

## Unsolicited Mailing? Must be Election Season

Since 2020 worries of “voter fraud” and mistrust in the government, the voting system, and the U.S. Postal Service have been on the rise in social media and local diner coffee clutches. Despite their potential best intentions, political parties’ and special interest groups’ attempts to help the American voter is causing confusion and consternation at the local levels.

According to the Michigan Association of Municipal Clerks (MAMC) Official Facebook site, the last two weeks have seen a surge in unsolicited voting-related mail to the citizens across Michigan and it may not be stopping any time soon. A voter must read carefully to determine the actual sender of the application, despite it being preprinted to return to a homeowner’s correct township clerk.

The Michigan Democratic State Central Committee is mass mailing absentee voter ballot applications. The problem? Many of the recipients already filled out and returned applications earlier this year to vote in the August and/or November elections. The mass mailing has driven concerned calls, emails, and these duplicate applications being completed and mailed to local clerks and deputies because of the doubt and worry they incite. Were the former applications lost? Is an additional one needed? Did the voter accurately remember returning the prior one?

**MI Absent Voter Ballot Application – Aug. 2, 2022 Primary/Nov. 8, 2022 General**  
I am a **United States citizen** and a qualified and registered elector of the County and jurisdiction in the State of Michigan listed below, and I apply for an official ballot, to be voted by me at the election(s) listed below.

**Voter's Registration Information:**

Last Name		First Name	M.I.	County	
Street Address		MI		<input type="checkbox"/> City	<input type="checkbox"/> Township
City		Zip	Year of Birth ( )		
Email Address				Phone #	

Your e-mail address and phone number will be used only for official election purposes.

**Select election(s) to receive ballot (required):**

August 2, 2022 Primary and November 8, 2022 General or  August 2, 2022 Primary only or  November 8, 2022

**Other Elections:** Complete to join permanent absent voter application list  I want to vote absentee in all elections. Automatically send me an application for an absent voter ballot for all elections, including other elections in 2022.

**Voter's Signature (Power of attorney is not acceptable):**  
I certify that I am a **United States citizen** and that the statements in this absent voter ballot application are true.

**X**

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

WARNING: You must be a United States citizen to vote. If you are not a United States citizen, you will not be issued an absent voter ballot. A person making a false statement in this absent voter ballot application is guilty of a misdemeanor. It is a violation of Michigan election law for a person other than those listed in the instructions to return, offer to return, agree to

**The State of MI Absentee Ballot Application form (top half shown here) is available to all non-profit and political organizations as well as every citizen. It can be identified by the 5 step arrows and multiple fields to fill in.**

According to Clerk Mary Clark of Lansing, MI, the MAMC had discussion with legislative leaders have asked for a required disclaimer on the applications to clarify the source, but it was “met with zero support as both parties use them.”

If a voter has any question on if (s)he as returned an absentee voter application, contacting the local Clerk can quickly clear that up without having

to fill out additional unnecessary applications or inundate local clerks with sorting through multiple duplicates. Carefully scan the outer envelopes to determine the sender's location. Any one can mark the mail as "Election Mail" which unfortunately leads recipients to incorrectly think it originated from their local township offices.

One tip for awareness is that absentee voting applications mailed from an actual Clerk's office are printed through the Qualified Voter File (QVF) program. The form is entirely preprinted with voter's correct name and mailing address. Additionally, it has three steps to complete whereas the State of MI form (that any organization can mail) has five arrowed steps and has very little preprinted because the information available to special interest groups and political parties is limited.

**Pic 1: Twp app– Township-mailed MI Absent Voter Ballot Applications come with all the voter's information pre-printed and with 3 arrowed steps. They are only sent if requested by a voter or if the voter has opted to be on the Permanent Absentee Voter list.**

The key to remember, is that regardless of how many absentee ballot applications arrive in the mail, and regardless of how many duplicates someone sends to the local clerk, only one absentee ballot can be assigned to any voter. The clerk verifies the legal signature on the application and marks it "received" in the program. The QVF system does not allow more than one ballot to be assigned.

Voters who are part of the Permanent Absentee Voter list received dual applications in June to cover both the August and November elections. If a resident selected interest in a ballot for both elections, no further applications

The image shows a Michigan Absent Voter Ballot Application form with several handwritten annotations and three numbered steps highlighted on the left side. The form is titled "MI Absent Voter Ballot Application" and includes fields for "your Clerk", "your Legal Name", "your address", "Town, State zip", "ELECTION: 11/8/2022", "Date leaving for this address", "Date of return", "Year of Birth (Optional)", "Email Address", and "Phone #". There are also checkboxes for "Future elections" and "I want to vote absentee in all future elections".

Handwritten annotations include:

- "The relevant election. This sample is only for Nov." with an arrow pointing to the election date.
- "In June, a dual app was sent for Nov." with an arrow pointing to the "Future elections" section.
- "Optional to join AV list" with an arrow pointing to the "Future elections" section.

Numbered steps on the left side:

- 1 Sign
- 2 Other
- 3 Optional

are necessary to turn in. The ballot for the November election will be mailed when it becomes available.

If a member of the Permanent list did not return their application earlier, or did not clearly indicate which elections they wanted a ballot for, local clerks decide if they want to resend an application. If new ones are mailed, they will be arriving anytime now.

### **A Different Type of Green Card**

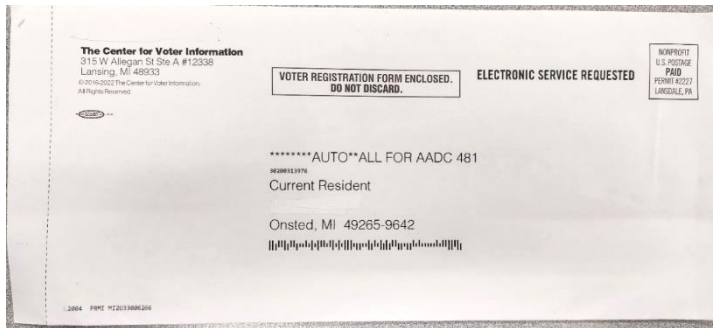
Another type of unsolicited application which has begun arriving in the Irish Hills is a MI Voter Registration Application. It is part of a national mass mailing by the Center for Voter Information self-described as a “non-profit, non-partisan partner organization to Voter Participation Center, both founded to provide resources and tools to help voting-eligible citizens register and vote in upcoming elections” nation-wide.

Its title may be easily confused with the “Michigan Voter Information Center” which is the actual Michigan government sponsored voter informational database—where township clerks and deputies direct a voter to review and update his/her own personal records.

The special interest mailing claims, “According to our review of publicly available records, someone at this address may not be registered to vote.” The red flag that this is not from their local township clerk is the vagueness, “someone may not be registered.”

The letter continues to say “We have already filled in some of your information on the enclosed form. If it is incorrect, please cross it out and enter the correct information.” Information coming from your local township should have a resident’s correct name and address—or at least the last information updated by the voter.

What motivates this special interest group? Their webpage explains a bit more: “We all have reason to be discouraged by the character of political dialogue today. Politics is often cluttered with loose accusations, half-truths, and unfounded assertions.” Yet ironically, the outside of their envelope uses bold-text to state “Voter Registration Form Enclosed. Do Not Discard.” It is important to note this is not official election mail and residents have the right to “discard” or “not to discard” as is their discretion.



**Even envelope wording can be persuasive and misleading. The Center for Voter Information mailed envelopes with bold-text stating, “Voter registration form enclosed. Do Not Discard.”**

This special interest group has the jump on another mass mailing coming soon to a mailbox near residents. Michigan clerks recently received the following announcement: “The Michigan Department of State will begin sending voter registration mailings to eligible but unregistered individuals with a Michigan driver’s license or state ID card. Based on data received from the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC), the Bureau of Elections will be sending voter registration mailers to approximately 140,000 individuals. The mailers will offer options to register online or to return the inserted card to the Secretary of State to be registered (not the local clerk). However, if a voter returns it to the local clerk, it can be identified by its green color and “Be a Voter” message.”

What does it all amount to? Multiple groups are motivated to mobilize citizens to vote and this can cause confusion if someone is flipping through the mail quickly.

If there is any doubt regarding your personal voter registration or absentee ballot involvement, call or email your local clerk or go on-line to visit <https://mvic.sos.state.mi.us/> .