

**I-866-OUR-VOTE
(1-866-687-8683)****Disclaimer:**

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VOTER REGISTRATION FORMS**1) How can voter registration forms be obtained?**

Voter registration forms can be downloaded from the Secretary of State website at http://www.sos.state.ia.us/elections/voterreg/reg_to_vote.html. Application forms are also available at the Office of the County Commissioner of Elections, motor vehicle driver's license stations, public assistance agencies, offices providing services to people with disabilities, and Armed Forces recruitment offices.

2) Are there restrictions on registering to vote using a photocopied voter registration form?

No. There is not an express provision in the Iowa Code prohibiting the copying of voter registration forms.

3) Are there restrictions on the use of the National Voter Registration Form?

No, the National Voter Registration Form can be used in Iowa. The registrant must complete and sign the form, and it must be received by the Office of the County Commissioner of Elections by 5 p.m. eleven days before the election. See <http://www.eac.gov/voter/Register%20to%20Vote>. The State Commissioner of Elections must make the federal mail voter registration form available to governmental and private entities, particularly organized voter registration entities and programs.

4) Are there restrictions regarding the use of registration form information?

Yes. Voter registration records are available for public inspection at the Office of the County Commissioner of Elections. However, the commissioner or any voter registration agency which has custody of the voter registration records shall take the necessary steps to ensure that the name of the agency at which the voter registration form was completed remains confidential.

The registrar may provide upon request a list of registered voters. The list will contain data on registration and participation in elections. The County Commissioner of Registration and the State Registrar of Voters is required to remove the voter's whole or partial social security number, Iowa driver's license number, or Iowa non-operator's identification card number from the voter registration list. Information about individual registrants obtained from the voter registration records is to be used only: (a) to request that a registrant vote at an election, (b) for another genuine political purpose, (c) for a bona fide official purpose by an elected official, or (d) for bona fide political research. Information is not to be used for commercial purposes.

5) Are there restrictions regarding pre-filling information on registration forms?

No. There is no express provision in the Iowa Code prohibiting pre-filling information on registration forms. However, any inconsistent information on registration forms, such as an incorrect county or zip code, may delay the registration process. **See Question #11.**

COMPLETING VOTER REGISTRATION FORMS

6) How long must you live in a county before you are eligible to register to vote?

There is no minimum residency requirement for voter eligibility in Iowa. A voter must be an Iowa resident (in addition to being a US citizen at least 18 years of age (17½ to register) and not claim the right to vote in more than one place). A voter's residence is the place which the voter declares to be the voter's home with the intent to remain there permanently or for a definite, or indefinite or indeterminable length of time.

If a person who meets the requirements to vote in Iowa moves to a new residence, either in Iowa or outside Iowa, and does not meet the voter registration requirements in the person's new residence, that person may vote at that person's former precinct in Iowa until the person meets the voter requirements at the person's new residence.

7) Are there any restrictions on registering to vote using a P.O. Box, college campus, or dorm address?

A person may register to vote using any address he or she considers to be his or her legal residence (for the definition of "residence," see Question 6). A person who is homeless or has no established residence may declare residence in a precinct by describing on the voter registration form a place to which the person often returns. A registrant must include the address at which he or she resides, which does not include a P.O. Box. A registrant must include his or her mailing address if different from the residence address. For the Iowa students registering to vote with a college campus or dorm address, see Question 8.

8) If I enter or leave the state because of work or school, can I register to vote?

Yes. A student who resides at or near the school they attend, but who may also be able to claim residence at another location under the provisions of the Iowa Code, may choose either location as a residence for voter registration purposes. Those who leave the state for work or school may choose to register in Iowa and vote absentee.

9) Are there any identification requirements to register to vote?

Voter identification is not mandatory in every circumstance, but election officials can usually require acceptable identification from voters registering to vote. First-time voters who have registered to vote by mail are required to provide identification at the polling place (for acceptable types of identification **see Question #10**). The Iowa Voter Registration Form requires the applicant's valid Iowa driver's license number, or valid Iowa non-operator's identification card, or the last four numerals of the applicant's social security number. A voter registration application lacking this information will not be processed and the registrant is required to be notified of deficiencies by election officials. A registrant who does not have an Iowa driver's license number, an Iowa non-operator's identification card number, or a social security number, and who notifies the registrar of this fact should be assigned an identification number that identifies the registrant for voter registration purposes.

10) What are the identification requirements needed to vote?

Election officials have the authority in most circumstances to require voter identification; in some circumstances such identification is mandatory. An eligible voter who registers by mail and who has not previously voted in an election for federal office in the county of registration can be required to provide

appropriate identification when voting for the first time in the county, unless the registrant provided on the registration form the registrant's Iowa driver's license number, or the registrant's Iowa non-operator's identification card number, or the last four numerals of the registrant's social security number and the registration form entries match an existing state or federal identification record with the same number, name, and date of birth.

Any person who is required to provide identification prior to voting, and who votes in person at the polls, or by absentee ballot at the commissioner's office or at a satellite voting station, must provide a current and valid photo identification card, or present to the appropriate election official one of the following current documents that shows the name and address of the registrant:

- (1) Utility bill;
- (2) Bank statement;
- (3) Paycheck;
- (4) Government check;
- (5) Other government document.

If the registrant described above votes an absentee ballot by mail, the registrant must provide a photocopy of one of the documents listed above when returning the absentee ballot.

If the voter does not present one of these forms of identification at the polling place, that person can vote a provisional ballot. If a voter who is required to present identification at the polling place votes by absentee ballot without presenting one of these forms of identification, the ballot shall be considered a provisional ballot.

11) What are the rules regarding missing or illegible information on registration forms?

The registration form requires the prospective voter to provide the following information: full name; the county in which the registrant resides; date of birth; gender; residence address or description; Iowa driver's license number, or Iowa non-operator's identification card, or the last four numerals of the registrant's social security number (**see Question #9**); and signature. A voter registration application lacking any of this information will not be processed.

If the registration on its face appears to be complete and proper, the commissioner shall send an acknowledgement to the registrant stating that the registrant is now a registered voter of the county. If the registration form is missing required information, the commissioner is required to send an acknowledgement advising the applicant of the missing information along with a new registration form. If the incomplete application is received during the twelve days before the close of registration for an election, the commissioner must provide the registrant with an opportunity to complete the form before the close of registration.

12) Can a person whose name has changed since registering vote on Election Day?

Yes. A person already registered to vote under a name that has been legally changed since originally registering may have the name changed in the voter's registration record by submitting one of the following:

- (1) A written notice of the name change submitted to the county commissioner of elections;
- (2) A completed Iowa or federal mail registration form submitted to the county commissioner;
- (3) On election day, a registration form presented to the precinct election officials at the precinct of the voter's current residence;
- (4) A change of address form submitted to the Iowa Motor Vehicle Division, or to a county treasurer's office that is participating in county issuance of driver's licenses; or

(5) A change of address notice for voter registration submitted to any voter registration agency.

REGISTERING OTHERS TO VOTE

13) What are the laws regarding third-party registration?

Eligible voters have a right to fill out their own registration forms, but third party designees may fill out registration forms for eligible voters. Third parties may mail or deliver the completed registration form to the county commissioner of elections in the county where the voter resides. The Secretary of State is required to encourage volunteer organizations to undertake voter registration drives by providing registration forms. Anyone who wants to register others to vote may obtain the voter registration form on the secretary of state's website:

<http://www.sos.state.ia.us/elections/VoterInformation/VoterRegistration.html>.

14) Are there any laws regarding submission of voter registration forms by individuals receiving compensation?

Yes. Individuals may receive compensation for assisting others in completing voter registration forms, but only if the compensation is based solely on the time spent providing the assistance. It is unlawful to pay, offer to pay, or receive compensation based on the number of registration forms completed, or the party affiliations shown on the completed registration forms, or on any other performance criteria. State statutory political committees are exempt from the requirement that compensation be based solely on time spent providing assistance.

15) Is training required for voter registration drives?

No. There is no express training requirement under Iowa law; however, the Secretary of State has published guidelines for registering voters, which are available on the Secretary's website:

<http://www.sos.state.ia.us/pdfs/elections/GuidRegVoters.pdf>.

16) Are volunteers or staff of voter registration drives required to be county or state residents?

No.

REGISTRATION DEADLINES

17) What is the deadline to register to vote?

For the November 4, 2008 general election, the deadline is five p.m. on Saturday, October 25, 2008. See three-year election calendar, <http://www.sos.state.ia.us/elections/index.html>. Iowa closes its registration for elections ten or eleven days before an election depending on the type of election being held. However, election day registration is also permitted provided the prospective voter complies with the requirements discussed following Question 19 below.

All applications to vote must be received by the county commissioner's office by five p.m. on the day registration closes; however, if a registration form submitted by mail is postmarked no later than the fifteenth day before the election, it will be considered timely even if it is received by the commissioner after the close of registration. A registration form submitted by mail that is postmarked after the fifteenth day before the election will be considered timely only if it is received no later than the close of registration.

The deadlines for voter registration do not apply to a person who has been discharged from military service within 30 days preceding the date of an election. This person can present a copy of his or her

discharge papers to the precinct official together with a completed voter registration form in order to vote.

18) Must organizations or individuals engaged in voter registration drives submit their forms within a certain period of time?

No, the same rules and deadline apply for third party organizations. Unless a registration form submitted by mail is postmarked no later than the fifteenth day before the election. In that case, even if the form is received after the registration deadline it will be considered timely.

19) Is Election Day registration allowed?

A person who is eligible to register to vote may register on election day by appearing in person at the polling place in the precinct in which the individual resides and completing a voter registration application, making a written oath, and providing appropriate proof of identity and residence.

A person may establish identity and residence by presenting a valid Iowa driver's license or Iowa non-operator's identification card, or by presenting any of the following valid forms of identification if such identification contains the person's photograph and a valid expiration date:

- (1) An out-of-state driver's license or non-operator's identification card;
- (2) A United States passport;
- (3) A United States military identification card;
- (4) An identification card issued by an employer; or
- (5) A student identification card issued by an Iowa high school or an Iowa postsecondary educational institution.

If the photographic identification presented does not contain the person's current address in the precinct, the person is required to present one of the following documents that show the person's name and address in the precinct:

- (1) Residential lease;
- (2) Property tax statement;
- (3) Utility bill;
- (4) Bank statement;
- (5) Paycheck;
- (6) Government check; or
- (7) Other government document.

In lieu of presenting identifying documents, a person may establish identity and residency in the precinct by the written oath of another person who is registered to vote in the precinct. The registered voter must attest to the identity and residency of the person who wants to register to vote, and he or she must sign the oath in the presence of a precinct election official. A registered voter may make only one such oath each election day

20) Does state election law allow for early or absentee voting?

Iowa permits absentee voting.

A registered voter may vote by absentee ballot if any of the following conditions applies:

- (1) The voter expects to be absent on Election Day during the time the polls are open from the precinct in which the voter is a registered voter;
- (2) The voter expects to be prevented from going to the polls and voting on Election Day because of an illness or physical disability; or
- (3) The voter expects to be unable to go to the polls and vote on Election Day.

A voter who is eligible to vote by absentee ballot may apply in person for an absentee ballot at the commissioner's office or any location designated by the commissioner at any time within seventy days prior to Election Day (except on Election Day). For elections in which polls open at noon, a voter can request an absentee ballot in person at the commissioner's office from eight a.m. until eleven a.m. on Election Day.

A voter who is eligible to vote by absentee ballot may make written application to the commissioner for an absentee ballot. The application must be received by the commissioner no later than five p.m. on the Friday before the election. The commissioner will retain written applications received more than seventy days before an election and process those applications in the same manner as applications received not more than seventy days before the election.

Applications for absentee ballots can be obtained from the Secretary of State at 888-767-8683 or at: <http://www.sos.state.ia.us/elections/AbsenteeBallot/index.html>.

VOTER REGISTRATION LEGISLATION

21) Is there any pending legislation that affects voter registration? If so, where is it in the legislative process?

Yes, there are a number of proposed bills affecting voter registration.

- **SF 84** (in subcommittee since 2/1/07) – Would amend § 49.77 to require that all voters show valid and current identification before being allowed to vote. The identification must contain a photograph of the voter, the printed name of the voter, and a valid expiration date. Also, a person whose name does not appear on the election register as an active voter must show identification to prove residency within the precinct.
- **SF 104** (in subcommittee since 2/6/07) – Amends § 48A.5 to allow people who are seventeen years old to vote.
- **SF 2312** (passed Senate 3/18/08, has not passed house) Would amend §§ 48A.7A and 48A.26. It would require that a person who registers to vote in person on Election Day present an identifying document that contains the person's current address in the precinct if the photographic identification presented does not contain the person's current address. It would also provide that the application of a registrant who did not answer the citizenship question on the voter registration application will be processed, and if the application is complete in all other respects and information is verified, the applicant will be registered to vote and sent an acknowledgment.
- **HF 248** (in subcommittee since 1/24/08) Amends § 48A.9 to change the deadline to register to vote in the primary elections to 11 days prior to the election.
- **HF 350** (in subcommittee since 2/20/07) Amends §§ 48A.5, 48A.11, 48A.25A, 48A.26, and 48A.37. It would require that the commissioner of registration verify that the date of birth on the voter registration application is at least seventeen and one half years earlier than the date the registration form is processed. It would also provide that a voter registration form lacking a signature will not be processed. HF 350 further provides that all voter registration applications shall have their identification numbers verified and the social security administration, as well as the department of transportation, will be used as sources for verification. Military and overseas

voters would be exempt from these verification requirements. It would also provide that the voter registration application of a person who does not answer the questions pertaining to age or United States citizenship will not be processed. Acknowledgements mailed to registrants that do not answer the age or United States citizenship questions will inform registrants that they may submit new applications up until 5 p.m. the day before the election if the election includes candidates for federal office. Finally HF 350 would prohibit a person who did not answer, or answered “no” to the voter registration questions pertaining to citizenship, from voting in local elections.

- **HF 2077** (in subcommittee since 1/30/08) Would amend § 48A.7A to prohibit a registered voter, who is attesting by written oath to the identity and residency of a person registering to vote, from signing more than one oath in an election. The attester must register to vote before the registration deadline (at least 10 days prior to the primary and general elections and 11 days prior to all other elections).
- **HF 2138** (in subcommittee since 2/6/08) Would amend § 48A.7A to provide that persons who register to vote after the close of registration may vote a provisional ballot if they wish to vote in an election for which the registration deadline has passed.
- **HF 2347** (in subcommittee since 2/28/08) Would amend §48A.9 to change the deadline for voter registration from 5:00 p.m. to the regular close of business for that commissioner’s office.

22) What applicable statutes are possibly affected?

Iowa Code §§ 48A.5, 48A.7A, 48A.9, 48A.11, 48A.25A, 48A.26, 48A.37, and 49.77.

23) Are there any helpful elections official contacts?

For more information, contact the Iowa Secretary of State at:

Secretary of State
Voter Registration
First Floor, Lucas Building
321 E. 12th Street
Des Moines, IA 50319
1-515-281-0145

<http://www.sos.state.ia.us/elections/>.

24) What web resources are available?

The Iowa Secretary of State has a useful website: <http://www.sos.state.ia.us/index.html>.

The site includes registration forms, absentee ballot requests, a calendar of important elections dates, and FAQs.

National Campaign for Fair Elections:

www.nationalcampaignforfairelections.org/pages/iowa.