

Disclaimer:

This guide is designed for informational purposes only. It is not legal advice and is not intended to create an attorney-client relationship. The Election Protection Coalition does not warrant any information contained in this guide, nor does the Coalition suggest that the information in this guide should be used as a basis to pursue legal advice or decision making.

Questions Involving Access to the Ballot:

1. It is after 6:00 AM, 7:00 AM, 8:00 AM, or 9:00 AM¹ and the polling place is not open.

Immediately contact the local Elections Office to report the problem. You can find information on local Election Offices at <http://www.sec.state.ri.us/govtracker/index.php?page=IdxMuni>.

If the polling place is open but the voting machines have not arrived, call headquarters immediately. Voters should be permitted to vote by paper ballots (preferably) or by provisional ballots if there are no machines available. Provisional ballots are a LAST resort.

3. It is 9:00 PM and my precinct is closed or closing and they will not let me vote.

Immediately contact the local Elections Office to report the problem. You can find information on local Election Offices at <http://www.sec.state.ri.us/govtracker/index.php?page=IdxMuni>.

4. There are equipment problems at my precinct and I cannot vote. What should I do?

Encourage the voter to ask to vote by a back-up paper ballot or by provisional ballot. If a caller reports problems with machines, immediately contact the Electronic Frontier Foundation representative at the call center to walk you through the appropriate steps to solve the machine problem.

Identification and Provisional Ballots:

1. I do not have any identification with me. Can I vote?

¹ Polling places in various counties in Rhode Island open at different times.

Yes. If the voter is a first-time voter who registered by mail and did not present acceptable identification at that time, the voter may vote by provisional ballot; however, that voter will be required to bring the requisite identification to the local board prior to 9:00 pm on election date in order for his or her vote to be counted. If possible, a voter should be encouraged to go and get an ID and NOT cast a provisional ballot.

2. I am a registered voter who is not on the rolls at my precinct. Can I vote?

Confirm that the voter is a qualified to vote (see eligibility requirements in the main manual) and that the voter registered in time to vote in this election. Next, using the online poll locator tool, make sure the voter is at the correct polling place.

If the voter has registered on time, is eligible and is in the correct polling place, direct the voter to ask the poll worker to call the county clerk and confirm the their registration. If the voter still is not on the rolls, let them know that the voter can vote provisionally. This is a LAST resort as provisional ballots will only be counted if the county clerk can later verify the voter's registration status before the election is certified.

3. Poll workers are turning voters away if they don't have photo ID.

Call the Commander immediately to report the problem. An attorney will be dispatched to the polling place. Encourage the voter to go back inside the polling place and demand the right to vote by a REGULAR ballot (unless the voter is a first time voter who registered to vote by mail and has not previously provided a copy of their ID and is not now providing an ID, in which case they can vote by provisional ballot).

4. I have been offered a provisional ballot. What should I do?

Provisional ballots are a LAST resort.

If an individual's name does not appear on the certified voting list, and the individual is eligible to vote in an election for federal office, or if an election official asserts that the individual is not eligible to vote in the district in which the individual desires to vote, then the individual shall be permitted to cast a provisional ballot. However, bear in mind that provisional ballots cast at a precinct must be processed and certified by the local board before they will be counted. Further, if a provisional ballot cannot be matched or identified in the Central Voter Registration System, then your vote may not be counted.

Where to Vote:

I. Where do I vote (for voter's who have not moved)?

You can look up polling locations at the website for Rhode Island's Secretary of State, located at <http://www.sec.state.ri.us/vic/>, enter your address, city or town and locate this information.

2. I have moved within the same PRECINCT and have not updated by address for voter registration purposes. Where should I vote?

If the voter has moved within the same precinct, the voter should go to the appropriate polling place for that precinct. If the voter has not notified the local board of the change of address, he or she may vote in that election at the polling place designated for the voting district, or at the local board, upon completion of a written affirmation form which shall record the voter's change of address within the voting district. After completion of the affirmation, the voter shall be entitled to vote a full ballot.

3. I have moved to a different precinct within the same CITY OR TOWN and I have not updated my address for voter registration purposes. Where should I vote?

If the voter moves from a residence in one voting district to an address in another voting district within the same city or town thirty (30) days or more preceding an election, the voter shall be permitted to vote a full ballot at the polling place of the new residence address or at the local board upon completion of an affirmation form which shall record the voter's change of address.

If the voter who moves from a residence in one voting district to an address in another voting district within the same city or town less than thirty (30) days before an election, the voter shall be permitted to vote a full ballot at the polling place of the former residence address upon completion of an affirmation form which shall record the voter's change of address.

4. I have moved from one city or town to another and have not updated my address for voter registration purposes. Where should I vote?

The voter shall be required to register in the city or town to which the voter has moved and vote in that new city or town. If the voter moves to a new city or town, and fails to register within the time to vote in the city or town, the voter shall be permitted to vote by special paper ballot to be provided by the secretary of state upon application for it approved by the board of canvassers of the voter's former city or town for federal and statewide elected officials only during the six (6) months, less one day, next preceding an election or primary.

However, no person qualified to vote in any city or town shall lose his or her right to vote in that city or town by reason of his or her move to another city or town in the state of Rhode Island during the thirty (30) days, less one day, next preceding an election or primary in the former city or town.

Assistance at the polls:

1. I am physically disabled and need assistance; will my polling place be accessible?

Rhode Island law requires that each polling place be accessible to physically disabled voters, and if the voter's polling place is not in compliance with accessibility requirements, the voter must be provided an alternative method of voting or an alternative location for voting. Do note, however, that the American Association of People with Disabilities is reporting that Rhode Island is the first state to make all of its voting places mobility accessible.

If a voter reports that a polling place is not accessible to the handicapped, call the Commander so an attorney can get in touch with the responsible election official to report the problem immediately.

2. I am blind, physically disabled or can not read English and require assistance at the polls in order to vote. Can I get assistance at the polls?

A voter requiring assistance at the polls for any of the reasons stated above can take a person of their choice into the voting booth (except employer, an agent of employer, an officer or agent to their union). If a poll worker refuses to allow a disabled or language minority voter to bring a person of their choice into the voting booth call a Commander.

Blind voters can request Braille or Tactile ballots, but must do so 45 days before the election.

If any local board determines that it requires ballots printed in a language other than English to be provided at the polling place, then there shall be at least one individual who is fluent in the language for each language for which those ballots were sought. Such person or persons shall be available to assist voters in casting their ballots, upon request by the individual or at the direction of the warden, during all hours of poll operations.

Miscellaneous Issues:

1. I have been approached by candidates or others at the polls.

All poll monitors, including Election Protection volunteers, must stay at least 50 feet from the entrance to the polling place; they can solicit you if they comply with this rule. If they are violating the 50-foot requirement, contact a Commander to report the problem, let them know the extent of the problem and work with them to assess if calling an election official is necessary.

2. What if I requested an absentee ballot but I want to vote in person on Election Day?

As long as the voter has NOT already submitted the absentee ballot, is otherwise qualified to vote and has re-established his or her right to vote at the polls by appearing at the local board on or before election day and surrendering his or her mail ballot, then the voter may voter in person on election day.

Further, a person who requested an absentee ballot may also be permitted to vote on election day if that voter executes and delivers to the local board an affidavit stating that the person did not receive the mail ballot, or that the mail ballot was lost or destroyed.

3. There are people at the polls trying to intimidate voters.

Call a Commander immediately. An attorney will be dispatched to the polling place. If the voter agrees, put them on hold while you call a Commander so they can send an attorney to the location immediately. Then, gather as much information from the voter as possible.

4. I have a felony conviction. Can I vote?

Yes. Rhode Island law permits convicted felons to vote provided they have been discharged from incarceration.

5. I am a college student, can I vote where I go to school?

College students may register and vote where they go to school provided that they consider that location their voting residence. A voting residence is the residence the student claims as their home; the residence which qualifies them to vote on a particular ballot. Students must be held to the SAME eligibility requirements as any other voter in the jurisdiction. If a student has been turned away at the polls, ascertain if they have fulfilled all of the registration requirements (age, criminal status, durational residency requirements) and that they have registered on time for this election. If so, contact a Commander to contact the appropriate election official.