

The right to vote is fundamental in a democratic society. The following information will help you exercise this right. For additional information, call the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts at 617-523-2999 or visit the League's website, www.lwvma.org. You can also find information about candidates, ballot questions, voter registration, and location of your polling place at the League's election information site, www.VOTE411.org.

Who is eligible to register to vote?

To be eligible to vote in Massachusetts, you must be a Massachusetts resident and a U.S. citizen who will be at least 18 years old on the date of the next election. There is no waiting period to register if you have just moved to Massachusetts.

Where and how do I register to vote?

You can register to vote in person at any registration event OR online OR by mail OR in your local election office OR at certain state agencies. In Massachusetts, the last day to register to vote for any election is 20 days before the election. The one exception is for Massachusetts residents who become U.S. citizens after the voter registration deadline has passed; they may register to vote at their town or city hall until 4 p.m. on the day preceding an election.

How do I register to vote online?

Anyone with a Massachusetts driver's license or a state-issued ID card can register to vote, update an address, or change a party affiliation at www.registertovoteMA.com. Online voter registration forms must be submitted by midnight on the date of the voter registration deadline.

How do I register to vote by mail?

Mail-in voter registration forms are available at all local election offices and many post offices and libraries. Or you can download a form from the Massachusetts Secretary of State's website: www.sec.state.ma.us. Registration forms submitted by mail must be postmarked no later than the voter registration deadline. They can also be hand-delivered to your local election office by the deadline.

Can I register to vote at the polls?

No.

Can I register to vote if I am under 18?

If you are 16 or 17 and a Massachusetts resident, you can pre-register to vote starting in August 2016 at the Registry of Motor Vehicles OR online if you have a driver's license or state-issued ID OR by using a paper voter registration form. You will receive notification and automatically be added to the voter rolls when you turn 18.

Can I register if I am an out-of-state college student?

You have two choices: 1) You may register to vote in Massachusetts using a college dormitory, apartment, etc., as your legal residence if you intend to make it "home" for the time being OR 2) you may register in your home state and vote by absentee ballot. Be aware that registering to vote in Massachusetts may be considered a declaration of residency, potentially making you subject to other laws that govern state residents, and may have implications for your tuition, insurance, taxes, and any scholarships and/or loans you might have from your home state.

How do I fill out the voter registration form?

Follow the directions on the paper form, sign it, complete the address for the local election office in the city or town where you live, place a first-class stamp on it, and mail. The online voter registration form requests the same information. Voter registration forms require your driver's license number or the last four digits of your social security number. If you have neither, you must write "none" in the box on the form and then provide a copy of acceptable identification either with the mail-in form or at your polling location when you vote for the first time.

Do I enroll in a political party when I register?

At the time you register, you can choose to enroll in a political party or you can choose to be "unenrolled" --that is, not signed up in any party. Members of political parties may vote only in their own party's primary elections. Unenrolled voters and members of political designations or minor parties may vote in the party primary of their choice and remain unenrolled.



Where do I vote?

To find your polling place, you can visit www.VOTE411.org, or www.wheredoivotema.com or call your town or city clerk's office.

When are elections held?

Presidential elections occur every four years, with the primaries held early in the year and the general election in November. Elections for governor and other statewide officials are held every four years, in the even-numbered year that is not a presidential election year. State senator and representative and congressional elections occur in even-numbered years, with the primary in September and the general election in November. Each town sets its own dates for local elections: these usually occur annually in the spring. City elections occur in odd-numbered years; preliminary elections are held in September or October and the elections occur in November. For state and federal elections, the polls must be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. If you are in line when the polls close at 8 p.m., you can still vote.

What procedures do I follow at the polls?

Sample ballots and instructions are posted at the polls. Upon entering the polling place, give your address and name so the poll worker can check it off the list before giving you a ballot. Once you get your ballot, go to a booth where you mark your choices for the candidates for offices and ballot questions. Feel free to ask for help from election officials if you have any questions. If you need assistance because of vision impairment, disability, inability to read or to read English, you may seek help from either a person of your choice or from election officials. Some precincts will have ballots available in languages other than English.

Who do I call if I have a problem voting?

If you feel that your right to vote has been violated in any way, call the Elections Division at 1-800-462-VOTE (8683). You can also ask to speak with your town election officials.

Do I have to show identification to vote?

You generally do not have to show identification. However, you may be asked to show suitable identification when you check in at your voting place if:

- You are voting for the first time in Massachusetts;
- The identification number on your voter registration form could not be verified;
- You are an inactive voter;
- You are casting a provisional or challenged ballot; or
- A poll worker has reasonable suspicion about your identity.

Suitable identification, which must show your name and address, includes a copy of current and valid photo identification, current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck or other government document. You do not have to show a photo ID.

Please note that passports, birth certificates, naturalization papers, and student IDs are not acceptable forms of identification because they do not include your address. If you cannot show suitable identification, you will be given a provisional ballot.

A provisional ballot will be given in any of the following situations:

- Your name does not appear on the official voters' list;
- Your name or other information is listed incorrectly on the voters' list;
- Your party enrollment is incorrect;
- You are unable to provide proper identification; or
- Under some circumstances, if voting for the first time.

For more information on provisional ballots, go to the www.sec.state.ma.us

What if my name does not appear on the voters' list?

If your name is not on the voters' list or inactive voters' list or is listed incorrectly, you can still vote. You can go to your local election office to further investigate your eligibility. If proof that you have registered is found, the official will issue you a certificate. You can vote at the election office by absentee ballot or take the certificate back to your polling place to vote. Or you can vote by provisional ballot (see above).

What if I can't get to the polls on Election Day?

You can cast an absentee ballot under three circumstances:

- You will be absent from your city or town on Election Day;
- You have a physical disability preventing you from voting at the polling place; or
- Your religious beliefs prevent you from voting on Election Day.

Additionally, early voting will be available for November elections in presidential election years only, beginning with the November 8, 2016 election. In these elections, early voting will begin eleven days before the election, starting on the Monday two weeks before the election and ending on the Friday before the election. Check with your town's election official for early voting locations and hours.

How do I apply for an absentee ballot?

You or your family member must apply in writing to the local election office in the city or town where you live, either by filling out an application form in person or by mail. You can also download the absentee ballot application form here: www.sec.state.ma.us. You can apply for an absentee ballot in person at your election office, fill out the application, and then cast your absentee ballot, all in the same trip.

What are the deadlines for voting absentee?

The deadline for applying for an absentee ballot is noon on the day before an election. If you plan to vote by mail, be sure to submit your application with sufficient time for you to receive your ballot and return your ballot to your local election office by the close of the polls on Election Day. For federal elections, your absentee ballot must be postmarked by Election Day and arrive no later than 10 days after the election.

**League of Women Voters of Massachusetts
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