



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 17, 2018

Contact: For local media inquiries, please contact your [local elections office](#).

### Elections Administrators: Additional Primary Ballot Creating Questions

One week ago, hundreds of thousands of ballots were mailed to Montana voters for the June 5<sup>th</sup> primary, and since then, elections administrators across the state have been responding to questions and concerns from voters.

Ruth Baker, president of the Montana Association of Clerks and Recorders, said some voters are confused by the primary ballot procedures this year.

“This is an unusual year,” Baker said, noting that the 2018 primary includes ballots for three parties. “While voters often reach out to us about handling primary ballots, the addition of the third party ballot has created a few more questions.”

In mid-March, the Montana Secretary of State’s Office certified the Green Party for inclusion in the primary for the June 5<sup>th</sup> election. Primary voters, then, receive three ballots – Democrat, Republican and Green – in each ballot packet. Voters will receive all three ballots whether they vote via the mail or at the polls on June 5<sup>th</sup>.

Montana has had an “open” primary system for more than 100 years. Voters do not declare a party affiliation when they register, but they must choose one party’s ballot to complete for the primary. For a primary like the one in June, they receive one version of the ballot for each qualified party, and the choice of which ballot to vote – and which ones not to vote – is entirely the voter’s.

The Clerks and Recorders Association offered some pointers for vote-by-mail voters.

- A voter will receive three ballots, but can only choose one to vote. Each voter should select the two ballots he or she opts not to vote and put them in the “unvoted party ballots” envelope.
- The voter may then complete the party ballot of choice and place it in the “secrecy” envelope.
- The voter must sign and date the return affirmation envelope prior to sealing and returning their ballot.
- If the voter does not return the unvoted ballots in their vote-by-mail packet, it will NOT invalidate their vote.
- The critical pieces that election administrators need returned are the voted ballot in the secrecy envelope, secrecy envelope in the return affirmation envelope, and the affirmation envelope signed by the voter.
- A vote-by-mail ballot will be rejected if the return, affirmation envelope is missing a signature or the signature does not match what the election administrator has on file. Signature issues for vote-by-mail ballots can be resolved by contacting your [local elections office](#).

The Association of Clerks and Recorders said voters should contact their local elections [administrator](#) with questions or concerns, or to register to vote or request a ballot in the mail.

The association recently created a website with basic elections resources – deadlines, forms, links, etc. – for voters. [VotinginMontana.com](http://VotinginMontana.com) offers non-partisan information about registration, polling place locations, absentee status, sample ballots, etc.

The deadline to return vote-by-mail ballots to local election offices is Tuesday, June 5 by 8:00 p.m. Postmark does not apply. Voters should allow for several days to mail their ballot or they can return their ballot in-person to their local elections office before or on Election Day.

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