Numbered Memo 2020-29

TO: County Boards of Elections
FROM: Karen Brinson Bell, Executive Director
RE: Witness or Assistant Address Issues on the Absentee Container-Return Envelope
DATE: October 4, 2020

This memo is issued to provide uniform guidance and further clarification on how to determine if the correct address can be identified if the witness’s or assistant’s address on an absentee container-return envelope is incomplete.

If No Address
If a witness or assistant does not print their address, the envelope is deficient.

Missing ZIP Code or City
As previously explained in Footnote 3 of Numbered Memo 2020-19, failure to list a witness’s ZIP code does not require a cure. G.S. § 163-231(a)(5). A witness or assistant’s address does not have to be a residential address; it may be a post office box or other mailing address. Additionally, if the address is missing a city or state, but the county board of elections can determine the correct address, the failure to list that information also does not invalidate the container-return envelope. For example, if a witness lists “Raleigh 27603” you can determine the state is NC, or if a witness lists “333 North Main Street, 27701” you can determine that the city/state is Durham, NC.

If City and ZIP Code Missing
If both the city and ZIP code are missing, staff will need to determine whether the correct address can be identified. If the correct address cannot be identified, the envelope is deficient. If one of the following criteria are met, you can determine the address and the envelope is not deficient:

- The witness or assistant’s address is the same as the voter’s address – either because the witness or assistant wrote “same as above” or something similar on the address line or because the partial address provided matches the address of the voter – or it is on the same street as the voter’s address;
- The witness’s or assistant’s name and partial address match that of a registered voter in your county in SEIMS; or
• The street address is a valid address in your county. You may confirm this using a county GIS website\(^1\) or office, or a similar tool. Do not use an online directions tool such as Google Maps, which does not identify whether an address is valid.

If there is only a street address and none of the above criteria are met, the county board cannot determine the address and the envelope is deficient. If a P.O. box is listed but the address provided does not include a city or ZIP code, it is not possible to determine the address and the envelope is deficient.

\(^1\) [https://www.lib.ncsu.edu/gis/counties.html](https://www.lib.ncsu.edu/gis/counties.html)