



Why Delaware needs no excuse absentee voting.

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that voting is a fundamental citizen right that must be guaranteed. The LWV of Delaware bases its action on the LWVUS position. The League of Women Voters seeks to protect the right of all citizens to vote, and encourage all citizens to vote." (LWVUS Position on Representative Government)

How does Delaware rank in voter turnout? According to the 2016 census data, 72.8% of eligible voters were registered and 62.3% of those registered turned out at the polls.¹ In 2020, 69% of registered voters went to the polls, according to the Delaware elections website.²

So why don't voters go to the polls? U.S. Census data has long indicated the #1 reason voters gave for not making it to the polls was "too busy/couldn't get time off to vote." In 2010, 27% of nonvoters gave this answer. After the 2014 midterm elections, a staggering 67% of nonvoters didn't cast a ballot because they were stuck at school or work, or were too busy, out of town, sick or forgot.³

How can no excuse absentee ballots improve turnout? Delaware already supports absentee ballots, but there are restrictions on allowable excuses. A policy of no excuse absentee ballots allows anybody to request an absentee ballot for any reason – to save time, avoid the lines, work around a busy work, childcare, or elder care schedule, anything. During the 2020 election, no excuse absentee voting was allowed due to COVID. It is important to note that voter turnout increased by 7% with 1/3 of the votes cast by absentee or mail in ballots.²

Do other states support absentee ballots? All states allow mail in absentee ballots for certain voters. Currently, 68% of states have permanent no excuse absentee voting or vote by mail programs. Delaware along with 13 southern states only allows absentee voting for a specific reason. It is certainly time for Delaware to implement no excuse absentee voting.

The LWV of Delaware supports this bill:

HB 15 ABSENTEE VOTING: This bill allows for changes to the current laws governing absentee voting. It is the second leg of a constitutional amendment that would eliminate from the Delaware Constitution the limitations as to when an individual may vote by absentee ballot. It provides that the General Assembly shall enact general laws providing the circumstances, rules, and procedures for absentee voting. This paves the way for no excuse absentee voting.

The League works all year, every year, to empower all eligible voters to participate in our political system. Our work especially seeks to aid those from traditionally underrepresented or underserved communities, including first-time voters, non-college youth, new citizens, minorities, and low-income Americans. Hundreds of local volunteer teams work year-round to register, inform and mobilize hundreds of thousands of voters in the lead-up to Election Day. The League also serves millions of voters through [VOTE411.org](https://www.vote411.org), our one-stop elections information hub.

¹Census Data <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/voting-and-registration/p20-580.html>

²<https://elections.delaware.gov/results/html/index.shtml?electionId=GE2020>

³ Pew Research Center, November, 2014, "Little Enthusiasm, Familiar Divisions after the GOP's Big Midterm Victory"