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 a voter is registered to vote by checking the Washington Secretary of State website (https://voter.votewa.gov/WhereToVote.aspx).

2. Where do I vote?

All counties in Washington State vote by mail. Your ballot is mailed to you at least 18 days before each election. Your ballot packet will include a ballot, a secrecy envelope, and a return envelope. Follow the instructions that accompany your ballot.

Each county also opens a voting center prior to each primary, special election and general election. You can locate your nearest voting center by logging into VoteWA or contacting your county’s elections department.
Military personnel and U.S. citizens overseas may use a Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot available through Voting Assistance Offices at military installations or at U.S. Embassies and Consulates. Washington State law allows all eligible election contests to be voted on this ballot.

If a voter has moved recently and has not updated their voter registration, refer to Question 6.

3. When do the polls open and close?

Your ballot is mailed to you at least 18 days before each election and must be postmarked no later than the election day or returned to a ballot drop box by 8:00 p.m. on the election day.

In addition, each county opens one voting center prior to each primary, special election, and general election. Voters can vote in person at their county voting center. Each voting center is open during business hours during the voting period, which begins 18 days before and ends at 8:00 p.m. on the day of, the primary, special election, or general election. You can locate your nearest voting center by logging into VoteWA or contacting your county’s elections department.

4. When is/was the voter registration deadline?

For the primary and general elections, online and mail registration must be received 8 days before the day of election. For the August 4 primary, the online and mail registration deadlines will be July 27, 2020. In-person registrations may be done between business hours and any time before 8:00 p.m. on election day.

5. Can I vote without providing identification?

When you register, you must provide your Washington state driver’s license, permit, or identification or the last 4 digits of your social security number. If you vote in person at a voting center, you will need to sign a ballot declaration and your signature will be compared to your registration signature. Otherwise, you will need to provide valid photo identification, such as a driver’s license, state identification card, student identification card, tribal identification card, or employer identification card.

If you do not have one of these forms of ID, then you will need to vote by provisional ballot, which shall be accepted if your signature on the ballot declaration matches the signature on your voter’s registration record. An identification notice will then be sent to the voter to confirm the voter’s identification.

If voters are shown as not registered or their right to vote is otherwise challenged, they may still vote by provisional ballot. Before it is counted, a provisional ballot will be investigated by the county auditor to confirm a voter’s registration status.

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

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<th>Moved within the same county</th>
<th>Moved to a different county</th>
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<td>A registered voter can update their address by appearing in person before the county auditor, or at a voting center or other location</td>
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A registered voter may also update their address by (1) sending the county auditor a request stating both the voter’s previous and present addresses; (2) submitting information to the department of licensing; (3) telephoning or emailing the county auditor to transfer the registration; (4) submitting voter registration information through the health benefit exchange; (5) submitting an updated voter registration application; or (6) submitting information to an agency that implements automatic voter registration as designated by the governor, provided that receipt of information is received by an election official at least eight days prior to an election.

If the voter has missed the deadline, the voter may contact the county auditor, and vote according to their previous address.

If the voter moved out of Washington State and has not yet registered in their new home state, the voter may still vote in Washington State, as long as the voter has not canceled their registration.

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

Voters who are voting in person at a voting center should immediately notify the election officers if the voting equipment breaks down while the polls are open. In the meantime, voters should be permitted to vote by paper ballots or by provisional ballots if no machines are available. However, provisional ballots should be used only as a last resort, as provisional ballots will be investigated by the county auditor to confirm a voter’s registration status before they are counted.

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

Confirm that the voter believes that they have registered in time to vote for this election and is at their county voting center. See Question 6 if voter has moved. The voter can check their registration status online: https://weiapplets.sos.wa.gov/MyVote/#/login

The voter can find their voting center by contacting the county auditor’s office https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/auditors.aspx or by logging into VoteWA.

If the voter believes that they registered on time, direct the voter to ask a poll worker to call the county auditor and check whether the voter is registered. If the voter’s registration cannot be verified, let the voter know that they can still vote by provisional ballot. Provisional ballots should be treated as a last resort, though, because they will only be counted if the county auditor can later verify the voter’s registration status.
9. My name isn’t popping up on the list of registered voters – could it have been removed?

Voters’ names can be removed from the voter list if the voters have cancelled their registrations or have become ineligible to vote. Voters can become ineligible by, for example, while being incarcerated for a felony conviction or being declared incompetent by a court. Voters may also be removed from the voter rolls if they have moved, not updated their registration, and failed to vote in the prior two federal general elections. If a voter remains at the same address and chooses not to vote, the voter’s registration cannot be cancelled.

A voter whose name was removed from the voter registration list because of a determination of ineligibility but who later becomes eligible to vote must re-register.

A voter who has not responded to confirmation notices sent by the county auditor, and is on the inactive list, may show up at their polling place to vote and will be permitted to vote a regular ballot if the voter requests to vote at an ensuing election before two federal general elections have been held. A voter whose registration has been properly canceled may vote by provisional ballot. The county elections official will investigate the circumstances of the voter’s registration cancellation and if the cancellation is in error, then the county elections official will count the provisional ballot. However, if the cancellation was proper, the official will not count the provisional ballot and will require the voter to reregister at the voter’s correct address.

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 they are registered to vote and at the right place. (see Question 1)

Has the voter moved recently? Could they be registered at an old address? Check that address in the registration lookup tool. (see Question 1 and Question 8)

Has the voter changed their name recently, or could they 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?

Did the voter fail to vote in the last two federal general elections?

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

If you were convicted of a felony in Washington State, your right to vote is provisionally restored as long as you are not under the authority (in prison or on community custody) of the Washington State Department of Corrections (DOC). The right to vote may be permanently restored by one of the following for each felony conviction:

- A certificate of discharge issued by the sentencing court;
- A court order restoring the right;
- A final order of discharge issued by the indeterminate sentence review board; or
• A certificate of restoration issued by the governor.24
• Once your right is restored, you must re-register to vote in order to receive a ballot.
• If you have questions about your status with Washington State DOC, you can call (800) 430-9674.

Restoring your right to vote

If you were convicted of a felony in a Washington State court, your right to vote is provisionally restored unless you are currently under the authority of DOC (in prison or on community custody).25 If you have questions about whether you are on community custody, call DOC at (800) 430-9674. To permanently restore your rights, see the methods of restoration above.

If you were convicted of a felony in another state or in federal court, your right to vote is restored as long as you are not currently incarcerated for that felony.26

Once your right to vote is restored, you must re-register in order to receive a ballot. You can re-register online with VoteWA, by mail, or in person.

You do not lose the right to vote for a misdemeanor conviction or a conviction in juvenile court.

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

Ask the poll worker why the voter was offered a provisional ballot. Was it for one of the following reasons?

• The voter’s registration record is not available or has been canceled;27
• The voter’s name does not appear in the list of registered voters for the county;28
• There is an indication in the voter registration system that the voter has already voted in that primary, special election, or general election, but the voter wishes to vote again;29
• There is a question on the part of the voter concerning the issues or candidates on which the voter is qualified to vote;30
• The voter returned an absentee or vote-by-mail ballot but has appeared at the voting center to vote;31 or
• The voter does not provide identification when required to do so.32

Other than for these reasons, the voter should be allowed to cast a regular ballot. A provisional ballot should be used only as a last resort. If the voter casts a provisional ballot, remind the voter to ask the poll worker whether any additional steps are needed to make sure the ballot is counted.

A voter can learn either that their provisional ballot was counted or the reason why it was not counted from their county auditor.33

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

You may register to vote in Washington if you have lived in the State for at least 30 days and have established a residential address in the state. If you live on campus, provide your dormitory and room number. Do not provide a P.O. Box.
If you are living outside Washington State, you will retain residency if you are a student and will maintain registration until you register to vote elsewhere. A student must still meet these requirements to be eligible to register:

- A U.S. citizen;
- A legal resident of Washington State at least 30 days before election day;
- At least 18 years old by election day;
- Must not have been declared mentally incompetent by a court; and
- Must not be incarcerated for a felony.

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

Accessible voting units are available starting 18 days before election day, until 8 p.m. on election day. Every county must have at least one accessible voting unit at each voting center. Accessible voting units, which must be wheelchair accessible and screened from others to maintain privacy. Accessible voting units for the blind and sight impaired are also available. If you need assistance or a reasonable accommodation, contact your county auditor.

To find contact information for a county auditor, visit: https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/auditors.aspx

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. Any voter who needs assistance voting is entitled to have some person of their choice, other than the voter’s employer, an agent of the employer, or an officer or agent of the voter’s union, mark the voter’s choices or assist the voter in marking their choices on the ballot.

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

The county auditor or poll workers will have instructions on the use of the voting equipment at the voting center.

16. Can I vote absentee or vote in person before election day?

Voting centers are open during business hours during the voting period, which begins eighteen days before, and ends at 8:00 p.m. on the day of election. Washington is a vote-by-mail state, with early voting starting at vote centers at least 18 days prior to election day for each primary, special election, and general election.

Military and Overseas Voters: are exempt from the regular voter registration deadlines. The last day to register and request a ballot is election day. Military and overseas voters may qualify to receive their ballot as early as 90 days before the election. For more information, see the Military and Overseas Voters webpage.

17. What if I requested an absentee ballot but I want to vote in person on election day?
Registered voters will automatically receive a vote-by-mail ballot, as Washington is a vote-by-mail state, but may also vote in person at the early voting center. However, if election records indicate that the voter has already voted the vote-by-mail ballot, the voter will be given a provisional ballot, which will be counted if the vote-by-mail regular ballot was not received.

18. Does my state have same-day registration? If so, what is the process?

A person who is not registered to vote may register in person at the county auditor’s office, the division of elections if in a separate city from the county auditor’s office, a voting center, or other location designated by the county auditor in his or her county of residence no later than 8:00 p.m. on the day of the election.

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

During the voting period, it is a gross misdemeanor for any person to be within a voting center and attempt to suggest or persuade you, the voter, to vote for or against any candidate or ballot measure. Similarly, it is prohibited for anyone to engage in any practice which interferes with your freedom to exercise your right to vote, solicit signatures to any kind of petition, or to disrupt the administration of the voting center including by obstructing doors or entries to a voting center or ballot drop location.

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

A challenge to a person’s right to vote must be based on personal knowledge of one of the following:

- The challenged voter has been convicted of a felony and the voter’s civil rights have not been restored;
- The challenged voter has been judicially declared ineligible to vote due to mental incompetency;
- The challenged voter does not live at the residential address provided;
- The challenged voter is not a U.S. citizen; or
- The challenged voter will not be 18 years of age by the next election.

The person or entity challenging your right to vote must submit a voter registration challenge form with all supporting documents to the county elections department where you are registered. The county auditor will notify you by letter of the documents filed by the challenger, and the date, time, and location of an administrative hearing relating your voter registration. The administrative hearing is presided over by a county elections official; it is not a court proceeding; and it is open to the public.

You can respond by either participating in the hearing in person, or by submitting written testimony. If you choose to respond in writing, the notice letter contains a declaration form that you could use to respond to the challenge. Your declaration and any supporting documents must be received by the county auditor prior to the hearing. If you do not participate in the hearing, a
decision will be made based on all available information. You may appeal the hearing’s decision to the superior court.

If an election will occur before the hearing, you may still vote in that election. The outcome of the hearing will determine whether your ballot will be counted.

21. Can I vote in the primary election?

The Washington primary will be held on August 4, 2020. See Question 4 and Question 12 for details on registering to vote and minimum requirements.

Washington State is “Top Two, Nonpartisan” which means that a single nonpartisan primary is open to all voters, including independents. There is no option to affiliate with a political party on the voter registration form and all registered voters receive the same ballot regardless of party affiliation.

1 RCW 29A.40.160(9)(a).
2 RCW 29A.40.160(9)(b).
3 RCW 29A.40.160(9)(b).
4 See, e.g., RCW 29A.08.625.
5 RCW 29A.08.140(2).
6 RCW 29A.08.140.
7 RCW 29A.08.140(2).
8 RCW 29A.08.140(2).
9 RCW 29A.08.420.
10 RCW 29A.08.140(2).
12 RCW 29A.08.107(3).
13 RCW 29A.08.515; RCW 29A.08.520.
14 RCW 29A.08.635.
17 RCW 29A.08.625.
18 Id.
19 Id.
20 RCW 29A.08.520(1).
21 RCW 29A.08.520(6)(a); RCW 9.94A.637.
22 RCW 29A.08.520(6)(b); RCW 9.92.066.
23 RCW 29A.08.520(6)(c); RCW 9.96.050.
24 RCW 29A.08.520(6)(d); RCW 9.96.020.
25 RCW 29A.08.520(1).
26 RCW 29A.08.520(1).
27 RCW 29A.08.625.
28 RCW 29A.08.008(5)(a).
29 RCW 29A.04.008(5)(b).
30 RCW 29A.04.008(5)(c).

31 RCW 29A.40.160(14).
32 RCW 29A.40.160(9)(b).
33 RCW 29A.40.160(10).
35 RCW 29A.40.160(6).
36 See RCW 29A.40.160(12).
37 See RCW 29A.40.160(14).
38 RCW 29A.84.510.
39 RCW 29A.84.510.
41 RCW 29A.08.840(2).
43 RCW 29A.08.840(3).
46 RCW 29A.08.840(4).
47 RCW 29A.08.840(6).