



# Your Right to Vote in New York State: College Students

The right to vote is fundamental in a democratic society. The following information will help make it easy for you to exercise this right. To be eligible to vote, you must:

- be a United States citizen
- be 18 years old by December 31 of the year in which you register (note: you must be 18 years old by the date of the general, primary or other election in which you want to vote)
- live at your present address at least 30 days before an election
- not be in jail or on parole for a felony conviction
- not claim the right to vote elsewhere
- have registered to vote.

If you are in college, the following information will help you to decide whether to register and vote in your home district/state or at your college address. There are many good reasons for registering and voting at either residence, but keep in mind, in most cases the final choice is really yours. You can, of course, register and vote in only one locality – either at your home address or at your college address.

## *What are the reasons for registering and voting in my college community?*

In making the choice where to register to vote, you should consider that, while you might have a close relationship with and interest in your home community, you *do also* have a stake in the local issues of your college community. Issues such as off-campus housing and zoning restrictions, the environment, taxes, transportation and personal safety all affect your quality of living. Voting in your college community also is more convenient and relieves you of the need to apply for and return an absentee ballot. Every voter needs to have information about the issues and the candidates. Registering and voting at college can give you the opportunity to become involved with, and informed about, the local issues in your college town or city. Becoming involved in the issues, and learning about local politics, are some of the ways in which you can begin to build a relationship with other residents of the community. If you consider the college community your primary residence, you should register to vote in that community.

## *Am I really a resident of my college community?*

Although there have been some historical challenges to the residency of college students by some involved in elections in New York State, the county boards of election have become aware of the legal issues involved in questioning or challenging students about their current or future intentions for residing in the college locality. If you are concerned about how you will be treated when submitting your voter registration application in your college community, check with your campus student affairs office, NYPIRG chapter, or other student organizations involved in political activity. You can also check with the town/city clerk or the county board of elections.

Students live in their college towns anywhere from nine to 12 months of the year, for at least four years. This means that students are no more transient than the average American family, which typically moves once every four years. Moreover, the U.S. Census Bureau considers students to be residents of their college community. Federal funds are distributed to municipalities based on figures that include the student population. Students contribute to the college community in many valuable ways. They work as volunteers in a host of civic organizations, help to create jobs in the community, bolster the local economy, and pay sales and gasoline taxes.

## *What are the reasons for registering at my home address?*

If you don't consider your college community your primary residence and/or you have a special interest in the local issues at your home address, you have a good reason for voting there. The people and issues you vote for will have impact that is more lasting on you if you intend to return to this location to live. It is also possible that you are still subject to taxes and student loan/scholarship regulations at your home address. If this is the case, having a voice in the policy decisions about these issues might be important for you. Just remember, if you want your vote to be counted at your home residence, you must be registered at that address and be aware of absentee ballot regulations and procedures. If you are not from New York State and wish to vote in your home community, check your state's board of elections web site for information about how to do so.

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\*\*The League of Women Voters of New York State is a unique, multi-issue, nonpartisan, political organization. It encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy. \*\*

### ***How do I know how, when, and where to register and vote?***

You may register in person at your local board of elections or at any state agency participating in the National Voter Registration Act, on any business day throughout the year. You may register by mail. Forms are available from your county board of elections, town and city halls, post office, political parties, various state offices, and the League of Women Voters. Contact the League of Women Voters of New York State - 1-866-LWVNYS1, the New York State Board of Elections - 1-800-FOR-VOTE, or your county board of elections to have a voter registration form sent to you. You may also download a voter registration form in New York State. Go to <http://www.elections.state.ny.us> to find an online voter registration form that you can download.

### ***How do I get an absentee ballot?***

You need an absentee ballot if you are a registered voter but will be away from your county on Election Day. You can request an absentee ballot from your county board of elections or download one from the New York State Board of Elections website (<http://www.elections.state.ny.us/>). Upon completion, your application must be mailed or delivered to your county board of elections. Once they have received your application, your county board of elections will mail or give the ballot to you. To vote by absentee ballot in New York State, your ballot must be post-marked on or before Election Day and must be received by the board of elections no later than seven days after Election Day.

### ***How do I register to vote?***

You need to fill out and submit a Voter Registration form. You may register in person at your local board of elections or at any state agency participating in the National Voter Registration Act, on any business day throughout the year. You may also register by mail. Forms are available from your county board of elections, town and city halls, post offices, political parties, various state offices, and the League of Women Voters. Contact the League of Women Voters of New York State - 1-866-LWVNYS1, the New York State Board of Elections - 1-800-FOR-VOTE, or your county board of elections to have a voter registration form sent to you. You may also download a voter registration form in New York State from <http://www.elections.state.ny.us/>. Complete, sign, and submit the form, either in person or by mail.

### ***If I register to vote, will I be called for jury duty?***

The rolls of prospective jurors are compiled from a number of sources, so registering to vote does not necessarily mean that you will be called. Similarly, *not* registering to vote does not necessarily mean that you will *not* be called for jury duty. If you are called and feel that you cannot serve, jurors can often be excused for a valid health reason.

### ***To obtain a Voter Registration form or Absentee Ballot Application form, or to find out dates for the elections, for registering, for filing absentee ballot applications and submitting ballots:***

- Call the NYS Board of Elections at 1-800-367-8683, or download the forms/calendar from the web site for the New York State Board of Elections (<http://www.elections.state.ny.us>).
- Call, write to, or download forms/calendar from the web site for your local county board of elections. You can get their contact information from the NYS Board of Elections.
- Call your local League of Women Voters, or the League of Women Voters of New York State at 518-465-4162 or toll free at 1-866-598-6971, or go to our web site at <http://www.lwvny.org/>.

### ***To check your voter registration status:***

You should receive in the mail before the election a card that informs you of your polling place. If you do not receive such a card, call your local board of elections and ask them:

1. Am I registered to vote?
2. Is my registration status set to "Active"? If not, to what is it set?
3. Will my name appear in the polling place roll book on Election Day?

### ***If you are not on the rolls at your polling place:***

If you believe you are registered to vote and are not on the rolls, ask for an "affidavit" (paper) ballot, and ask the poll worker for advisement about following up on your status. You are legally entitled to an affidavit (paper) ballot and must be given one.

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