Voting Matters

Our world has changed drastically since our last election. The loss of lives from COVID-19, and concern for the health of our family and friends is foremost on our minds. Yet our democracy calls on us, and voting, the foundation of our democracy, will prevail in these difficult times.

In California, the November 3 election will be conducted by mailing a ballot to all active registered voters in the State of California. This decision is a result of local election officials, voting rights groups, the Secretary of State, Governor and Legislature working hard to come to this necessary approach.

In Santa Cruz County, 120,000 of our 166,000 voters already signed up to have a ballot mailed to them but it is essential that in-person voting opportunities be available. In November, instead of our traditional polling places, we will have 17 voting locations where voters can obtain a ballot, turn in a ballot, register and vote on the same day, or vote an accessible or Spanish ballot on the tablet. Any voter can go to any location.

Consolidating voting locations improves our ability to protect health and safety, including implementing physical distancing and wearing masks, disinfecting surfaces and voting equipment, providing hand sanitizer and more, including screening poll workers for symptoms. Voters will be asked to follow these guidelines to protect themselves and to protect others.

During COVID-19, voting at home is the safest way to make your voice heard. We hope voters will vote using the ballot we mail you. As always, mailed ballots require you to sign the envelope in your own handwriting! Please do not forget this and do not let someone else sign it for you.

Given uncertain postal service delivery times, we strongly recommend using one of the 15 ballot drop boxes that will be located throughout the county. Boxes will be available 24/7 starting October 6, and easily accessible for drop-off without leaving your car. You will receive a list of drop boxes (and other ballot return locations) with your mailed ballot. You can also find this and other information at [www.votescount.us](http://www.votescount.us).

You can still mail your ballot using the pre-paid envelope but be sure to do so at least a week before the election. If you must mail your ballot closer to the election, ask a postal clerk to stamp it with the postmark.

Casting your vote using the ballot mailed to you is safe and secure. All signatures are verified, and if the signature does not compare to the one on your voter registration, we will contact you to obtain an updated signature and confirm the ballot is yours.

There are laws prohibiting someone telling you how to vote, including when you are voting at home. Remember, your vote is your secret! However, if you need someone to return the ballot for you, enlist the help of someone in your household or a person you trust, and have them write their name in the space provided on the envelope.

These are uncertain times. The best way through this crisis is together. I want to hear your thoughts, your questions, your ideas about voting in Santa Cruz County. That is why I have scheduled a “Voting Matters” Zoom session at 6pm, Thursday, August 6. In today’s complicated world, your vote matters more than ever. Your questions matter. Your access to a safe, secure and transparent election matters. Please go to [www.votescount.us](http://www.votescount.us) for information about joining me for “Voting Matters.”