

Massachusetts Voter Registration Information

The 1998 Higher Education Act requires all postsecondary institutions to make a good faith effort to distribute voter registration information to all students. As a result, we are providing the following information about voter registration. We hope you will find this data useful.

Registering to vote in Massachusetts: In the state of Massachusetts you must be a registered voter before you can vote.

Voting for Students

For many students, voting is a new experience and registering to vote is the first step in the process. Students must decide where to register and whether they will need an absentee ballot.

Some students attending school in Massachusetts may consider their school address their residence for voting purposes while others may still consider their home address their residence for voting purposes. In either case, the student must register in order to be eligible to vote. Below please find frequently asked questions regarding voting for students.

Do I need to register to vote?

If you would like to vote in Massachusetts, you must be registered by twenty days before the election or town meeting, or ten days before a special town meeting.

I am a student living in Massachusetts for college; do I need to register to vote in Massachusetts or my home state?

You may register in either state depending on which address you consider your residence for voting purposes. You may register from your home state and request that an absentee ballot be mailed to you, or you may register to vote from your Massachusetts address. You may not, however, be registered to vote in more than one place.

I am a Massachusetts resident living out of state for school. How do I vote?

If you consider your Massachusetts home address your residence for voting purposes, you may request that your city or town mail you an absentee ballot. While the deadline to request an absentee ballot is 12 noon on the day before the election, please be sure to allow enough time for the ballot to reach you and to be returned to your city or town by Election Day. Instruction on how to request an absentee ballot may be found see above.

Do I need identification to vote in Massachusetts?

Federal law requires that any person registering to vote by mail for the first time, or for the first time in a new state, must provide identification. Mail-in registration forms ask for either a Massachusetts driver's license number or the last four digits of your social security number, and registrants are encouraged to enclose a copy of their identification with the form. First-time voters in Massachusetts should also bring some type of identification to their polling place when they go to vote. This does not need to be a photo identification card. Acceptable forms of identification include: a Massachusetts driver's license or state ID card; a utility bill; a government-issued check; a paycheck or paystub; or any other official document bearing the voter's name and address. Please note that passports, birth certificates, naturalization papers, and student IDs without addresses are

not acceptable forms of identification. Many students get letters from their schools listing their student address for such purposes.

How can I register to vote?

By Mail: The Massachusetts Mail-In Voter Registration Form can be used to register to vote in Massachusetts, to update registration information due to a change of name, make a change of address, or to register with a political party. After filling out the Massachusetts Voter Registration Form, you must print it, sign it and send it to your [local election official](#). The form is found on www.sec.state.ma.us web site.

For registering to vote in other states, please use the [National Voter Registration](#) Form. Forms can be found on www.sec.state.ma.us web site.

You can also request a form be mailed to you by calling 617.727.2828 or 800.462.VOTE or emailing your request to elections@sec.state.ma.us.

In Person: Go to any registration location and complete an affidavit of registration, which must be answered truthfully under the penalty of perjury. The questions on the affidavit will include your name, residence and date of birth.

At the Registry of Motor Vehicles: Keep your motor voter receipt until you receive confirmation from your local election official. If you do not receive any confirmation, please contact your local election office to verify your voting status.

Mail the completed form to your local city or town hall. You should receive a confirmation notice in two to three weeks. If you do not receive a confirmation notice, or wish to confirm your voter registration status, please contact your local [City or Town Clerk](#) to verify your voting status.

Who may register?

Only a person who is:

- a US citizen, and
- a resident of Massachusetts, and
- 18 years old on or before election day (must still meet registration deadlines set forth below)

When and where may I register?

There is no waiting period to be eligible to register to vote. If you move, you may register to vote as soon as you move into your new home.

You may register to vote:

- in person or by mail, by completing a mail-in registration form and delivering it to your city or town election office, or
- at any local election office in any city or town in the state and at any registration event you encounter anywhere in Massachusetts, or

- when applying for or renewing your driver's license at the Registry of Motor Vehicles or when applying for service at a designated voter registration agency. Registration forms are also available at all colleges, universities, high schools and vocational schools.

What must I do if I've changed my address since I registered?

If you have moved within the same city or town, notify your local election office of your new address in writing. If you have moved to a new city or town, you must register again.

Can I register to vote before I turn eighteen?

Yes, as long as you will be 18 on or before the **next** election or town meeting. However, please note that you must still register by the deadline for that meeting or election.

Are there deadlines for registration?

Yes. In order to vote you must be registered:

- 20 days before all primaries and elections, and/or
- 10 days before a special town meeting.

Do I need to attach identification to my voter registration form?

Yes, if you are registering to vote for the first time in Massachusetts. Because of a federal law, the Help America Vote Act of 2002 passed by Congress, if you registered to vote by mail on or after January 1, 2003, you will be required to show identification when you vote for the first time in a federal election since registering by mail in 2003, or you can send in a copy of your identification with your voter registration form.

Acceptable identification must include your name and the address at which you are registered to vote, for example: a current and valid driver's license, photo identification, current utility bill, bank statement, paycheck, government check, or other government document showing your name and address. If you send in a copy of your identification with your mail-in voter registration form, it may not be returned to you.

If you do not provide such identification, the Help America Vote Act of 2002 requires that you may only cast a provisional ballot which will be counted later, but only after your eligibility to vote has been determined

What should I do if I registered to vote and I have not heard from my local election official?

If you have NOT received confirmation of your voter status from your city or town election official within two or three weeks from the date you registered please contact your [local election office](#) to verify your voting status.

Absentee Ballot Information

Massachusetts allows voters to vote by absentee ballot if they:

- will be absent from your city or town on election day, and/or
- have a physical disability that prevents your voting at the polling place, and/or
- cannot vote at the polls due to religious beliefs.

You may have an absentee ballot mailed to you or you may vote at your city or town hall by making arrangements with your local election official.

To be counted, a completed ballot must be received by the time the polls close on Election Day to be counted.

If you are voting from outside the United States, your completed absentee ballot for a final state or city election can be received up until 10 days after the election, but must be postmarked on or before Election Day.

Requesting an absentee ballot

To have a form mailed to you, you must apply in writing to your city or town clerk or election commission. Submit your application early to allow sufficient time for the ballot to be mailed to you and be returned by the close of polls on election day.

Although the deadline to apply for absentee ballots is *noon the day before the election*, we highly recommend submitting the application as soon as practicable.

An application form is available at your local election office or you may download one of the applications on the www.sec.state.ma.us web site.

You may also make application by letter or note that must include your:

- name,
- address as registered,
- ward and precinct (if you know them),
- address where you wish the absentee ballot sent,
- in a primary, the party ballot you want, and
- your signature.

If you wish to vote absentee at your city or town hall contact **your local election official** (listing on the www.sec.state.ma.ma web site). Plan to visit the office two or three weeks before the election. You can make your application and cast your vote in one visit.

Returning your absentee ballot

The ballot will come with instructions and a set of return envelopes. After making your choices on the ballot, you must enclose it in the inner (smaller) brown envelope and read and complete the information on the front of that envelope and sign it. Then insert the smaller envelope in the bigger envelope, place proper postage on it and mail it back to your city or town hall.

Alternatively, you or a family member may hand-deliver it to the local election official. Your completed ballot cannot be delivered directly to your polling place on Election Day.

To be counted, a completed ballot must be received by the time the polls close on Election Day.

If you are voting from outside the United States, your completed absentee ballot for a final state or city election can be received up until 10 days after the election, but must be postmarked on or before Election Day.

Absentee Ballot FAQs

When should I submit my application for an absentee ballot?

If you wish to vote by absentee ballot for more than one election in a year you may make one application and request that ballots for all elections during that calendar year be sent to you.

If you vote by mail, make certain the application arrives at your local election office early. Remember, the ballot will be mailed to you. You may mail or hand-deliver it back to the election office but must arrive before the close of the polls on election day (8:00 p.m. for state elections).

If you cast your ballot at the clerk's office before election day, plan to visit the office two or three weeks before the election. You can make your application and cast your vote in one visit. Call the clerk's office to make certain that the absentee ballots are available. Absentee ballots should be available three weeks before an election.

Must I be a registered voter in order to vote by absentee ballot?

Yes, unless you are a "specially qualified voter". A specially qualified voter is a person:

- who is otherwise eligible to register as a voter and
- whose present domicile is outside the United States and whose last domicile in the United States was Massachusetts or whose present domicile is Massachusetts and who is:
 1. absent from the city or town or residence and in the active service of the armed forces or in the merchant marine of the United States or a spouse or dependent of such person;
 2. absent from the commonwealth; or
 3. confined in a correctional facility or a jail, except if by reason of felony conviction.

Must my ballot be witnessed?

No.

Voting for Military and Overseas US Citizens

<http://www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/elemil/milidx.htm>