



NORTH CAROLINA DEMOCRATIC PARTY

2008 GUIDE TO VOTER REGISTRATION

QUALIFICATIONS TO REGISTER

To register to vote in the State of North Carolina, an individual must meet the following qualifications:

- Be a **United States citizen**.
- Be a **resident of North Carolina and the county** you are registering in for 30 days before the election.
- Be **at least 18 years old by the next general election**. In fact, anyone who will turn 18 by the general election can register and vote at age 17 in a partisan primary election.
- **Not be registered or planning to vote in any other county or state**.
- **Not be a convicted felon still in custody, on probation, or on parole**. If one has served all parts of a sentence, he or she can register.

WHY PEOPLE DON'T REGISTER

Many citizens believe that their votes do not make a difference. They do not have a personal relationship with the public officials who represent them, and there is mistrust of politicians' motives and an assumption that government officials are guided by self-interest.

As Democrats, we know that every citizen matters and that every vote counts. We strive to give all North Carolinians a voice in government and work for their best interests.

It is our responsibility to let our neighbors know that their vote can make a difference in an election.

SAME DAY VOTER REGISTRATION

North Carolinians can now also register, change their address or their Party affiliation, and vote during One-Stop (early) voting before Election Day.

The only exception is that they are not allowed to change their party affiliation during the One Stop Voting period that precedes a partisan primary. All that is required is that they visit a One-Stop Site in their county, fill out a voter registration application, and provide proof of residency.

Most counties will have additional One-Stop Voting sites for the general election this year.

VOTER REGISTRATION AND THE LAW

It is a misdemeanor offense to tell a voter that you will deliver the form and then fail to make a good faith effort to deliver it in time to meet the registration deadline for the next election.

You cannot be convicted, however, if you tell the voter that the form likely would not be delivered in time for him or her to vote in the next election.

The Moral? If you accept a registration form, either hustle to get it to the Board of Elections or tell the voter that it likely would not be delivered in time.

Other laws to be aware of include:

- **It is a crime to pay, offer to pay, or accept a payment for voting, registering to vote, or voting in any particular manner.** You may however provide water, snacks, or promotional materials to potential registrants if the items are available to everyone, not just those who turn in registration forms.
- **It is a crime to attempt to threaten or coerce any voter into voting for candidates or referenda not of the voter's choice.**
- **It is a crime to make false entries on election records.**
- **It is a crime to steal, destroy or hide election records.**

VOTER REGISTRATION DRIVES

Here are the Party's top 10 suggestions on how to conduct a successful drive:

- 1 Establish a timeline.** Once you are aware of registration laws, establish a timeline, working backward from the voter registration deadline date. Find out when major events are being held in the community before the registration deadline, and include them on the timeline so you remember to attend and register participants.
- 2 Get voter registration forms.** Contact your local elections office or the State Board of Elections and ask for enough voter registration forms for your drive. Since it may take a while to be ordered and mailed from Raleigh, be sure to ask 2-3 weeks before your event.
- 3 Identify locations for registration.** Use your knowledge of the community, the Voter Action Network, and NCEC data or work with your regional political director to identify areas in your county where the need for registration is high and where there may be a lot of Democrats.

Be sure to ask for permission from the appropriate authorities before doing any registration efforts.

Some suggested places for registration drives include, but are not limited to:

- Community events, concerts, fairs, sports events, movie festivals, public transportation stops, libraries, parks;
- Areas frequented by residents, such as locally-owned bookstores, grocery stores, restaurants, and movie theatres;
- Office buildings and factories;
- Apartment complexes or neighborhoods with predominantly young residents; and
- Houses of worship and community organizations.

- 4 Assemble a Voter Registration Committee.** Whether they come from your executive board or from your precincts, you will need a group of committed volunteers

who will staff your tables and canvass to help register residents in your county.

Be sure to use registration efforts in a way that increases your volunteer base for the future. Follow up with all of your volunteers to keep them connected to the Party. Also, be sure to have sign-up sheets at each event to gather contact information for people interested in becoming involved.

- 5 Train all of your volunteers.** Be sure they understand the basic laws and processes of voter registration before sending them to register. Successfully registering a new voter takes positive, knowledgeable interaction. We have provided a "frequently asked questions" section for you to pass on to volunteers.

- 6 Have Spanish-language materials on hand.** Over six percent of North Carolina's population is of Hispanic or Latino origin. The State Board of Elections provides Spanish-language registration forms, which are available through your county elections office, or you can contact Maria Williams, special projects coordinator for the State Board of Elections at (866) 522-4723. Also, your regional political director has Spanish brochures from the Democratic National Committee.

- 7 Think of registration as selling a product.** Tie the importance of voting to a particular issue, whatever it may be in your area., If you need help framing your message, contact your regional political director. Some other rules to keep in mind:

- Be nice, courteous and respectful of everyone you encounter.
- If you canvass, do not enter people's homes unless invited. If you are working a registration table, do not go up to people's cars.
- If someone is not interested, thank them for their time and keep moving to the next person. And be sure to not get caught in arguments with people on issues.

- 8 Be sure you and all of your volunteers have the essential materials,** which include, but are not limited to:

- Lots and lots of voter registration forms, with a sample form already filled out to use as an example;
- Contact information for your county elections board and the state offices in Raleigh;
- Absentee ballot request forms;
- County party and auxiliary brochures and sign-up sheets;
- Signs or other visibility items;
- Clipboards and writing utensils; and
- Water and snacks for both volunteers and potential registrants

9 **Be sure to announce yourself as being with the Democratic Party.** Make it clear, through signs and verbal interaction with potential registrants that you are from the Democratic Party. Also, use your knowledge of the community, the Voter Action Network, NCEC data, and your regional political director to identify areas where there are large numbers of potential Democrats.

While we can not tell people who to vote for, we want to be sure that we are registering Democrats – not Republicans or unaffiliated voters.

10 **Return registration forms to your county board of elections within a week.** This is perhaps the most important thing to keep in mind. As stated earlier, it is against the law to tell a voter that you will deliver the form and then fail to make a good faith effort to deliver it in time to meet the registration deadline for the next election.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

There is no way to be ready for every possible question that could be posed while you register voters. However, here are some questions you should expect and the answers. If you are ever in doubt contact the North Carolina Democratic Party headquarters or the State Board of Elections.

I am a student. Can I register to vote at my school address? Yes. Students have the right to register to vote at their home or school address, including a dorm room.

Will I have to register again in the future? No. Once registered to vote, a voter remains registered until he or she requests to be removed from the list of registered voters, dies, is convicted of a felony, moves outside of the county, or can no longer be confirmed to reside in the county.

I am in the military. How do I register to vote? The rules for people in the armed forces or abroad are different than people living in the United States. Contact the Federal Voting Assistance Program at www.fvap.gov or (800) 438-VOTE. You may also contact the State Board of Elections.

Can I put a post office box or a school mailbox as my permanent address? No. Your form will not be processed if you list a P.O. Box or school mailbox address as your permanent address. For districting purposes, you must put a physical address, but there is a section of the form to put your mailing address, in addition to your physical address.

How can I check to see if I am registered to vote? Go to the State Board of Elections website (www.sboe.state.nc.us). If you do not have access to the internet, contact your local elections board and ask them if you're registered to vote.

I registered to vote a long time ago. Is it still valid? Go to the State Board of Elections website (www.sboe.state.nc.us). If you do not have access to the internet, contact your local elections board and ask them if you're registered to vote.

How do I change my voter registration address if I have moved or if I have changed my name?

The provided form serves as both a first-time registration tool and as a change-of-information form. Send the completed and signed form to your county Board of Elections.

When is the last day to register to vote? In order to vote in an election on Election Day, a citizen must register to vote at least 25 days before that election. However, North Carolina voters can also register and vote during One-Stop (early) voting before Election Day.

I was convicted of a felony a few years ago, but I'm out of jail now. Can I register to vote? In order to register, you must not be a convicted felon still in custody, on probation, or on parole. If you've served all parts of your sentence, you can register.

I know someone who is mentally impaired or disabled. Can he or she register to vote? North Carolina law does not prevent the mentally impaired or disabled from registering to vote and voting.

I just moved here. Can I register to vote in this county right now? To register, one has to have been a resident of North Carolina and the county of residence for at least 30 days before the election.

Do I need to show ID to register or vote? You must provide your North Carolina driver's license number or the last four digits of your Social Security Number on the registration form. If you do not have either of these, then you may include with the form a copy of identification that shows your name and address. Some people are not comfortable with providing that information on a form, but they may still register to vote. If the board of elections cannot verify your information, you may be asked to show identification when you first vote.

Where do I vote on Election Day? Your county board of elections should send you the information with your specific precinct and polling place. If you forget or do not receive that information, go to the State Board of Elections website (www.sboe.state.nc.us) or call the local elections office.

I won't be in town on Election Day. How can I get an absentee ballot? First, you can participate in "one-stop" or early voting, which takes place for 17 days, including weekends, prior to elections. Every county has at least one site for one-stop absentee voting, and some have sites open beyond normal business hours. **You do not need an excuse for voting early.**

If you, or your near relative, are still unable to vote, **you can request an absentee ballot in writing from your county elections board – no excuse is needed.** Check with your local elections board for requirements. The county authorities must receive the request far in advance, so give them a call.

What if I go to the polls and they tell me I am not registered to vote? If you think you are a registered voter but your name does not appear on the county's official list of registered voters, you are entitled to cast a provisional ballot. You may also vote using a provisional ballot if you are asked for identification at the polls but do not have a photo ID or other document with you.

On Election Day, what should I do if I think my rights might have been violated? Contact the North Carolina Democratic Party at (800) 229-3376 or the Executive Director of the State Board of Elections office at (866) 522-4723. The State Board of Elections has general supervisory authority over all elections conducted in the State.

If you have any questions, contact:

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www.ncdp.org

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