

**ACLU**  
Rhode Island

# KNOW YOUR RIGHTS VOTING RIGHTS

Learn about:

- Who can vote
- Voter registration
- Early voting
- Voting by mail
- Voting at the polls
- Voter ID
- What to do if you have problems at the polls

# WHO CAN VOTE?

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## Can I vote in Rhode Island?

To vote, you must be registered at least 30 days before the election.

## You can vote in a RI election if you are:

- A U.S. citizen
- At least 18 years old on Election Day
- A Rhode Island resident
- Not currently incarcerated for a felony
- Not declared mentally incompetent to vote by a court
- Registered to vote

Seventeen-year-olds can also vote in a primary election if they will be 18 by the time of the general election.

## What if I'm a student?

You can register to vote at whatever address you consider your primary legal residence. This can be your school address or your home address.

## What if I have a legal guardian?

You can vote unless a judge says in a written court order that your right to vote is denied or suspended.

## What if I've been convicted of a crime?

Only people who are currently incarcerated for a felony are denied the right to vote. If you're incarcerated for a misdemeanor, you can vote by absentee/mail ballot. If you have a past felony or misdemeanor record, you have the right to vote. If you are on parole or probation for any crime, even if you are on home confinement for a felony, you have the right to vote.

## What if I'm homeless?

You don't need a home to register, but you do have to identify a place of residence (which can be a street corner, a shelter, or another place where you usually stay). You can also use the address of the Board of Canvassers in the town where you usually stay.

## What if I've moved or changed my name?

You should update your registration every time you move or change your name.

- If you moved to RI from another state and didn't register before the deadline, you cannot vote in a Rhode Island election.
- If you moved to a new city or town within the state after the registration deadline, you can still vote at your old polling place in your old city or town.
- If you moved to a new city or town within RI between six months and 30 days before the election and didn't re-register, you can only vote at the

Board of Canvassers of your old city or town. You will only be allowed to vote in federal and statewide races.

- If you moved to a new voting district (precinct) within your city or town after the deadline: vote at the Board of Canvassers or the polling place for your old address.
- If you moved to a new voting district (precinct) within your city or town on or before the 30-day advance registration deadline and didn't re-register: vote at the Board of Canvassers or the polling place for your new address.

## Welcome to your Voter Information Center



View/Update  
My Voter Record



Register  
To Vote



Find a Polling Place  
View Sample Ballot



Find Your  
Elected Officials



Publications  
and Forms

Photo of the Rhode Island Secretary of State's website, <https://vote.sos.ri.gov>.

## VOTER REGISTRATION

### You can register to vote:

- Online at <https://vote.sos.ri.gov/>
- By mail by filling out a voter registration form and mailing it to your local Board of Canvassers.
- In person by filling out a voter registration form at your local Board of Canvassers, located in your city or town hall.
- When you apply for services at state agencies that provide public assistance (such as Medicaid, WIC, and food stamps) or services to people with disabilities, and at armed forces recruitment offices.
- If eligible, you can be registered to vote when you apply for a driver's license or state ID at the DMV.
- You can often find mail-in voter registration forms at libraries and city and town clerk offices.

### How do I know if I'm registered?

Check your registration status at <https://vote.sos.ri.gov> or call your local Board of Canvassers.

### Can I see who is on the ballot before I actually go to vote?

Yes. If you visit the Secretary of State website at <https://vote.sos.ri.gov>, you can find a sample ballot specific to your address.

# **EARLY VOTING & VOTING BY MAIL**

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## **Can I vote before Election Day?**

Yes, in two ways. You can vote by mail. Find deadlines for receipt of mail ballots at <https://vote.sos.ri.gov> or by calling your local Board of Canvassers. You can also vote early, in person, at your local Board of Canvassers.

## **How do I get a mail ballot?**

To vote by mail, you need to apply for a mail ballot. You can apply directly for one online or download an application at <https://vote.sos.ri.gov> or visit your local Board of Canvassers. If you miss a mail ballot application deadline and cannot vote in person, you are eligible for an emergency mail ballot. Visit <https://vote.sos.ri.gov> or call your local Board of Canvassers for more info. You do not need to provide a reason to get a mail ballot.

## **Do I need a witness to vote by mail ballot?**

No. The General Assembly repealed that requirement.

## **What is the deadline for returning my mail ballot?**

Your mail ballot must be received by the state Board of Elections by 8 p.m. on election day. If you don't want to return your ballot by mail, or there is not enough time to do so, there are drop boxes in each community where you can place your ballot. If your ballot is placed in a drop box by 8 p.m. on election day, it will be counted.

## **How do I know my mail ballot has been counted?**

You can track the status of your mail ballot at [vote.sos.ri.gov](https://vote.sos.ri.gov), which lets you know if it has been received and counted. If there is a problem with your ballot, the Board of Elections will try to reach you and offer you a chance to cure any problems.

## **How can I vote via emergency mail ballot?**

Within twenty days of an election, you can apply for an emergency mail ballot and vote at your local Board of Canvassers or you can have it mailed to you or authorize someone to pick up the ballot on your behalf. After it is received, it will be treated like any other mail ballot.

## **What is in-person early voting?**

Within twenty days of an election, you can vote at your local Board of Canvassers in the same manner you would on election day. You will be asked to complete an in-person electronic application, and you will be required to present valid ID. You will then be provided a ballot and permitted to complete it in person and place it directly into a voting machine right there.

## How can I vote by mail if I have a print disability?

You can request to vote by accessible mail ballot. Visit <https://vote.sos.ri.gov/Voter/AccessibleVoting> or call the RI Secretary of State at (401) 222-2340 to learn more about this option.



Section of example ballot in Rhode Island.

## VOTING AT THE POLLS

### If I don't vote by mail, when do the polls open?

Polls are generally open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. You have the right to vote if you're in line when the polls close, even if the line is outside of the building.

### Where do I vote?

You have to vote at your assigned polling place, which is listed on the voter registration card you receive in the mail when you register. Because polling locations can change between elections, you should check before going out to vote by visiting <https://vote.sos.ri.gov> or calling your local Board of Canvassers. If you go to the wrong polling place to vote, you will only be allowed to vote by provisional ballot and all your votes may not be counted.

### What if I need language assistance?

If you vote in Providence, Central Falls, Pawtucket or Woonsocket, you have the right to ask for voting assistance in Spanish. You're also entitled to a translation of the ballot and other election materials. You can bring an interpreter with you to the polls or get assistance in your language from anyone you choose, including a poll worker, as long as the person is not your employer, an agent of your employer, or an agent of your labor union.

### What if I have a disability and my polling place is not accessible?

You have the right to an accessible polling place and an accessible voting machine. If you find your polling place inaccessible on election day, call Disability Rights RI at (401) 831-3150. If you learn it's inaccessible prior to Election Day, call your local Board of Canvassers right away and ask for an alternative method of voting. If you are visually impaired or have difficulty reading or marking a ballot, your polling place has a special voting terminal for you to use so that you can vote privately and independently. If you need a Braille or tactile ballot, you must ask for one in advance. On Election Day, you can bring one or more people to assist you. This can be

anyone you choose as long as the person is not your employer, an agent of your employer, or an officer or agent of your labor union. The same accessibility rights apply to early voting.

### **Can I bring my children with me?**

Yes. State law permits you to bring a child under the age of 18 into the voting booth with you.

### **Can I wear a political button when I go to vote?**

Yes. You can display or wear political messages while waiting in line to vote. However, once you have voted, you must immediately leave the polling location.

### **Can I record activity at the polling place?**

Electronic recording of the election process is allowed as long as it is done outside of the railed or enclosed voting area and does not hinder the election process or compromise a voter's right to cast a secret ballot. You also have the right to take photos of your own ballots.

## **VOTER ID**

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### **What are the accepted forms of photo ID?**

Accepted forms of photo ID include, but are not limited to, the ones listed below. The ID must not have expired more than six (6) months prior to voting, but it does not need to have your current address.

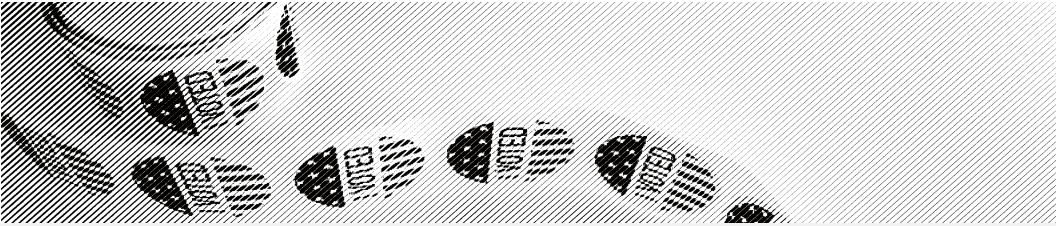
- Rhode Island driver's license or permit
- Rhode Island voter ID card
- State or federal ID card
- U.S. passport
- U.S. military ID card
- ID card issued by a recognized tribal government
- Student ID card from a U.S. educational institution

### **Do I have to provide ID if I vote by mail?**

You do not need ID if you vote by mail ballot (in most cases). However, if you are a first-time registrant and did not provide a driver's license or state ID or the last four digits of your SSN when you registered, you will be asked to provide a copy of a photo ID.

### **Do I have to show ID if I vote at the polls on Election Day?**

RI law requires you to show photo identification in order to vote by regular ballot at the polls. However, if you do not have photo ID and want to vote at the polls, you cannot be turned away, and must instead be given a provisional ballot. If your signature on the ballot is later found to match that in the voting database, your vote will be counted. If you vote via provisional ballot, polling officials are required to give you information explaining how to find out if your vote was counted.



“I VOTED” stickers, like one you might receive after voting in person.

## **PROBLEMS AT THE POLLS**

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### **What if I’m not on the voter list?**

Ask a poll worker to check the list and confirm that you’re at the right polling place. If you believe you’re at the right polling place but your name isn’t on the list, ask for a provisional ballot. You have the right to cast a provisional ballot as long as you’re willing to swear that you believe you are registered to vote.

### **What if I go to the wrong polling place?**

Ask a poll worker to help you find the right one. You can also call your local Board of Canvassers. If nobody can determine where you’re registered or you don’t have time to go to the correct polling place, you can cast a provisional ballot, but all your votes may not be counted.

### **What if someone challenges my right to vote?**

Ask for a provisional ballot. You have the right to cast a provisional ballot even if you’ve been challenged.

### **What if someone tries to intimidate or harass me?**

Tell a poll worker right away. If the poll worker is the problem, tell a poll watcher or call your local Board of Canvassers. You can electronically record polling place problems, as long as it is done outside the enclosed voting area and does not hinder the election process.

### **What if I make a mistake on my ballot or the voting machine malfunctions?**

Tell a poll worker before you cast your vote. You have the right to a replacement ballot if you catch the error before you cast your ballot. If you haven’t properly filled out the ballot and the voting machine rejects it, you have the right to a replacement ballot. If your voting machine malfunctions, you can request a different machine or a paper ballot.

### **What is a provisional ballot?**

Unlike a regular ballot, a provisional ballot is not fed through the voting machine. Once the polls close, the Board of Canvassers will review the ballot to ensure you are eligible to vote. The ballot should be counted if the signature you provide (as part of the provisional ballot voting process) matches the one on your voter registration. If you vote via provisional ballot, polling officials are required to give you information explaining how to find out if your vote was counted.

**PHONE NUMBERS TO CALL  
FOR INFORMATION OR HELP:**

- RI Secretary of State: (401) 222-2340
- RI Board of Elections: (401) 222-2345
- Disability Rights RI: (401) 831-3150
- Election Protection: (866) 687-8683
- ACLU of Rhode Island: (401) 831-7171



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