

Voter Registration

[Download a Voter Registration Form](#)

Reminder: The deadline to register to vote in the November 3, 2009 General Election is October 5th, 2009, so any registration form must be returned either in person to your Board of Elections, Secretary of State's office, office of the registrar or any deputy registrar of motor vehicles, a public high school or vocational school, a public library, the office of a county treasurer, or a state or local office of a designated agency or postmarked no later than October 5, 2009.

Does everyone who wants to vote in Ohio have to be registered to vote here?

Yes.

What are the qualifications to register and to vote in Ohio?

You are qualified to register to vote in Ohio if you meet all the following requirements:

1. You are a citizen of the United States;
2. You will be at least 18 years old on or before the day of the general election. (If you will be 18 on or before November 3, you may vote in the primary election for candidates, but you cannot vote on issues until you are 18);
3. You will be a resident of Ohio for at least 30 days immediately before the election in which you want to vote;
4. You are not incarcerated (in prison or jail) for a felony conviction under the laws of this state, another state or the United States;
5. You have not been declared incompetent for voting purposes by a probate court; and
6. You have not been permanently disenfranchised for violations of the election laws.

You are eligible to vote in elections held in your voting precinct more than 30 consecutive days after you are duly registered to vote in this state.

Where do I vote?

Where you vote depends on where you are determined by law to have a qualifying voting residence. Your qualifying voting residence is determined by the county board of elections using guidelines established by Ohio law (Revised Code (R.C.) 3503.02). You may vote only from the residence that qualifies as your voting residence. Your voting residence is the place in which your habitation is fixed and to which, whenever you are absent, you intend to return. Also, your voting residence is a location you consider to be a permanent, not a temporary, residence. You will not lose your voting residency in Ohio if you leave temporarily and intend to return to Ohio, unless you are absent from the state

for four consecutive years. You may contact your local board of elections if you have any questions regarding your specific situation.

(Exception: You will not lose your residency after four years if your absence from Ohio is due to your employment with Ohio or the United States government, including military service, unless you vote in, or permanently move to, another state or country.)

If you do not have a fixed place of habitation, but you are a consistent or regular inhabitant of a shelter or other location to which you intend to return, you may use that shelter or other location as your residence for purposes of registering to vote.

[For information on voting rights of U.S. citizens living outside the U.S., please click here, Uniformed and Overseas Citizens.](#)

May a college student register and vote from his or her school address in Ohio?

Yes, a college student may vote using his or her Ohio school residence address. However, the student may not also vote an absentee ballot where he or she last lived (e.g., with one or more parent or guardian). When a college student votes from his or her school address, the school residence is considered to be the place to which the student's habitation is fixed and to which, whenever the student is absent, the student intends to return, and is considered by the student to be his or her permanent residence at the time of voting.

How can I register to vote?

[You may download a voter registration form from by clicking here.](#) You also may ask a county board of elections ([click here for the Ohio County Boards of Elections Directory](#)) or the Secretary of State's office to mail a registration form to you.

You may obtain a form in person, and register in person, at any of the following locations:

- The office of the Secretary of State or any of the 88 county boards of elections;
- The office of any Deputy Registrar of the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles;
- Public libraries;
- Public high schools or vocational schools;
- County treasurers' offices; or
- Offices of designated agencies including:
 - The Department of Job and Family Services;
 - The Department of Health – Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program;
 - The Department of Mental Health;
 - The Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities;
 - The Rehabilitation Services Commission; or
 - Any state-assisted college or university that provides assistance to disabled students.

When you have completed your voter registration form, please review it carefully for completeness and mail it or personally deliver it to your county board of elections or the Secretary of State's Office. Another person, or one of the offices listed above, may deliver it for you, but you will want to ensure it reaches the board within 10 days and no later than 30 days before the election at which you want to vote.

What is the registration deadline?

Ohio has a 30 day voter registration requirement. However, valid registrations that are received or postmarked by the 29th day before an election will be processed for that election.

Registration by U.S. Mail

If you register to vote using the U.S. Mail, you may send your properly completed and signed registration application to your county board of elections ([click here for the Ohio County Boards of Elections Directory](#)), the Secretary of State's office, any state or local office of a designated agency, a public high school or vocational school, a public library, or the county treasurer's office. Your application must be postmarked by the 29th day before the election to be eligible to vote in that election.

Registration in person

If you do not submit your registration application by U.S. Mail, you must deliver it to a county board of elections, the office of the Secretary of State, a public library, high school or vocational school, county treasurer's office, any Deputy Registrar of the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles office or designated agency no later than the registration deadline for the election in which you want to vote.

You also may entrust your completed registration application to another person for delivery to elections officials. However, that person must deliver your application to a county board of elections or the Secretary of State's office within 10 days after you completed the application, or by the 29th day before the election, whichever is earlier. If you have been registered to vote in Ohio for 30 consecutive days and maintain the qualifications of an elector, you are entitled to vote at elections conducted in your precinct or to request an absentee ballot.

Do I have to sign my voter registration application?

Yes; Ohio law requires the applicant to sign the voter registration application. "Sign" or "signature" means your written, cursive-style legal mark written in your own handwriting.

However, if you do not use a cursive-style legal mark in your regular business and legal affairs, "sign" or "signature" means another legal mark that you use in your regular business and legal affairs that is written in your own handwriting.

What if I am unable to sign my voter registration form or other election documents?

If you are unable to sign your own name and have no other legal mark, make an “X,” if possible, on the application signature line and have the person who witnessed you making that mark write his/her name and address beneath the signature line.

If you are unable to make an “X,” you must indicate in some manner to the person assisting you that you want to register to vote. The person registering you must sign the application form and attest that you indicated that you want to register to vote.

May a person who has my “power of attorney” sign my name to my voter registration application?

No. However, if by reason of disability you are unable to physically sign your name or affix your mark to the application, you may appoint an “attorney-in-fact” in accordance with the specific requirements of R.C. 3501.382. Your attorney-in-fact then may sign a voter registration application on your behalf, but only at your direction and in your presence.

What are my obligations to keep the board of elections informed of address or name changes?

If you are already registered to vote but have moved within Ohio and/or changed your name, you must update your voter registration by submitting a new voter registration form or change of address form for your new residence ([Change of address forms may be obtained by clicking here](#)).

Ohio’s voter registration application also serves as a change of address and change of name form. A form may be obtained [online](#), at all locations where voter registration forms may be obtained, and from the probate court and the court of common pleas of any Ohio county.

You may personally deliver your completed change of name and/or address form to any of these offices: the Secretary of State, a board of elections, a public high school or vocational school, a public library, a county treasurer’s office, any Deputy Registrar of the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles or an office of a designated agency. Designated agencies include:

- The Department of Job and Family Services;
- The Department of Health (including the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program);
- The Department of Mental Health;
- The Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities;
- The Rehabilitation Services Commission; and
- Any state-assisted college or university that provides assistance to disabled students.

If you return your completed change of name and/or address form by U.S. Mail, you must send it to your county board of elections or the Secretary of State’s Office.

If your change of name and/or address form is completed properly, the board of elections will update your registration and send you a notice reflecting your new name and/or address. If your form is incomplete, the board will send you a notice of the information necessary to update your registration. If your valid change of name and/or address form is received or postmarked at least 29 days before an election, you will be eligible to vote a regular (rather than a provisional) ballot at that election. You may vote in person on or before Election Day or by mail via absentee ballot.

You may also update your registration during the 28 days immediately before, or on the day of, an election, but this may require you to vote a “provisional ballot” as described later in this guide.

Do I declare my political party affiliation when I register?

No. Under Ohio election law, you declare your political party affiliation by requesting the ballot of a political party in a partisan primary election. Additionally, Ohio law provides that, by signing a declaration of candidacy for a minor party candidate, you become affiliated with that minor political party.

If you do not desire to affiliate with a political party in Ohio, you are considered to be an unaffiliated voter. An unaffiliated voter (identified by some people as an “independent voter”) does not vote the ballot of a political party in a primary election. However, an unaffiliated voter may vote the Official Questions & Issues Ballot, if there is one for the voter’s precinct at the election.

Where do I send my completed absentee ballot request form?

Send your completed absentee ballot request form to your local county board of elections ([please click here for the Ohio County Boards of Elections Directory](#)) or mail your registration form to the Ohio Secretary of State's office at 180 East Broad Street, 15th Floor, Columbus, Ohio 43215.

May I vote if I have been convicted of a crime?

As noted under the “Voter Registration” section of this guide, a person currently serving time in jail or prison for a felony conviction can neither register to vote nor vote. Additionally, a person who has twice been convicted of a violation of Ohio’s elections laws is permanently barred from voting in Ohio. An otherwise qualified person convicted of a misdemeanor may vote, and an otherwise qualified person who had been convicted of a felony may register and vote while on probation or parole, or after completing his or her jail or prison sentence.

What happens after I submit my voter registration application?

If the information contained on your application is found to be complete and truthful, the board of elections for the county in which you reside will accept your voter registration application. The board must register you to vote not later than 20 business days after

receiving your application and promptly mail a notice to your voting residence address confirming that you are registered to vote, identifying your voting precinct and the location of your precinct polling place, and stating the identification requirements for voting.

If the board does not accept your registration application, it must immediately mail you a notice stating why your application was rejected and offering you the opportunity to submit a properly completed registration application.

If you do not receive a notice that your registration was accepted or rejected, please contact your county board of elections before Election Day to determine if the board received your application.

Can I check my voter information online?

Yes. You may check your voter information by performing a “Voter Information Search” [by clicking here](#). If performing such a search returns the information you registered, your county board of elections has successfully processed your voter registration form. If the search does not return your information, please contact your county board of elections to check on the status of your registration. You may also be able to check your voter information through your county board of elections’ Web site, although not all county boards have the capacity to provide this service