

# New Law Sets in Motion Mail-In, Early Voting Options in Massachusetts

Chris Lisinski

State House News Service

A dramatic expansion of mail-in and early voting in Massachusetts is now law, and Secretary of State William Galvin is now preparing to quickly mail applications to all 4.5 million of the state's registered voters by a deadline next week.

Galvin announced late Monday afternoon that Gov. Charlie Baker signed into law the reforms drafted during the pandemic and aimed at ensuring maximum participation while allowing people to choose voting options and minimize their COVID-19 risks. This election season, for the first time in the state's history, all voters who wish to do so will be able to cast a ballot via mail without needing to qualify for an absentee ballot. By July 15, Galvin's office must send applications for mail-in primary election ballots to all voters. His staff will then need to send another round of applications in September for the general election.

The new law also creates the state's first-ever early voting period before a primary election, from Aug. 22 to Aug. 28, and expands general election early voting to run from Oct. 17 to Oct. 30. A six-member legislative conference committee reached a deal last week after both branches passed their own reform bills. The House passed the compromise legislation 157-1, with only Dracut Democratic Rep. Colleen Garry voting against it, while the Senate approved the measure unanimously.

Baker had until Sunday to decide whether to sign, veto or return the bill with an amendment. By signing it Monday, he

gave Galvin more than a week to meet the July 15 application-mailing deadline rather than only a few days. Baker had offered few hints about his thinking on the topic. In late May, he questioned the urgency of the issue, arguing that “the elections are a long way away.”