

Dear students,

In case you don't already know, I want to tell you about your options – as Grinnell College students – for voting in this year's general election. To be clear: If you are an American citizen who is of voting age, you are able to vote in the election – but **you should act immediately**. Things are more complicated this year, and if you wait too long you may run out of time. Additionally, concerns about possible delays in the mail make it even more important to act immediately.

**Students who reside in Grinnell (Poweshiek County) are eligible to vote in Poweshiek County.** *If you are already registered*, request an absentee ballot from the County Auditor. (“Applying to Vote Absentee” module toward end of this document offers instruction.) You will note that the ballot request asks for an Iowa Driver's License Number or the 4-digit voter PIN, found on your voter ID card. If you have access to neither, call Missy Eilander, the Poweshiek County Auditor, who will tell you your PIN, after she confirms your identity on the phone. (Auditor phone number at end of this message.)

*If you reside in Poweshiek County right now but are not yet registered to vote*, register right now. (See “Registering to Vote” module link.) Then request an absentee ballot. Note that while the “Applying to Vote Absentee” module asks for the PIN, which you won't receive until you have successfully registered, Auditor Eilander says that you can send both applications in to the Poweshiek County Auditor's Office at the same time, and that they will process the ballot request after you are successfully registered.

**Students who are residing elsewhere *may* be able to vote in Poweshiek County, provided you are already registered in Poweshiek County.** In the interest of full disclosure, I will report what I have been able to track down about this. Please read it all before you decide whether to vote in Poweshiek County or wherever you are right now.

Auditor Eilander reports that *if you are already registered to vote in Poweshiek County*, you can request an absentee ballot, even if you are temporarily residing elsewhere during the pandemic. The Auditor reminds us all, however, that ballots may be subject to challenges; she says this not as a threat, but to be transparent about what could possibly happen.

I have posted at the end of this document a link to the Iowa Code, which addresses the situation of “reside temporarily” (§48A.5A Subsection 3). But I add that Wes Hicok, in the office of the Iowa Secretary of State, refers to Subsection 3 as a “grey area.” Both Auditor Eilander and Mr. Hicok are knowledgeable and willing to address questions that you might have about this or other aspects of voter registration and voting.

**Students who are residing outside of Poweshiek County and who are not presently registered to vote in Poweshiek County, will not be able to vote in Poweshiek County** – according to my understanding of what the Auditor says. You should immediately explore the registration and voting provisions in place for wherever you are residing. Many websites provide useful information about voting elsewhere. Here is a good one: <https://www.vote411.org/> **But, again, act immediately**, because rules for registration and voting are specific to each state, and you may find options slip away – or close completely – as time passes.

For those of you who will vote by absentee ballot in Iowa, the remaining module at the end of this document (i.e., Voting Absentee by Mail) provides useful information.

Finally, I'd happy to field questions from anyone about the procedures and material I've presented in this note, though – like many – I am also trying to figure out precisely how the rules apply in the various contexts. If necessary, I could point you in the direction of others – even beyond those I have noted already – who might be able to offer insight.

I am certain, however, of one thing about registering and voting this year: **You'll be much better off if you start the process right now.**

Sincerely,

Barbara Trish ([trish@grinnell.edu](mailto:trish@grinnell.edu))  
Professor, Political Science  
Director, Rosenfield/PPPE

### Potentially useful information

Contact information:

Poweshiek County Auditor Missy Eilander	641-623-5443
Wes Hicok, Office of Iowa Secretary of State	888-767-8683

Links to relevant passages in Iowa Code

Voter Registration, including §48A.5A on Determination of Residency. (Subsection 3 deals with “temporarily residing”) <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/code/2020/48A.5A.pdf>

Iowa Code more comprehensively on Elections in Title II <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/law/iowaCode/sections?codeChapter=48A&year=2020>

Modules (below) to assist with Iowa voter registration, request of absentee ballot, and casting an absentee ballot by mail (provided by Jack Doppelt '74)

- [Registering to vote](#)
- [Applying to vote absentee](#)
- [Voting absentee by mail](#)

Note: The Applying to vote module has been edited from the original.