

14 FACTS

About Voting in Federal Elections

From registering to vote through casting a ballot on election day, informed voters are empowered voters. Here are answers to 14 common questions from citizens about voting in Federal elections.



Voter's Checklist— Things To Do Before Election Day

- Confirm you are registered to vote several weeks before election day.
- Update your registration if your address, name, or political affiliation has changed.
- Know how and when to apply for an absentee ballot if you are unable to vote at your polling place on election day.
- Know your options for early voting.
- Know the voter identification requirements in your State.
- Know your polling place and how to get there.
- Familiarize yourself with the voting device used in your jurisdiction. Learn how the device is accessible to voters with disabilities.
- Learn what assistance is available in languages other than English.
- Know what time the polls open and close.
- Become acquainted with the candidates and issues on the ballot.
- Consider becoming a poll worker in your community. Call your local election office to learn more.

REMEMBER



For more information about State-specific requirements and eligibility, contact your State or local election offices or consult The National Mail Voter Registration Form. See the *Voter's Resources* section at the end of this guide for contact and other information.

1 Am I Eligible To Vote?

You are eligible to vote if—

- You are a U.S. citizen.
- You meet your State's residency requirements.
- You are 18 years old. Some States allow 17-year-olds to vote in primaries and/or register to vote if they will be 18 before the general election.

2 How Do I Register To Vote?

You may choose to apply for voter registration by mail, in person, or online.

By Mail

- Download the National Mail Voter Registration Form (NMVRF) from <http://www.eac.gov/NVRA>. You can also find NMVRF and State voter registration forms at libraries, public schools, and city and county clerks' offices.
- Complete the form and submit it by mail according to the instructions. The NMVRF has a "State Instructions" section that lists the requirements for each State.
- North Dakota, Wyoming, and the U.S. territories American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands do not accept the NMVRF. New Hampshire accepts the form only as a request for a State absentee voter mail-in registration form.

In Person

Apply to register to vote at—

- State or local voter registration or election offices.
- The department of motor vehicles.
- Public assistance agencies.
- Armed services recruitment centers.
- State-funded programs that serve people with disabilities.
- Any public facility that a State has designated as a voter registration agency.

Online

- To learn if your State offers online voter registration, contact your State or local election office.

3 When Should I Register To Vote?

Find out your State's registration deadline—

- Access the "State Instructions" section of the NMVRF, at <http://www.eac.gov/NVRA>.
- Contact your State or local election office.
- Many States have online tools where you can check your registration status.

REMEMBER



Contact your State or local election office at least 7 weeks before an election to learn if you are registered to vote and what to do if you are not. Asking well before the registration deadline allows sufficient time to register.



4 Are There Special Requirements the First Time I Vote?

If you registered by mail, you might have to show proof of identification the first time you vote. This proof of identification includes—

- A current and valid photo identification.
- A current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck, or government document that shows your name and address.

You may not have to show proof of identification if—

- You provided copies of the proof of identification with your voter registration form.
- Your State or local election official matched the driver’s license number or Social Security information on your application with a Federal or State identification record bearing the same number, name, and date of birth.
- You are entitled by Federal law to vote by absentee ballot.

REMEMBER

Even if you met the Federal proof-of-identification requirement when you registered, some States may require identification at the polling place. You are eligible to cast a provisional ballot if you do not have sufficient identification at the polling place. Contact your State or local election office for more information.

5 What Is Early Voting?

Some States might allow you to cast a ballot before election day at—

- A jurisdiction’s election office.
- Another designated polling place.
- A ballot drop site.

REMEMBER

Early voting dates and times vary among States. For information, contact your State or local election office.

6 What Is Absentee Voting?

If you cannot go to your polling place on election day, you may qualify to cast an absentee ballot.

- Some States allow you to cast an absentee ballot only if you cannot vote at the polling place for a reason outlined in State law, such as illness or physical absence from the jurisdiction for a certain number of hours on election day.
- Other States offer “no-excuse” absentee voting, which allows any eligible citizen to cast an absentee ballot.
- States also have different deadlines for requesting and submitting absentee ballots. Contact your State or local election office.
- You are entitled by Federal law to vote by absentee ballot in Federal elections if you meet qualifications outlined in the Voting Rights Act, Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act, and Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act.

REMEMBER

After you have received your absentee ballot, read the instructions carefully. Sign your name where it is required. If you return your absentee ballot by mail, be certain to put sufficient postage to the return envelope.

7 Where Do I Vote—Where Is My Polling Place?

- You are assigned to a polling place based on the home address on your voter registration record.

- Some States have ballot drop sites instead of polling places.
- To find out the location of your polling place or ballot drop sites, contact your State or local election office.

REMEMBER

Update your voter registration information each time you move.

8 What Is Provisional Voting?

If your eligibility to vote in a Federal election is in question, you must be offered a provisional ballot at the polling place. The possible reasons include—

- Your name does not appear on the official voter list at your polling place.
- Your eligibility is challenged in accordance with State law.
- You did not provide the required identification to register or at the polling place on election day.
- A court order requires provisional ballots.
- A court order extends polling place hours.
- State law mandates provisional ballots.

You have a right to cast a provisional ballot if you declare you are eligible and registered to vote in that jurisdiction. Your provisional ballot will be counted if the State or local election official later determines that you were eligible and registered to vote under State law.

REMEMBER

Federal law requires States to provide a “free access system” by toll-free number and/or the Internet for you to check the status of your provisional ballot. Contact your State or local election office for more information about your State’s system.

9 How Do I Vote if I am a Uniformed or Overseas Citizen?

To register to vote or request a ballot as a member of the military or overseas citizen, use the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA).

- The FPCA is available at <http://www.fvap.gov>.
- The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) Web portal offers a step-by-step guide to the voter registration process.
- All States and territories accept the FPCA as a simultaneous application for registration and request for an absentee ballot.
- Depending on your State of residence, return the completed FPCA by e-mail, fax, or mail.
- Printed copies of the FPCA are available at U.S. embassies, military bases, and consular offices. Voting Assistance Officers at those sites can provide any information or assistance you may need to complete the form.
- You may also request the electronic transmission of blank voting materials.

REMEMBER

If you need help with absentee voting, visit <http://www.fvap.gov>, contact FVAP at (703) 588-1584 (toll free at [800] 438-VOTE; also available toll free from 70 countries at <http://www.fvap.gov/contact/tollfreephone.html>), or e-mail vote@fvap.gov.

10 Is Voting Accessible if I Have a Disability?

Most polling places are designed to make the voting process accessible to all voters, including voters with disabilities, by including—

REMEMBER

If you have questions about the accessibility of your polling place or voting equipment, contact your State or local election office.

- Clearly marked parking spaces.
- Entrances with ramps.
- Well-marked routes and signage to voting locations.
- Voting equipment that is accessible for individuals with disabilities, including the blind and visually impaired.

11 Is Language Assistance Provided?

The Voting Rights Act requires some jurisdictions to provide voting materials in languages other than English. Other jurisdictions voluntarily offer such assistance. Language assistance may include—

- Equipping polling places with ballots and voting instructions in other languages.
- Staffing polling places with bilingual poll workers.
- Providing voting information online in languages other than English.

Contact your State or local election office to learn more about language assistance in your area.

REMEMBER

The U.S. Election Assistance Commission Web site provides voter information in English, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese. The National Mail Voter Registration Form is also available in those seven languages. This guide is available in English, Cherokee, Chinese, Dakota, Japanese, Korean, Navajo, Spanish, Tagalog, Vietnamese, and Yup'ik.

12 May I Request Assistance To Vote?

Under Federal law, you may bring an individual to assist you in voting for reasons of—

- Blindness.
- Disability.
- Inability to read or write.

Federal law prohibits you from receiving voting assistance from your employer or an agent of your employer, or from an officer or agent of the voter's union. A poll worker can provide voting assistance to—

- First-time voters.
- Voters with disabilities.
- Voters at polling places with new voting equipment.

REMEMBER

Some States offer "curbside voting," in which a poll worker brings all voting materials to your car if you cannot leave your car easily. Check with your State or local election office to see if curbside voting is available in your jurisdiction and for additional provisions about voting assistance.

13 How Do I Report a Problem or File a Complaint?

If you experience a problem at a polling place or with voting procedures in your jurisdiction—

- Contact your State or local election office for information on complaint procedures.
- Register a complaint with the U.S. Department of Justice at (800) 253-3931 or voting.section@usdoj.gov.



State Election Office Contact Information (continued)

GUAM
(671) 477-9791
<http://guamelection.org/>

HAWAII
(808) 453-8683
<http://hawaii.gov/elections>

IDAHO
(208) 334-2852
<http://www.idahovotes.gov>

ILLINOIS
(217) 782-4141 (Springfield)
(312) 814-6440 (Chicago)
<http://www.elections.state.il.us>

INDIANA
(317) 232-3939
<http://www.in.gov/sos/elections>

IOWA
(888) 767-8683
<http://www.sos.state.ia.us/elections>

KANSAS
(800) 262-8683
<http://www.kssos.org/elections/elections.html>

KENTUCKY
(502) 564-3490
<http://www.elect.ky.gov>

LOUISIANA
(800) 883-2805
<http://www.geauxvote.com>

MAINE
(207) 624-7736
<http://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/elec>

MARYLAND
(800) 222-8683
<http://www.elections.state.md.us>

MASSACHUSETTS
(800) 462-8683
<http://www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/eleidx.htm>

MICHIGAN
(517) 373-2540
<http://www.michigan.gov/vote>

MINNESOTA
(877) 600-8683
<http://www.sos.state.mn.us>

MISSISSIPPI
(800) 829-6786
<http://www.sos.ms.gov/elections.aspx>

MISSOURI
(800) 669-8683
<http://www.sos.mo.gov/elections>

MONTANA
(888) 884-8683
<http://sos.mt.gov/elections>

NEBRASKA
(402) 471-2555
<http://www.sos.ne.gov>

NEVADA
(775) 684-5705
<http://nvsos.gov/index.aspx?page=3>

NEW HAMPSHIRE
(603) 271-3242
<http://sos.nh.gov/Elections.aspx>

NEW JERSEY
(609) 292-3760
<http://www.njelections.org>

NEW MEXICO
(800) 477-3632
<http://www.sos.state.nm.us>

NEW YORK
(800) 367-8683
<http://www.elections.ny.gov/>

NORTH CAROLINA
(866) 522-4723
<http://www.sboe.state.nc.us>

NORTH DAKOTA
(800) 352-0867
<http://www.nd.gov/sos/electvote>

OHIO
(877) 767-6446
<http://www.sos.state.oh.us/sos/elections.aspx>

OKLAHOMA
(405) 521-2391
<http://www.ok.gov/~elections>

OREGON
(503) 986-1518
<http://www.sos.state.or.us/elections>

PENNSYLVANIA
(877) 868-3772
<http://www.votespa.com>

PUERTO RICO
(787) 777-8682
<http://www.ceepur.org>

RHODE ISLAND
(401) 222-2345
<http://www.elections.state.ri.us>

SOUTH CAROLINA
(803) 734-9060
<http://www.scvotes.org>

SOUTH DAKOTA
(605) 773-3537
<http://www.sdsos.gov>

TENNESSEE
(877) 850-4959
<http://www.tennessee.gov/sos/election>

TEXAS
(800) 252-8683
<http://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections>

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS
(340) 773-1021 (St. Croix)
(340) 776-6535 (St. John)
(340) 774-3107 (St. Thomas)
<http://www.vivote.gov>

UTAH
(800) 995-8683
<http://elections.utah.gov/>

VERMONT
(802) 828-2464
<http://vermont-elections.org>

VIRGINIA
(800) 552-9745
<http://www.sbe.virginia.gov>

WASHINGTON
(800) 448-4881
<http://www.secstate.wa.gov/elections>

WEST VIRGINIA
(866) 767-8683
<http://www.sos.wv.gov/elections>

WISCONSIN
(866) 868-3947
<http://gab.wi.gov>

WYOMING
(307) 777-5860
<http://soswy.state.wy.us/elections/elections.aspx>

