

An Analysis of Absentee Ballot Voting Trends



DELBERT HOSEMAN
Secretary of State

A detailed examination
of absentee ballot voting issues in Mississippi

**2011 General Election
&
2011 Primary Election**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE

- 1 - - - - **TABLE I:** Absentee Voting Trends
- 2 - - - - **TABLE II:** Difference in Absentee Voting Rates between 2011 Primary and 2011 General Election
- 3 - - - - **TABLE III:** Absentee Voting in Counties with Highest Absentee Percentages - 2011 Primary Election
- 3 - - - - **TABLE IV:** Absentee Voting in Counties with Highest Absentee Percentages - 2011 Primary Election
- 4 - - - - **Section A:** Absentee Voting Locations
- 4 - - - - **TABLE V:** Location of Absentee Voting - 2011 Primary Election
- 5 - - - - **Section B:** Reasons for Absentee Voting
- 6 - - - - **TABLE VI:** Reasons Cited for Absentee Voting - Actual Number by Voting Location 2011 Primary Election
- 7 - - - - **TABLE VII:** Reasons Cited for Absentee Voting - Percentage by Voting Location 2011 Primary Election
- 8 - - - - **TABLE VIII:** Reasons Cited for Absentee Voting - In-Person Voting or By Mail / Outside of Clerk's Office - 2011 Primary Election
- 9 - - - - **Section C:** Absentee Ballot Witnesses
- 10 - - - **Section D:** Absentee Ballot Process
- 11 - - - **Section E:** Absentee Ballot Law Summary
- 13 - - - **TABLE IX:** Absentee Ballot Analysis - 2011, 2010 and 2008 General Elections
- 16 - - - **Research Methodology**



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Analysis of Absentee Ballot Voting 2011 General Election & 2011 Primary Election

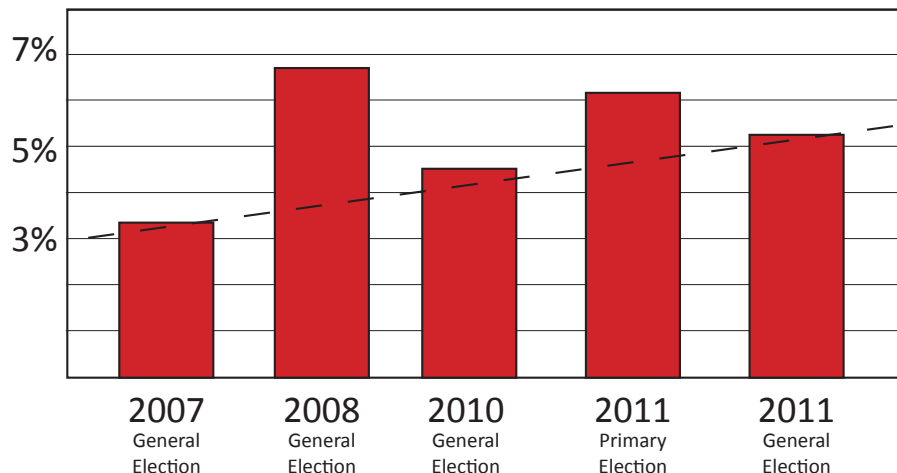
An analysis by the Secretary of State's Office of absentee ballot voting in Mississippi over the past five years shows registered voters statewide are steadily trending toward an increased use of absentee ballots to cast their votes in advance of Election Day.

- **2011 General Election** - Absentee ballots (47,580) accounted for 5.33% of 893,204 total votes cast for governor in all 82 counties. The 13 counties reporting 10% or more absentee voting averaged 12.6%.
- **2011 Primary Election** - Absentee ballots (43,222) accounted for 6.15% of 702,318 total votes cast for governor. The 21 counties reporting 10% or more absentee voting averaged 14.17%.
- **2010 General Election** - Absentee ballots (30,832) accounted for 3.91% of 788,549 votes cast in congressional races from the 66 counties reporting absentee ballot totals. Of those, the three counties reporting 10% or more absentee voting averaged 12.1%.
- **2008 General Election** - Absentee ballots (88,398) accounted for 6.85% of the 1,289,865 total votes cast for president. Of the 55 counties reporting absentee ballot totals, 24 counties reported 10% or more absentee voting.
- **2007 General Election** - Absentee ballots (25,048) accounted for 3.37% of the 744,039 votes cast for governor.

TABLE I

Absentee Voting Trends

Percentage of Absentee Ballots to Total Votes



* 2009 elections in Mississippi were for municipal races. The State of Mississippi does not maintain absentee voting information for municipal elections.

A county-by-county tally of absentee ballots cast in the August 2, 2011, Primary Election and the November 8, 2011 General Election conducted by the Mississippi Secretary of State's office shows twenty-two (22) counties in the Primary Election and thirteen (13) counties in the General Election received at least 10% percent of their ballots cast by absentee vote.

In the 2011 Primary Election, Quitman County had the highest percentage of absentee voters with 33.61%, followed by Noxubee (31.78%), Claiborne (18.95%) and Grenada (18.21%) counties. In the 2011 General Election, Claiborne County received the highest percentage of absentee ballots (17.2%), followed by Quitman (14.6%), Tunica (14%) and Benton (13.9%) counties.

While most counties reported a decrease in the number of absentee ballots cast in the 2011 General Election when compared with the 2011 Primary Election, four counties had a slight increase in both number and percentage of absentee voters -- most notably Kemper County in which only 8.34% of its 2011 Primary Election vote was cast by absentee ballot but recorded 12.50% of its 2011 General Election vote from absentee ballots.

TABLE II

Difference in Absentee Voting Rates between 2011 Primary and 2011 General Election
A Comparative Analysis of Counties with Highest Absentee Ballot Percentages
in 2011 Primary and General Elections - Ranked by Variation %

COUNTY	AUGUST 2011 PRIMARY			NOV. 2011 GENERAL			VARIATION
	ABSENTEE BALLOTS	TOTAL BALLOTS	% of TOTAL	ABSENTEE BALLOTS	TOTAL BALLOTS	% of TOTAL	
Quitman	1,041	3,097	33.61%	338	2,316	14.60%	-19.01%
Noxubee	1,130	3,556	31.78%	547	3,935	13.90%	-17.88%
Issaquena	95	606	15.68%	29	499	5.81%	-9.87%
Grenada	1,174	6,447	18.21%	740	7,666	9.70%	-8.51%
Tallahatchie	710	5,025	14.13%	281	4,336	6.50%	-7.43%
Jefferson	446	3,263	13.67%	435	3,197	13.60%	-5.67%
Alcorn	1,077	9,597	11.22%	685	11,320	6.10%	-5.12%
Walthall	592	4,817	12.29%	419	5,329	7.90%	-4.39%
Sharkey	290	1,973	14.70%	218	2,068	10.50%	-4.20%
Kemper	307	3,679	8.34%	559	4,465	12.50%	4.16%
Clay	857	7,281	11.77%	588	7,447	7.90%	-3.87%
Carroll	471	4,200	11.21%	355	4,715	7.50%	-3.71%
Leflore	659	5,853	11.26%	751	8,834	8.50%	-2.76%
Greene	631	4,284	14.73%	534	4,412	12.10%	-2.63%
Franklin	347	2,849	12.30%	323	3,339	9.70%	-2.60%
Humphreys	460	3,410	13.49%	454	3,869	11.70%	-1.79%
Claiborne	655	3,457	18.95%	648	3,765	17.20%	-1.75%
Montgomery	388	3,553	10.92%	388	4,135	9.40%	-1.52%
Tunica	374	2,953	12.67%	453	3,246	14.00%	1.33%
Benton	424	3,318	12.78%	477	3,429	13.90%	1.12%
Covington	600	5,810	10.33%	877	7,723	11.40%	1.07%
Holmes	658	5,663	11.62%	645	6,024	10.70%	-0.92%
Winston	765	6,634	11.53%	912	8,220	11.10%	-0.43%
AGGREGATE	14,151	101,325	13.97%	11656	114,289	10.20%	-3.77%

TABLE III

Absentee Voting in 22 Counties with Highest Absentee Percentages - 2011 Primary Election

COUNTY	ABSENTEES RECEIVED	VOTES CAST FOR GOV	% of ABSENTEE TO VOTES CAST
Quitman	1,041	3,097	33.61%
Noxubee	1,130	3,556	31.78%
Claiborne	655	3,457	18.95%
Grenada	1,174	6,447	18.21%
Issaquena	95	606	15.68%
Greene	631	4,284	14.73%
Sharkey	290*	1,973	14.70%
Tallahatchie	710	5,025	14.13%
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Clay	857	7,281	11.77%
Holmes	658	5,663	11.62%
Winston	765	6,634	11.53%
Leflore	659	5,853	11.26%
Alcorn	1,077	9,597	11.22%
Carroll	471	4,200	11.21%
Montgomery	388	3,553	10.92%
Covington	600	5,810	10.33%
AGGREGATE	11,036	90,993	12.51%

* Denotes only the number of absentee ballots verified and counted, excluding those ballots rejected by election officials.

TABLE IV

Absentee Voting in 13 Counties with Highest Absentee Percentages - 2011 General Election

COUNTY	ABSENTEE BALLOTS RECEIVED	VOTER TURNOUT	% Absentee
Claiborne	648	3,765	17.2%
Quitman	388	2,316	14.6%
Tunica	453	3,246	14.0%
Benton	477	3,429	13.9%
Noxubee	547	3,935	13.9%
Jefferson	435	3,197	13.6%
Kemper	559	4,465	12.5%
Greene	534	4,412	12.1%
Humphreys	454	3,869	11.7%
Covington	877	7,723	11.4%
Winston	912	8,220	11.1%
Holmes	645	6,024	10.7%
Sharkey	218	2,068	10.5%
AGGREGATE	7147	56,669	12.6%

Absentee Ballots Received totals for each county reflect the actual number of absentee ballots received, including those ballots later rejected by election officials and not included in vote tally and certified results.

Section A - Absentee Voting Locations

Absentee ballot applications from the eighteen (18) Mississippi counties analyzed by the Secretary of State's office from the 2011 Primary Election (17 counties reporting absentee ballot numbers of at least 10% of the total voter turnout plus Kemper County which was examined at the request of local officials), revealed more than two-thirds of absentee electors chose to cast an "early" ballot **in person** inside the Circuit Clerk's office rather than mailing in a notarized ballot. Five additional counties (Benton, Covington, Grenada, Noxubee and Tunica) also had absentee ballot voting of 10% or more in the 2011 Primary Election but their ballot documents were not available for examination because of pending litigation or election challenges.

For example, Alcorn County reported 736 absentee ballots included in the 2011 Primary Election count. Of those, 552 were witnessed inside the clerk's office while 184 were cast outside of the office. In contrast, Leflore County's 393 absentee ballots were almost evenly split between in-person voters (203) casting their ballots inside the Circuit Clerk's office and those absentee ballots submitted by mail (190).

Mississippi law allows qualified absentee electors either to cast a ballot inside the Circuit Clerk's office in advance of Election Day or mark a ballot away from the office (notarized and signed by an attesting witness) and mailed to the Clerk's office. Absentee ballots submitted by mail must be received by the clerk by 5:00 p.m. the day before the election. All ballots cast by absentee voters appearing in person in the office of the registrar must be received no later than 12:00 noon on the Saturday immediately before the Tuesday election. All absentee ballots cast by the statutory deadlines will be deposited in the appropriate precinct ballot boxes by the Circuit Clerk upon receipt. (*Reference: Miss. Code Ann. § 23-15-637*)

TABLE V
Location of Absentee Voting - 2011 Primary Election
(Analysis of Counties with Absentee Ballots Comprising 10% or More of Ballots Cast)

COUNTY	VOTED IN PERSON AT CLERK'S OFFICE	OUTSIDE OF CLERK'S OFFICE	% OF ABSENTEE BALLOTS CAST INSIDE OFFICE
Issaquena	86	9	90.50%
Winston	649	107	85.80%
Walthall	473	82	85.20%
Montgomery	307	70	81.40%
Humphreys	246	72	77.40%
Carroll	334	103	76.40%
Sharkey	215	75	74.10%
Quitman	731	266	73.30%
Franklin	242	105	69.70%
Greene	402	199	66.90%
Clay	615	312	66.30%
Tallahatchie	407	208	66.20%
Alcorn	552	184	63.40%
Claiborne	350	210	62.50%
Kemper	163	144	53.00%
Leflore	203	190	51.70%
Jefferson	219	207	51.40%
Holmes	185	205	47.40%
AGGREGATE	6,379	2,748	69.63%

Ballot numbers do not include any absentee ballots rejected and not counted. Ballots from Benton, Covington, Grenada, Noxubee and Tunica counties, all reporting 10% or more of ballot totals as absentee ballots, were not analyzed because ballot boxes were sealed for pending litigation or challenges.

Section B - Reasons for Absentee Voting

In the 2011 Primary Election, 25% of the 9,127 absentee voters requesting an absentee ballot in the 18 counties evaluated by the Secretary of State's office cited a temporary or permanent physical disability as their reason for requesting an absentee ballot.

For those voters who cast an absentee ballot **by mail** in the 2011 Primary Election:

- 1,777 of the 2,748 mail-in absentee applicants cited permanent or temporary disability the reason for absentee voting by mail; and,
- 631 mail-in voters cited age 65 years or older.

For those 6,379 absentee voters casting ballots in person **inside** the Circuit Clerk office in advance of the 2011 Primary Election:

- 2,985 said they would be outside of the county on Election Day,
- 1,787 cited age 65 years or older,
- 826 cited working during voting hours
- 525 cited temporary or permanent disability
- 127 said they were a student outside of the county in which they were registered.

The Secretary of State's analysis also found some absentee voters provided **no** reason on their application to receive a ballot as required by Mississippi law. In the 18 Mississippi counties examined, 15 counties provided absentee ballots to applicants who did not mark a reason on their application. In those 15 counties, 101 applications did not have a reason marked on the form provided by the Circuit Clerk. Of those absentee ballots applied for in person at the clerk's office, 76 did not have a reason marked on the application. Of those applying for an absentee ballot by mail, 25 did not mark a reason on the application.

TABLE VI
REASONS CITED FOR ABSENTEE VOTING - ACTUAL NUMBER BY VOTING LOCATION
2011 PRIMARY ELECTION

(Analysis of Counties with Absentee Ballots Comprising 10% or More of Ballots Received)

IN denotes Inside the Clerk's Office OUT denotes ballots cast By Mail

	TEMPORARY or PERMANENT DISABILITY		AGED 65 OR OLDER		REQUIRED TO WORK DURING VOTING Hrs.		OUT OF COUNTY ON ELECTION DAY		STUDENT		ENLISTED MILITARY		NO REASON GIVEN		ABSENTEE BALLOTS CAST		TOTAL
	IN	OUT	IN	OUT	IN	OUT	IN	OUT	IN	OUT	IN	OUT	IN	OUT	IN	OUT	
Alcorn	39	115	89	28	41	3	369	22	9	4	2	2	1	8	552	184	736
Carrroll	9	90	35	0	4	0	273	12	5	0	0	0	8	1	334	103	437
Claiborne	50	63	55	138	74	0	156	8	9	0	2	0	2	1	350	210	560
Clay	5	270	264	37	60	0	275	2	2	0	7	0	0	0	615	312	927
Franklin	8	59	19	18	59	0	131	23	6	3	2	1	14	0	242	105	347
Greene	43	100	78	9	26	13	229	69	7	4	0	4	17	0	402	199	601
Holmes	17	194	26	11	42	0	93	0	3	0	0	0	3	0	185	205	390
Humphreys	68	57	87	9	23	0	55	2	8	0	0	0	4	4	246	72	318
Issaquena	5	4	19	0	10	0	50	3	2	1	0	0	0	1	86	9	95
Jefferson	30	97	33	73	15	2	134	21	2	4	0	0	4	8	219	207	426
Kemper	11	80	29	49	47	8	82	15	1	0	0	0	2	0	163	144	307
Leflore	10	165	86	16	8	1	91	3	1	1	2	1	3	1	203	190	393
Montgomery	3	55	101	13	96	0	106	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	307	70	377
Quitman	104	78	303	156	99	3	178	10	31	12	2	0	2	0	731	266	997
Sharkey	40	64	10	2	39	0	107	5	15	0	0	0	0	0	215	75	290
Tallahatchie	42	185	63	0	98	22	175	0	12	0	1	0	13	1	407	208	615
Walthall	9	63	192	6	32	0	238	12	1	1	0	0	1	0	473	82	555
Winston	32	38	298	66	53	0	243	3	12	0	2	0	2	0	649	107	756
AGGREGATE	525	1777	1787	631	826	52	2985	212	127	30	20	8	76	25	6379	2748	9127

Ballot numbers do not include any absentee ballots rejected and not counted. Ballots from Benton, Covington, Grenada, Noxubee and Tunica counties, all reporting 10% or more of ballot totals as absentee ballots, were not analyzed because ballot boxes were sealed for pending litigation or challenges.

TABLE VII
REASONS CITED FOR ABSENTEE VOTING - PERCENTAGE BY VOTING LOCATION
2011 PRIMARY ELECTION

(Analysis of Counties with Absentee Ballots Comprising 10% or More of Ballots Received)

IN denotes Inside the Clerk's Office OUT denotes ballots cast By Mail

	TEMPORARY OR PERMANENT DISABILITY		AGED 65 OR OLDER		REQUIRED TO WORK DURING VOTING Hrs.		OUT OF COUNTY ON ELECTION DAY		STUDENT		ENLISTED MILITARY		NO REASON GIVEN		ABSENTEE BALLOTS CAST	
	IN	OUT	IN	OUT	IN	OUT	IN	OUT	IN	OUT	IN	OUT	IN	OUT	IN	OUT
Alcorn	25%	75%	76%	24%	93%	7%	94%	6%	69%	31%	50%	50%	11%	89%	75%	25%
Carrroll	9%	91%	100%	0%	100%	0%	96%	4%	100%	0%	0%	0%	89%	11%	76%	24%
Claiborne	44%	56%	28%	72%	100%	0%	95%	5%	100%	0%	100%	0%	67%	33%	62.50%	37.50%
Clay	2%	98%	88%	12%	100%	0%	99%	1%	100%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	66%	34%
Franklin	12%	88%	51%	49%	100%	0%	85%	15%	67%	33%	67%	33%	199%	0%	70%	30%
Greene	30%	70%	90%	10%	67%	33%	77%	23%	64%	36%	0%	100%	100%	0%	67%	33%
Holmes	8%	92%	70%	30%	100%	0%	100%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	47%	53%
Humphreys	54%	46%	91%	9%	100%	0%	96%	4%	100%	0%	0%	0%	50%	50%	77%	23%
Issaquena	56%	44%	100%	0%	100%	0%	94%	6%	67%	33%	0%	0%	0%	100%	91%	9%
Jefferson	24%	76%	31%	69%	88%	12%	86%	14%	33%	67%	0%	0%	33%	67%	51%	49%
Kemper	12%	88%	33%	67%	85%	15%	85%	15%	100%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	53%	47%
Leflore	6%	94%	84%	16%	89%	11%	97%	3%	50%	50%	67%	33%	75%	25%	52%	48%
Montgomery	5%	95%	89%	11%	100%	0%	98%	2%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	81%	19%
Quitman	57%	43%	66%	34%	97%	3%	95%	5%	72%	28%	100%	0%	100%	0%	73%	27%
Sharkey	38%	62%	83%	17%	100%	0%	96%	4%	100%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	74%	26%
Tallahatchie	19%	81%	100%	0%	82%	18%	100%	0%	100%	0%	100%	0%	93%	7%	66%	34%
Walthall	13%	87%	97%	3%	100%	0%	95%	5%	50%	50%	0%	0%	100%	0%	85%	15%
Winston	46%	54%	82%	18%	100%	0%	99%	1%	100%	0%	100%	0%	100%	0%	86%	14%
	23%	77%	74%	26%	94%	6%	90%	10%	80%	20%	69%	31%	75%	25%	70%	30%

Ballot numbers do not include any absentee ballots rejected and not counted. Ballots from Benton, Covington, Grenada, Noxubee and Tunica counties, all reporting 10% or more of ballot totals as absentee ballots, were not analyzed because ballot boxes were sealed for pending litigation or challenges.

TABLE VIII
REASONS CITED FOR ABSENTEE VOTING - % BY VOTING LOCATION
IN-PERSON VOTING or BY MAIL/OUTSIDE OF CLERK'S OFFICE
2011 PRIMARY ELECTION

(Analysis of Counties with Absentee Ballots Comprising 10% or More of Ballots Received)

In person voting	Out of office By Mail	NO Ballots	Temporary or Permanent Disability	Aged 65 or Older	Required to work during voting hours	Out of County on Election Day	Student	Enlisted Military	No Reason Given	Total Absentee Ballots Cast
Alcorn										
Carroll										
Claiborne										
Clay										
Franklin										
Greene										
Holmes										
Humphreys										
Issaquena										
Jefferson										
Kemper										
Leflore										
Montgomery										
Quitman										
Sharkey										
Tallahatchie										
Walthall										
Winston										
Aggregate Totals										

Ballot numbers do not include any absentee ballots rejected and not counted. Ballots from Benton, Covington, Grenada, Noxubee and Tunica counties, all reporting 10% or more of ballot totals as absentee ballots, were not analyzed because ballot boxes were sealed for pending litigation or challenges.

Mississippi law provides twelve (12) reasons registered voters may apply for an absentee ballot. (**Reference: Miss. Code Ann. § 23-15-713**) Absentee ballots are available prior to Election Day for:

- Members of the Armed Forces or their spouses and/or dependents;
- Members of the Merchant Marines or the American Red Cross, or their spouses and/or dependents;
- Disabled war veterans who are patients in any hospital, or their spouses and/or dependents;
- Civilians attached to any branch of the Armed Forces, the Merchant Marines, or the American Red Cross and serving outside of the United State, or their spouses and/or dependents;
- Persons temporarily residing outside the territorial limits of the United States and the District of Columbia ;

- Students, teachers, or administrators whose employment or studies necessitate their absence from their county of voting residence, or their dependent or spouse who maintains a common domicile outside the county of voting residence;
- Persons who will be outside of their county of residence on election day;
- Persons required to be at work on election day during the times at which the polls will be open;
- Persons temporarily or permanently physically disabled;
- Persons sixty-five (65) years of age or older;
- Parents, spouses or dependents of persons having a temporary or permanent physical disability who are hospitalized outside their county of residence or more than fifty (50) miles away from their residence if the parents, spouses, and/or dependents will be with such persons on election day;
- Members of the Mississippi Congressional delegation, or their spouses and/or dependents.

Mississippi law permits permanently disabled individuals applying for an absentee ballot to submit a statement signed by their physician indicating the person applying for the absentee ballot is permanently physically disabled to such a degree that it is difficult for the elector to vote in person. This will entitle the permanently disabled person to receive automatically an absentee ballot for all elections on a continuing basis for one year without having to reapply for each election. (*Reference: Miss. Code Ann. § 23-15-629*)

Section C - Absentee Ballot Witnesses

During the 2010 General Election, election workers in Lowndes County reported to the Secretary of State's Office an unusually large number of absentee ballots witnessed by **six (6)** individuals. Of the 19,023 votes cast in that county, 1,263 were absentee ballots. Of the absentee ballots, **350** were witnessed by **six (6)** individuals. One of those signed **163** different ballot envelopes as a witness and another witnessed **80** absentee ballots.

Following the 2011 Primary Election, the Secretary of State's examination of absentee ballot envelopes from the 18 counties reporting absentee ballots comprising at least 10% of their Primary Election ballot totals also revealed instances where single individuals had witnessed large numbers of absentee ballots marked outside the Circuit Clerk's office and the mailed in for counting.

Our analysis of 2011 Party Primary absentee balloting found numerous instances where a single individual witnessed more than 10 absentee ballots:

- **Leflore County** - One individual witnessed **27 ballots** (for individuals all living at one of two addresses) and another person witnessed **13 ballots**. It should be noted, as well, there was **no** witness who signed for **41** out-of-office absentee ballots in Leflore County.
- **Kemper County** - One individual witnessed **52 ballots**.
- **Quitman County** - One individual witnessed **24 ballots** and another witnessed **12 ballots**.
- **Clay County** - One individual witnessed **26 ballots** and another witnessed **15 ballots**.
- **Alcorn County** - One individual witnessed **12 ballots**.
- **Tallahatchie County** - One individual witnessed **14 ballots**.
- **Sharkey County** - One individual witnessed **14 ballots**.

There is **no legal limit** in Mississippi on the number of absentee ballots or ballot applications an individual may witness.

Mississippi law does require absentee voters casting their ballots outside of the clerk's office to have their ballots witnessed by another individual who signs the outside of the envelope in which the cast ballot is sealed. (*Reference: Miss. Code Ann. § 23-15-633*) Individuals claiming a temporary disability can cast absentee ballots without having to verify their temporary disability or having their ballot application notarized. The ballot must, however, be witnessed by an individual over the age of 18.

Active duty military personnel are not required to have their absentee ballots notarized or witnessed.

Section D - Absentee Ballot Process

According to both the Secretary of State's examination of ballot applications and absentee ballot envelopes and reports from on-site observers dispatched to 37 counties during the 2011 Primary Election and to 44 counties for the 2011 General Election, there appear to be inconsistencies from county to county and from precinct to precinct in the way the absentee ballot process is handled. In some counties:

- Ballot applications did not appear to be properly witnessed but were nonetheless accepted by election workers.
- Absentee ballots were accepted and included in the vote tally in the 2011 Primary Election although the ballot applications did not appear to be notarized as required by Mississippi law.
- Absentee ballots did not appear to be properly witnessed and/or the witness did not sign and provide the required information on the Attesting Witness Certificate on the back of the absentee ballot envelope.
- During both the 2011 Party Primary and the 2011 General Election, poll observers reported to the Secretary of State's Office instances where the requisite list of absentee voters was not posted at precinct polling locations as required by Mississippi law. (*Reference: Miss. Code Ann. § 23-15-625*)
- When polling precincts closed at the end of Election Day in both the 2011 General and 2011 Primary Elections, some election workers did not appear to strictly follow established protocols for examining and verifying absentee ballots. State law outlines specific procedures election workers should follow for verifying and counting absentee ballots:
 1. At the close of the regular balloting and at the close of the polls, the election managers for each precinct shall first take the envelopes containing the absentee ballots of such electors from the ballot box, and the name, address and precinct inscribed on each envelope shall be announced by the election managers.
 2. The signature on the application shall then be compared with the signature on the back of the envelope. If it corresponds and the affidavit, if one is required, is sufficient and the election managers find that the applicant is a registered and qualified voter or otherwise qualified to vote, and has not appeared in person and voted at the election, the unopened envelope shall be marked "ACCEPTED" and the election managers shall enter the voter's name in the receipt book provided for that purpose and mark "VOTED" in the pollbook or poll list as if the voter had been present and voted in person.
 3. All absentee ballot envelopes shall then be placed in the secure ballot transfer case and delivered to the officials in charge of the election at the central tabulation point of the county. The official

in charge of the election shall open the envelopes marked “ACCEPTED” and remove the ballot from the envelope, and process it through the central optical scanner.

Section E - Absentee Ballot Law Summary

1. Requesting an absentee ballot - Mississippi law allows registered voters to request an absentee ballot *either orally or in writing* from the Circuit Clerk’s office in the county where the voter is registered. A legally designated representative, empowered by a power of attorney for the elector, may also request an absentee ballot application for the voter but that application must have the clerk’s seal and initials on the application. Mississippi law limits application for ballots *by mail* to only those registered voters temporarily residing out of the county of their residence, persons having a temporary or permanent physical disability, persons who are sixty-five (65) years of age or older, or any person who is the parent, spouse or dependent of a temporarily or permanently physically disabled person who is hospitalized outside of his county of residence or more than fifty (50) miles away from his residence, and such parent, spouse or dependent will be with such person on election day. Others meeting legal criteria for casting an absentee ballot must request an absentee ballot in person at the Circuit Clerk’s office from 45 days before the election until 12 noon on the Saturday preceding Election Day. (*Reference: Miss. Code Ann. § 23-15-715*)

Absentee voters requesting an absentee ballot through the mail are required by Mississippi law to have their application notarized unless their reason is a temporary or permanent disability, in which case the application must only be witnessed by an individual who signs, prints their name and provides an address on the official ballot return envelope. Mississippi Law allows any notary public, United States postmaster, assistant United States postmaster, United States postal supervisor, clerk in charge of a contract postal station, or any officer having authority to administer an oath or take an acknowledgment to be an attesting witness of an absentee ballot. If an absentee voter is temporarily or permanently physically disabled, the attesting witness may be any person eighteen (18) years or older and such person is not required to have the authority to administer an oath. (*References: Miss. Code Ann. § 23-15-631; Miss. Code Ann. § 23-15-627; Miss. Code Ann. § 23-15-715*)

2. Absentee ballot witnesses - Mississippi law requires each Circuit Clerk’s office to enclose printed instructions with each absentee ballot containing the following requirements:

(a) All absentee voters, excepting those with temporary or permanent physical disabilities or those who are sixty-five (65) years of age or older, who mark their ballots in the county of residence shall use the Circuit Clerk of that county as the witness.

(b) Absentee voters will not mark the ballot except in view or sight of the attesting witness.

(c) After marking the ballot, fill out and sign the “ELECTOR’S CERTIFICATE” on back of the envelope so that the signature is written across the flap of the envelope to insure the integrity of the ballot. All absent electors shall have the attesting witness sign the “ATTESTING WITNESS CERTIFICATE” across the flap on back of the envelope. The ballot, if mailed, must reach the Circuit Clerk’s office no later than 5:00 p.m. on the day before Election Day.

(d) When the application accompanies the ballot, it shall not be returned in the same envelope as the ballot but shall be returned in a separate preaddressed envelope provided by the registrar.

(e) A person who is a candidate for public office may not be an attesting witness for any absentee ballot upon which the person's name appears.

(f) Any voter casting an absentee ballot who declares that he requires assistance to vote by reason of blindness, temporary or permanent physical disability or inability to read or write, shall be entitled to receive assistance in the marking of his absentee ballot and in completing the affidavit on the absentee ballot envelope. The voter may be given assistance by anyone of the voter's choice other than a candidate whose name appears on the absentee ballot being marked, or the voter's employer, or agent of that employer. In order to ensure the integrity of the ballot, any person who provides assistance to an absentee voter shall be required to sign and complete the "Certificate of Person Providing Voter Assistance" on the absentee ballot envelope.

3. Reasons for absentee voting - Mississippi law provides twelve (12) reasons registered voters may apply for an absentee elector's ballot and cast their ballot in advance of Election Day. (*Reference: Miss. Code Ann. § 23-15-713*) Absentee ballots are available prior to Election Day for:

- Members of the Armed Forces or their spouses and/or dependents;
- Members of the Merchant Marines or the American Red Cross, or their spouses and/or dependents;
- Disabled war veterans who are patients in any hospital, or their spouses and/or dependents;
- Civilians attached to any branch of the Armed Forces, the Merchant Marines, or the American Red Cross and serving outside of the United State, or their spouses and/or dependents;
- Persons temporarily residing outside the territorial limits of the United States and the District of Columbia;
- Students, teachers, or administrators whose employment or studies necessitate their absence from their county of voting residence, or their dependent or spouse who maintains a common domicile outside the county of voting residence;
- Persons who will be outside of their county of residence on election day;
- Persons required to be at work on election day during the times at which the polls will be open;
- Persons temporarily or permanently physically disabled;
- Persons sixty-five (65) years of age or older;
- Parents, spouses or dependents of persons having a temporary or permanent physical disability who are hospitalized outside their county of residence or more than fifty (50) miles away from their residence if the parents, spouses, and/or dependents will be with such persons on election day;
- Members of the Mississippi Congressional delegation, or their spouses and/or dependents.

4. Location and dates for absentee ballot voting - Mississippi law allows absentee electors to either cast their ballot inside the Circuit Clerk's office in advance of Election Day or cast their ballot away from the office (notorized and signed by an attesting witness), and mailed to the Clerk's office. Absentee ballots submitted by mail must be received by the registrar by 5:00 p.m. on the date before Election Day. All ballots cast by the absentee voter appearing in person in the office of the registrar must be cast no later than 12:00 noon on the Saturday immediately preceding elections held on Tuesday. All absentee ballots which have been cast by the deadlines will be deposited in the appropriate ballot boxes by the Circuit Clerk upon receipt. (*Reference: Miss. Code Ann. § 23-15-637*)

**TABLE IX
1 of 3**

ABSENTEE BALLOT ANALYSIS - 2011, 2010 and 2008 GENERAL ELECTIONS
Finalized 2/3/2012

COUNTY NAME	2011 GENERAL ELECTION				2010 GENERAL ELECTION				2008 GENERAL ELECTION			
	ABSENTEE BALLOTS RECEIVED	CERTIFIED VOTER TURNOUT	% Absentee	Change from 2010	ABSENTEE BALLOTS RECEIVED	CERTIFIED VOTER TURNOUT	% Absentee	Change from 2008	ABSENTEE BALLOTS RECEIVED	CERTIFIED VOTER TURNOUT	% Absentee	Change from 2008
Adams	686	10,459	6.56%	1.46%	401	7,865	5.10%	-9.05%	2,221	15,696	14.15%	
Alcorn	685	11,320	6.05%	-0.29%	544	8,576	6.34%	-3.57%	1,505	15,182	9.91%	
Amite	464	6,285	7.38%	2.46%	197	4,004	4.92%	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	
Attala	362	6,006	6.03%	1.60%	233	5,263	4.43%	-6.89%	1,039	9,183	11.31%	
Benton	477	3,429	13.91%	6.32%	193	2,542	7.59%	-6.03%	632	4,638	13.63%	
Bolivar	461	10,301	4.48%	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	
Calhoun	539	5,945	9.07%	2.96%	279	4,567	6.11%	-3.93%	706	7,034	10.04%	
Carroll	355	4,715	7.53%	2.78%	177	3,730	4.75%	-6.94%	697	5,965	11.68%	
Chickasaw	515	6,668	7.72%	1.89%	339	5,812	5.83%	-4.89%	971	9,058	10.72%	
Choctaw	168	3,093	5.43%	-1.62%	221	3,133	7.05%	-2.73%	404	4,128	9.79%	
Claiborne	648	3,765	17.21%	3.98%	410	3,099	13.23%	-4.41%	962	5,453	17.64%	
Clarke	591	6,593	8.96%	4.15%	241	5,003	4.82%	-6.07%	914	8,397	10.88%	
Clay	588	7,447	7.90%	0.04%	617	7,854	7.86%	-4.14%	1,331	11,092	12.00%	
Coahoma	214	5,149	4.16%	-1.14%	296	5,584	5.30%	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	
Copiah	399	9,582	4.16%	1.69%	203	8,214	2.47%	-5.96%	1,222	14,502	8.43%	
Covington	877	7,723	11.36%	5.77%	326	5,840	5.58%	-4.48%	952	9,461	10.06%	
DeSoto	933	36,944	2.53%	-1.87%	1,595	36,265	4.40%	-5.93%	6,646	64,323	10.33%	
Forrest	757	21,842	3.47%	-0.02%	665	19,067	3.49%	-4.75%	2,238	27,184	8.23%	
Franklin	323	3,339	9.67%	4.67%	114	2,279	5.00%	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	
George	376	6,701	5.61%	-0.42%	467	7,747	6.03%	-1.52%	705	9,335	7.55%	
Greene	534	4,412	12.10%	4.97%	248	3,478	7.13%	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	
Grenada	740	7,666	9.65%	-1.06%	754	7,041	10.71%	10.25%	52	11,321	0.46%	
Hancock	617	12,167	5.07%	-0.18%	624	11,885	5.25%	-6.75%	2,047	17,056	12.00%	
Harrison	1309	40,028	3.27%	-0.81%	1,762	43,183	4.08%	-6.00%	6,246	61,957	10.08%	
Hinds	1558	69,943	2.23%	0.13%	1,404	66,820	2.10%	-4.33%	7,008	108,902	6.44%	
Holmes	645	6,024	10.71%	3.64%	390	5,522	7.06%	-3.63%	1,020	9,543	10.69%	
Humphreys	454	3,869	11.73%	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	

2011 numbers pulled from SEMS and calls to counties, 2010 numbers pulled from SEMS and Residual Vote Reports, 2008 numbers pulled from SEMS.

TABLE IX
Continued - 2 of 3

COUNTY NAME	2011 GENERAL ELECTION				2010 GENERAL ELECTION				2008 GENERAL ELECTION			
	ABSENTEE BALLOTS RECEIVED	CERTIFIED VOTER TURNOUT	% Absentee	Change from 2010	ABSENTEE BALLOTS RECEIVED	CERTIFIED VOTER TURNOUT	% Absentee	Change from 2008	ABSENTEE BALLOTS RECEIVED	CERTIFIED VOTER TURNOUT	% Absentee	Change from 2008
Issaquena	29	499	5.81%	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	n/a
Itawamba	283	7,584	3.73%	0.76%	187	6,302	2.97%	-1.71%	465	9,951	4.67%	4.67%
Jackson	716	33,920	2.11%	-0.56%	974	36,401	2.68%	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	n/a
Jasper	571	6,813	8.38%	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	n/a
Jefferson	435	3,197	13.61%	4.99%	213	2,473	8.61%	-9.43%	808	4,478	18.04%	18.04%
Jefferson Davis	342	5,426	6.30%	2.51%	167	4,407	3.79%	-4.96%	645	7,370	8.75%	8.75%
Jones	1113	23,544	4.73%	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	n/a
Kemper	559	4,465	12.52%	9.83%	73	2,715	2.69%	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	n/a
Lafayette	755	12,811	5.89%	-0.05%	681	11,463	5.94%	-6.11%	2,224	18,460	12.05%	12.05%
Lamar	709	18,307	3.87%	-0.39%	737	17,295	4.26%	-2.97%	1,728	23,910	7.23%	7.23%
Lauderdale	1478	21,073	7.01%	1.02%	973	16,247	5.99%	-4.26%	3,393	33,114	10.25%	10.25%
Lawrence	436	5,736	7.60%	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	n/a
Leake	401	6,520	6.15%	2.60%	196	5,525	3.55%	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	n/a
Lee	825	24,827	3.32%	-0.66%	929	23,332	3.98%	-2.45%	2,249	34,960	6.43%	6.43%
Leflore	751	8,834	8.50%	0.40%	606	7,482	8.10%	-2.64%	1,405	13,081	10.74%	10.74%
Lincoln	940	12,525	7.50%	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	n/a
Lowndes	1076	17,485	6.15%	-0.50%	1,257	18,900	6.65%	-3.55%	2,802	27,465	10.20%	10.20%
Madison	1120	33,525	3.34%	0.46%	809	28,047	2.88%	-5.57%	3,995	47,269	8.45%	8.45%
Marion	868	10,481	8.28%	1.45%	552	8,079	6.83%	-4.80%	1,514	13,010	11.64%	11.64%
Marshall	388	9,167	4.23%	0.01%	417	9,864	4.23%	-4.59%	1,453	16,478	8.82%	8.82%
Monroe	550	12,238	4.49%	0.92%	391	10,947	3.57%	-2.94%	1,139	17,496	6.51%	6.51%
Montgomery	388	4,135	9.38%	2.10%	241	3,309	7.28%	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	n/a
Neshoba	511	8,314	6.15%	2.28%	226	5,840	3.87%	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	n/a
Newton	271	7,222	3.75%	0.56%	176	5,509	3.19%	-5.01%	809	9,855	8.21%	8.21%
Noxubee	547	3,935	13.90%	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	n/a
Oktibbeha	725	12,601	5.75%	-0.38%	656	10,687	6.14%	-2.58%	1,638	18,792	8.72%	8.72%
Panola	1267	13,398	9.46%	1.87%	949	12,501	7.59%	-2.71%	1,691	16,416	10.30%	10.30%
Pearl River	755	13,879	5.44%	-0.50%	920	15,490	5.94%	-3.19%	2,049	22,443	9.13%	9.13%
Perry	324	4,806	6.74%	2.20%	165	3,634	4.54%	-3.44%	452	5,664	7.98%	7.98%
Pike	700	13,121	5.33%	0.58%	413	8,688	4.75%	-5.73%	1,893	18,055	10.48%	10.48%

2011 numbers pulled from SEMS and calls to counties, 2010 numbers pulled from SEMS and Residual Vote Reports, 2008 numbers pulled from SEMS.

TABLE IX
Continued - 3 of 3

COUNTY NAME	2011 GENERAL ELECTION				2010 GENERAL ELECTION				2008 GENERAL ELECTION			
	ABSENTEE BALLOTS RECEIVED	CERTIFIED VOTER TURNOUT	% Absentee	Change from 2010	ABSENTEE BALLOTS RECEIVED	CERTIFIED VOTER TURNOUT	% Absentee	Change from 2008	ABSENTEE BALLOTS RECEIVED	CERTIFIED VOTER TURNOUT	% Absentee	Change from 2008
Pontotoc	753	10,364	7.27%	2.94%	350	8,096	4.32%	-3.90%	1,058	12,868	8.22%	
Prentiss	370	7,708	4.80%	-0.06%	389	8,001	4.86%	-2.29%	783	10,944	7.15%	
Quitman	338	2,316	14.59%	-0.32%	338	2,267	14.91%	-5.08%	833	4,168	19.99%	
Rankin	1373	44,329	3.10%	0.28%	1,038	36,820	2.82%	-4.92%	4,882	63,103	7.74%	
Scott	242	8,166	2.96%	1.01%	115	5,885	1.95%	-3.27%	610	11,671	5.23%	
Sharkey	218	2,068	10.54%	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	
Simpson	434	9,467	4.58%	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	
Smith	484	7,028	6.89%	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	
Stone	350	5,921	5.91%	2.01%	196	5,026	3.90%	5.28%	665	7,246	9.18%	
Sunflower	177	5,946	2.98%	0.52%	136	5,530	2.46%	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	
Tallahatchie	281	4,336	6.48%	1.77%	182	3,860	4.72%	-4.60%	647	6,943	9.32%	
Tate	317	8,233	3.85%	-0.90%	353	7,432	4.75%	-4.81%	1,221	12,778	9.56%	
Tippah	420	7,821	5.37%	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	
Tishomingo	293	6,256	4.68%	-0.10%	256	5,354	4.78%	-3.22%	674	8,419	8.01%	
Tunica	453	3,246	13.96%	10.47%	67	1,922	3.49%	-5.03%	369	4,332	8.52%	
Union	569	8,926	6.37%	1.51%	357	7,338	4.87%	-4.10%	1,093	12,195	8.96%	
Walthall	419	5,329	7.86%	-0.30%	418	5,121	8.16%	-7.94%	1,253	7,780	16.11%	
Warren	735	15,399	4.77%	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	
Washington	522	10,887	4.79%	0.86%	411	10,453	3.93%	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	
Wayne	856	8,659	9.89%	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	
Webster	243	4,405	5.52%	1.43%	146	3,570	4.09%	-3.99%	441	5,457	8.08%	
Wilkinson	225	3,134	7.18%	5.10%	44	2,114	2.08%	-5.59%	394	5,139	7.67%	
Winston	912	8,220	11.09%	3.36%	428	5,532	7.74%	-7.97%	1,605	10,221	15.70%	
Yalobusha	217	4,774	4.55%	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	
Yazoo	271	8,463	3.20%	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	n/a	not in SEMS		n/a	
TOTAL/AVG	47,580	893,204	5.33%		30,832	683,831	4.51%		88,398	970,941	9.10%	

2011 numbers pulled from SEMS and calls to counties, 2010 numbers pulled from SEMS and Residual Vote Reports, 2008 numbers pulled from SEMS.

Research Methodology

1. Eighteen (18) Mississippi counties were identified as having 10% or more of their vote totals from absentee ballots by comparing the number of absentee ballots received during the 2011 Primary Election and the preliminary vote totals for each county on August 8, 2011. For those counties not reporting their absentee ballot numbers into the SEMS (Statewide Elections Management System), phone calls were made by Secretary of State staff to local Circuit Clerks to obtain an absentee ballot total for those counties.

Twenty (20) counties were initially identified:

- Alcorn
- Benton
- Carroll
- Claiborne
- Clay
- Franklin
- Grenada
- Greene
- Holmes
- Humphreys
- Issaquena
- Jefferson
- Leflore
- Montgomery
- Noxubee
- Quitman
- Sharkey
- Tallahatchie
- Walthall
- Winston

2. After party officials certified their 2011 Primary Election vote totals on August 15, 2011 (Republican) and August 16, 2011 (Democrat) for all 82 Mississippi counties, another calculation was made which determined two additional counties had recorded absentee ballots of 10% or greater of voter turnout.

The counties were:

- Tunica
- Covington

3. Absentee ballot applications and mail-in ballot envelopes were requested by the Secretary of State's Office for the 22 counties reporting absentee ballots of 10% or greater of voter turnout. Because of pending litigation and/or challenges to the counties' vote results, ballots from Benton, Covington, Grenada, Noxubee and Tunica counties were placed under seal by local elections officials and were not made available for analysis by the Secretary of State's Office.

4. At the request of a Kemper County elected official, absentee ballots were also evaluated from Kemper County, which posted the largest percentage increase in absentee ballot voting from the 2011 Primary Election to the 2011 General Election.

5. The Secretary of State's Office conducted a county by county examination of the absentee ballot applications and mail-in ballot envelopes for accepted/counted absentee ballots from those 18 counties reporting 10% or more of absentee voting (plus Kemper County) to compile information on the reasons for requesting an absentee ballot, the location of absentee voting (in person or by mail) and to examine applications and ballot

envelopes for witnesses and notarizations. Rejected ballots were not examined.

The 18 counties examined were:

- Alcorn
- Carroll
- Claiborne
- Clay
- Franklin
- Greene
- Holmes
- Humphreys
- Issaquena
- Jefferson
- Kemper
- Leflore
- Montgomery
- Quitman
- Sharkey
- Tallahatchie
- Walthall
- Winston

6. Absentee ballot applications were examined individually and a count was made of reasons cited for requesting an absentee ballot. For each county, a list was compiled of the names of all witnesses for absentee ballots marked outside of the Circuit Clerks' offices and then submitted by mail or hand-delivered by an authorized individual as prescribed by law. A tally was made of individuals witnessing 10 or more absentee ballots.

7. Absentee ballot envelopes were examined to determine how many absentee ballots were cast in person (inside the Clerks' offices) and how many were marked outside of the office and submitted by mail in each of the 18 counties examined.

8. Certified elections results were used to determine the total number of ballots cast for the 2011, 2010, 2008 and 2007 elections included in this report's analysis. The numbers of absentee ballots for each election were determined by ballot totals reported to the Secretary of State's Office through the Statewide Elections Management System supplemented by phone calls to individual counties.