



National Campaign For
FAIR ELECTIONS
www.nationalcampaignforfairelections.org

Ensuring a Valid Voter Registration in OHIO: Frequently Asked Questions

VOTER REGISTRATION FORMS

There are several ways to get a voter registration form. Via the Internet, the form can be downloaded at: <http://www.sos.state.oh.us/sos/publicAffairs/electionPubs.aspx?Section=1758>. Original copies can be obtained by visiting the office of the Secretary of State, any of the 88 county boards of elections, or requesting an application by mail.

1) Are there restrictions on copying voter registration forms?

No. Ohio law does not ban individuals or groups from copying blank voter registration forms for use in voter registration drives. See OH St. § 3503.26.

2) Are there restrictions on the use of the National Form?

No. Either the National Mail Voter Registration or the Ohio Voter Registration form can be used to register a person to vote in OH. See http://www.eac.gov/register_vote_faq.asp. National Forms that are printed on regular paper, signed by the applicant, and mailed in an envelope with first class postage are accepted. If using the National Form in Ohio, the political party affiliation and race/ethnicity fields may be left blank.

3) Are there restrictions regarding the use of registration form information?

Ohio law does not prohibit copying completed registration forms prior to submission to the board. OH St. § 3503.26. Information on a voter registration card may be used for other purposes, for instance, to see if the voter would like an absentee ballot or for Get-Out-The-Vote activities.

After a form has been completed and submitted, names and addresses of voters can only be copied in the county Board of Election office during normal business hours. *Id.* However, this information may not be available between the twenty-first day before an election and the eleventh day after an election if the Board of Election feels that copying the information will interfere with election administration. *Id.*

4) Are there restrictions regarding pre-filling info on registration forms?

No. Ohio law does not have any restrictions regarding pre-filling information on registration forms. Any inconsistent information on registration forms, such as an incorrect county or zip code, may delay the registration process. See **Question #10**.

COMPLETING VOTER REGISTRATION FORMS

5) How long must you live in a county before you are eligible to register to vote?

A person who has been a resident of the county for at least thirty days prior to the election is eligible to register to vote. OH. St. § 3503.01.

6) Are there any restrictions on registering to vote using a P.O. Box, college campus, or dorm address?

A person may register to vote using any address she considers to be her residence. A residence is any place where a person lives with the intent of staying. A college or dorm address may be used if the applicant lives at that address, and when they leave—for any length of time—have the intention of returning. A post office box is not a residence. See OH St. § 3503.2.

Students with a campus P.O. Box should fill in their dorm name and room number in the House Number and Street box (4) on the Ohio form or the Home Address box (2) on the National form and then enter their P.O. Box number in the Additional Rural or Mailing address box (7) on the Ohio form or Address Where You Get Your Mail box (3) on the National form.

7) Can a person register to vote at a location that is not their permanent address (i.e. college)?

Yes. A person's voting address is determined based on their residence. A residence is any place where a person lives with the intent of staying. A person can reside at an address and leave for a period of time, e.g. to attend college. However, as long as the person has the intention of returning, that address may be considered their residence. See OH St. § 3503.2.

Students who want to vote are protected by the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. This means that they cannot be treated differently than any other citizen when it comes to voting. Specifically, students should neither be forced to fill out additional information that non-students do not have to fill out nor can election officials require students fulfill additional obligations that non-students do not have to satisfy. Of course, no one can register and vote in two places but if a student considers her dorm or her address at school her residence, she can register to vote there; if she feels that the address where her parents live or the address she lived before going to school is her residence, she can register to vote there and vote by absentee ballot.

A person is eligible to register and vote in the county they consider their residence. If a person is away from their residence, they may vote by absentee ballot.

8) Are there any identification requirements to register to vote?

Generally, identification is not required to register to vote in Ohio. However, the registration form requires an applicant's Ohio drivers license number or the last four digits of the applicant's social security number. If this information is not available for any reason, the application may be submitted with a copy of the applicant's current and valid photo identification, military identification, or a current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck or other

government document (other than a voter registration notice mailed by the county) that shows the applicant's name and address.

9) Are there any identification requirements in order to vote?

As of June 1, 2006, identification is required in order to vote. OH. St. § 3503.28. Voters must bring ID to the polls in order to verify identity. Voters who do not provide ID may still be able to vote by providing the last four digits of the voter's social security number and by casting a provisional ballot. Voters who do not have identification, including a social security number, may still vote by signing a form swearing to the voter's identity and casting a provisional ballot. OH. St. § 3503.28(A)

You may vote with a regular ballot if you provide:

- (1) a current and valid federal or Ohio government-issued photo ID, with your name and with an expiration date, OR
- (2) a current and valid driver's license or Ohio government-issued photo ID with your former address as long as you provide the last 4 digits of your license or ID number, OR
- (3) a military ID with name and current address, OR
- (4) a utility bill, bank statement, paycheck, government check, or other government document showing the voter's name and current address, that is NOT a voter registration notice or an election notice

Voters who do not have the ID outlined above can cast a provisional ballot if they provide the last 4 digits of their social security number.

The Secretary of State has not yet declared whether a student ID from a state college or university constitutes a valid government-issued photo ID. Students should bring their student ID and another form of photo ID (outlined above) as well as the last 4 digits of their social security card with them when voting.

10) What are the rules regarding missing or illegible information on registration forms?

If the form is incomplete or illegible, the Board of Electors will send the applicant notice of the information that is missing so that the form can be updated. If the change form is received or postmarked at least 29 days before an election, the applicant will be able to vote in that election. Ohio State Voter Information Guide, pg 8.

The Board of Electors will only allow for corrections if it believes that the errors were not made with the intent to defraud. OH St. § 3503.3.

11) Can a person register to change their name by filling out a voter registration form?

Yes. A person who has already registered to vote may change their name by completing an Ohio Voter Registration Form. This form can be completed at any time, including on Election Day, and submitted to the Board of Electors. OH St. § 3503.19.

REGISTERING OTHERS TO VOTE

Since 2004, the laws governing voter registration drives have changed dramatically. Please read the section below carefully.

12) What are the laws regarding people who will receive compensation for registering others to vote?

IT IS ILLEGAL TO PAY PEOPLE DOING VOTER REGISTRATION DRIVES ON A PER APPLICATION BASIS, i.e., \$1 for every voter registration form submitted. No person may receive compensation on a fee per signature, fee per registration, or fee per volume basis. No person shall pay any other person for collecting signatures on election-related petitions or for registering voters except on the basis of time worked. Failure to comply with any of these provisions constitutes a felony in the fifth degree. OH St § 3599.111.

In Ohio, a person who receives or expects to receive compensation for registering people to vote must:

1. Register with the Secretary of State: www.sos.state.oh.us/electionsvoter/training.aspx
2. Complete an online training program, and
3. Sign an "Affirmation Form" that includes their name, permanent address, date of birth, the name of each county where registration efforts will take place, proof of completion of training, and a statement stating all state laws will be followed while registering voters. OH St. § 3503.29(C).

13) Are there any laws regarding submission of voter registration forms by individuals receiving compensation?

Yes. In addition to registering with the state, Ohio law governs how registration forms must be submitted if a person is receiving compensation:

1. All application forms collected must be submitted directly to county board of elections or the Secretary of State. It is against the law to return the completed forms to any other person, group, organization, office or entity.
2. Voter registration forms must be returned no later than the 10th day after the form has been completed, or before the 30th day before the election, whichever is earlier. If the form is received on the 31st day before the election, it must be submitted within 10 days.
3. The "Affirmation Form" must be submitted with each set of voter registration forms returned to the county board of elections. OH St. § 3503.29(C)

Forms may be reviewed for quality control purposes before being handed in as long as the person who registered that voter turns in their form within the designated time frame.

14) Is training or registration with state required for registration drives?

Yes. If a person expects to receive compensation for registration of voters, Ohio law requires that person to register with the state and attend training. See **Questions #12 and #13** above. No training is required if you do not expect to receive compensation; however, the definition of

compensation is broad enough to include donated meals, etc. and volunteers should register with the state and attend training if they are receiving some form of compensation.

15) Are volunteers or staff of voter registration drives required to be county or state residents?

No. Ohio law requires individuals who are circulating initiatives or referendums to be residents of the state. OH St. § 3503.06(A). There are no such prohibitions for registering voters.

REGISTRATION DEADLINES

16) What is the deadline to register to vote?

Ohio has a 30-day voter registration requirement. Registration forms must be completed, signed, and either postmarked by or submitted before the 30th day before the election. OH. St. § 3503.19.

17) What (if different from voter registration deadline) is the registration form submission deadline?

A person who receives compensation for registering a voter must return completed registration forms to any board of elections or to the office of the Secretary of State no later than the 10th day after the applicant has completed the form, or before the 30th day before the election, whichever is earlier. If the form is completed and received on the 31st day before the election, the form must be submitted within 10-days. OH. St. § 3503.19(B).

18) Election Day registration?

Individuals who register to vote on Election Day will not be able to vote in that election. Ohio has a 30-day voter registration requirement and all applications to vote must be submitted or postmarked no later than the 30th day before the first election in which the individual would like to vote. OH St. § 3503.19(A).

19) Does Ohio election law allow for early voting?

A person may vote early in an Ohio election by submitting an absentee ballot. Any qualified voter may vote absentee – a registered voter does not have to state a reason to vote by absentee ballot. Absentee voting begins 35 days before primary and general elections and, except for hospitalized voters, ends the day before the election. OH. St. § 3509.02. Voters may vote absentee by mail or at the county board of elections office. To vote early in person, you may go to the board of elections office during regular business hours after absentee ballots are available for voting but no later than the day before the election, and request, receive and vote your ballot at the board office.

To obtain an absentee ballot by mail, you must apply in writing or complete Ohio Secretary of State Form 11-A. Your form must be submitted to the board of elections of the county in which your voting residence is located. For more information and a form, visit: <http://www.sos.state.oh.us/sos/PublicAffairs/VoterInfoGuide.aspx?Section=16>.

VOTER REGISTRATION LEGISLATION

20) Is there any pending legislation? If so, where is it in the legislative process?

Ohio recently enacted new laws regarding election administration, many of which became effective June 1, 2006. These laws cover areas such as compensated voters, identification at the polls, and penalties for violations of the election code. These new laws have been incorporated under the appropriate questions.

In addition, **HB 129** was introduced during the 2005-2006 term and if passed would require: 1) a person who registers another person to vote to return the signed forms within 5 days, failure would be a misdemeanor, 2) failure to purposely submit a voter registration form would be a felony of the fourth degree, 3) requires that the board of elections, who receives an incomplete form, notify the individual within 30 days, and 4) would eliminate reasons why voters can vote absentee and allow **any** voter to chose to vote absentee.

21) Applicable statutes?

Chapter 3503 of Ohio's Annotated Code is relevant to Voter Registration, specifically:

- § 3503.01 on qualifications;
- § 3503.19 registration procedures;
- § 3503.26 custody of forms;
- § 3503.28 voter information brochure and ID requirements;
- § 3503.29 training for compensated voters,
- § 3503.30 mistakes in registration forms.
- § 3509 information on absentee ballots

21) Is there an elections official contact who is helpful?

For more information, contact the Secretary of State's Office at:

Ohio Secretary of State
180 E. Broad Street, 15th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215
(614) 466-2585

22) What web resources are available?

The Ohio Secretary of State has a website dedicated to providing information on the voter registration process. www.Yourvotecountsohio.org. This site includes resources such as frequently asked questions, absentee ballots, and special provisions for military officers. Additionally, you can go to the Secretary of State's website and look under voting information: <http://www.sos.state.oh.us/sos/PublicAffairs/voterInfoGuide.aspx>.

National Campaign for Fair Elections:
www.nationalcampaignforfairelections.org/pages/ohio.