

Casting a Write-In Vote

The candidate I would like to vote for is not listed on the ballot. How do I vote for him or her?

You may vote for a candidate not listed on the ballot by writing his or her name in the “write-in” box on your ballot. Each contest on the ballot has a “write-in” box. You must also color in the bubble in the “write-in” box for your write-in vote to count.

If I vote a straight-party ticket but then cast a write-in vote in one of the contests, will that ruin my ballot?

No. Your straight-party selection will cast votes for the political party’s candidates in all contests except the contest where you cast the write-in vote. In the contest where you cast the write-in vote, the write-in vote will override the straight-party ticket for that candidate area.

Do I have to spell the candidate’s name correctly?

When you write in a name, the spelling must be close enough so that the name you write in is identifiable with the person you are voting for. When you write the name in, it must be done in a way that the election officials can determine exactly who you are voting for.

Do I need to write in the candidate’s full name?

Initials and last name rather than a full name may be used. However, only a last name would be insufficient. The bottom line is that a write-in vote must be marked in a way that the election officials can determine exactly who you are voting for.

Can I cast a write-in vote for my favorite cartoon character or superhero?

No. Write-in votes will be counted only for live, human beings who are eligible to serve in the office for which they have been voted. Votes cannot be counted for fictional characters.

Can I use a sticker or a stamp to put my write-in vote on my ballot?

No, the write-in vote must be cast in handwriting.

The candidate I would like to vote for lost in the primary election and is not listed on my ballot. Can I still vote for that candidate by writing them in?

Yes, Alabama’s “sore loser” law does not apply to voters writing in a candidate. Any write in votes for that candidate will be counted.

Will I know election night how many votes my write-in candidate received?

Under a law passed in 2016 by the Alabama Legislature, write-in votes will be recorded and documented but not necessarily counted on election day.

Write-in votes for a particular contest, such as U.S. Senate, are not counted unless the total number of write-in votes is greater than the difference in the number of votes received by the candidate who is in first place and the number of votes received by the candidate in second place. For example, let’s say that Susan Franklin receives 300 votes and James Smith receives 200 votes and there are 250 write-in votes. 250 is greater than the difference between Franklin’s votes and Smith’s votes. ($300 - 200 = 100$ and 250 is greater than 100.) In this case, the write-in votes would be counted to see the names of the people who received the 250 write-in votes. These write-in votes **would be counted** on the seventh day after the election, along with provisional ballots and absentee ballots submitted by military personnel and U.S. citizens residing overseas.

However, let’s say there were only 50 write-in votes, compared to Franklin’s 300 votes and Smith’s 200 votes. The difference between Franklin’s and Smith’s votes is still 100. However, 50 is less than 100. Therefore, the write-in votes **would not be counted** to see who received the write-in votes.

If only one candidate’s name is printed on the ballot, write-in votes would be counted only if the number of write-in votes is greater than the number of votes received by the candidate whose name is printed on the ballot.

Write-in votes may also be counted in a particular contest upon request. For information on the procedures for requesting that write-in votes be counted, please visit the Secretary of State’s web site: alabamavotes.gov.