

LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS'
OF NEW YORK STATE

FIRST VOTE

A guide for new voters
in New York State



Written and distributed by the League of Women Voters® of New York State

VOTING BASIC

Where can I get information about voting?

Consult or contact the following:

New York State Board of Elections

www.elections.ny.gov | 1-800-367-8683

Your local county Board of Elections

www.elections.ny.gov/CountyBoards.html

New York City Board of Elections

www.vote.nyc | 1-866-868-3692

League of Women Voters of New York State

www.lwvny.org | lwvny@lwvny.org | 518-465-4162

Your local League of Women Voters

www.lwvny.org and click on “Find a Local League”

Vote 411 Electronic Voter Guide

Info on the races and candidates specific for your address – www.vote411.org

You can also contact political parties, newspapers, candidates and civic organizations, and consult their websites.



Vote 411



Please Join Us

Membership is open to women and men.

There are 42 local Leagues across NY state. Joining at any level automatically confers membership at every level: local, state and national.

Membership enables you to support the League and receive publications from all three levels, and provides the opportunity to be involved in local, state and national issues.

Visit www.lwvny.org and click on **JOIN**

To find a local League in your area, click on **FIND A LOCAL LEAGUE.**

Am I eligible to vote in New York State?

In order to vote, you must:

- be a United States citizen
- be 18-years old by the date of the general, primary or other election in which you want to vote
- live at your present New York State address at least 30 days before an election
- not claim the right to vote elsewhere
- have registered to vote
- not be currently incarcerated for a felony conviction
- not be currently adjudged incompetent or incapacitated to vote by order of a court

REGISTERING TO VOTE

How can I register to vote?

Register online at (scan QR code for more information):

- NYS Board of Elections (BOE) website at elections.ny.gov
- NYS Department of Motor Vehicles (If you already have a NYS Drivers license, permit, or Non-Driver ID) website at <https://dmv.ny.gov/more-info/electronic-voter-registration-application>



Download voter registration form and mail or submit it in person:

- NYS BOE website
- County Boards of Elections
- Request a form be mailed to you:
- Online from NYS BOE
- Call NYS BOE hotline at 1-800-FOR-VOTE (1-800-367-8683)

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In person at:

- County Board of Elections offices
- Select NYS government agencies
- NYS Department of Motor Vehicles offices

When do I need to file a voter registration form?

You must file a new form (or register at MyDMV) if you are registering to vote for the first time in NYS, if you change your name, or want to change your party affiliation.

If you move within NYS, you may need to re-register. Please refer to the section on the next page for information about re-registering if you move within NYS.

Where do I file the voter registration form and when is it due?

You can file your completed form by mailing it to your county Board of Elections. Contact the State Board of Elections or your county Board of Elections for deadlines (see page 2).

You can also hand in the form in person at your county Board of Elections or at many NYS government agencies on any business day of the year, but you must file it at least 10 days before the election.

What are the identification requirements necessary for voter registration?

The voter registration form asks for the ID number on your current NYS Drivers License or Non-Driver Photo ID, or the last four digits of your Social Security Number. You do not have to supply BOTH of these pieces of information. The Board of Elections will use this ID number to check your identity. If you do not have either of these numbers, you may need to show at your polling place a valid photo ID, a current utility bill, bank statement, paycheck, government check or some other government document that shows your name and address the first time you vote.

How do I know that I have successfully registered?

If you are registered, your county BOE will send you an Information Notice by mail between the 3rd Tuesday in April and the 2nd Friday in May each year telling you that you are registered and where to vote (your polling place). If you are registering for the first time, you should receive a card within 4 to 6 weeks after submitting your application. The card will confirm your registration or ask you for missing information. If you don't get this card, call your county Board of Elections

REGISTERING TO VOTE

to see if your application was processed. You can also use the online facility at the NYS Board of Elections' website (<https://voterlookup.elections.ny.gov/>) to see if you are registered and to determine your polling place.

Can I register to vote before I turn 18-years old?

16 and 17-year olds may pre-register to vote. You may pre-register in section 2 on the NYS voter registration form and you will automatically be eligible to vote when you turn 18 years old. You must be 18 years old to vote on or before the date of the general, primary or other election in which you want to vote.

After I have registered for the first time, what if I move within my county or within New York City?

If you move within NYS, you may need to reregister. In 2019, NYS passed a law permitting statewide voter registration transfers, also known as "Registration Portability." The law allows the Board of Elections to transfer your registration and enrollment information to wherever you move within the state. This enables you to vote on an affidavit (paper) ballot if you move to a new county even if it has not received your change of address information. Your affidavit ballot will be counted once the Board of Elections verifies your voter registration.

We strongly recommend that if you move, you still submit a voter registration form with your new information or visit MyDMV to change your registration online.

Do I have to choose a political party when I register to vote?

No, it is your choice. If you choose not to register in a political party, simply mark the box on the form that says "I do not wish to enroll in a party." You may enroll in a party or change your party enrollment at a later time by filing another voter registration form. To vote in a party primary, you may change your party registration up to and including February 14 to take effect for the presidential (April) and federal and state (June) primaries. Any party enrollment changes made after February 14 will not take effect until after 7 days after the June primary.

Is there any benefit to joining a political party when I register to vote?

Yes. Choosing a party allows you to vote in that party's primary election, which in New York State is open only to party members. Also, only enrolled party members can sign nominating petitions, which are circulated by candidates seeking to have their names placed on the election ballot. You do not have to vote for your party's candidates in the general election. You may vote for any candidate from any party.

What is a primary election?

A primary is an election that takes place within each of the political parties before the general election. When two or more members of one political party wish to run for the same position (State Senator, for example), a primary election will be held. The winner of the primary will be the party's candidate in the general election. If there is only one candidate running from a party, there is no primary.

ELIGIBILITY QUESTIONS

I am on parole from prison for a felony conviction. Can I vote?

Yes, If you are otherwise eligible, you may vote if you are on parole for a felony conviction. Individuals who are currently incarcerated for a felony convictions cannot vote.

Note: Once you have been released from incarceration, your right to vote will automatically be restored; however, you will likely need to re-register to vote, even if you were previously registered.

I have a criminal history. Am I eligible to vote?

YES. In New York, you CAN vote with a criminal record if you:

- Were convicted of a misdemeanor;
- Are on parole;
- Are on probation;
- Are in jail or prison for any reason other than a felony conviction. This includes anyone who is awaiting grand jury action, awaiting trial, or serving a sentence for a misdemeanor;
- Were not sentenced to prison or had your prison sentence suspended;
- Served your maximum prison sentence;
- Were pardoned

NO. In New York, you CANNOT vote with a criminal record if you:

- Are currently incarcerated for a felony conviction.

Note: Once you have been released from incarceration, your right to vote will automatically be restored; however, you will need to re-register to vote, even if you were previously registered.

I am in jail or prison. Can I still vote?

Yes, if you are otherwise eligible, you may vote if you are in jail or prison for any reason other than a felony conviction. This includes anyone who is awaiting grand jury action, awaiting trial, or serving a sentence for a misdemeanor.

If you are in jail or prison and eligible to vote, you should register to vote in the county

of your permanent home address. List the jail or prison address as the place where you receive your mail temporarily.

I am eligible to vote, but since I am in jail or prison, I will not be able to go to the polling place to vote. What should I do?

You may vote by absentee ballot or Early Mail Ballot. See page 8 for more information.

I'm homeless. Can I vote?

Yes, you can register to vote if you meet the other requirements. You should list the location – park, shelter, etc. – where you regularly stay as your place of residence, but you must provide a mailing address so that notifications from the Board of Elections can be mailed to you. The mailing address provided can be a shelter. You will receive a postcard from the Board of Elections at the address you list that will tell you where to vote. You will need to provide some kind of identification as described above.

Where do I vote when I am in college out-of-town?

When attending college outside your hometown, you may vote in person or by absentee ballot or Early Mail Ballot (see page 8) in your home community if you are registered to vote there. In NYS, you may register to vote in your college community. Many states allow college students to register and vote where they attend college but some do not if students are not permanent residents in that state. Check with the town or city clerk or the county Board of Elections in your college community to find out if you may vote there.

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

Jury duty lists are selected randomly from licensed drivers, state taxpayers, social services recipients, and registered voters. You have just as much chance to be selected as a juror if you drive as you do if you are a registered voter.

VOTING PROCEDURES

What do I need when I go to vote?

You must be registered. If you registered by mail or online, you may be asked for identification the first time you vote. Acceptable forms of ID include a Drivers License or current photo ID, or a copy of a current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck, or other government document that shows your name and address.

How do I find out what I am voting for before I get my ballot?

It is wise to know who and what will be on the ballot before you go to your polling place. Many newspapers and the League of Women Voters publish voters' guides before elections listing the candidates and their background information. Your Board of Elections' website often provides information on what offices are to be filled and who the candidates are. The website VOTE411 (www.VOTE411.org) provides information on the races and candidates specific to your address. When you enter your polling place, look for a sample ballot listing the candidates and their party affiliations, the offices they are seeking, and any questions placed before the voters.

What are referendum questions, ballot issues, and propositions?

These are proposals by local or state legislatures that are voted on by registered voters. For example, the legislature may propose an amendment to the State Constitution or ask for approval for the borrowing of money for a specific purpose such as a highway. These proposals require a "yes" or "no" answer, and are easy to miss. Remember to look for them on the back of your ballot.

What are "Write-ins"?

Any person's name that is not listed on the ballot can be written in by you for any office. Write in the name of the candidate of your choice on the line of the ballot that says "WRITE IN."

How do I vote?

When you enter the polling place, sign in with one of the poll workers. If you have any questions at any point in the process, be sure to ask a poll worker; they are there to help you. In most NYS counties, voters use paper ballots and optical scanning equipment. The poll worker will give you a ballot and a privacy cover so that you can keep your vote secret. You will be directed to a booth to mark your ballot in private. Make sure to mark the ballot according to the directions. You will then take your ballot to the scanner and feed it in. The scanner counts your vote and your paper ballot is securely saved in case a recount is needed. Some counties may be using a new all-in-one voting machine on which you will be selecting your choice of candidates on a computer and verifying your ballot before it is cast. You can check with your local Board of Elections.

What if my name is not in the paper poll book or on electronic poll book?

If you are at a poll site during Early Voting or on Election Day, and your name is not in the poll book (either paper book or electronic poll book), ask to complete an affidavit ballot (sometimes called a provisional ballot). Make sure you are at the correct poll site for your address, and if so, do not leave without completing an affidavit ballot. After the Election Day, the county Board of Elections' office will research your registration and count your affidavit ballot, if you are a qualified voter. You should follow up with a call or visit to your county Board of Elections to confirm that your ballot was counted. In certain counties, including NYC, the Board of Elections will send you a letter advising you whether or not your vote was counted.

Suppose I need help or am disabled in some way?

If you have any questions about the voting procedure, ask the poll workers to help you. They can show you how to use the voting machine. You may bring a friend or relative with you to help you vote, but not your

employer or union representative. Each poll site has a special machine called a Ballot Marking Device (BMD). This machine will assist voters to read ballots to voters and make the ballot larger; these devices are available for all voters but especially for those with disabilities. Ask for help to use this equipment.

WHO IS ELECTED WHEN?

When are elections held?

Primary elections in New York State — other than presidential primaries — will be held the fourth Tuesday in June. Presidential primaries are held in the Spring. Polls for all elections are open from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. in all counties.

General elections are held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. Poll sites are open from 6 a.m. until 9 p.m. There is also Early Voting in New York State. Early Voting allows you to vote in person at a poll site within your county for nine (9) days before the General Election Day. The poll sites for Early Voting will not necessarily be your usual poll site. Each county Board of Elections will determine the location, hours and whether you can vote at any poll site in your county for early voting or at an assigned one. Check with your county Board of Elections website. You do not need a special reason to vote early and your vote will be counted on Election Day.

Voting on school budgets and the election of school board members usually occur on the same day in May throughout New York State; check with your local school district for information for dates and information on the ballot. Many village elections are held in the spring. Check with your county Board of Elections for the dates and polling times for these elections.

How do candidates get on the ballot?

Most candidates get on the ballot by filing a petition containing a specified number of signatures of members of their political party, as required by the New York State Election Law. Some political parties

designate particular candidates at their conventions.

Are some elected offices voted on during even-numbered years and others during odd-numbered years?

Yes. In every even-numbered year, New York State citizens elect the following to two-year terms:

- all members of the U.S. House of Representatives who represent us in Washington, D.C., and
- all members of the New York State Assembly and Senate who represent us in Albany

In every other even-numbered year, every four years, ballots are cast for President and Vice President of the United States.

In even-numbered non-presidential-election years, every four years, New York State citizens elect the following state officials:

- Governor and Lieutenant Governor
- Comptroller
- Attorney General

U.S. Senators, who represent New York State in Washington D.C., are elected to 6-year terms in some even-numbered years. One third of the U.S. Senate runs for election on any given even-numbered year.

In odd-numbered years, ballots are cast for many local town, county, and city offices as prescribed by their charters. Some local elections are also held in even-numbered years. Check your county Board of Elections for dates of elections in your area.

ABSENTEE AND EARLY MAIL BALLOT VOTING

Can I vote if I won't be home on Election Day?

Voters may vote early for nine (9) days before Election Day (see page 7).

Voters may also vote by Early Mail Ballot or by Absentee Ballot if they are unable to vote in person.



Absentee Ballot

- absence from county or New York City on election day
- temporary or permanent illness or physical disability
- permanent illness or physical disability
- duties related to primary care of one or more ill or physically disabled individuals
- a patient in a VA Hospital
- detention in jail or prison for any reason other than a felony conviction (this includes anyone who is awaiting grand jury action, awaiting trial, or serving a sentence for a misdemeanor).

An application for an absentee ballot must be filled out and submitted to the Board of Elections by mail by seven (7) days before Election Day, or in person by the day before Election Day. The Board of Elections will mail or give you an absentee ballot. Fill the ballot out, and mail it by the day before the election, or hand deliver it to your Board of Elections before or on Election Day.

Early Mail Ballot

Any registered voter may apply for an Early Mail Ballot.

- You may apply for an Early Mail Ballot in any of the following ways:
- Apply online at <https://ballotapplication.elections.ny.gov/home/earlymail>
- If you have a print disability, which means any disability that interferes with the effective reading, writing, or use of printed material, and require a ballot with accessible features you may apply using the online Accessible Ballot Application portal.

- By going in-person to your local county Board of Elections
- By designating another person to deliver your application in-person to your local county Board of Elections and receive your ballot
- Applications requesting an Early Mail Ballot must be received by the board of elections in your county no later than ten (10) days before the election. For Early Mail Ballots to be received in-person, applications must be received by your board no later than the day before the election.

What if I join the military and am sent away from home or overseas?

Every base has a voting officer who has information about the voting requirements for each state. Military and overseas voters are eligible to apply for and receive their ballots electronically. There is also information on the NYS Board of Elections' website at: <https://elections.ny.gov/military-and-overseas-federal-voting>.

If I am disabled, must I vote by absentee ballot?

No. Each poll site must have a Ballot Marking Device for disabled individuals that allows you to vote in privacy. You may ask for assistance. Not all poll sites are accessible to the disabled. If you require special access, check with your local Board of Elections to determine accessibility. If your assigned poll site is inaccessible, ask the Board of Elections to assign you to an accessible poll site.

You may also vote by absentee ballot. If you have a long-term illness or disability, you can apply for a permanent absentee ballot and you will automatically receive your ballot before each primary and general election.