The coronavirus pandemic for months has been affecting and changing the day-to-day normal we have become accustomed to: Home is now the workplace for many people; Large gatherings at sporting events, concerts, festivals, etc. are a thing of the past; Kids receive their education on a computer rather than at a desk in a classroom; And this coming November, a record number of Americans are expected to vote via mail-in ballots. In 42 states, voters will either have the option to request a mail-in ballot or automatically have one mailed to them; this covers roughly 76% of all registered voters in the country, including the more than 900 thousand registered voters in Allegheny County. Some have argued that this is a bad thing, that mail-in voting is susceptible to widespread voter fraud that could compromise election results in November, but there is no evidence of this. Because reducing the amount of people who congregate together is essential for keeping the coronavirus at bay, and given that current laws throughout the country already give many Americans the option to vote by mail, mail-in ballots have the potential to protect public health and safety while still allowing our democratic tradition to continue this November.

Who can request a mail-in ballot?
Any registered voter in PA can request a mail-in ballot, no excuse needed. If you aren’t already registered to vote, the registration deadline is October 19th.

How do I apply for my ballot?
If you have a driver’s license or other state ID card, you can go here to apply online. Otherwise, you can print out this form and mail it into your county’s voter registration office.

How do I submit my ballot?
Your mail-in ballot request must be received by the county election office no later than October 27 at 5pm. Your actual ballot must be in the mail on November 3rd (Election Day) and received by the county election office no later than November 6th, the Friday following Election Day. You can return your ballot through the mail, drop it off at a drop location (see next page for locations), or take it to the election office in person. Make sure you return your mail-in ballot in the secrecy envelope provided to you. If you do not, it will not be counted. Because so many are expected to vote by mail this November, it is best to exceed these deadlines by 2 weeks to ensure your vote is counted.

Who counts my mail-in ballot?
In Allegheny County, the Board of Elections handles the elections and vote tallying, including mail-in ballots. The Board’s current members are County Executive Rich Fitzgerald and Council Members Sam DeMarco and Bethany Hallam.

What happens if I have issues with my mail-in ballot?
If you never received your ballot or are worried it wasn’t counted, go to your normal polling place on Election Day and explain your situation. A poll worker will give you a provisional ballot you can fill out. Your provisional ballot will only be counted if your mail-in ballot cannot be found, so this will not allow you to vote twice. If your mail-in ballot is successfully counted, the provisional ballot you filled out will be discarded.

Do I have to pay to mail my ballot into the election office?
Nope! The PA State Department announced in late July that those who request mail-in ballots will receive a postage-paid envelope to mail their ballots to the election office.

I’ve already requested a mail-in ballot. Is there any way for me to track it’s status?
Yes there is and it is easy to do so. Simply visit the PA Voter Services website and enter your first and last name along with your date of birth and the county you live in.
List of ballot drop off locations and their dates/times of operation. These locations also offer over-the-counter voting:

Sat., Oct. 10, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.
County Office Building
North Park Ice Rink
South Park Ice Rink
DPW Garage #2 (Carnegie)
CCAC Homewood

Sat., Oct. 17, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.
County Office Building
South Park Ice Rink
CCAC South
Boyce Park Ski Lodge
Shop ‘n Save Hill District

Sat., Oct. 24, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.
County Office Building
Boyce Park Ski Lodge
CCAC South
CCAC Allegheny
North Park Ice Rink

Sun., Oct. 11, 11 a.m. – 7 p.m.
County Office Building
North Park Ice Rink
South Park Ice Rink
DPW Garage #2 (Carnegie)
CCAC Homewood

Sun., Oct. 18, 11 a.m. – 7 p.m.
County Office Building
South Park Ice Rink
CCAC South
Boyce Park Ski Lodge
Shop ‘n Save Hill District

Sun., Oct. 25, 11 a.m. – 7 p.m.
County Office Building
Boyce Park Ski Lodge
CCAC South
CCAC Allegheny
North Park Ice Rink