

Disclaimer: This guide is designed for informational purposes only. It is not legal advice and is not intended to create an attorney-client relationship. The Election Protection Coalition does not warrant any information contained in this guide, nor does the Coalition suggest that the information in this guide should be used as a basis to pursue legal advice or decision-making.

Note: This FAQ is not exhaustive. Situations or inquiries may arise that are not answered below. In those circumstances, contact your hotline captain or command center for assistance. Please make sure to record all of the voter’s contact information should follow-up be necessary.

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1. Am I registered to vote?

You can determine whether the caller is registered to vote by checking the Pennsylvania Department of State’s website (<https://www.pavoterservices.state.pa.us/Pages/VoterRegistrationStatus.aspx>).

2. Where do I vote?

A voter can determine their proper polling place by checking the Pennsylvania Department of State’s website (<https://www.pavoterservices.state.pa.us/Pages/PollingPlaceInfo.aspx>). If a voter has moved recently and has not updated their voter registration, refer to [Question #6](#).

3. What time do the polls open and close?

The polls must be open from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on Election Day.¹ A voter in line at the polling place by 8:00 p.m. must be allowed to vote.

4. When is/was the voter registration deadline?

The voter registration deadline is 30 days before an election.² For the 2018 General Election, the deadline is **October 9, 2018**. Voter registration [applications](#) submitted by mail will be processed if they are postmarked on or before the deadline.³

Pennsylvania also offers online voter registration at register.votespa.com. For most applicants, as long as an application is submitted via the online system by 11:59 p.m. on the voter registration deadline, the voter will be eligible to vote in the upcoming election. Note that if the applicant does not have a PennDOT driver’s license or state ID card, they will have to upload a photograph of their signature or submit their signature by mail.⁴

5. Can I vote without providing identification?

Pennsylvania voters are usually not required to show identification at the polling place.⁵ Voters must show identification if they are voting for the first time or if they have not previously voted in their current election district. Any of the following forms of photo ID are acceptable:⁶

- Pennsylvania driver’s license;
- PennDOT ID card;
- ID issued by any Commonwealth agency;
- ID issued by the U.S. Government;
- U.S. Passport;
- U.S. Armed Forces ID;
- Student ID; or
- Employee ID.

If voters do not have photo ID, they can also present a document that includes their name and address. These include:

- Registration confirmation issued by the County Voter Registration Office;
- Current utility bill;
- Current bank statement;
- Current paycheck;
- Government check;
- Non-photo ID issued by the Commonwealth;
- Non-photo ID issued by the U.S. Government; or
- Firearm permit.

If the first-time voter does not have ID, they can vote a provisional ballot⁷

6. I have moved and I didn’t update my voter registration, can I vote?

Moved within the same precinct (division)	Moved to a different precinct/division or a different county
The voter should go to their polling place (which should be the same for their old and new addresses) and will be permitted to vote a regular ballot after filling out a written affirmation of the change of address. ⁸	The voter should go to the polling place for their former residence and will be permitted to vote a regular ballot after filling out a written affirmation of the change of address. ⁹

7. What should I do if there are equipment problems at my precinct?

Polling places with malfunctioning machines should allow voters to vote by emergency paper ballot.¹⁰

8. I am a registered voter who is not on the rolls where I am. Can I vote where I am?

A voter must vote at their assigned precinct. A voter may vote using a provisional ballot if their name is not on the voter registration list but they believe they are a registered voter and eligible to vote in this election.¹¹

The voter should vote in their correct precinct/division. However, if a voter casts a provisional ballot at the wrong precinct/division, it should be counted as long as the voter lives in that county and only if the voter did not intentionally vote in the wrong precinct/division. The ballot will count only for those races that the voter would have been eligible to vote for in the voter's correct precinct/division.¹²

The County Board of Elections has seven days to determine the validity of a provisional ballot. A voter may check their provisional ballot status after the seven-day period by either by checking online at <https://www.pavoterservices.state.pa.us/Pages/ProvisionalBallotSearch.aspx> or calling 1-877-VOTESPA.

9. My name isn't popping up on the list of registered voters – could it have been removed?

Note that you can take steps to help to determine why a voter's name is not popping up on the list of registered voters:

- Check the voter's registration status using the registration lookup tool to make sure he/she is registered to vote and at the right place. (See [Question #1](#)).
- Has the voter moved recently? Could he/she be registered at an old address? Check that address in the registration lookup tool. (See [Question #1](#)).
- Has the voter changed their name recently, or could he/she be registered under a different name? Check that name (and any variations of the voter's name, especially for hyphenated names, which sometimes trip up databases) in the registration lookup tool. (See [Question #1](#)).
- When/where did the voter register to vote? Was that before the deadline?

Voters should only be removed from the voting list due to:¹³

- The voter's signed, written request;
- The voter's legally established mental incompetency;
- Proof the voter is currently imprisoned or on parole for conviction of a felony;
- A judgment directing the removal;
- The elections office receiving notice of the voter's death;
- The voter returning a preelection confirmation postcard that indicates the voter is no longer a resident;
- Notification the voter is registered to vote in another county or state; or
- Proof that the person is otherwise ineligible to vote.

Any voter whose name was properly removed from the voter registration list must re-register.

10. I have a criminal conviction. Can I vote?

Usually, yes. Individuals who have been convicted of a felony may register to vote unless they are currently serving a felony sentence of incarceration on election day. Voters with misdemeanor convictions or on probation are always eligible to vote, and individuals in pre-trial detention may vote via absentee ballot. However, if a voter was incarcerated for a felony, they will need to re-register to vote before the registration deadline.¹⁴

11. I have been offered a provisional ballot. What should I do?

Voters should only be offered a provisional ballot for one of the following reasons:¹⁵

- The voter's name does not appear in the poll book and election officials cannot determine the voter's registration status;
- The voter is voting in an election district for the first time and does not have an approved ID;
- An election official asserts that the voter is not eligible to vote;
- The voter is voting as a result of a federal or state judicial order; or
- The voter is voting as a result of an order extending the time established for closing the polls.

Other than for these reasons, the voter should be able to cast a regular ballot. Voters should be sure to ask the poll worker if any additional steps will be needed to make sure the ballot is counted. If the individual voting the provisional ballot was not registered, the provisional ballot will not be counted. If the individual voting the provisional ballot was eligible to vote but not at the election district where the ballot was cast, the county board of elections will only count that portion of the ballot that the individual would have been eligible to vote in their proper election district.¹⁶

12. I am a college student. Can I register to vote where I go to school?

Yes. College students attending school in Pennsylvania who meet the generally applicable registration requirements may register to vote if their "habitation is fixed" at their Pennsylvania residence.¹⁷

13. I am physically disabled and need assistance. Will my polling place be accessible?

It should be. However, in some cases a polling place may not be easily accessible for voters with disabilities. If a voter lives in the City of Philadelphia, check here (<http://www.philadelphiavotes.com/en/voters/polling-place-accessibility>) to see if their polling place is fully accessible (most are not). For those outside of Philadelphia, see <http://www.votespa.com/en-us/Pages/Citizen-with-a-Disability.aspx>

If a voter with a disability is assigned to a polling place deemed inaccessible by the County Board of Elections, they may also vote by absentee or "alternative" ballot. The Board of must receive requests for this ballot by 5 p.m. on the Tuesday before Election Day.¹⁸ However, a disabled or elderly voter may make an emergency application for alternative ballot at any time until 8:00 p.m. on Election Day. Both application forms are available here (http://www.votespa.com/en-us/Documents/Alternative_Ballot_Application.pdf) or by calling 1-877-VOTESPA.¹⁹

Alternatively, if the voter is ill or permanently disabled, and the voter's attending physician certifies that the voter is physically unable to go to their polling place or operate a voting machine, then the voter may apply to be on the permanent absentee ballot list (<http://www.dosimages.pa.gov/pdf/PermABApplication.pdf>), and thereby receive an absentee ballot for every election.²⁰

14. I am blind, physically disabled, or cannot read English and require assistance in order to vote. Can I get assistance at the polls?

Yes. A voter who is blind, disabled or illiterate may select a person of their choice (except the judge of elections, the voter's employer or an agent of the employer, or an officer or agent of the voter's union) to enter the voting machine booth with them to assist them in voting. If information about the voter's disability is not recorded on their registration record, the voter will have to make a declaration of the disability at the polling place.²¹

15. I don't know how to use the voting equipment. Can I get help?

Yes. Any voter may request instructions on how to operate the voting machine from election officers before or after entering the voting machine booth but before the voter closes the booth.²²

16. Can I vote absentee or vote in person before Election Day?²³

Absentee voting allows registered voters to vote by mail before an Election Day. Pennsylvania does not offer early or in-person absentee voting. There are three types of voting before election day in Pennsylvania:

- 1) Absentee voting: Only certain individuals are eligible to vote by absentee ballot:²⁴
 - a. Members of the military, regardless of whether or not the individual is present in their municipality of residence on election day;
 - b. Members of the Merchant Marines, religious or welfare groups officially attached to and serving with the armed forces, spouses and dependents of such individuals, and spouses and dependents of members of the military, *provided, however*, the individual is absent from their municipality of residence on election day (see #3 below for more options for these individuals);
 - c. A voter who is ill or physically disabled;
 - d. A voter who expects to be away from their municipality of residence on election day from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.;
 - e. A county employee who will be unable to attend the polls due to election day obligations; or
 - f. A voter unable to go to the polls on election day due to a religious holiday.

Applying for an Absentee Ballot.²⁵ The County Board of Elections must receive an application for absentee ballot (http://www.votespa.com/en-us/Documents/Absentee_Ballot_Application.pdf) by 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, October 30 (the Tuesday before the election). The County Board of Elections will send a paper absentee ballot to the voter.

Returning the Ballot.²⁶ The voter then completes the ballot and submits the ballot to the County Board of Elections, which must receive the ballot before 5:00 p.m. on Friday, November 2 (the Friday before election day). However, in presidential elections, absentee ballots received before 8 p.m. on election day will be counted for the offices of president and vice president.

Identification.²⁷ When applying for an absentee ballot, the voter must provide a driver's license number, last 4 digits of Social Security Number, or a copy of an acceptable photo ID (see list below). If needed, voters have six days following an election to provide the necessary identification. (Note: Voters who are entitled to vote under the Uniformed Military and Overseas Voters Act or by alternative ballot under the Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act are exempt from this ID requirement.)

Acceptable forms of photo ID include the following:²⁸

- U.S. Passport;
- U.S. Military ID;
- Employee photo ID issued by federal, Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania County, or Pennsylvania Municipal government;
- Photo ID issued by an accredited Pennsylvania public or private institution of higher learning; and
- Photo ID issued by a Pennsylvania care facility, including long-term care facilities, assisted-living residences, and personal-care homes.

In case of a voter's emergency:²⁹ If a voter has not requested an absentee ballot but has an emergency and is unable to go to the polls, they may submit a notarized Emergency Absentee Ballot Application (<http://www.votespa.com/en-us/Documents/Emergency%20Absentee%20Application.pdf>) to the County Board of Elections between 5:00 p.m. on the Tuesday before election day and 5:00 p.m. on the Friday before election day. Given the short window between filing the application and when the ballot must be submitted, the voter may want to consider designating another person to pick up and/or drop off their ballot with the County Board of Elections. The form for the voter can be found here (<http://www.votespa.com/en-us/Documents/Designated%20Agent%20Form%20Assist%20Emergency.pdf>) and the form for the designated representative can be found here (<http://www.votespa.com/en-us/Documents/Certification%20of%20Authorized%20Representative%20Form.pdf>).

If the emergency occurs after 5:00 p.m. the Friday before Election Day, the voter may complete and file an emergency application (or letter/other signed document that includes the same information as that provided on the emergency application) with the [Court of Common Pleas](#) in the county where they are registered to vote. If the voter cannot appear in court, they may designate in writing an individual who may obtain an Emergency Absentee Ballot from the Court of Common Pleas and then return it to the County Board of Elections no later than 8:00 p.m. on Election Day.³⁰

- 2) Voting by Elders and Individuals with Disabilities: Additional voting options (i.e., alternative ballots) are available for elderly voters and those with disabilities. See [Question #13](#).
- 3) Military-Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting: Absent uniformed service members (and their eligible dependents) and U.S. citizens living outside of the United States may request an absentee ballot under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA). The voter can get step-by-step assistance and forms at <http://www.fvap.gov/>.

17. What if I requested an absentee ballot but I want to vote in person on Election Day?

With the exception of voters who are in the military or who are ill or disabled such that they cannot vote in person, any voter who has requested an absentee ballot but is in the municipality of their residence on the day of the election must vote in person at their polling place. An absentee ballot issued to such a voter will be deemed void. There, the judge of elections (one of the poll workers) will ask the voter to sign an affidavit.³¹

18. Does my state have Same-Day Registration? If so, what is the process?

No. The last day to register to vote in Pennsylvania is October 9, 2018.

19. What rules apply to people campaigning or “hanging around” my polling place? Can people approach me?

Individuals are generally prohibited from being within 10 feet of the polling place if they are not voting. Electioneering and soliciting are prohibited within the polling place.³²

20. Someone is formally challenging my right to vote. What should I do?³³

Any person, although personally registered as an elector, may be challenged by any qualified elector, election officer, overseer, or watcher at any primary or election as to their identity, as to their continued residence in the election district or as to violations of the election code. (Note that this does not apply to

party membership for primaries.) Challenged voters are required to produce a qualified elector as a witness to make an affidavit of the challenged information.

¹ 25 Pa. Stat. Ann. § 3045.

² 25 Pa. Stat. and Cons. Stat. Ann. § 1326(b).

³ 25 Pa. Stat. and Cons. Stat. Ann. § 1326(b)(2); see also

<http://www.dos.pa.gov/VotingElections/CandidatesCommittees/RunningforOffice/Documents/2018%20ElectionCalendar%20Web%20Version.pdf>.

⁴ <http://www.votespa.com/en-us/Pages/Online-Voter-Registration-FAQ.aspx>.

⁵ *Applewhite v. Commonwealth*, No. 330 M.D. 2012, 2014 WL 184988 (Pa. Commw. Ct. Jan. 17, 2014).

⁶ See <http://www.votespa.com/en-us/Pages/First-Time-Voter.aspx>;

<http://www.dos.pa.gov/VotingElections/OtherServicesEvents/Documents/Voter%20ID%20Guidance%20FINAL.pdf>.

⁷ 25 Pa. Stat. Ann. § 3050(a.4).

⁸ 25 Pa. Stat. and Cons. Stat. Ann. § 1902(a)(1).

⁹ 25 Pa. Stat. and Cons. Stat. Ann. § 1902(a)(2).

¹⁰ 25 Pa. Stat. Ann. § 3017; *Nat'l Ass'n for Advancement of Colored People State Conference of Pennsylvania v. Cortes*, 591 F. Supp. 2d 757, 767 (E.D. Pa. 2008); see also

http://www.dos.pa.gov/VotingElections/Documents/Elections%20Division/Administration/Use%20of%20emergency_paper_ballots.pdf.

¹¹ 25 Pa. Stat. Ann. § 3050(a.4).

¹² 25 Pa. Stat. Ann. § 3050(a.4)(7).

¹³ 25 Pa. Stat. Ann. § 1901.

¹⁴ 25 Pa. Stat. and Cons. Stat. Ann. § 1301; *Mixon v. Connecticut*, 759 A.2d 442 (Pa. 2000) (Ruling unconstitutional Pennsylvania election law stating that convicted felons may not vote until 5 years after their release from prison).

¹⁵ 25 Pa. Stat. Ann. § 3050(a.4);

http://www.dos.pa.gov/VotingElections/Documents/Elections%20Division/Administration/provisional_balloting_procedures.pdf.

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ 25 Pa. Stat. and Cons. Stat. Ann. § 1301; 25 Pa. Stat. Ann. § 2813; see *Dunn v. Blumstein*, 405 U.S. 330, 330 (1972); *Williams v. Salerno*, 792 F.2d 323, 328 (2d Cir. 1986); 1971 Op. Atty. Ga. Pa. 111, 1971 Pa. AG LEXIS 62 (1971).

¹⁸ 25 Pa. Stat. Ann. § 3146.2; <https://www.pa.gov/guides/voting-and-elections/#AbsenteeBallot>.

¹⁹ 25 Pa. Stat. Ann. § 3146.2a; Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act of 1984, 52 U.S.C. § 201 formerly U.S.C. §§ 1973ee-1-6; see, e.g., *N.A.A.C.P. v. Philadelphia Bd. of Elections*, CIV. A. 97-7085, 1998 WL 321253 (E.D. Pa. 1998) (explaining that the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has instituted the process of voting by “alternative ballot” to comply with the provisions of the Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act).

²⁰ 25 Pa. Stat. Ann. § 3146.2(e.1).

²¹ 25 Pa. Stat. Ann. § 3058; § 1504 .

²² 25 Pa. Stat. Ann. § 3056(a)-(b).

²³ <http://www.votespa.com/en-us/voting-and-elections/types-of-voting/Pages/Absentee-Ballot.aspx>.

²⁴ 25 Pa. Stat. Ann. § 3146.1.

²⁵ 25 Pa. Stat. Ann. § 3146.2a.

²⁶ 25 Pa. Stat. Ann. § 3146.6.

²⁷ 25 Pa. Stat. Ann. § 3146.2(e.2).

²⁸ <http://www.votespa.com/en-us/Documents/AcceptableIdentification.pdf>.

²⁹ 25 Pa. Stat. Ann. § 3146.2a.

30 25 Pa. Stat. Ann. § 3146.2a; <http://www.votespa.com/en-us/voting-and-elections/types-of-voting/Pages/Absentee-Ballot.aspx>.

31 25 Pa. Stat. Ann. § 3146.6(b).

32 25 Pa. Stat. Ann. § 3060.

33 25 Pa. Stat. Ann. § 3050.