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Your voting questions answered

... continued from Page A7

Here are some dates to be aware of: Election day is Tuesday, Nov. 3 and this year, on Oct. 5 all registered voters will automatically be mailed a voteby-mail ballot for the general election. The deadline to register online to vote is Monday, Oct. 19. Registering by mail must be postmarked by that date as well, but if you miss that deadline, the deadline to register in person is election day. Eligible citizens can go to their county election office, polling place, or vote center to register and vote conditionally. These ballots will be processed as soon as the county elections office has completed the voter registration verification process.

Early voting – which means returning your ballot to elections early, via mail, secure drop box or bringing it to Elections in Martinez – will start on Oct. 5, and run through the Monday before election day. In addition, there will be some 18 polling places throughout Contra Costa County that will be open for in-person voting, with early voting offered in Lamorinda at the Veteran's Memorial Building in Lafayette, and the Moraga Library. Both will be open from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Friday, Oct. 30 and Monday, Nov. 2, and from 9 a.m. to 5

p.m. Saturday, Oct. 31. There are other early polling places nearby, such as in Pleasant Hill and Walnut Creek. All polling places will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Nov. 3.

The actual deadline for ballots being received is 17 days after election day, and those ballots, provided they have been postmarked on election day or earlier will be counted by Nov. 20. What if your ballot is received within the 17-day period after election day, but you actually voted at the polls? If you mail in a vote-by-mail ballot, that is the one that will be counted, according to Konopasek. You cannot change your mind and vote differently on election day, unless, of course, you bring in your mailin-ballot to the polling site and surrender it. In that case, you can vote a regular ballot on election day. This year, poll workers will be able to access the county's central data base to see if a voter's mail-in-ballot has been received by Elections. If not, the voter can vote a regular ballot.

Voters can use the ballottrax website (https://california.ballottrax.net/voter/) to see when your ballot is mailed out to you, when it is received back by Elections, and when it is counted. You will also be able to see if your ballot is rejected. If your ballot is received by mail after election day but before the 17-day cut-off, there will still be time to correct the problem and your vote will be counted.

If you arrive at your polling place, and they say that you have already voted, you can vote a provisional ballot. If someone else returned your ballot, the signature on the envelope would have to match your registration signature.

The last possible day for a voter who failed to sign the vote-by-mail ballot envelope to correct the mistake is Dec. 1. If you forgot to sign the envelope, you can either sign the identification envelope at the office of the county elections official or complete and submit an "unsigned ballot statement" in person to the county elections official, or by mail, email or fax. The election must be certified by the county elections official to the county board of supervisors no later than Dec. 3.

It is a crime to vote twice in an election within most states. Konopasek urges everyone to vote, but only once.

More information on where and how to vote: https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/where-and-how For a computer generated personalized sample ballot, visit: https://ballotpedia.org/Sample_Ballot_Lookup

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