



Implementing Universal Absentee Voting

Once a new election law is passed, the work of turning that law into something voters and local election officials can actually use begins. Implementation can require changes to forms, manuals, technology and procedures; legal and operational guidance; training and support for local officials; and coordination across numerous functions within our Office.

The following provides one example of what that work looks like. It outlines the steps our Office took before, during, and after the 2026 General Assembly Session to prepare for and implement universal absentee voting under Public Act 26-42.

1. Pre-Legislative Foundations

- a. Conducted extensive national research on universal absentee voting models, curing standards, and administrative best practices
- b. Reviewed resources from the National Conference of State Legislatures concerning universal absentee voting and curing procedures
- c. Completed multi-state statutory review (e.g., California, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont)
- d. Held internal agency planning meetings:
 - i. 2025 – September 24 and 30; October 10 and 22; November 19; and December 8, 11, and 12
 - ii. 2026 – January 12 and February 10
- e. Met with advocacy and civic organizations:
 - i. Group session – December 8, 2025
 - ii. Common Cause – January 12, 2026
 - iii. Center for Election Innovation and Research – January 21 and 26, 2026
- f. Identified essential items for the successful implementation of universal absentee voting
- g. Identified deficiencies in Connecticut's absentee system and opportunities to improve the process at large (old envelopes, lack of curing, inconsistent materials, and decentralized workflows)

2. Legislative Work

- a. Drafted preliminary universal absentee voting legislation
 - i. Integrated multi-state statutory lessons and national best practices into Connecticut's legal framework
- b. Facilitated review of draft multiple times, both by internal staff and by the Legislative Commissioners' Office



- c. Conducted ongoing outreach to legislative stakeholders and subject-matter advocates
- d. Prepared written testimony for public hearings
- e. Universal absentee voting enacted as Public Act 26-42, signed May 15, 2026
- f. Post-enactment activities included:
 - i. Drafting legislative summaries
 - ii. Responding to municipal officials' questions
 - iii. Documenting issues that may require future legislative attention

3. Guidance and Operational Documents

- a. LEAD produced or revised 87 pages of statewide guidance and forms following the passage of PA 26-42
- b. The full list of edited documents includes:
 - i. ED-3 absentee application
 - ii. ED-3R referendum absentee application
 - iii. Absentee Ballot Fact Sheet (2026)
 - iv. Absentee Curing FAQ (PA 26-42)
 - v. Detailed Curing Instructions
 - vi. Blank Absentee Ballot Mailing Memo
 - vii. ED-81a, Election Blank Ballot
 - viii. ED-81pr, Primary Blank Ballot
 - ix. Certification Statement 2026
 - x. ED-81, UOCAVA Email Instructions
 - xi. ED-645, Absentee Ballot Grid
 - xii. Absentee Ballot Counting Manual
 - xiii. Absentee Ballot Counter's Manual (extensively updated)
- c. Additional operational accomplishments:
 - i. Standardized workflows for curing, envelope intake, presorting, rejection, and central counting
 - ii. Modernized statutory warnings, designee rules, voter instructions, and envelope requirements
 - iii. Ensured bilingual availability of blank ballots and voter instructions
 - iv. Updated all absentee documentation to align with universal eligibility and curing provisions

4. Technical Components

- a. Implemented statewide curing infrastructure
- b. Developed and updated coding in the statewide voter registration system, CVRS, to accommodate universal absentee voting (cure eligible, rejected coding)
- c. Standardized envelope endorsement and rejection categories



- d. Updated tabulator workflows (overrides, unreadable ballots, write-ins, auxiliary bin processing)
 - e. Ensured compliance with UOCAVA and FPCA rules for electronic transmission, certification page inclusion, and receipt deadlines
 - f. Established statewide issuance timelines for blank ballots (June 26, August 5, and September 18)
 - g. Harmonized all ballot sets (ED-1, ED-11, ED-81a/pr, ED-71, ED-31) with new statutory timelines and processes
- 5. Operationalizing PA 26-42**
- a. Deployed and publicly posted 87 pages of revised absentee materials statewide
 - b. Distributed updated ED-3, ED-3R, ED-81a, ED-81pr, ED-10, ED-11, ED-71, ED-31, and Certification Statement forms
 - c. Introduced statewide uniform workflows for intake, presorting, curing, rejections, segregation, and central counting
 - d. Implemented full UOCAVA/FPCA compliance for electronic blank ballot transmission
 - e. Ensured readiness for the June 2026 Special Election in Middlebury, August 2026 statewide primary, and November 2026 general election
- 6. Training & Support**
- a. Delivered clerk training on:
 - i. Curing workflows
 - ii. Envelope rejection rules
 - iii. UOCAVA/FPCA procedures
 - iv. Blank ballot issuance
 - v. Updated certification requirements
 - b. Provided registrar training on:
 - i. Central counting
 - ii. Tabulator procedures
 - iii. Provisional ballot processing
 - iv. Write-in and cross-endorsement handling
 - c. Released voter-facing guides, checklists, sample notifications, and workflow templates
 - d. Provide ongoing technical support to municipal officials
- 7. Looking Ahead (Operational + Strategic Needs)**
- a. Develop/maintain a list of operational challenges and statutory ambiguities as they arise, to inform possible proposals in future legislative sessions