

Voting Rights

frequently asked questions

When is the last day to register to vote in the November election?

Monday, October 20, 2008.

Am I eligible to register to vote?

If you are a U.S. citizen who will be at least 18 years old by Election Day, you reside in California, you are not on parole or in prison for a felony conviction, and you have not been judged to be mentally incompetent, then you are eligible to vote in California. You do not need to know how to read or write in English or any other language. No tests are given when you register to vote.

I am a student. May I use my university's address to register to vote?

Yes. You have the right to register to vote at your school address, this includes a dorm room. If you receive mail in a Post Office box you can sign an affidavit (or, in some cases, get a letter from your college's Residential Life office) asserting that you live at your dorm address. A student should bring proof of residence to the polling booth, like College or University Fee Card or Student Identification in case a problem arises.

I have been charged or convicted of a crime. Can I still vote?

In California, you have the right to vote, even if you've been charged or convicted of a crime as long as you are not currently serving out a sentence in a state prison for a felony conviction and you are not on parole following a felony conviction.

You CAN VOTE if you have not been convicted (even if you have been charged and are in jail awaiting court). You CAN VOTE if your parole for a felony conviction has ended and you are only on probation. If you are unsure of whether you are eligible to vote, call the Registrar of Voters in your county.

I think I registered already. How can I find out if I am registered to vote?

You can call the Registrar of Voters Office to find out if you are properly registered to vote based on your current residence. In San Diego, call 858.565.5800. In Imperial, call 760.482.4266.

Do I need to re-register if I moved?

Yes. You will need to complete a new registration form.

I registered to vote a long time ago. Is my registration still valid?

Sometimes the Registrar of Voters removes "inactive" voters from the voter rolls, such as voters who have not voted in the last four elections, if the Registrar believes the voter has moved or is deceased. If you can't remember the last time you voted, you may need to re-register.

I changed my legal name. How do I change my name on my voter registration?

On every voter registration form there is a place to fill in your previous registration information. You will fill out the form as if it were your first time doing so, and where it asks you to put in your old information, you would put in your previous name, (for example, your maiden name).

How do I become a permanent absentee voter?

You must re-register to vote and on the form check the box to become a permanent absentee voter. As a permanent absentee voter, you will retain this status as long as you vote in all statewide primary and general elections.

What if I change my mind about being an absentee voter and would like to vote at my regular polling place?

You can still vote at your regular polling place. You must bring your non-voted absentee ballot and give it to the polling place worker before voting a regular ballot. If you are unable to bring your vote-by-mail ballot to the poll, you may still cast a "provisional" ballot at your polling place which will not be counted until the county elections official can determine that you have not also submitted your absentee ballot.

I am in the armed forces. How do I register to vote?

You should contact the Federal Voting Assistance Program. Their website is www.fvap.gov. They specialize in getting people in the armed forces and people living abroad registered to vote. The rules for people in the armed forces or abroad are different than people living in the United States. The FVAP can also be reached by phone at (800) 438-VOTE.

I am a U.S. citizen living abroad. How do I vote?

You must request an absentee ballot. Contact a U.S. Embassy, consulate, designated military personnel or your state election authority. For additional information contact the Federal Voting Assistance Program.

Where can I learn what's on the ballot?

If you are a voter in San Diego County, you can view a sample ballot for your district online by going to your County Registrar of Voters [www2.sdcounty.ca/gpv/rov/Eng/Eballot_query.asp]. For a list of candidates and measures on the ballot in Imperial County, go to [www.imperialcounty.net/Election/].

Where can I get information about the candidates and propositions on the ballot?

For non-partisan election information, go to Smart Voter [www.smartvoter.org/ca/].

Do I need identification when I go to vote?

NO if you have voted before and your name is on the roster of voters. **YES** if this is your first time voting and you registered by mail without giving your California drivers' license or state identification number or the last four digits of your social security number. As a precaution, take a photo ID with you to the polls.

What if I go to the polls and they tell me I am not registered to vote or I'm not on the voter roll?

If for some reason your name is not on the registration list you will be allowed to cast a provisional ballot that will be counted once election officials determine if you are eligible to vote in that jurisdiction.

Am I allowed to post a candidate's poster on my window if I do not own my home?

If you are a renter, you must follow the rules set by the property owner. If you own your home, but belong to a housing association then they cannot prohibit signs and posters smaller than 9 square feet and flags or banners smaller than 15 square feet.

May I wear a button or t-shirt or anything else with the name of a candidate into the polling place?

No. This constitutes electioneering and any electioneering must be conducted a minimum of 100 feet from the place where people are voting. ▲

