

# General Voter Information

★ Polls must be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. for state elections. Sample ballots and instructions are posted at the polls on election day.

★ Presidential primaries are held once every four years in March.

★ State elections occur every other year in even numbered years. The primary is conducted in September and the election in November.

★ City elections occur every other year in odd numbered years. The preliminary, if there is one, is held in September or October and the election is held in November.



League of Women Voters of Boston  
P.O. Box 180654  
Boston, MA 02118

(617) 782-7982  
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For more information, please contact:

Boston Election Department  
Boston City Hall  
One City Hall Square,  
Room 241  
Boston, MA 02201

(617) 635-3767  
www.cityofboston.gov/elections

For up-to-date election information visit:

www.vote411.org

# All About Voting

IN BOSTON

Presented by the League of Women Voters of Boston

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## Am I eligible to vote?

You're eligible if you are a U.S. citizen, 18 years or older by election day, and a resident of your city or town at the time you register.

## How do I register to vote?

Call the Boston Election Department at (617) 635-3767 and ask for a Massachusetts mail-in voter registration form or register in person at the Election Department, located at Boston City Hall, One City Hall Square, Room 241. You can also get a registration form at the Registry of Motor Vehicles, or any one of several state agencies, including the Department of Medical Assistance, Department of Transitional Assistance, Commission for the Blind, Commission for the Deaf, and WIC. Make sure to follow all directions on the registration form.

## Once I've registered to vote, do I ever have to register again?

If you change your address, change your name, or if you want to change your political party enrollment, you will need to register again.

## When's the latest I can register to vote before the election?

Twenty days before any election. After the cut-off date, you can register for the next election. If you became a U.S. citizen after the voter registration deadline, you may bring your dated naturalization papers to the Election Department at Boston City Hall until 4 p.m. on the day before the election.

## I registered to vote but have not heard from the Election Department. What should I do?

If you have not received a letter confirming your voter status within 2 or 3 weeks from the date you registered, please contact the Boston Election Department at (617) 635-3767.

## Where do I go to vote?

Your street address is part of a ward and a precinct within the city of Boston. Once you have registered to vote, you will receive a confirmation letter from the Election Department with the location of your polling place in your neighborhood. You may also call the Election Department at (617) 635-3767 or visit their website at [www.cityofboston.gov/elections](http://www.cityofboston.gov/elections).

## How do I vote?

Since 2003, Boston has used AccuVote Optical Scanners, which are widely used throughout the state of Massachusetts. Once you check in at your polling place, you are given a ballot and asked to make selections by filling in the ovals opposite the name of your chosen candidate(s) and any ballot question(s). Once you are finished, you are directed to place your ballot in the AccuVote Optical Scanner machine, which will take your ballot and complete the process. For a brochure on the AccuVote-OS System, please contact the Boston Election Department at (617) 635-3767.

## What can I do if I can't get to the polling place on election day?

You can vote by absentee ballot if you're going to be out of town, or have a physical disability or religious beliefs that prevent you from going to the polls. Apply by mail or in person to the Election Department for an absentee ballot. The deadline for applying is by noon on the day before the election. If you are returning your ballot by mail, however, it must be received at the Election Department before the close of polls on election day.

## Can I vote if I don't read or write English?

Yes, as long as you are registered to vote. You may ask a person you know to help you or request help from election officials at your polling place.

## What is the Annual Resident Listing?

Each year the Boston Election Department updates this listing by mail to record all residents 17 years and older. You must return this form to the Election Department (by mail or in person) to stay on the registered voter list. If you move or change your name, you must re-register to vote.

## Can anyone vote in the primary election?

If you are enrolled in a political party, you may only vote in that party's primary. If you are enrolled in one party but want to vote in another party's primary election, you must change your party enrollment or change to "unenrolled" status by the voter registration deadline for that election.

If you're not sure about your party enrollment, check with the Boston Election Department before the voter registration deadline for that election. If you are registered as "unenrolled," you may choose the primary ballot of any party. You will return to your "unenrolled" status after you vote.

## What if I want to change my party affiliation?

You may change your party enrollment through the Election Department in person or by mail at any time, except during the 20 days before the primary election. If you want to change parties or drop your membership in a party after a primary, you may do so immediately after voting by filling out a card at your polling place and returning it to one of the election officials.

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

If you are registering to vote for the first time in Massachusetts by mail, you may send in a copy of your identification with your registration form. Otherwise, you will be asked to show identification when you vote for the first time in a federal election. 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.

## Will I need to show identification to vote?

Only if you are a first-time voter who registered by mail on or after January 1, 2003, or if you did not return the Annual Resident Listing form sent by the city of Boston. Otherwise, you do not need identification to vote.

## What should I do if my name is not on the voters' list?

Ask the election officer in charge of the polling place to call the Boston Election Department to determine your registration status. If they still cannot find your name, you may go to the Election Department at Boston City Hall to attempt to establish your identity as a registered voter or you may cast a provisional ballot. To cast a provisional ballot, you must show identification and declare before a precinct officer at the polling place that you are a registered voter in the city of Boston residing within your precinct. After the election, the Election Department will search for records to confirm your voter registration and, if confirmed, your ballot will be counted. If eligibility cannot be confirmed, your ballot will remain sealed until such time as required and then destroyed.

**Voting is a constitutional right for all U.S. citizens and is one of the single most important ways that Americans can have a voice in their local, state and federal governments. Listed above are some commonly asked questions about the process.**