



Voting Rights

Fast facts

When Americans are asked to list the rights that make us full citizens of the United States, the right to vote is often one of the first listed. Even so, many registered voters don't have a full understanding of the history of voting, who can vote in their state, and how the process of voting works. Here are a few fast facts as we enter election season.

When is Election Day?

- The next election is Tuesday, November 5, 2019. Your ballot must either be postmarked by that day, or turned in to a Voter Service Center or Ballot Drop Box by 8:00pm on that day. Of course you may mail in your completed ballot at any time before November 5. Ballots will be mailed to voters October 16–18.
- Access the online Voter's Guide here: <https://www.spokanecounty.org/178/Current-Election>

You can register to vote in Washington State if:

- You are a citizen of the United States. If you only hold a green card, you may not yet vote.
- You have lived in Washington for at least 30 days before the election in which you intend to vote.
- You are not under the department of corrections supervision or forbidden to vote due to a court order. People convicted of a crime who are no longer in prison, on parole, or on probation have their right to vote in Washington state restored when they reenter society. The rules for voting if you have been in prison are different from state to state, but in Washington state, you do not lose voting rights at all for a misdemeanor and you do not need a Certificate of Discharge (COD) to get your voting rights back even for a felony. You are not required to completely pay off your fines, restitution, or other legal financial obligations (LFOs) before you register to vote. However, your voting rights can be revoked if the sentencing court determines that you have failed to comply with the terms of your legal financial obligations.
- You are at least age 16; however, you may not actually vote until age 18. Teens can pre-register to vote at age 16, but will then need to update their registration at age 18.

Need help finding a resource?

Ask library staff for help if you are unable to find or access a resource. We're glad to help you find the information you are looking for.



When do I have to update my voter registration?

- You will have to update voter registration if you have moved, if you preregistered and have now turned 18, if you have changed your name, or if you are a newly naturalized citizen.

What if I can't remember if I'm registered to vote?

- Visit MyVote.wa.gov. Log in with your name and birthday to check your voter registration status.
- If your Voter Registration Status is "Active," you are registered. Check your address to be sure it is up to date.
- If your status is "Inactive," it means that an election-related piece of mail was returned by the post office as undeliverable. You can reactivate your registration with a voter registration form.
- If your status is "Cancelled," it means that an election-related piece of mail was returned by the post office as undeliverable and you have not voted in two federal elections. You may reactivate your registration by filling out a voter registration form.

What address should I use to vote?

- If you are a **college student**, you must choose whether to vote in elections in the town where you attend school or the permanent address where your parents live. You may register to vote in Washington if you have lived in the state for at least 30 days and have established a residential address in the state (including a campus address). However, some financial aid is tied to state residency. Check with your school's financial aid office before you change your voting address. Alternately, you may choose to retain your voter registration and permanent address at your parent or guardian's residence. If you decide to register and you were previously registered in another state, cancel your registration in that state. It is a felony to vote twice. You may only vote in one county in one state. Should you accidentally receive two ballots, vote only once.
- If you are **homeless**, register to vote with the location where you usually stay, such as a shelter, park, motor home, intersection, or other identifiable location that you consider your residence. You must also provide a valid mailing address where you can receive ballots and election information on time. A mailing address can be a post office box, address of a friend or relative, shelter, or general delivery at a local post office.

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- For those who **own more than one property**, people usually register using the address where they spend the most time in the year. For example, people who go south for the winter will probably want to retain their voter registration in Washington state. In other cases, people choose the residence that is less lived in but most permanent. For example, someone who has spent the past year at the home of a relative who needs care but does not expect to live there permanently may continue to vote using their more permanent address. If both addresses are equally permanent, it is your choice which to use. However, you must only register to vote at one address. Should you accidentally receive two ballots, vote only once. It is a felony to vote twice in an election.

For additional questions:

- For questions on voter registration, contact Spokane County Elections Office at (509) 477-2320.
- For questions about reinstated voting rights after prison release, contact the Department of Corrections at (800) 430-9674.
- If you would like to know the rules for felons and voting rights in other states, check here: <https://www.aclu.org/issues/voting-rights/voter-restoration/felony-disenfranchisement-laws-map>
- For registration to vote in Idaho instead of Washington, see <https://idahovotes.gov/voting/>.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

“Voters without traditional residential addresses”. Washington State Legislature, January 1, 2006, Accessed 1 October 2019.

<https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=29A.08.112>

“Voter Resources”. Secretary of State, 2019, Accessed 1 October 2019.

<https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/voters/>

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