



Oregon Secretary of State

Elections Division

255 Capitol St. NE, Suite 501, Salem, OR 97310

503-986-1518

<http://sos.oregon.gov/voting-elections>

Oregon Vote-by-Mail

On Nov. 7, 2000, Oregon became the nation's 1st all vote-by-mail state. Here's how history was made.

1980s

- 1981 Oregon Legislature approves a test of vote-by-mail (VBM) for local elections.
- 1987 VBM made permanent; majority of counties use it for local/special elections.

1990s

- June 1993 First special statewide election by mail; 39% voter turnout.
- May 1995 Second special statewide election by mail; 44% turnout.
- Spring/summer 1995 Legislature OKs proposal to expand VBM to primary and general elections. Governor vetoes the bill.
- December 1995 Oregon becomes 1st state to conduct primary election totally by mail to nominate candidates to fill a vacancy in a federal office; 58% turnout.
- January 1996 Oregon becomes 1st state to conduct general election totally by mail to fill a vacancy in a federal office, when it selects Sen. Ron Wyden to replace Sen. Bob Packwood; 66% turnout.
- March 1996 Oregon holds country's 2nd VBM presidential primary; 58% turnout. (First VBM presidential primary held by North Dakota, just weeks prior to Oregon.)
- May 1997 Sixth special statewide election by mail; 42% turnout.
- Spring/summer 1997 Oregon House of Representatives approves proposal to expand VBM to primary and general elections. The bill dies in a Senate committee. The Governor would've signed the bill into law.
- November 1997 Seventh special statewide election by mail; 60% turnout.
- May 1998 Primary election at the polls. 41% of registered voters in Oregon are permanent absentee voters. Overall, the state posts a record-low turnout of 35%. Absentee ballots represent nearly $\frac{2}{3}$ of all ballots cast. Oregon becomes 1st state to have more ballots cast by mail than at the polls during a polling place election. Absentee voter turnout was 53%, compared to 22% at the polls.
- June 1998 Supporters of expanding VBM to primary and general elections use the initiative process to put the issue on the November general election ballot. No paid signature gatherers are used to put measure on the ballot – a first since 1994.
- Nov. 3, 1998 Voters decide to expand VBM to primary and general elections, by a vote of 757,204 to 334,021.
- Nov. 2, 1999 Eighth special statewide election by mail; 38% turnout.

2000s

- May 2000 Presidential primary election VBM; 51% turnout.
- November 2000 First VBM presidential general election; 79% turnout. [First vote-by-mail guide.](#)
- May 2002 Primary election VBM; 46% turnout.

- September 2002 Special election for 2 statewide measures VBM; 44% turnout.
- November 2002 General election VBM; 69% turnout.
- January 2003 Special election for a statewide measure VBM; 66% turnout.
- September 2003 Special election for a statewide measure VBM; 35% turnout.
- February 2004 Special election for a statewide measure VBM; 63% turnout.
- May 2004 Presidential primary election VBM; 46% turnout.
- November 2004 Presidential general election VBM. Voter registration exceeds 2 million, with 86% turnout.
- May 2006 Primary election VBM; 38% turnout.
- November 2006 General election VBM; 70% turnout.