



# Safe at Home

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## MINNESOTA SECRETARY OF STATE

Steve Simon

### **Safe at Home Biennial Voting Report April 2021**

Voting Activity January 1, 2019 - December 31, 2020

#### **Cost of Report Preparation**

The total cost for the Office of the Secretary of State to prepare this report was approximately \$3,572.70. Most of these costs involved staff time in analyzing data and preparing the written report. Incidental costs include paper, copying, and other office supplies.

Estimated costs are provided in accordance with *Minnesota Statutes*, Section 3.197, requiring the cost for preparing a report to be provided at the beginning of a report to the legislature.

#### **Safe at Home Program Overview**

The Safe at Home address confidentiality program is managed by the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State (OSS). The program, which began September 1, 2007, is open to survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and those who otherwise fear for their safety. Participants in Safe at Home are assigned a designated address (a P.O. Box in St. Paul) that can be used for all their interactions with others. The designated address allows the participant to go about their daily life without disclosing their actual home, employment, or school address. All private and public entities in the state of Minnesota must accept the Safe at Home address as a participant's actual address. Safe at Home receives participants' mail, forwards all their First-Class Mail to them, and assists them with their interactions with third parties should problems arise when giving the Safe at Home address to others. Staff also works with third-party stakeholders to ensure legal compliance and that their business practices accommodate the safety needs of Safe at Home participants. During the calendar years 2019 and 2020, the Safe at Home office served a total of 8,802 participants and applicants. This total does not include other services the office provides to the public on a daily basis, such as in-depth discussions with victims who ultimately choose not to apply for enrollment and discussions with third party stakeholders who need a better understanding of Safe at Home laws and how they should develop safe procedures for program participants. Therefore, "Total Served" has a limited scope.

## Safe at Home Voting Process Overview

Safe at Home participants vote by absentee ballot through the Safe at Home office. As of December 31, 2020, there were 1,130 program participants registered as absentee voters through Safe at Home. The voting process is governed by *Minnesota Statutes*, section 5B.06 and *Minnesota Rules*, section 8290.1300. The voting experience under Safe at Home is time-consuming and somewhat cumbersome. It is, however, the only way participants can vote safely, without the need to share their name and address with others outside of the Safe at Home office.

The current process works as follows:

- Upon enrollment, each applicant has the opportunity to register as an ongoing absentee voter through Safe at Home. (Should an applicant decline registration at that time, Safe at Home extends other opportunities for registration during the duration of their participation in the program.)
- At least 60 days before an election or within two business days after the scheduling of a special election, all registered Safe at Home absentee voters are identified by the Safe at Home office.
- The Safe at Home office communicates to the appropriate county auditor the number of ballots needed for program participant voters whose records are not challenged. This communication is made without disclosing the names or specific addresses of program participants. Only jurisdiction information is shared.
- The ballots are mailed to the Safe at Home office.
- When Safe at Home receives a blank ballot, it is sent to the voter along with voting instructions, a tan ballot envelope, an absentee ballot return envelope, and a postage-paid return envelope addressed to Safe at Home.
- The voter returns the completed ballot to Safe at Home in the envelopes provided.
- When the ballot is received, Safe at Home staff performs name, signature, and identification number matches and determines whether the certificate on the absentee ballot signature envelope was properly completed.
- The signature envelope with the voter's name and address is separated from the tan ballot envelope containing the absentee ballot.
- The tan ballot envelope, which remains sealed at all times, is placed in an envelope containing a certification by staff that the ballot was cast by a Safe at Home participant, and whether the certificate on the absentee ballot signature envelope was properly completed. The certification envelope does not contain the participant voter's name or actual address, but it does contain the voter's local jurisdiction information.
- The completed certification envelope is sent to the appropriate county auditor, who sends the ballot to the appropriate absentee ballot board. Election judges on the absentee ballot board are required to accept the ballot if the certification indicates the return envelope was properly completed.

## Voting Activity

The following two tables show voting activity for Safe at Home voters during 2019 and 2020.

Table 1

<b>Safe at Home Voting Activity Calendar Year 2019</b>	
<b>2019 School District Elections</b> (including special primaries and special elections)	
Number of participant registered voters who received a ballot for a school district election	378
Number of participant registered voters who returned a ballot for a school district election	31
<b>2019 Special Elections</b> (municipalities and legislative districts, including special primaries)	
Number of participant registered voters who received a ballot for a special election	113
Number of participant registered voters who returned a ballot for a special election	20
<b>2019 General Elections</b> (municipalities and townships)	
Number of participant registered voters who received a ballot for a general election	200
Number of participant registered voters who returned a ballot for a general election	28

Table 2

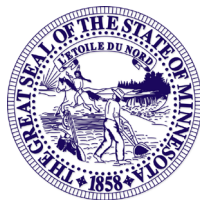
<b>Safe at Home Voting Activity Calendar Year 2020</b>	
<b>2020 Special Elections</b> (school districts, municipalities and legislative districts, including special primaries)	
Number of participant registered voters who received a ballot for a special election	49
Number of participant registered voters who returned a ballot for a special election	3
<b>2020 Township Elections</b>	
Number of participant registered voters who received a ballot for a township election	0
Number of participant registered voters who returned a ballot for a township election	0
<b>2020 Presidential Nomination Primary</b>	
Number of participant registered voters who received a ballot for the 2020 Presidential Nomination Primary	1,042
Number of participant registered voters who returned a ballot for the 2020 Presidential Nomination Primary	284
<b>2020 State Primary</b>	
Number of participant registered voters who received a ballot for the 2020 State Primary	1,046
Number of participant registered voters who returned a ballot for the 2020 State Primary	286
<b>2020 State General Election</b>	
Number of participant registered voters who received a ballot for the 2020 State General Election	1,125
Number of participant registered voters who returned a ballot for the 2020 State General Election	747

Questions about this report can be directed to:

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