

**§ 163-229. Absentee ballots, applications on container-return envelopes, and instruction sheets.**

(a) Absentee Ballot Form. – In accordance with the provisions of G.S. 163-230.1, persons entitled to vote by absentee ballot shall be furnished with official ballots.

(b) Application on Container-Return Envelope. – In time for use not later than 60 days before a statewide general election in an even-numbered year, and not later than 50 days before a statewide primary, other general election or county bond election, the county board of elections shall print a sufficient number of envelopes in which persons casting absentee ballots may transmit their marked ballots to the county board of elections. However, in the case of municipal elections, sufficient container-return envelopes shall be made available no later than 30 days before an election. Each container-return envelope shall have printed on it an application which shall be designed and prescribed by the State Board, providing for all of the following:

- (1) The voter's certification of eligibility to vote the enclosed ballot and of having voted the enclosed ballot in accordance with this Part.
- (2) A space for identification of the envelope with the voter and the voter's signature.
- (3) A space for the identification of the two persons witnessing the casting of the absentee ballot in accordance with G.S. 163-231, those persons' signatures, and those persons' addresses.
- (4) A space for the name and address of any person who, as permitted under G.S. 163-226.3(a), assisted the voter if the voter is unable to complete and sign the certification and that individual's signature.
- (5) A space for approval by the county board of elections.
- (6) A space to allow reporting of a change of name as provided by G.S. 163-82.16.
- (7) A prominent display of the unlawful acts under G.S. 163-226.3 and G.S. 163-275, except if there is not room on the envelope, the State Board may provide for that disclosure to be made on a separate piece of paper to be included along with the container-return envelope.
- (8) An area to attach additional documentation necessary to comply with the identification requirements in accordance with State Board rules, as provided in G.S. 163-230.1.
- (9) A bar code or other unique identifier to allow both the county board of elections and the voter to track the ballot following return of the voted ballot to the county board of elections by the voter.

The container-return envelope shall be printed in accordance with the instructions of the State Board, which shall prohibit the display of the voter's party affiliation on the outside of the container-return envelope.

(c) Instruction Sheets. – In time for use not later than 60 days before a statewide general election in an even-numbered year, and not later than 50 days before a statewide primary, other general or county bond election, the county board of elections shall prepare and print a sufficient number of sheets of instructions on how voters are to prepare absentee ballots and return them to the county board of elections. However, in the case of municipal elections, instruction sheets shall be made available no later than 30 days before an election. (1929, c. 164, s. 39; 1939, c. 159, ss. 3, 4; 1943, c. 751, s. 2; 1963, c. 457, ss. 3, 4; 1965, c. 1208; 1967, c. 775, s. 1; c. 851, s. 1; c. 952, s. 5; 1973, c. 536, s. 1; 1975, c. 844, s. 13; 1977, c. 469, s. 1; 1985, c. 562, ss. 3, 4; 1985 (Reg. Sess., 1986), c. 986, s. 2; 1987, c. 485, ss. 2, 5; c. 509, s. 9; c. 583, s. 3; 1989, c. 635, s. 5; 1995 (Reg. Sess., 1996), c. 561, s. 5; 1999-455, s. 8; 2009-537, s. 4; 2013-381, s. 4.1; 2017-6, s. 3; 2018-144, s. 1.2(d); 2018-146, s. 3.1(a), (b); 2019-239, s. 1.4; 2020-17, s. 3(a).)