

Using Colorado's Accessible Ballot Delivery and Return System In the 2024 General Election

By Curtis Chong

Author's Note: This document is intended primarily for screen reader users who are using a Windows computer to mark and/or return the ballot electronically. While voters using smartphones running a screen reader are not expressly prohibited from using Colorado's accessible electronic ballot delivery and return system, please bear in mind that the procedures used to download the ballot and accessible ballot application files and the steps to upload these documents differ to some degree from what you would do if you were using a smartphone running a screen reader such as VoiceOver (iOS) or Talkback (Android).

Starting October 11, 2024, ballots for the November 5 General election will be mailed out to registered voters in Colorado. For people with disabilities, those who are blind, and individuals who are unable to mark the printed mail ballot without assistance, this means that on that date, Colorado's accessible electronic ballot delivery, marking, and return system will become available. Registered Colorado voters with disabilities can receive and mark their ballots at home, at work, or anywhere else using the accessible technology with which they are most familiar. Registered Colorado voters who are blind or have a print disability can also return their ballots electronically.

Critical First Step

If you plan to use the electronic ballot return option when voting, there is a critical first step which you must complete. You need to take a picture of your Colorado State ID and place it somewhere on your computer or smartphone where you can easily locate it while returning your ballot electronically. You do not need to do this if you are able to draw your signature on the computer or smartphone screen or prefer to use the system simply to mark your ballot and are able to print the ballot and the ballot application.

Accessible Voting Procedure

1. Point your browser to <https://myballot.coloradosos.gov>. You will be taken to the accessible ballot home page. Find the Vote My Ballot heading and activate the CONTINUE button which is immediately adjacent to it; this will take you to the Voter Lookup page.
2. On this Voter Lookup page, you will need to provide your first and last name, your date of birth, and the county where you are registered to vote. Once this information has been entered, activate the CONTINUE button. This will take you to the Ballot Type page.
3. On the Ballot Type page, you will find three radio buttons.
 - I am requesting an emergency ballot

- I am a voter with a disability and am requesting an accessible ballot
- These do not apply

Activate the second radio button (I am a voter with a disability) and then activate the CONTINUE button to be taken to the "Please confirm you are eligible to access this system" page.

4. The Please confirm you are eligible to access this system page contains a checkbox which you should activate to affirm that you are a voter with a disability as defined in the Americans with Disabilities Act. Check this box and then activate the CONTINUE button.
5. This next page asks a question which determines if you are a voter who is blind, has a print disability, or is otherwise unable, through physical disability, to hold, mark, or manipulate a ballot or to focus or move the eyes to the extent that would be normally acceptable for reading or marking a ballot. If you are blind or print-disabled and want to return your ballot electronically, activate the Yes radio button. If you want to return your ballot in the mail and you have access to a printer, you should respond "No" to this question. After activating the appropriate Radio Button, activate the CONTINUE button.
6. On this last voter verification page, you are asked to enter either your driver's license or Colorado State ID number or the last four digits of your Social Security number. You do not need to enter both numbers. If you are entering your state ID number, you should not enter any of the hyphens which appear on your Colorado state ID card. After entering your identification information, activate the CONTINUE button. Given that this is a general election, you will be taken directly to the page which displays your ballot.
7. All of the contests and questions on the ballot are displayed on a single page. Each candidate or position is indicated by a checkbox. Use the space key to check the boxes corresponding to the candidates or positions for which you want to vote. Once you have completed marking the ballot, activate the CONTINUE button to go to the Selection Review page.
8. On the Selection Review page, you have the opportunity to check your ballot for one last time before moving on to the next phase. There is a Change button for each contest which, when activated, takes you back to the ballot page. Once you are satisfied that the ballot is as you want it, activate the CONTINUE button at the bottom of the page. You will be taken to the Save or Print Your Ballot page.
9. On the Save or Print Your Ballot page, you should activate the SAVE OR PRINT BALLOT button. If you are activating this button from a Windows computer and if you want to save your ballot instead of printing it, you should ensure that the printer selected is the one which is labeled Save as PDF.

(For users of platforms other than Windows, a different procedure is used to save the ballot into a PDF file.)

10. After your ballot is saved or printed, you will be taken back to the Save or Print Your Ballot page. Activate the CONTINUE button. You will be taken to a page which asks "Would you like to sign on your screen?"
This page informs you that, "You have the option to sign your voter affidavit on your device or to skip signing on your device and return your ballot with an acceptable form of identification or handwritten signature." Screen reader users should navigate to the heading which says, "I would like to return an acceptable form of identification or sign with a pen" and activate the CONTINUE button immediately adjacent to this heading; this will navigate you to the "Download Additional Ballot Materials" page.
11. On the "Download Additional Ballot Materials" page, activate the DOWNLOAD ADDITIONAL MATERIALS button. Windows users will be prompted with a dialog to save a PDF document. By default, this file will be placed in your Downloads folder. You will be able to give it whatever name works for you.
12. After the file has been printed or downloaded, activate the CONTINUE button to go to the next step.
13. If you are going to print your ballot and ballot documents instead of downloading them, you are finished with the online system; you will need to sign the ballot application document, however, before putting both the ballot and the application into an envelope. If you downloaded these files to submit them electronically, you should pay attention to the following instructions.

"Thank you for voting, but you're not done!"

"Please follow the instructions provided in the previous pages and in your additional ballot materials to return your ballot and materials to your local elections office. If you are returning your ballot and materials electronically, please return them at Colorado's secure ballot return website by clicking the 'return my ballot' link below."

For your information, the link to the "return my ballot" page is <https://ballotreturn.coloradosos.gov/form/accessible>.

Uploading Your Ballot and Ballot Application

After you have saved your ballot, your ballot application document, and a picture of your Colorado State ID, you should direct your browser to the website <https://ballotreturn.coloradosos.gov/form/accessible>. You will be taken to the State of Colorado Secure Ballot Return page. You do not have to perform this part of the voting process immediately after you have finished marking your ballot. You already have your documents downloaded to your system. You can treat this part of the process as something that you can take up on another day.

On the State of Colorado Secure Ballot Return page, screen reader users are placed on an edit field where you are asked to enter your first name. Before you enter your identification information, you need to upload your saved files first. Move your focus to the top of the page (CTRL+HOME in Windows) and read the information you find there.

There are three "browse to attach files" links on the State of Colorado Secure Ballot Return page. The first browse link should be used to upload the actual ballot. The second browse link should be used to upload the accessible ballot application. The third browse link should be used to upload the picture of your Colorado State ID (or other authorized form of identification). These links cannot be reached using the TAB key. Windows screen reader users should arrow down through the page or ask their screen reader to search for the word "browse."

As each file is successfully uploaded, its name will appear just below the browse link you activated to upload the file. Thus, a careful review of the page will assure you that all three of the files needed to return your ballot have been successfully uploaded.

After all three files have been uploaded, fill in your name, phone number, and email address, and only then, activate the Submit button. Failing to fill in these fields properly makes it impossible for your county to notify you about any problems or issues with your ballot and accompanying files.

Conclusion

If all of this sounds exceedingly complicated or, at the very least, tedious, I am afraid that there are definitely a lot of steps to perform here. Such is the way with technology.

Voters with disabilities who use this system are urged to contact their respective county clerks. If history is any guide, you will probably be referred to the office of Colorado's Secretary of State. If you like, feel free to call me at 515-306-1654 or drop me an email at chong.curtis@gmail.com. I will try to be of help if I can.