

Employees Voting in the Upcoming Election

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With the election coming on Tuesday, Nov. 3, a large number of Americans are expected to cast their ballots. The United States Election Project estimates that a record-setting 150 million – or 65 percent of the U.S. population – will vote. This is the highest percentage of eligible voters in more than 100 years. The Washington Post estimated that two weeks before Election Day, at least 31.4 million had already voted.

With this intense interest in the election, employees are asking their employers in North and South Carolina about leaving the workplace on Nov. 3 to cast their ballots. Neither state has any laws providing private employees the right to leave their workplace to vote. They are expected to vote on their own time.

However, some employers' policies or employee handbook provisions may provide for such leave. If not, employers may consider letting employees take paid or unpaid leave to vote. If an employer decides to do so, they should also look at allowing a specific number of hours to vote. Furthermore, they should consider requiring employees to provide notice to a supervisor or manager beforehand so that the employer can make the necessary preparations.

Employers may encourage their employees to take advantage of early voting or voting-by-mail opportunities. In South Carolina, voters may obtain and cast an early absentee ballot in person through Nov. 2 at their county Voter Registration Office or extension office on weekdays. Early voting in North Carolina is likewise available through Oct. 31 on weekdays.

If employees vote by mail, North Carolina election officials must receive the mail-in absentee application by Oct. 27, and the vote must be submitted by mail before Nov. 3. Similarly, if the written vote is submitted in person, it must be done on or before Nov. 3. In South Carolina, the deadline to submit an application to vote by mail is Oct. 24, and the mailed ballot must be received by Nov. 3, which is also the date to submit the ballot in person.

The polls will be open from 6:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. in North Carolina, and from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. in South Carolina.