



—FAQ—

Am I eligible to register and vote in California?

You are eligible to vote in California if you are a United States citizen, a resident of California, and will be 18 years of age or older on Election Day (November 8, 2016). If you meet these conditions, you can register to vote.

Why should I vote?

Voting is an opportunity to voice your opinion on how you would like government to run. Your vote helps elect Presidents, representatives in Congress, city council members, and many other decisions that have a direct impact on your life. Through voting you have the power to help establish new laws or repeal ones you disagree with. Voting gives you the power to strengthen our democracy.

How do I register to vote?

You can register to vote online at RegisterToVote.ca.gov or call the Secretary of State's Voter Hotline at (800) 345-VOTE (8683). Voter Registration Applications are also provided at many places throughout California, including your County Elections Office or City Hall, public libraries, post offices, Department of Motor Vehicles Field Offices, and Armed Forces Recruitment Offices.

Is there a deadline to register to vote?

If you want to vote in the Presidential Election on November 8th, 2016, you must register on or before October 24th, 2016.

Will I get called to jury duty if I register to vote?

Possibly, but you can get called even if you are not registered. California law states you are qualified to be a juror if you are a U.S. citizen, are at least 18 years old, and can understand and speak English. Registering to vote does not increase your chances of being summoned, so you have nothing to lose by registering.

How do I know if I'm already registered?

Many counties allow voters to check their registration status online via their county election website. For voters living in counties without online registration status lookup tools, contact your county election office to check your status.



All registered voters (except those who register to close to the deadline) receive a “Sample Ballot” from their county election office. Registered voters also receive an official voter information guide from the California Secretary of State. Vote-by-mail voters begin receiving ballots four weeks prior to Election Day. If you do not receive these materials, you are most likely not registered at your current address and should contact your county election office immediately to verify and update your registration record.

Can I vote at home but have my ballot sent to my school address?

Yes. As a college student, you may choose to register in the town you’re attending college or the town you lived before college; it’s your choice. The address you list under “Address Where You Live” on your voter registration form will determine what local races and ballot issues you’ll vote on, and the address under “Where You Get Your Mail” tells our office where to mail your voting information. Your mailing address can be an on-campus or off-campus address, or even your parents’ home.

Can I still vote while studying abroad?

If you are a student temporarily living outside the United States, you can register to vote and apply to vote by mail using the Federal Post Card Application. To submit your ballot, mail or fax your ballot to your county’s office of elections on or before Election Day. An empty ballot can be e-mailed to you but it must be returned by postage or fax.

What if I move or change addresses?

Your voter registration record should always reflect your current residence. However, if you have moved from your home into a temporary residence (not your permanent residence), you can continue to use your prior address for the purpose of voting.

Where is my polling place?

The address of your polling place is on the back page of the sample ballot booklet that your county elections official mailed to you. You can also look up your polling place at: www.sos.ca.gov/elections/polling-place.

What should I bring with me to the polling place?

Although California voters are not required to show identification at their polling place, you should bring identification with you when you vote for the first time. A California-issued driver’s license or ID card, passport or student ID card are all forms of acceptable identification.



I vote by mail and forgot to re-register when I moved, can I go to a polling place and vote?

In most cases, you cannot vote if you missed the registration deadline. Speak with your county elections official about your specific circumstances to see if something can be done. You have the right to vote with a provisional ballot, which will be counted only after elections officials have confirmed you are registered to vote in that county and you did not already vote in that election.

Can I vote for a candidate that belongs to a different political party than the one I belong to?

In a general election you can vote for any candidate regardless of what party you are registered with or if you are registered with No Party Preference (NPP).

For presidential primary elections, NPP voters will receive a “non-partisan” ballot that does not include presidential candidates. However, an NPP voter can still vote the presidential ballot of parties that have decided to allow NPP voters to do so. You may ask your county elections office or a poll worker at your polling place for a ballot for participating parties. If you want to vote for a party that is not allowing NPP voters, you must reregister to vote for that specific party.

How can I change my political party?

You must re-register to vote in order to change your political party. There are currently six qualified parties in California: the American Independent Party, the Democratic Party, the Green Party, the Libertarian Party, the Peace & Freedom Party, and the Republican Party.

Do I have to vote on each contest on the ballot?

No. You do not have to vote on each contest for your ballot to be valid. Many voters skip contests when they are uncertain of how to vote.

Who counts the votes?

The county you are registered in counts your votes. The Secretary of State’s Elections Division then uses that information to produce the official compilation of vote totals for each statewide election.

Can colleges request voter registration forms?



Yes. Colleges can request voter registration forms by contacting our office. To request voter registration forms, contact our Voter Education and Outreach Services Team by: Phone: (916) 651-3070, Fax: (916) 653-3214, or Email: MyVote@sos.ca.gov