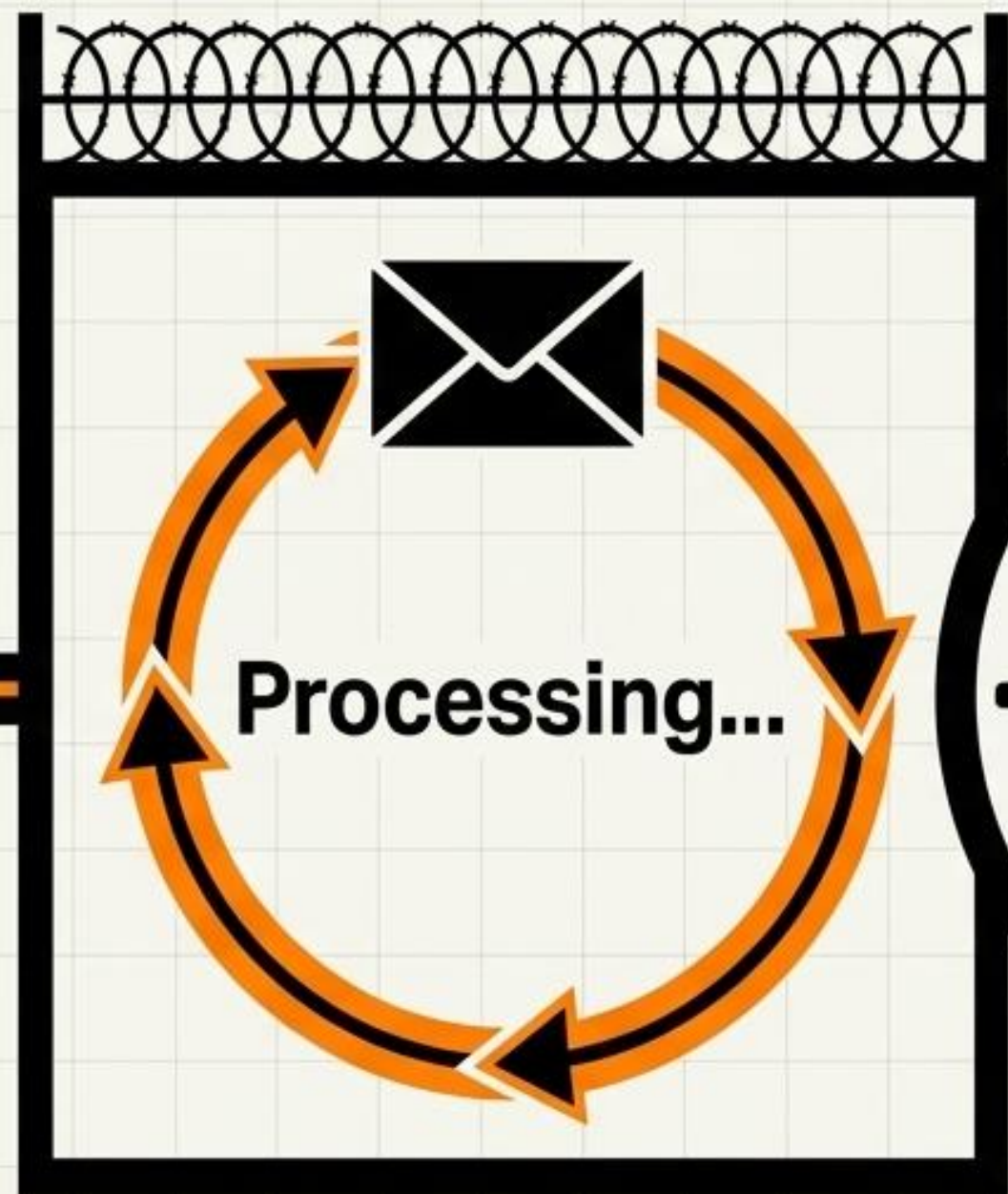
Stop 2: Return Deadline



Applications/letters must be received by the municipal election office by 12:00 PM (noon) on the day before Election Day.

Completed absentee ballots must arrive at the election office before polls close on Election Day (the Tuesday following the first Monday in November).

The Prison Mail Reality Check



Warning

State laws do not account for prison mail delays.

The Reality

If you wait until the official deadline (noon the day before) to request a ballot, it will not arrive in time to be mailed, completed, and returned.

The Action

Request and mail your absentee ballot as early as physically possible. Ballots arriving after polls close are void and will not be counted.

Synthesis: Your 4-Step Voting Plan



Essential Links & Digital Resources



Download Absentee Ballot Applications

sec.state.ma.us/divisions/elections/languages/absentee-ballot-applications.htm



Online Voter Registration Form

sec.state.ma.us/OVR/



Check Your Registration Status

sec.state.ma.us/VoterRegistrationSearch/MyVoterRegStatus.aspx



Find Your Voting Area & Election Office

sec.state.ma.us/WhereDoIVoteMA/WhereDoIVote