

**PROTECTION AND ADVOCACY
FOR VOTING ACCESSIBILITY
(PAVA) PROGRAM**

This online publication provides an overview of the rights of and assistance available to voters with disabilities, including what to do if you believe your right to vote is being violated.

Federal Election Laws

Federal laws protect your right to vote as a person with disability. Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) (as amended) requires state and local governments to assure people with disabilities access to all government programs, services and activities. This includes requiring that state and local governments make voting places and equipment accessible to people with disabilities.

The federal Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) further protects your right to vote as a person with a disability. HAVA grants money to states to improve voting systems for all voters. HAVA grants money to states specifically to improve voting place and equipment accessibility for people with disabilities. HAVA also requires states to establish an administrative procedure to hear complaints and resolve grievances about voting rights violations.



Registering to Vote

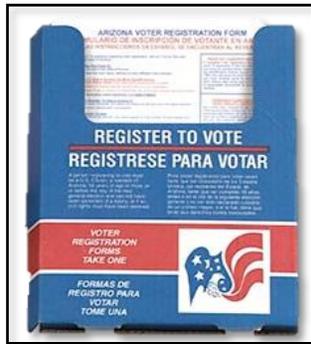
Eligibility

You are eligible to vote if:



- you are a U.S. citizen;
- you will be at least 18 years old on election day;
- you are a resident of Rhode Island *for at least 30 days before the election*;
- you are not currently incarcerated in a correctional facility on a felony conviction; and
- you have not been found incompetent or unable to vote through a specific finding and order of a judge regarding your voting ability. A general finding of a need for guardianship does not take away the right to vote; if the court guardianship order does not specify that the person is incompetent or unable to vote, then the person may register and vote.
- in Presidential elections, if you miss the 30 day deadline, you can still register and vote only for President/Vice-President at your local election office called the board of canvassers on the day of the election (R.I.G.L.17-1-3). Contact your board of canvassers to confirm the location for same-day registration and voting.

Registering to vote:



In order to vote, you must be registered to vote. If you have an ID issued by the RI Department of Motor Vehicles, you can register to vote on the Secretary of State's website at vote.sos.ri.gov. If you are not able to register to vote on the Secretary of State's website, you must register by filling out a voter registration form and submitting it to your local elections office called the board of canvassers. You can obtain a voter registration form from your board of canvassers or from the Rhode Island Secretary of State's website.

After you register, the board of canvassers will send you information telling you which voting precinct you will vote in, and the location of your polling place. If you do not hear from the board of canvassers within a few weeks, contact them to confirm that you are registered. Information on how to reach your local board of canvassers is [here](#).

Once you are registered to vote, you can get useful information at the Secretary of State's website such as the candidates on the ballot, election dates, sample ballot and the location of your polling place. You can even print out a copy of your sample ballot to see what it will look like or practice marking the ballot correctly.

Assistance registering: If you need assistance in filling out your voter registration form, contact Disability Rights Rhode Island. Staff from government agencies and service providers such as case managers, social workers, or client rights advocates, may also help you in obtaining and filling out a voter registration form.

Need to
REGISTER to
VOTE?

You must provide your signature on the registration form. If you are unable to sign your name, you must make your mark “X” if possible. If you are unable to make an “X,” you must indicate in some manner that you desire assistance to make your mark “X” to register to vote.

Updating your registration: If you change your residence or name, you need to submit an updated voter registration form to notify your board of canvassers of the change. You can do this on line at vote.sos.ri.gov, by submitting a new form to your board of canvassers by mail or in person or by contacting Disability Rights Rhode Island for assistance.

If you were registered in the past but you have not voted in any election in a few years, you may need to re-register. You can check to see if you are still registered at vote.sos.ri.gov. If your registration is not there, you will need to re-register to be eligible to vote in the next election. You may also contact your local board of canvassers or Disability Rights Rhode Island to find out if you are still registered.

You must re-register to vote no later than thirty days prior to the primary or general elections. In Presidential elections, if you miss the 30 day deadline, you can still register and vote only for President/Vice-President at your board of canvassers on the day of the election. Contact your board of canvassers to confirm the location for same-day registration and voting.



Registering from Institutions, Hospitals or Facilities

If you are now in jail or prison as a result of a felony conviction, you are not eligible to register and vote. Your right to register and vote is *automatically restored* upon your final release from the Department of Corrections, although you will need to register again. If you have not been convicted of a felony but are incarcerated in a correctional facility, you are eligible to register to vote, and to vote by absentee ballot. You may vote while on probation, parole, or home confinement.

If you reside in a public or private hospital or facility, you may register and vote. If you are not able to leave the facility to vote at the polls, you may vote by absentee ballot. Please note that findings of not guilty by reason of insanity (NGRI) or incompetency to stand trial are not convictions and do not interfere with your right to register and vote from a hospital or facility.

Contact Disability Rights Rhode Island for help or additional information about how to vote from these settings.

Voting at the Polls

Voting Identification

Poll workers will ask you to show a current and valid photo ID when you vote at your polling place. ID is valid if it is unexpired or expired no more than six months prior to voting. If you do not bring an acceptable photo ID to the polls, you will not be able to vote and cast a regular ballot. You will be allowed to vote a provisional ballot. This means that your vote may be counted by your local board of canvassers after they verify your eligibility to vote by comparing the signature on your provisional ballot with the signature on your voter registration form. When you vote a provisional ballot there is a chance that your vote will not be counted.

Identification that is accepted in Rhode Island includes:

RI driver's license/permit

US passport

ID card issued by any federally recognized tribal government

ID card issued by an educational institution in the United States

US military identification card

ID card issued by the US government or State of Rhode Island (RIPTA bus pass, etc.)

Government issued medical card

RI Voter ID card*

Tribal ID



*The Rhode Island Secretary of State's office will issue a free voter photo ID card to individuals who do not possess any of the valid Photo IDs listed above. See the Secretary of State's website for additional information on the program, or call (401) 222-2340.

Accessibility

Physical Accessibility

All polling places must be physically accessible to persons with disabilities. This means that all polling places must be situated in buildings that can be entered and exited by people with disabilities. If your polling location is not accessible, contact Disability Rights Rhode Island for assistance and to report the problem.

Assistance with Casting Your Ballot

Voters with disabilities have a right to equal access to their polling location, and to cast a private ballot. Voters with disabilities who have complaints about access, accommodations, assistance, or other rights violations can **contact Disability Rights Rhode Island**.



Some of the accommodations and assistance you have a right to are:

- You may bring a sample ballot into the voting booth with you.
- If you need help with voting, you may bring a person of your choice into the voting booth to assist you with reading or marking your ballot. However, your helper may not be a candidate on the ballot, and may not be an agent of your employer or your labor union. Your helper is not allowed to tell you who or what to vote for.
- If you need help with voting but have no one to assist you, a pair of bipartisan poll workers may provide assistance to you in marking your ballot.
- You can request to use the Automark machine to mark your ballot, with or without assistance.

Voting by Mail



Absentee Ballots

Any registered voter is permitted to vote by mail. To vote by mail, you must submit an application for mail ballot. You may obtain an application for a mail ballot from the Secretary of State's website or your local board of canvassers. You must complete the mail ballot application according to the instructions and send it in to get a mail ballot. Mail ballot applications must be filled out completely and received by your local board no later than 4:00 P.M. on the 21st day before the election or primary in which you wish to vote. If you miss this deadline, you may vote by Emergency Mail Ballot.

Once you receive the mail ballot, fill it out according to its instructions and return it (by mail or in-person) to the Board of Elections before the close of polls (8 PM) on Election Day.

Secure drop boxes may be available for delivery of your voted mail ballot. Contact your local board of canvassers for details.

Emergency Mail Ballots

If for any reason you believe you will not be able to make it to the polls on Election Day, you can vote early using an emergency mail ballot within 20 days before the election.

To apply for an emergency mail ballot you must obtain an application from your local board of canvassers and return it to them by **4:00 P.M.** the day before the election. You will be able to vote your ballot at the board of canvassers, take it with you, or authorize someone to pick it up for you.

All mail ballots must be received by the State Board of Elections at 2000 Plainfield Pike STE A Cranston, R.I. 02921 by **8:00 P.M.** the night of the election.

Secure drop boxes may be available for delivery of your voted mail ballot. Contact your local board of canvassers for details.

You can call Disability Rights Rhode Island or your local Board of Canvassers for more information.

Braille and Tactile Mail Ballots

Voters who are blind or visually impaired may apply for a Braille or tactile mail ballot. To apply for a Braille or tactile mail ballot, you must be a registered voter in Rhode Island, submit a request for a Braille or tactile ballot in addition to submitting an application for a mail ballot for each primary and/or general election.



The application must be filed with your local board of canvassers at least 45 days before the date of the election for which you are requesting a mail ballot. The request will be valid for mail ballots for all elections held during the calendar year in which the request was received and in which you are eligible to participate.

You can use the request form prepared by the RI Department of State, or you may apply in writing without using the form by including the following information:



- Name, address, and daytime phone number
- Indication of whether this request is for the entire calendar year or only for the next election
- Your party affiliation (if you are requesting a ballot for a primary)
- Which special ballot format you desire: Braille Grade I, Braille Grade II, or tactile
- Your signature