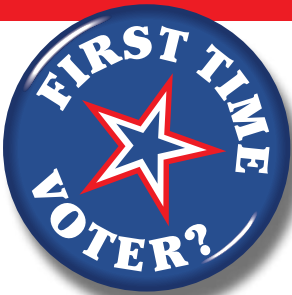




Pretty much everything
you could ever want to know
about voting in Texas.



VOTTEXAS.ORG

You count. Texas makes sure.





CONTACT INFORMATION

This guide is designed to be your one-stop source on voting in Texas. However, if there's something we didn't touch upon, or you would like to know more, please contact the Office of the Texas Secretary of State, by writing:

Texas Secretary of State
Elections Division
P.O. Box 12060
Austin, Texas 78711-2060

By emailing: elections@sos.state.tx.us

By calling toll free: **1.800.252.8683**

By calling direct: **512.463.5650**

By faxing: **512.475.2811**

Or by visiting: www.votexas.org

Our offices are open 8:00 a.m. 'til 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday (except on state and national holidays) and during the hours the polls are open on all uniform election days, including primary elections, the second Saturday in May, and the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November.

To learn more about the responsibilities of the Texas Secretary of State's Office, including election dates, deadlines, election law opinions, election returns, and more, visit: www.sos.state.tx.us.





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WELCOME

Thank you for your interest in learning more about voting in Texas. In our history, Texas has been governed by no less than six sovereign powers. As a result, Texans have learned the importance of speaking up—and one of the best ways to speak up is to vote. By casting a vote, you're telling local, state, and national officials where you stand on the issues most important to you and, indeed, deciding on who those elected officials are in the first place. Rest assured, in the Lone Star State, your vote counts. Texas makes sure.

Still, you may have some questions. That's why the Office of the Texas Secretary of State — the people charged with making sure voting in Texas is easy, transparent, and open to all — created this guide. It's full of information on how to register to vote, where to vote, what to bring, what the process is like, and much more. As to who and what to vote for, well, we're relying on you for that bit of information.

If there's anything else we can provide you, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Texas Secretary of State





YOU'RE ELIGIBLE TO VOTE IN TEXAS IF...

1. You are a United States citizen;
2. You are legally registered to vote in Texas (See our section on Registering to Vote);
3. You are at least 18 years old on Election Day;
4. You are not a convicted felon (you may be eligible to vote if you have completed your sentence, probation, and parole) and;
5. You have not been declared by a court of law to be either "totally mentally incapacitated or partially mentally incapacitated without the right to vote."



FIRST, YOU HAVE TO REGISTER TO VOTE.

MOST IMPORTANT: To vote in Texas, you must be registered, but that's easy. Simply pick up an official application, fill it out, and mail it at least 30 days before the election date. You don't even need a stamp.

WHERE TO GET A VOTER REGISTRATION APPLICATION.

1. You can pick up an application and register at the Department of Public Safety when applying for or making changes to a driver license;
2. You can register at your county Voter Registrar's office. (In most Texas counties, the Tax Assessor-Collector is also the Voter Registrar. In some counties, the County Clerk or Elections Administrator registers voters);
3. You can register by mail by obtaining an application from your county Voter Registrar's office or the Secretary of State's office. You can also pick up applications at libraries, many post offices and government offices, major grocery stores, high schools, or download one at www.sos.state.tx.us or www.votexas.org.

A FEW HELPFUL HINTS WHEN FILLING OUT YOUR VOTER REGISTRATION APPLICATION:

1. You must be at least 17 years and 10 months of age on the date you apply.
2. Read the instructions on the form in its entirety, fill it out and mail it, postage-free, to the Voter Registrar in your county, or drop it by the Voter Registrar's office.
3. All voters who registered to vote in Texas must provide a Texas driver license number or personal identification number issued by the Texas



Department of Public Safety. If you don't have such a number, you must state that fact and must instead provide the last four digits of your social security number. If you have not been issued a social security number, then you must also state that fact.

AND IF YOU DON'T HAVE A DRIVER LICENSE, PERSONAL IDENTIFICATION NUMBER, OR A SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER?

Your voter application asks for three identification numbers. If you have not received these, you are still eligible to register to vote, but will be required to provide proof of your identity at the polling place. Acceptable identification includes:

1. A driver license or personal identification card issued to you by the Texas Department of Public Safety. You may also bring a similar document issued to you by an agency of another state, even if the license or card has expired;
2. A form of identification that contains your photograph and establishes your identity;
3. A birth certificate or other document that confirms birth and is admissible in a court of law to establish identity;
4. Your United States citizenship papers;
5. Your United States passport;
6. Official mail addressed to you by name from a governmental entity;
7. A copy of a current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck, or other government document that shows your name and address; or
8. Any other form of identification prescribed by the Texas Secretary of State.

REMEMBER, YOU MUST REGISTER BY...

Your application must be received in the Voter Registrar's office or postmarked at least 30 days before an election for you to be eligible to vote in that election. (A good rule of thumb is to mail in the form 8 weeks before an election to allow time for processing.)

WE'LL SEND YOU A VOTER REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE.

1. After you apply, a voter registration certificate (your proof of registration) will be mailed to you within 30 days.





2. Check your certificate to be sure all information is correct. If there is a mistake, make corrections and return it to the Voter Registrar immediately.
3. On your registration certificate, you will see a precinct number. Your residence is located in a specific “precinct” or area within the county where you will vote on Election Day. In some cases, precincts may be combined to accommodate joint local elections, so it’s always wise to consult your County Clerk or Elections Administrator in the days before an election for the address of the polling place where you’re to vote, or call your County Clerk or Elections Administrator for the location. You can also go to www.sos.state.tx.us or www.votexas.org. If the county has supplied us with polling place information, we will provide you the link.
4. When you go to the polls to vote, present your certificate as proof of registration.
5. You may vote without your certificate by signing an affidavit at the polling place and showing some other form of identification (for example, driver license, birth certificate, copy of electric bill).
6. If you lose your certificate, notify your county Voter Registrar in writing to receive a new one.
7. You will automatically receive a new certificate every two years if you haven’t moved from the address at which you are registered.



SO, YOU MOVED OR CHANGED YOUR NAME; CAN YOU VOTE?

IF YOU MOVED WITHIN YOUR COUNTY...

If you moved from one place to another in the same county, you’ll need to notify the Voter Registrar in your county in writing of your new address. (In most Texas counties, the Tax Assessor-Collector is also the Voter Registrar. In some counties, the County Clerk or Elections Administrator registers voters.) There are several ways to do this:

1. Correct your current voter registration certificate on the back and return it to the Voter Registrar;
2. Fill out a new voter registration application form and check the “change” box;
3. When you apply for or change your Texas driver license, change your voter information at the same time; or
4. Change your address on-line! Simply go to the Secretary of State’s



website at www.sos.state.tx.us and, as long as you reside in the same county, you can update your name and/or address. The screen will prompt you through the process and the changes that you make will be forwarded to your local voter registrar for processing.

You will be mailed a new certificate with your new address and be able to vote in your new precinct 30 days after you submit your change. If you miss the deadline to change information on your voter registration certificate (30 days before an election), you may vote in your former precinct as long as you still reside in the political subdivision conducting the election.

IF YOU MOVED TO ANOTHER COUNTY...

If you moved to another county, YOU MUST RE-REGISTER! Fill out and mail a new application, or take it in person, to the Voter Registrar of your new county. (In most Texas counties, the Tax Assessor-Collector is also the Voter Registrar. In some counties, the County Clerk or Elections Administrator registers voters.) You will receive a new voter registration certificate 30 days after your application is submitted.

If you are late to register in your new county, you may be able to vote a “limited” ballot on candidates or issues common between your old and new counties. You may only vote this “limited” ballot after you have moved to your new residence and only during the early voting period by mail or personal appearance (not on Election Day) if:

1. You were registered to vote in your former county at the time you moved; and
2. Your registration in your new county is not yet effective.

IF YOU CHANGED YOUR NAME...

Promptly notify your county Voter Registrar in writing of the change using the same steps as for the “If you moved within your county” section. You will receive a new voter registration certificate 30 days after submitting your name and may continue to vote during this period. If you do not have your certificate in hand when you go to vote, you may still vote by signing an affidavit at the polls and presenting an approved form of identification.





STUDENTS, HERE'S YOUR CLASS ASSIGNMENT: *VOTE!*

LESSON ONE: YOU HAVE TO REGISTER.

If you're a student who spends several weeks or months a year in different locations, but want to vote in Texas, you'll need to decide which place in Texas is the place you call "home", i.e., where you intend to return after you've been away. If you consider your parents address to be your permanent residence, you may use that address as your registration address. If you would like to register to vote at your college address, you may do so, but you can't be registered in both places.

If you consider yourself a permanent resident of another state, you'll need to consult with officials there for registration and ballot-by-mail procedures.

LESSON TWO: VOTING AWAY FROM HOME.

If you're attending a college or university away from home, you can vote early by mail if you claimed as your primary residence the address where you live while not attending school; in other words, where "Mom and Dad live."

To request that an early voting ballot be sent to the address where you are physically planning to be at Election time (at school), you must fill out an early voting ballot request application.

For complete details on voting early by mail, read the following section: "Many Texans like to vote early."



MANY TEXANS LIKE TO VOTE EARLY.

Texas enables residents to vote in the days and weeks before each election day to make the voting process more convenient and accessible. There are two ways to vote early: showing up in person during the prescribed early voting period or voting by mail.

VOTE EARLY IN PERSON

Here's an idea: vote at a location in your political subdivision that's convenient to where you live or work and, at the same time, skip long election lines. Early voting in person for each November election starts the 17th day before election day (if that's a weekend, early voting starts on Monday) and ends the 4th day before election day. (Quick reminder: Early voting for elections held in May starts the 12th day before election day and ends on the 4th day before election day.)



All other voting rules and procedures apply; i.e., eligibility, identification, polling hours, etc.

VOTE EARLY BY MAIL

You may vote early by mail if:

1. You will be away from your county on Election Day and during early voting;
2. You are sick or disabled;
3. You are 65 years of age or older on Election Day; or
4. You are confined in jail, but eligible to vote.

You must submit your application for a ballot by mail to the Early Voting Clerk at the county Voter Registrar office on or after 60 days before Election Day, but before the close of business on the 7th day before Election Day. (If the 7th day is a weekend, the last day to submit an application is the preceding Friday.)

You may send your application by regular mail, common or contract carrier. You can also send your application by FAX if (1) a FAX machine is available to the Early Voting Clerk and (2) you are faxing your application from outside the county.

Finally, if you are voting early because of expected absence, you may apply in person for a ballot by mail before the “early voting in person” period begins (usually the 17th day before the election).

You may obtain a formal application for a ballot by mail from the Secretary of State’s office or the Early Voting Clerk in your county, though you do not have to use a formal application. You can also simply present a written application that contains:

1. Your signature, or a witness’ signature if you cannot sign;
2. Your name and the address at which you are registered to vote;
3. The address to which the ballot is to be mailed;
4. The election date and the election for which you are requesting a ballot. (For a primary election, you must state the political party’s primary in which you want to vote); and
5. A reason why you are eligible to vote early by mail. To be eligible to vote early because you expect to be out of the county, your application must state the out-of-county address to which your ballot should be mailed.





The Early Voting Clerk must receive your marked ballot by 7 p.m. on Election Day or, if you are mailing your ballot from outside the United States, by the 5th day after Election Day. (Overseas ballots must be mailed no later than 7 p.m. on Election Day).

HELPFUL HINTS ON VOTING EARLY BY MAIL

Voting by mail in Texas has been available to elderly voters and voters with physical disabilities for decades. Remember, however, that many of the legal safeguards designed to protect voters and their ballots are impossible to enforce in the privacy of the voter's home. Here are a few tips that may prove helpful:

1. Call your local or county office holding the election or the Secretary of State's office and have an application to vote by mail sent to you.
2. If you need help filling out the form or mailing it, ask someone you trust to help you. Your helper's name and address must be written next to your signature and they must sign the application.
3. Address your application to the Early Voting Clerk. Applications mailed to an address other than the Early Voting Clerk will be rejected.
4. Send your application for a ballot by mail up to two months before an election. This will give you plenty of time to receive your ballot, mark it and mail it back to the Early Voting Clerk.
5. Generally, a ballot must be mailed to the address where you are registered to vote. However, if you are 65 or older or have a physical disability, you may have your ballot sent to a hospital, nursing home or long-term care facility, retirement center, or relative, but you must check the blank on the form indicating which address you are providing. If your reason for voting by mail is absence from the county, the ballot must be mailed to an address outside the county.
6. If you need help reading, marking or mailing the actual ballot, ask a trusted relative or friend for help. It's not uncommon for someone from a political organization to offer to help with your ballot soon after you've received it. We recommend you decline this kind of help for several reasons. If you allow your ballot to be mailed by someone you don't know, it might not be mailed at all. If it's delivered to the elections office by a common or contract carrier from the address of a candidate or a campaign's headquarters, your ballot will be rejected.
7. Finally, if someone helps you with your mail ballot, you must put your helper's name and address on the carrier envelope, which is the one used to return your ballot to the Early Voting Clerk. Your helper must also sign the carrier envelope.



Should a situation arise regarding any aspect of voting and you don't know what to do, please call our office. Our legal staff is available toll-free at 1.800.252.8683 to answer questions and advise you on your rights as a voter.

As well, we recommend you visit us at www.sos.state.tx.us to:

1. Obtain the name, phone number, fax number, and address of the Early Voting Clerk in your county for county elections.
2. Learn dates or deadlines for the two uniform election dates, primary elections, and the November gubernatorial and presidential or constitutional amendment elections.
3. Request that an application for ballot by mail be mailed to you or download an application form.



WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT AT THE POLLING PLACE.

When you arrive at the polling place, you will be asked for your voter registration certificate. (For other acceptable forms of identification, see the section: "First, you have to register to vote.") The election official will ask if you have moved and then ask you to sign the list of people who have voted in the precinct.

Depending on the type of election — local, statewide, national, or combination — you will be handed:

1. A paper ballot on which you will select your choices and which will be counted by hand;
2. A paper ballot on which you will select your choices by darkening an oval or arrow directly or by "marking" with the aid of a voting machine, or,
3. A slip of paper with a numerical access code, or in some counties, a ballot activator card. In the next available voting booth, enter your code or card and let the on-screen instructions on the machine guide you through the process of electronic voting.

Easy, right? For a complete list of what you can bring into the voting booth and the type of help you can ask for, please refer to our section "Hey, you have rights."





VOTERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

In the past decade, Texas has led the nation to increase ballot accessibility for all voters, including elderly voters, voters with disabilities, and voters who do not read or speak English or Spanish. Texas has created laws requiring all polling places to be accessible to persons who are elderly or physically disabled. And Texas was the first state to require that all electronic voting systems purchased after September 1, 1999 provide voters who have disabilities a practical way to cast a secret ballot.

POLLING PLACES SHOULD SUPPORT VOTERS, NOT HINDER THEM.

When you go to the polls in Texas, you can expect:

1. Your polling place will meet strict accessibility standards, including:
 - a) A location on the ground floor, which can be entered from the street or via an elevator with doors that open at least 36 inches.
 - b) Doors, entrances, and exits used to enter or leave the polling place are at least 32 inches wide.
 - c) Any curb next to the main entrance to the polling place must have curb-cuts or temporary non-slip ramps.
 - d) Stairs necessary to enter or leave the polling place must have handrails on each side and a non-slip ramp.
 - e) Removal of all barriers such as gravel, automatically closing gates, closed doors without lever-type handles, or any other barrier that impedes the path of the physically disabled to the voting station.
2. Voting systems that are accessible to voters with physical disabilities and can accommodate no vision, low vision, no hearing, low hearing, limited manual dexterity, limited reach, limited strength, no mobility, low mobility, or any combination of the foregoing (except the combination of no hearing and no vision).
3. Each polling place will offer at least one Direct Recording Electronic device or "DRE". DREs are paperless, computerized voting units that allow voters with disabilities to vote directly on the system. Depending on the type of DRE, special needs voters may use headphones or other assistive devices to help them vote independently and secretly. (Limited Exception: Sparsely populated jurisdictions conducting non-federal elections may not be required to provide a DRE.)



VOTERS MAY RECEIVE SPECIAL HELP AT THE POLLING LOCATION.

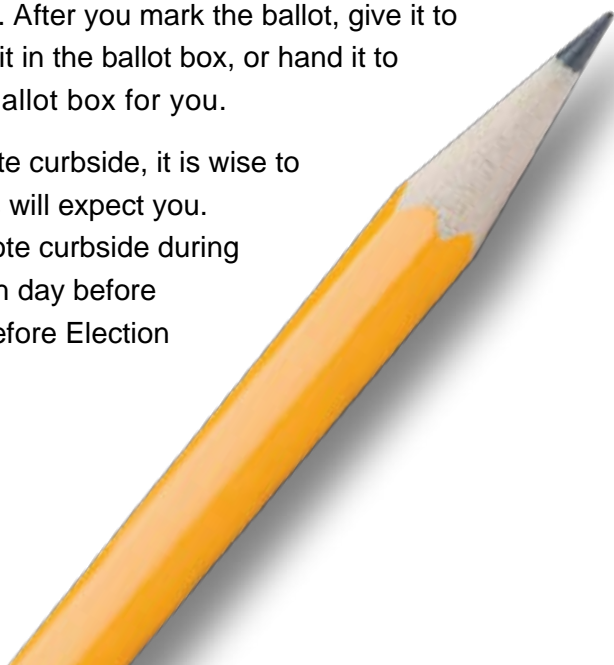
If you cannot read or write, or you have a physical disability that prevents you from reading or marking the ballot, tell the election official that you need help to vote. You do not have to provide proof of your disability.

1. You may be assisted by a person of your choice, by two election workers on Election Day, or by one election worker during early voting. You may NOT be assisted by your employer, an agent of your employer, or an officer or agent of your union.
2. The person assisting you must read the entire ballot to you, unless you request that only certain parts of the ballot be read aloud.
3. The person assisting you must take an oath that he or she will not try to influence your vote, will mark your ballot as you direct, and will not tell anyone how you voted.
4. If you choose to be assisted by polling place officials, then poll watchers and/or state and federal election inspectors may observe the voting process to make sure the ballot is marked as you request. If you are assisted by a person of your choosing, no one else may watch you vote.
5. If you cannot speak English, or if you communicate only with sign language, you may select any registered voter of your county to help you communicate with election officials. If you cannot read the languages on the ballot, your interpreter may translate the ballot for you in the voting booth.

VOTERS MAY VOTE CURBSIDE.

If you are physically unable to enter the polling place, you may ask that an election officer bring a ballot to you at the entrance of the polling place or to your car at curbside. After you mark the ballot, give it to the election officer who will put it in the ballot box, or hand it to a companion to deposit in the ballot box for you.

If you plan to go alone to vote curbside, it is wise to call ahead so election officials will expect you. Generally speaking, you may vote curbside during the early voting period (the 17th day before Election Day until the 4th day before Election Day) or on Election Day.





HEY, YOU HAVE RIGHTS!

As a registered voter in Texas, you have the right to:

1. A ballot with written instructions on how to cast the ballot;
2. Cast your vote in secret and free from intimidation;
3. Receive up to two more ballots if you make a mistake while marking the ballot;
4. Ask the polling place official for instructions on how to cast the ballot (but not for suggestions on how to vote);
5. Bring an interpreter to assist you as you qualify to vote if you do not understand the English language;
6. Help to cast your ballot if you cannot write, see the ballot, or understand the language in which it is written;
7. Bring written materials into the voting booth to assist you as you cast your ballot;
8. Report a possible voting rights abuse to the Secretary of State (1.800.252.8683) or to your local election official;
9. Cast a provisional ballot if your name does not appear on the list of registered voters or you do not have proper identification;
10. Vote once at any early voting location during the early voting period within the territory conducting the election;
11. File an administrative complaint with the Secretary of State concerning violations of federal and state voting procedures;

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON VOTING AND VOTING PROCEDURES, CONTACT:

1. The Secretary of State's office toll-free at 1.800.252.8683
2. Your County Clerk (listed in the blue pages of your telephone book)
3. Your County Elections Administrator
4. Your Voter Registrar (Tax Assessor-Collector)
5. The Secretary of State's office online at www.sos.state.tx.us or www.votexas.org

Published by the Elections Division of the Office of the Texas Secretary of State. This guide is available in Spanish, large print, audiotape, or computer disc upon request.



YOU MAY ALSO FIND HELPFUL INFORMATION ON VOTING BY CONTACTING THE FOLLOWING OFFICES AND ORGANIZATIONS:

SECRETARY OF STATE

Elections Division

P.O. Box 12060

Austin, Texas 78711-2060

512.463.5650 or

1.800.252.VOTE (8683)

Fax 512.475.2811

TTY 7.1.1

www.sos.state.tx.us • www.votexas.org

FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION

999 E Street, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20463

1.800.424.9530

www.fec.gov

TEXAS REPUBLICAN PARTY

900 Congress Avenue, Suite 300

Austin, Texas 78701

512.477.9821

www.texasgop.org

TEXAS DEMOCRATIC PARTY

505 West 12th Street, Suite 200

Austin, Texas 78701

512.478.9800

www.txdemocrats.org

LIBERTARIAN PARTY OF TEXAS

P.O. Box 41059

Austin, Texas 78704

1.800.422.1776

www.tx.lp.org

Este folleto está disponible en Español, imprenta más grande, cinta magnética para audio, o disco para computadora. Para conseguir una de estas versiones por favor llame sin cargo a la oficina del Secretario de Estado al 1.800.252.8683.

SECRETARY OF STATE
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