



# Pennsylvania Voting in 2023

## Frequently Asked Questions

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### GENERAL QUESTIONS

**Q: How many elections are there this year?**

**A:** *There are 2 (two) elections EVERY year:*

1. The Spring Primary election: Democrats and Republicans pick their party's nominees for the General election
2. The November General election: All voters pick the winners for each office.  
(Sometimes there are additional special elections; for example, if an elected official can't finish serving their term)

**Q: When are the elections this year?**

**A:** The Primary election is on Tuesday, May 16, 2023

The General election is on Tuesday, November 7, 2023

**Q: Does voting make any difference in my life?**

**A:** **YES!!!** Local elected officials in positions like School Board Director and local and County Judges, for example, make decisions about everyday issues in your life such as school safety, special education, free school lunch, suicide prevention, election integrity, protection from abuse, DUIs, child custody, traffic violations, landlord/tenant disputes, and more.

**Q: What are the voter registration deadlines?**

**A:** *The DEADLINES to register for this year's elections are:*

- *By May 1, 2023 for the Primary*
- *By October 23, 2023 for the General*

**Q: How do I register to vote?**

**A:** *There are two ways to register:*

1. Online at [www.vote.pa.gov](http://www.vote.pa.gov)
2. Call your County Voter Services office.

**Q: How do I check to see if I'm registered?**

**A:** Go to [www.vote.pa.gov](http://www.vote.pa.gov) or call your County Voter Services office. Your registration may have been purged if you have not voted in the past 5 years. You can register again.

**Q: WHO can vote in Pennsylvania?**

**A:** *You can vote if you are:*

1. A **citizen of the United States** for at least 30 days before election day
2. A **resident of Pennsylvania** for at least 30 days before election day
3. At least **18 years old** on or before election day (you can register when you're 17)
4. **Convicted** of a misdemeanor or are a convicted felon who has completed your sentence (see below)
5. **Registered to vote by the deadline** for each election

**Q: Can I vote if I've been convicted of a crime?**

**A:** It depends. The law is:

1. People in jail or prison who have been convicted of misdemeanors **can vote** with an absentee ballot.
2. People in jail or prison who have been convicted of a felony and won't be released before the election **cannot vote**.
3. People under house arrest **can vote**, using an absentee ballot.
4. People who are on probation or parole, or living at a halfway house or community corrections center **can vote**. Must use an absentee ballot and a previous or future address, not the address of the facility.
5. People being held in jail while waiting to go to trial **can vote** using an absentee ballot.
6. Who can **NOT** vote:
  - a. People who are in prison or jail because of a felony conviction and won't be released before the election.
  - b. People who have been convicted of violating Pennsylvania election laws within the past four years.

**Q: Can I register and vote if I'm experiencing homelessness?**

**A:** *Yes!* Use a shelter address where you can get mail as your address. You may also list a street corner or a park instead of a traditional address. The voter registration form has a space for this. Call your County Voter Services office if you need help.

**Q: Will I be called for Jury Duty if I register to vote?**

**A:** *No.* They're not related in PA.

**Q: I am a college student in PA. Where do I register and vote?**

**A:** *You can register using the address where you live while at school. Or you can vote by mail from home (if your home State has mail-in voting).* You can only register and vote in one place. Call the Voter Services office in the County where your school is located.

**Q: Will voting endanger undocumented people in my household?**

**A:** *No. When you register, you are not asked about anyone in your household. When you vote in person you sign only your name in the poll book, and you are not asked about anyone in your household. When you vote by mail, you sign only your name on the envelope.*

**Q: How do I find out WHO is running for each position, what their views are on the issues I care about, and which Party they represent?**

**A:** First call your local County Voter Services office to see who is running on your ballot. (Your ADDRESS determines which *local* Candidates will be running for office in your town). Then Google each Candidate's name to find their website and Facebook page.

**Q: Where can I get general information about voting in Pennsylvania?**

**A:** Go to [www.vote.pa.gov](http://www.vote.pa.gov)

**Q: HOW do I vote?**

**A:** You have a choice: In person on Election Day at your local polling place, OR from home, by mail.

**Q: Is it safer to vote by mail or in person?**

**A:** *Both ways are safe and secure.* If personal health is a concern you can use the mail-in ballot and vote from home.

**Q: How is the Primary election different the General election?**

**A:** In the Primary, ONLY *Democrats and Republicans* can vote for nominees. Each Party has its own ballot. But **ALL VOTERS** can vote on constitutional amendments, ballot questions, and any special election contests.

**Q: What is Cross Filing?**

**A:** *When candidates from one Party appear on the ballot of the opposing Party in the Primary. School Board Director, Common Pleas Judge and Magisterial District Judge candidates can appear on both Party's ballots, without their Party indicated. All or some of these positions **WILL** be on your ballot this May, so do your homework BEFORE you vote:*

- *If you vote by MAIL, contact your County voter services office to get a sample ballot for your precinct. Then **google the name of EACH** School Board Director, Common Pleas Judge and Magisterial District Judge CANDIDATE on your ballot so you can determine which Party they represent*
- *If you vote in IN PERSON, stop at your Party's greeter table outside and pick up a sample ballot that will indicate which people are representing your Party*

## VOTE FROM HOME, BY MAIL

**Q: Who is eligible to vote by mail or absentee ballot – and what is the difference?**

**A:** *Any registered voter may apply for an absentee ballot or mail-in ballot. The absentee ballot is just for those who aren't physically able to vote in person. In 2020, no excuse MAIL-IN voting became available. Most PA voters now can request a mail-in ballot. The website will direct you to the right ballot. Go to [www.vote.pa.gov](http://www.vote.pa.gov).*

**Q: How do I get a mail-in ballot?**

**A:** *First you fill out an application for one. You can do this online at [www.vote.pa.gov](http://www.vote.pa.gov) Or call your County Voter Services office to ask for a paper application (available in Spanish and English). After you complete your application, a ballot will be mailed to you. Closer to the election, you can go into your Voter Services office, apply for the ballot, and immediately be given your ballot at the same time. You may even be able to complete your ballot and turn it in.)*

- Deadline to *apply* for a mail-in ballot for the Primary is May 9, 2023
- Deadline to *apply* for a mail in ballot for the General is October 31, 2023.

**Q: Will ballots be available in Spanish?**

**A:** *Spanish language applications for a mail-in ballot and the actual mail-in ballot are available. Go to: <https://www.vote.pa.gov/Resources/espanol/Pages/default.aspx>*

**Q: How do I fill out the mail-in ballot once I receive it?**

**A:** *Follow the directions that will be included with your ballot:*

- Use a black pen to fill in the oval next to your choices. Contact your local County Voter Services office to see a sample ballot.
- Put your ballot into the plain security envelope and seal it.
- Put the security envelope into the mailing envelope. Date and sign the envelope. Check to see if you need to add postage.
- MAIL IT BACK RIGHT AWAY. Your ballot must be received by 8:00 pm on election day or it won't be counted. *OR you can drop your ballot at your County Voter Services office or at any designated Ballot Drop Box location, especially if you are concerned about the timeliness of mail delivery.* Call your County Voter Services office for details.

**Q: Can I get a mail-in ballot if I'm registered as an Independent?**

**A:** *Yes. **NOTE:** IF there are NO ballot questions, constitutional amendments or special elections in the Primary then Independents will not be able to vote in the Primary in May. But in the November General election, ALL registered voters including Independents and those registered with a minor party will be able to vote and will receive the same ballot.*

**Q: If I make a mistake when marking up my ballot, what do I do?**

**A:** *If you accidentally filled in the wrong bubble, or forgot to sign or date the outer envelope, or put the wrong date on the envelope, contact your local County Voter Services office for instructions.*

**Q: Can I change my mind and vote in person?**

**A:** *Yes. BUT you must bring your mail-in ballot to your polling place along with both envelopes. You'll turn it in and get a new regular ballot to use. If you threw out your mail-in ballot, you'll get a Provisional ballot to use at the polls, so Voter Services can check if you already voted by mail.*

**Q: Who can I call if I have questions or need help with my mail-in ballot?**

**A:** *Call your local County Voter Services office.*

**Q: I voted by mail last year. Will I get a mail-in ballot automatically from now on?**

**A:** ***NO**, you must apply for a mail in ballot **for this year**. Going forward, you now have the option to request to be added to the annual mail-in ballot request list *where you'll receive an application to renew your mail-in ballot request each year*. Once your request is approved, you will automatically receive ballots for the remainder of the year, and you **do not** need to submit an application for each election.*

Learn more about the [annual mail-in ballot request](#)

**Q: What if my mail-in ballot doesn't come until very close to election day?**

**A:** **You can hand in your mail-in ballot** until 8:00 pm on Election Day at your County Voter Services office. NOTE: You must hand in your own ballot. If you can't due to illness or other circumstance, call your County Voter Services for instructions. There is an official process where another person can be designated to deliver your ballot.

**Q: What if my mail-in ballot doesn't come at all?**

**A:** **Go to your polling place on election day and vote in person.** You will use a Provisional ballot. Voter Services will check that you didn't already vote by mail before your Provisional ballot is counted.

**Q: How do I know my vote counts?**

**A:** *You can track your mail-in ballot on <https://www.votespa.com/Resources/Pages/Ballot-Tracker.aspx> *In-person voters* get a numbered receipt. All votes are electronically recorded. If you want reassurance, you can call your County Voter Services office and ask them to confirm your receipt number.*

## VOTE IN PERSON

**Q: Where do I go to vote?**

**A:** **Your polling place will be listed on your voter registration card.** Or go to [www.vote.pa.gov](http://www.vote.pa.gov) and search "Where's my polling place?"

**Q: What can I expect when I go to the polls? What's the procedure?**

**A:** *Google <https://www.dosomething.org/us/articles/4-things-to-expect-at-the-polls>* Every place is a little different, but this is usually how it goes. Have fun! Be proud!

**Q: Can I expect privacy when I vote at the polls?**

**A:** YES. You will be in a large room with workers and other voters waiting to vote. But the actual voting “booth” is private, even from your spouse. No one sees who you voted for.

**Q: May I bring my children?**

**A:** Yes! Many parents do.

**Q: Do I need ID?**

**A:** NO, ONLY if you are a first-time voter OR are voting in a new precinct. YOU DO NOT NEED A PHOTO ID. Acceptable forms of ID if needed include a driver’s license, US passport, voter registration card, military ID, student ID, employee ID, firearm permit, current utility bill or bank statement, paycheck or government check, or any ID issued by PA or the federal government.

**Q: Can I get help completing my ballot at the polls?**

**A:** Yes. You can bring a helper. If you do, tell a poll worker.

**Q: If I make a mistake when marking up my ballot can I receive a new one?**

**A:** Yes, if you haven’t put it into the scanner yet. Just ask for a new ballot.

**Q: Can I get help at the polls if I don’t speak English?**

**A:** You can bring someone with you who is not your employer or union representative. The Judge of Elections is not permitted to help with translation.

**For Election Day problems call:**

1-888-839-8682 (Spanish)

1-888-274-8683 (English, Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Urdu, Hindi, and Bengali)

NOTE: Language translation is an issue everywhere. Perhaps consider working with the State Representative in your community to bring language translation to PA.

**Q: How can I get to the polling place if I need transportation help?**

**A:** There is no official way, but you can try: Uber or Lyft (both may offer special rates), Rover (must be a subscriber), Voto Latino, local Urban League affiliates, the National Federation of the Blind, Faith in Action, League of Women Voters, the Student Vets of America, or your place of worship. You can also call your State Representative’s office to ask about ride services