



VOTING RIGHTS GUIDE

FOR DC RESIDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

DISABILITY RIGHTS DC
AT UNIVERSITY LEGAL SERVICES

220 I Street, NE #130, Washington, DC 20002

Disability Rights DC at University Legal Services

Disability Rights DC at University Legal Services (DRDC) is the federally-mandated Protection and Advocacy Program for people with disabilities in DC.

DRDC is a private, non-profit organization and is not affiliated with the DC Board of Elections or any other DC government agency.

DRDC's Protection and Advocacy Program for Voter Access (PAVA) advocates on behalf of people with disabilities to ensure their full participation in all aspects of the DC electoral process including registering to vote, accessing vote centers, and casting ballots.

For more information or to request additional copies of this booklet, please contact:

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VOTING RIGHTS GUIDE FOR DC RESIDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Introduction:

Why vote?

Voting is an important right under the U.S. Constitution and Federal and DC laws. DC's Mayor and Council members, Senators, the U.S. President, and others are chosen by voters like you.

Your Right to Vote in DC:

Voting Rights Laws

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) are federal laws that require the DC government to have voting and elections at places that are accessible to people with disabilities.



Photo of a person in a wheelchair entering a vote center through a door with an accessible entry symbol.

The DC Board of Elections controls voter registration (sign-up) and the way we vote.

People with all disabilities CAN vote.

Having a disability or receiving supports and services because of a disability does NOT disqualify you from voting. You CAN vote if you live in a nursing home, group home, shelter, hospital, jail, prison, or other facility. All eligible DC residents can vote while in jail or prison regardless of their conviction.

If you are a DC resident and at least 17 years old*, you can vote **UNLESS**:

You are not a U.S. Citizen**;

- You have not lived in DC at least 30 days just before election day (if you are in jail or prison, you had not lived in DC for at least 30 days prior to being in jail or prison);
- You plan to vote in another state, territory, or country;
- A judge found that you are not capable of voting.

* You may vote in a primary election if you are at least 17 years old and you will be at least 18 years old by the next general election. You may vote in a general or special election if you are at least 18 years old.

** DC residents who are not U.S. citizens can vote in DC local elections for the offices of Mayor, Chairman and Members of the Council, Attorney General, Members of the State Board of Education, Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners, and for elections on any ballot questions.

Voter Registration & Pre-Registration:

If you want to vote, you must be at least 17 years old and register with the Board of Elections.

If you are at least age 16, you can pre-register to vote. Preregistering adds your name to the voter list so you will be ready to vote when you turn 17.

After you are registered to vote, the Board of Elections will mail you a voter registration card, though you do not need to bring this card with you to vote.

Primary Election Registration

A primary election is for each political party (Democratic, Republican, Statehood Green) to choose a candidate for the general election.

To vote in a primary election, you must be registered with the political party holding the primary (for example: Democratic, Republican, Statehood Green) before the date of the primary (at least 21 days prior to the election unless you are registering for the first time). If you do not select one of these major parties, you will be registered as an "Independent" and will not be able to vote for a candidate in any primary election.

How do I register to vote?

Ways to Submit Your Registration Application Form:

Online

For U.S. Citizens, fill out and submit the form online at: https://vr.dcboe.org/213324797239968?agency_code=12.

For U.S. Citizens, fill out and submit the form online at: https://vr.dcboe.org/213324797239968?agency_code=12.

For non-U.S. Citizens, fill out and submit the form online at: <https://vr.dcboe.org/240076291295963>.

To complete the form, you need to draw a signature or mark. A typed signature is not allowed.

Upload a copy of your ID or other proof of name and address (see below).

Fax / Email / Mail / In-person

Print out the registration form. For U.S. Citizens, fill out and sign the registration form available online at: <https://dcboe.org/voters/register-to-vote/register-update-voter-registration>. For non-U.S. Citizens, fill out and sign the registration form titled "Non-U.S. Citizen Resident Application" available online at: <https://dcboe.org/voters/register-to-vote/non-citizen>.

Make a copy of your ID or other proof of name and address (see below) to send with your registration application form to:

DC Board of Elections
1015 Half Street, SE - Suite 750
Washington, DC 20077-0833
Phone: (202) 727-2525
Fax: (202) 347-2648
Email: DCRegistrations@dcboe.org
Hours: 8:15 am to 4:45 pm, Monday through Friday

Call the DC Board of Elections for the registration form or more information.

If you are Deaf, you can use DC Relay by dialing 711 or the numbers below:

TTY (Text Telephone): 800-643-3768

Voice: 800-643-3769

STS (Speech to Speech): 800-898-0740

Spanish TTY: 800-546-7111

Spanish Voice: 800-546-5111

Mail While in Jail or Prison

If you are currently in jail or prison, you must include on line 3 of your voter registration application your full legal name in the provided boxes, even if this is different from the name under which you are incarcerated. Include the name you are incarcerated under in parentheses. For example, "Jonathan Moore (aka John Moor)." You must include on line 4 of the registration application your DC home address to register to vote. Your DC home address is:

- the address where you lived prior to being in jail or prison, or
- your new DC address if your family has moved, or
- the address of a DC shelter where you stayed if you were unhoused prior to incarceration, or
- a DC address where you will be returning after you are released from jail or prison.

You must include on line 5 your jail or prison ID number and the mailing address of your correctional facility to receive your ballot (For example: "(12345-007) USP Marion P.O. BOX 1000 Marion, IL 62959)"). Also include on line 8 your DMV ID number or the last four numbers of your social security number if you have one. If you have neither, check box 8A. If you transfer to a different facility or are released, you must fill out another registration application (or you can go to a vote center if released) to receive your ballot.

Copies of DC's Voter Registration Application and postage paid return envelopes can also be requested from the Reentry Affairs Coordinators or your Unit Team at federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) facilities.

If you are in DC Department of Corrections' (DOC) care or custody, DOC must register you to vote if you want to register. Voter registration information is available on your housing unit. You can ask for help from the DOC Voting Coordinator to complete your voter registration application.

When should I register to vote?

The deadline dates for voter registration change, depending on the dates of elections.

The law allows you to register to vote by submitting the registration form to the Board of Elections at least 21 days before the official election day. If you miss that deadline, you can register in person on the same day you vote at a vote center. Bring your proof of name and address when you vote. The poll worker will give you the ballot to vote. If you do not have proof of your name and address when you vote, you must give it to the Board of Elections within two days after the election for your ballot to be counted.

What's Required for Registration?

Proof of name and address:

Give **ONE** of these showing your name and address to the Board of Elections:

- a government-issued ID, or
- a Pepco, gas, water, cable, internet, or phone bill, or
- a bank statement, or
- a paycheck stub or lease or rental agreement, or
- a letter from a shelter where you stay, or
- a tuition or housing bill from a DC college or university issued for the current academic or housing term, or
- any other government-issued document, other than one from the Board of Elections.

Bills, bank or other statements must be dated no more than 90 days before your registration application.

This proof of name and DC address is the only ID required for you to register and vote. Proof of name and address is not required for incarcerated DC residents if your jail or prison ID number and the last four digits of your social security number are included on the registration application form. If BOE cannot verify your name and address, your ballot will include instructions on providing prison identification.

How to confirm your registration:

Call the Board of Elections (see above) or check the website at: <https://apps.dcboe.org/VRS>.

How to update registration with a new name, address, -or- party:

Call the Board of Elections for an address change form or update your information online at: <https://dcboe.org/voters/register-to-vote/register-update-voter-registration>. Non-citizens may update your registration online at: <https://dcboe.org/voters/register-to-vote/non-citizen>.

Voting

How do I vote?

In-person at a Vote Center

The DC Board of Elections must let you vote inside a vote center in private (meaning you do not have to tell anyone how you voted). All vote centers should have ramps or flat entries for you to use.

You do NOT need to show an ID to vote on election day. You also do not need to show your voter registration card.

Inside the vote center, you can vote on a machine or use a paper ballot. There are signs showing the ballot (list of people running for elections) to look at before you vote. The voting machines use touch screens and audio (for people who are blind or have limited vision).

Curbside

You can vote curbside (from your car or at the sidewalk curb) in front of some vote centers. Check the Board of Elections' website for curbside voting locations or call the Board of Elections. If you choose to vote this way, a poll worker will give you a paper ballot to fill out and return right away.

Ballot by Mail or Mail Ballot Drop Box

You can vote by mail if you want or need to vote by mail. You do not need to ask for a mail-in ballot from the Board of Elections unless you will be away from your registered mailing address during the

election. To request a mail-in ballot you can:

- email your request to DCabsentee@dcboe.org, or
- complete a request form online at <https://dcboe.org/voters/casting-your-vote/mail-ballot-request>, or
- fax a request to the Board of Elections (see above).

The Board of Elections will automatically mail your ballot to you if you are registered. You must fill it out and mail it or bring it to the Board of Elections (including any vote center or ballot drop box) by 8 p.m. on election day. (If you mail it, you must sign the official ballot envelope, your ballot must be mailed in this envelope and postmarked on or before election day, and the Board of Elections must receive it no later than 10 days after election day.) If you do not get your ballot by mail, you can still vote in person at a voting center.

Accessible Remote Ballot

Voters with disabilities have the option to vote remotely using an accessible remote ballot (ARB). ARB is an electronic ballot that allows you to electronically read and mark your ballot. In 2022, DC passed the Elections Modernization Amendment Act that allows for ARB ballots to be returned electronically. ARB is compatible with all major screen readers (JAWS, etc.), tactile switches, closed captioning, and audio-enabled systems. You will need access to a computer with internet access and an email address.

You must ask for an ARB from the Board of Elections. To ask for an ARB you can: call the ADA Coordinator at 202-727-5411 or email your ARB Marking System Request form to ogc@dcboe.org. The ARB request form is available online at [https://www.dcboe.org/voters/accessible-voting/accessible-remote-ballot-\(arb\)-marking-system](https://www.dcboe.org/voters/accessible-voting/accessible-remote-ballot-(arb)-marking-system).

The Board of Elections will email you a link to your remote ballot. You must fill out the ballot online and return it to the Board of Elections (either by printing the ballot and delivering it to any vote center or ballot drop box or sending it back electronically) by 8:00 p.m. on election day. (If you mail it, you must sign the official ballot envelope mailed separately, your ballot must be mailed in this envelope and postmarked on or before election day, and the Board of Elections must receive it no later than 10 days after election day.)

What if I need help to vote in person?

You can bring anyone with you into the vote center if you need help to vote, but that person cannot be a poll watcher, election observer, your employer, or from your union. If you do not understand English, you can get the ballot and instructions in your language in some parts of DC. (You can call the Board of Elections' Language Access services at 202-727-2525 for free interpreter assistance and additional information in your language.) If you received your ballot by mail and need help completing it, you can ask for help from anyone of your choosing, including a poll worker at any vote center.

When can I vote?

There are two official dates for elections: one for primary elections (in June) and one for general elections (in November). The DC Council sets the official date for the primary elections. **The next primary election will be June 4, 2024.** The general election is always on the first Tuesday in November. **The next general election will be November 5, 2024.**

Early voting starts about two weeks before the official election day. You can either vote early or on election day.

Where can I vote?

Early Voting

There are vote centers in each Ward of DC for “early voting.” You can vote in any of these early voting places: <https://dcboe.org/elections/2024-elections>.

Election Day

You may vote at any vote center in the District. Find vote center locations on the Board of Elections website: <https://dcboe.org/elections/2024-elections>.

The closest vote center to your home address is listed on your voter registration card.



Photo of man in wheelchair at closed double doors.

If your vote center is not accessible (for example - if it has steps you cannot climb or heavy, closed doors you cannot open), see below about submitting complaints.

Accommodations (Changes) for Voters with Disabilities

You may need a change at your vote center or the way you vote because of your disability. These changes are called accommodations. Some examples are:

- opening the door to the vote center,
- giving you a magnifying glass to help you read the ballot or voting directions,
- using an audio headset that reads out the information on the voting machine and tells you what to do to vote,
- allowing you to bring anyone you choose into the vote center with you to help you to vote.

How/When to Request Accommodations:

You can ask anyone at your vote center or at DC Board of Elections if you need accommodations (changes) in voting because of your disability.

You can request accommodations (changes) in the voting process at any time.

Disability-Based Problems & Complaints:

Types of Problems

People with disabilities may face voting access problems such as:

- getting into their vote centers,
- not having audio headphones to use the machine,
- not having magnifying glasses to see the ballots,
- lack of space around voting machines.

How to File Complaints

If the Board of Elections denies your registration application, the Board of Elections must send a written notice listing the reasons why they denied you and explaining how to appeal.

If you cannot access (enter) your vote center, use the voting machine or paper ballot, or have other problems voting, you can file a complaint in writing or by calling the Board of Elections. You can also call DRDC.

During the elections (early voting or election day): you can contact the Board of Elections (202-727-2525) or DRDC (202-547-0198) to report access problems.

After election day, you can file a complaint to the Board of Elections in writing or by calling the Board or DRDC. If the Board does not resolve your complaint, you can appeal through the Office of Administrative Hearings.

Election Day Jobs

The Board of Elections hires people to work on election day in different jobs including Poll Workers, Voter Assistance Clerks, ADA Compliance Assistants, and Site Coordinators. These jobs are open to everyone including people with disabilities.

Here is a link to the FAQs about election day jobs: <https://dcboe.org/faqs/election-workers>.

To qualify for election day jobs, you must:

- be a DC resident* (Site Coordinators must also be registered voters), and
- be at least 16 years old, and
- attend or have graduated from a public or private secondary school or an institution of higher education (for Election Workers only), and
- complete at least four hours of training before each election.

* except for DC government employees.

People with disabilities are not required to pass test(s) or drive or walk to qualify.

How to apply: Fill out an application on the Board of Elections website at: <https://dcboe.org/election-workers/election-worker-applications> or call or go to the Board of Elections to get an application.

DRDC's Role

Disability Rights DC at University Legal Services (DRDC) urges the Board of Elections to make all vote centers and ballots accessible to all DC voters with disabilities by:

- visiting vote centers to check on accessibility;
- reporting access problems to the Board of Elections;
- recommending improved access such as opening school building doors.

DRDC also helps people with complaints regarding voter registration and voting access on and after election day.

Questions?

If you have questions or complaints about voting access, please contact DRDC at 202-547-0198 (voice) or 202-547-2657 (TTY). DRDC's website has a section about voters' rights advocacy: www.uls-dc.org.