



NY STATE VOTER REGISTRATION: COMMON Q & A

Q. If I register, am I registered forever?

A. The details are a bit confusing. No matter where you live you should re-register if you move, change your name or change political parties. If you're not sure you're still registered, play it safe – fill out a new form. You shouldn't be removed from the rolls for simply choosing not to vote for a few years. However, if you haven't voted in a long time or if you haven't received any recent mail from the Board of Elections you should probably fill out a new form.

Q. Should I enroll in a political party?

A. It's up to you. Most people register with a political party, but there is no requirement to do so. Registering as a party member grants you the right to vote in that party's primary election, like the upcoming Presidential primaries. Although, the deadline for this September's primary elections has passed, you should enroll in a party if you want to vote in April's Presidential Primary and the primaries for statewide and other elections that will take place in the coming years. Regardless of whether you choose a party or not, you're free to vote for whomever you wish in the general election. If you wish to change your party enrollment (because you're already registered in a different party or are a registered independent), it is too late to do that and vote in the new party's September 2015 primary. If you re-register and change parties before October 9th, you'll then be able to vote in the following primary elections like the Presidential Primary in April. If you do not wish to become a member of any party, check off the bottom choice in the 'choose a party' box on the form or it may not be considered complete by the Board of Elections.

Q. If I vote in a party's primary election, do I have to vote for that party in the general election?

A. No. In the general election you have the right to vote for the candidate of any party -- or even to write in your own candidate -- no matter what party you chose to enroll in.

Q. Do I need any identification in order to vote on Election Day?

A. Probably not, but you may want to bring ID to be safe. Only certain newly registered voters are required bring an ID to the polls, so if you've voted in your county/NYC in a previous election you shouldn't need one. Most voters who have voted in a previous election will not have to show any identification or proof of citizenship to vote. The mailing or voter card you may have received in the mail is intended to help you locate your polling site, but it is not required to vote. As a voter all you will have to do is sign your name in the poll site book.

However, voters registering for the first time in their present county/NYC, may be asked to show ID at the polls in order to submit their ballot into a scanner, if they did not include their license (or non driver ID) number or the last four digits of their social security number on their registration form, or if their license/ID number/social security number couldn't be verified with the state's database. So new voters should make sure they bring ID with them to the polls and as a precaution, already registered voters may want to do the same. All that said, even if you are asked to produce ID and that ID is rejected by poll workers it is still your right to vote by paper/affidavit ballot.

If you are asked to show ID, all that is required is "current and valid photo identification" with your name and picture such as a driver's license or college ID. Government documents and utility bills or bank statements with your name and address are also acceptable forms of ID.

Q. How do I get an absentee ballot?

A. Ask the people registering you if they have an absentee ballot application. If they don't, look on the bottom of the voter registration form. There you'll find a small box where you can request that an application for an absentee ballot be sent to you. You should fill out and return the application to the Board of Elections as soon as possible. The absentee ballots are sent just prior to the election. If a person is permanently disabled and unable to go to the polls they may apply for permanent absentee ballot status on the application form.

Q. Where do I vote?

A. You should receive a card from the Board of Elections telling you where your polling site is. If you don't, call toll free (866) VOTE-NYC or 311 if you live in NYC or your local Board of Elections or NYPIRG office. You can also find out your polling site online in New York City at: www.vote.nyc.ny.us. Outside of NYC you need to contact your local Board of Elections (<http://www.elections.ny.gov/CountyBoards.html>).

Q. I wasn't born in the USA. Can I still register to vote?

A. Any citizen of the United States can register to vote. You are a citizen if you were born in USA (including Washington DC, Guam, Puerto Rico or the US Virgin Islands). You can also become a citizen through the naturalization process. Holders of green cards are not eligible to vote.

Q. Do I have to vote on all of the officials and issues on the ballot?

A. No. You can vote for as many or as few of the candidates & issues on the ballot as you like.

Q. Will I be called for jury duty if I register to vote?

A. Currently, the names of jurors are drawn from many lists, including: licensed drivers; state taxpayers; registered voters; and library card holders. So, if you have a driver's license, a library card or if you have been mailed a state income tax return, your chances of avoiding jury duty by not registering to vote are very slim.

Q. I'm homeless and don't have a permanent address, can I vote?

A. Yes. It is your right to vote. All you need is the location/address you consider your home for the line that asks for the place where you live and a mailing address (the name of a shelter and a PO Box will do). Put your "residence" down for "Address Where You Live" on the registration form. Put your mailing address (wherever you receive your mail—be it a PO Box, the shelter or a friend's house) down on the next line. You'll get a card in the mail from the Board of Elections sent to your mailing address. It will assign a site near your residence address to vote. If you're a new voter, you may be subject to an ID check - see the first question on this sheet.

Q. I was convicted of a felony, can I vote?

A. If your crime was a felony in New York State, you can register once you are finished with your sentence and/or parole. If you are awaiting sentencing at a facility, on felony probation or were convicted of a misdemeanor, you can register and vote.

Q. How will I know I am registered to vote?

A. As a registered voter you should receive a postcard or mailing from the Board of Elections with information on your election and assembly district plus the address of your polling place. If you're told your name is not on the list at your polling place on Election Day you are still entitled to vote on a paper ballot. (First, ask the poll workers to check that you're at the right table and site.) If you're at the right place and your name isn't on the list, you can also go before a judge on Election Day to secure your right to vote on a machine. If you have any questions or are having problems casting your vote, a flyer about your rights as a voter is required to be at all polling places. Before Election Day, you can check your registration status online at: <http://www.elections.ny.gov/>

Q. Whom should I contact for additional forms or information?

A. In New York City, you can call the Board of Elections hotline toll free at (866) VOTE-NYC (868-3692) to find out if you're registered and to request additional forms. Or, contact your local Board of Elections or NYPIRG office. On the web try www.vote.nyc.ny.us, or www.elections.state.ny.us.

Q. I won't be 18 until later this year. When can I register?

A. You can fill out and submit a voter registration form if you will turn 18 by Dec. 31st. You can only vote however, if you will be 18 by Election Day. Several weeks after you register, or after your 18th birthday, you'll receive a card in the mail from the Board of Elections telling you where and when you can vote.

Q. I moved recently, can I vote in the election?

A. Federal and state laws say you shouldn't lose your right to vote because you've recently made a short distance move. If you moved within the same Election District (E.D.) you should be able to vote on the same paper ballot and submit it to the scanner as you always have. (If you've moved within the same apt. building or dorm, you probably have the same E.D.) If you moved out of you E.D. but within the same county (or within the five boroughs of NYC) you'll have to go to your new polling site to cast a paper ballot called an Affidavit Ballot. Unfortunately, if you've moved from out of state, from county to county or into or out of NYC you'll need to reregister. Contact your local Board of Elections (or (866) VOTE-NYC in NYC) for more info.

For more information contact: Your local NYPIRG office, the NYPIRG Voter Helpline at (212) 349-6460, or your local Board of Elections.