

How to Vote in Tennessee Frequently Asked Questions

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Q1. Do I have to register to vote?

A1. Yes, you must register (or re-register) to vote if you have:

- * Never been registered to vote in Tennessee
- * Changed your name or address since you last registered
- * Had your rights restored as required by law after being convicted of a felony

Note: If you were married and wish to use your new name, or you moved within the same county, check either the Name Change or Address Change box on the registration form, not the New Registration box.

Q2. Who is eligible to register to vote in Tennessee?

A2. Any U. S. citizen who is a resident of Tennessee, who is, or will be, at least eighteen years old on or before the next election, and who has not been convicted of a felony or has had his/her full citizen rights restored or received a pardon (see Q 31) may register to vote.

Q3. I just moved here--can I register to vote right away?

A3. Yes, you can register as soon as you become a resident of Tennessee.

Q4. When do I have to register?

A4. You may register at any time but you must register no later than 30 days before the election in which you want to vote.

Q5. Where do I have to go to register to vote?

A5. You can go to the county election commission office or you may apply for voter registration at the same time that you apply for a driver's license. Voter registration forms are also available at any public library, public high school, county clerk's office, the office of a register of deeds, a military recruiting office, or when you request services from a public assistance office or at a veterans' affairs office.

Q6. Can't I do it by mail?

A6. Yes. To register, change your name or your address, you can fill out a mail-in registration form, sign it, and mail it to the election commission office early enough to be postmarked at least 30 days before Election Day. The address is either printed on the form or you can find it in the blue pages of your local phone book.

Q7. Where can I get a mail-in registration form?

A7. Write or call the county election commission or pick one up at any of the locations listed in question #5. You can also download the form from the state election commission web site (see question #30) or many county election commission sites.

NOTE: IF YOU REGISTER BY MAIL, YOU MUST VOTE IN PERSON THE FIRST TIME YOU DO SO AFTER REGISTERING. Registering on a mail-in registration form is registering by mail even if the forms are hand-delivered to the election commission at the close of a voter registration drive.

Q8. How do I fill out the form?

A8. Check the box at the top of the form to indicate if you are filing a new registration, a change in address within the same county, or a name change. Then, with a ball-point pen, print the answer to every question (only the question about race is optional). Before mailing, make a note of the red serial number at the top of the form (or detach and keep the receipt if it has one) in case you have to call the election commission office. Then sign and fold the form, address it, put a stamp on it, and mail it to your county election commission office. (The address can be found in the blue pages of your phone book).

NOTE: Having the serial number or receipt may help trace your paperwork, but it is *not* proof of registration and cannot be used for voting.

Q9. I am registered to vote but I've moved to another address in my county. Do I have to re-register?

A9. You do have to change your address but you can do that just by:

- * Sending your Voter Registration Card with the new address on it to the election commission office or by

- * Filling out a mail-in registration form and checking “New Address” on it or by

- * Voting at an Early Voting site and changing your address at that time.

Q10. What if I move to another county?

A10. If you move to another county, you must re-register at your new address by filing a registration form and checking “New Registration” on it.

Q11. How do I register if I’ve moved here from another state or if I move from Tennessee to another state?

A11. When you move into Tennessee from another state, you must file a form with “New Registration” checked on it. If you move out of Tennessee, the election commission in the state you are moving to can give you further information on registration procedures there.

Q12. I’m a registered voter but I recently got married and changed my name. Do I have to change my registration?

A12. You may use either your old name or your new name after you are married. If you want to use your new name, you may file a mail-in form with “Name Change” checked or call your election commission office to find out how to have your new name reflected on your registration form.

Don’t forget to notify the election commission of your new address if you moved after you were married. (See #9 or #10)

Q13. How will I know that I am a registered voter?

A13. You will receive your voter registration card about two weeks after your form has been received by the county election commission. Receiving your card confirms that you are now registered. If you have not received your card after several weeks, call the election commission. The receipt you saved from the registration form will help them locate your paperwork.

Q14. Do I have to say which party I belong to when I register?

A14. No, but in each primary election you do have to choose which party ballot you wish to use. You can vote for candidates from either party in a general election.

Q15. After I have registered and voted, will I have to register again before each election?

A15. All registered voters may vote in all future elections if their addresses are maintained and if

they have responded to confirmation notices. Call the election commission if you are not sure of your status.

Q16. How can I find out where to go to vote?

A16. The location of your polling place is listed on your voter registration card. The addresses of all polling places will be published in your newspaper shortly before the election. Most election commissions now have web sites that contain a list of polling locations. Please do not wait until election day to call your election commission; the phone lines will be very busy and you may not get through.

Q17. I'm registered, but I lost my registration card. What do I do now?

A17. Call your county election commission or visit their office. They can issue a replacement card.

Q18. What is the date of Election Day?

A18. Elections for the President, Vice President, U.S. Senators and Representatives, Governor, State Senators and State Representatives are held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November of every even-numbered year.

Elections for judicial and county officials and State primary elections are held on the first Thursday of August of every even-numbered year. Referendums and municipal elections may also be held on that date. Not every office has to be filled every year. For instance, the President runs for office only every four years, not every even-numbered year.

Q19. I won't be able to vote on Election Day. What can I do?

A19. Tennessee has Early Voting. From the twentieth day to the fifth day before an election you can vote at the county election commission office or at any one of the other Early Voting sites. Early Voting sites are listed on election commission web sites and in your newspaper. Any registered voter may vote at any of the Early Voting sites in the County regardless of where the voter lives. Call your county election commission for places and times for Early Voting.

Q20. I will be out of town both during Early Voting and also on Election Day. How can I vote?

A20. You can request an absentee ballot. Not more than 90 days and no later than 7 days before the election you may request an absentee ballot from the county election commission in person, by mail or by fax. Many election commission web sites have a downloadable form for requesting an absentee ballot. If yours does not, a written request that includes your name, address, Social Security number, the address outside the county to which you want the ballot to be mailed, the election in which you wish to vote, and the reason you must vote absentee, will serve as an official application for a ballot. You must sign the request form. You must mail your completed absentee ballot in time for it to reach the election commission office on or before Election Day.

Q21. If I have to move to another state just before a presidential election does that mean I can't vote?

A21. No, you will not lose your vote in a national election if you move to another state less than thirty days before Election Day. You can vote either by absentee ballot or return to the county where you are registered and vote in person. Remember, this does *not* apply to state or local elections.

Q22. Can I write in the name of someone who is not on the ballot?

A22. Yes. Procedures differ depending on what kind of voting machine your county uses, so just ask how to do it when you go to vote.

Q23. I am a college student. How can I vote?

A23. You can register and vote in the precinct in which your school is located or in your home precinct. If you are a full-time student in a school in Tennessee but in a county other than where you live, you may vote by absentee ballot. Remember, if you registered by mail, you must vote in person the first time you do so after registering. (See #7)

Q24. How can a person with disabilities vote?

A24. Citizens with disabilities can vote by absentee ballot or they may be helped at the polls by any persons of their choice. Many of the new voting machines are accessible to those with disabilities; they have earphones for listening to the ballot or sip and puff devices for marking the ballot. They may also be placed on the permanent register of absentee voters by submitting a doctor's certificate when they register. They will then automatically receive an absentee ballot for every election.

Q25. How can I find out in which election districts I live?

A25. The district numbers of your Tennessee Senate, Tennessee House, and any applicable county or municipal representatives are listed on the front of your voter registration card. If you have not yet registered or cannot find your registration card, call your county election commission office and they will advise you of your district numbers.

Q26. I'm sure I registered, but my name is not on the list at my polling place. Can I vote?

A26. Yes. The Help America Vote Act created a Provisional Ballot. If your name is not listed or your eligibility is challenged for any reason, you must be offered a provisional ballot. If a record check after election day shows that you were eligible to vote, your ballot will be counted. You will be told how to find out if your ballot was counted.

Q27. How can I find out who my representatives are in each of those districts?

A27. You can call your county election commission office, your public library or your local League of Women Voters for help. Their numbers may be found in your local telephone directory. Many counties have this information on their web sites, especially if they have a Geographic Information System implemented.

Q28. How can I find out who is running for office in those districts this year?

A28. A good source of information is your local newspaper and radio or television newscasts. Political party headquarters and the county election commission office also can answer brief questions and in some cases may have printed lists of candidates. A sample ballot usually appears in newspapers a few days before the election. Election commission web sites also contain lists of all candidates who filed nomination papers and sample ballots.

Q29. Where can I find out something about the candidates?

A29. Newspaper stories about the candidates and announcements of public forums and debates are published for several weeks before an election. Your local League of Women Voters may publish a Voters' Guide, which is a non-partisan listing of answers given by candidates to questions concerning some of the important issues in a race. It is usually distributed through public libraries or enclosed in a local newspaper.

Q30. Where can I get more information about registering and voting in Tennessee?

A30. You can call your county election commission office listed in the blue pages of your phone book or visit your county election commission web site. For general information about election procedures or dates and times of debates and forums sponsored by the League, you may phone or write your local League of Women Voters.

You can also visit the state election commission website: <http://www.tennessee.gov/sos/election>. This site has answers to many questions and a downloadable registration form.

Q31. Can former felons have their voting rights restored?

A31. Some can. Those convicted of murder, rape, treason or voter fraud cannot have their voting rights restored. Others who were convicted after 5/18/81, have completed their sentences, and are current on any child support obligations, can complete a Certificate of Restoration form (available from the local Election Commission) and then register to vote.

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