

**I-866-OUR-VOTE
(1-866-687-8683)****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.

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

Voter registration forms can be obtained from numerous government entities, including:

- the Rhode Island Board of Elections office or downloaded from its website at <http://www.elections.state.ri.us/registration/intro.htm>;
- the Department of Motor Vehicles;
- any state agency that provides public assistance, such as the Department of Human Services and the Department of Mental Health;
- any office with state-funded programs primarily engaged in providing services to persons with disabilities;
- armed forces recruitment offices;
- the Department of Corrections;
- the local Board of Canvassers; and
- any other state agency designated by the Board of Elections.

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

No. According to election officials in Rhode Island's Secretary of State's office, both printed forms from the Board of Elections website and photocopies of forms are acceptable.

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

No. The National Voter Registration Form can be used in Rhode Island. It is subject to the same requirements described in **Questions #13-16** below. The political party affiliation and race/ethnicity fields may be left blank.

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

Yes. Driver's license numbers, R.I. State ID numbers, and the last four digits of Social Security numbers will remain confidential and be available only to elections officials solely for election purposes. Also, anyone who has a court-ordered restraining order against another person to prevent domestic violence may keep their residence address confidential. For more information, contact the Secretary of State, Elections Division.

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

No.

COMPLETING VOTER REGISTRATION FORMS

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

A person must reside in the Rhode Island town, city, or voting district in which the person intends to register for at least thirty (30) days prior to Election Day.

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. A person's residence for voting purposes is his or her domicile. A domicile is the place where the person intends to reside for an indefinite period and the place to which, upon temporary absence, he or she has the intention of returning. A person can have only one domicile.

A post office box is not considered a residence, but it may be provided as an optional mailing address.

8) Can a person register to vote at a college address that is not a permanent address?

Use of a college address is permissible, provided you consider your college address to be your legal residence.

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

Identification is required to register to vote in Rhode Island. An acceptable form of identification for first-time voter registration applicants must be provided to the Board of Canvassers on or before Election Day or at the polling place prior to voting.

Acceptable forms of identification include the applicant's Rhode Island driver's license number, Rhode Island state ID number, or the last four (4) digits of the Social Security number.

Also acceptable is a copy of a current and valid photo identification provided by a third party in the ordinary course of business that includes the individual's name and photograph; examples include:

- Driver's license or identification card of any state;
- U.S. Passport;
- Employee identification card;
- Identification card provided by a commercial establishment;
- Credit or debit card;
- Military identification card;
- Student identification card;
- Health club identification card;
- Insurance plan identification card; or
- Public housing identification card.

Other acceptable forms of identification are a copy of any of the following documents, provided that the document includes the name and current address of the individual presenting it, and it is dated after the date of the last general election, unless the document is intended to be of a permanent nature such as a pardon or discharge:

- Utility bill;
- Bank Statement;
- Government check;
- Government paycheck;

- Document issued by a government agency;
- Sample ballot or other official elections document issued by a governmental agency, dated for the election in which the individual is providing it as proof of residency or identity;
- Voter notification card issued by a governmental agency;
- Public housing identification card issued by a governmental agency;
- Lease or rental statement or agreement issued by a governmental agency;
- Student identification card issued by a governmental agency;
- Tuition statement or bill issued by a governmental agency;
- Insurance plan card or drug discount card issued by a government agency;
- Discharge certificates, pardons, or other official documents issued to the individual by a governmental agency in connection with the resolution of a criminal case, indictment, sentence, or other matter;
- Public transportation authority senior citizen and disabled discount cards issued by a governmental agency;
- Identification documents issued by governmental disability agencies;
- Identification documents issued by government homeless shelters and other government temporary or transitional facilities;
- Drug prescription issued by a government doctor or other governmental health care provider;
- Property tax statement issued by a governmental agency;
- Vehicle registration issued by a governmental agency; and
- Vehicle certificate of ownership issued by a governmental agency.

10) Are there any identification requirements in order to vote?

Only if the person is not registered.

A person who is not registered or whose registration has been canceled, may cast a vote for president and vice president on Election Day at his or her city or town hall if the person acknowledges that he/she is at least 18 years of age, a U.S. Citizen, a resident of R.I. and presents a valid form of identification (see **Question 9**).

Rhode Island voters don't need to show identification at the polling place in order to vote if the applicant submitted proper identification with his or her application prior to the time of voting (see **Question 9**) and if his or her stated name and address is on the voting list, the voter is not required to provide any further form of identification.

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

The voter registration form requires the applicant to provide the applicant's name, residence address, mailing address (if different from residence address), date of birth, and signature and date of affixation of signature.

The treatment of incomplete or illegible registration forms depends on the deficiency.

If a registration form does not contain the selection of a recognized political party, the registration will be processed as Unaffiliated.

If a registration form is not signed by the applicant, does not indicate that the applicant is a U.S. citizen, or does not indicate that the applicant will be 18-years-old by the next election, the registration form will not be processed. Instead, the deficient application will be returned to the applicant within seven

(7) days of its receipt, and the applicant must provide the missing information by the 20th day before the next election or the registration form will be rejected. An applicant whose registration form lacks the applicant's full name, address, or date of birth will be notified of the defect within seven (7) days, and if the applicant corrects the defect by the 20th day prior to the next election, the effective date of the registration will be the date the registration was initially submitted; otherwise the registration form will be rejected.

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

Yes. The registered voter may inform the poll worker serving at the polling place of the name change. The voter will be required to fill out an affirmation form that will be forwarded to the local Board of Canvassers so that the voter list can be updated. After signing the affirmation, the voter will be allowed to vote.

REGISTERING OTHERS TO VOTE

13) Are there laws regarding third-party registration?

No. According to officials on the Rhode Island Board of Elections, the only requirement is that third-party (and mail) voter registrations from new-registrants are subject to identification requirements. The applicant must write their RI driver's license or ID number on the form. If the applicant does not submit this information or it cannot be verified, they will have to present ID prior to or at the time of voting. There are no timelines for submission of third party registrations, beyond the general requirement to deliver the voter registration forms by the deadline of 30 days before the election, or the voter will not be eligible.

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

No statute expressly prohibits the submission of voter registration forms by individuals receiving compensation. See **Question #13**.

15) Is training required for voter registration drives?

No. See **Question #13**.

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

No. See **Question #13**.

REGISTRATION DEADLINES

17) What is the deadline to register to vote?

Saturday, October 4, 2008, is the voter registration deadline for the 2008 general election. Rhode Island requires voters to be registered 30 days before an election. All applications to vote must be submitted or postmarked no later than the 30th day before the date of the first election in which the individual intends to vote. Applications that are mailed but not postmarked or where the postmark is illegible shall be deemed to be timely received if they arrive within 5 days after the closing of the registration books.

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

No. To be processed, forms must be submitted by the registration deadline, which is 30 days before a general election. All applications to vote must be submitted or postmarked no later than the 30th day before the date of the first election in which the individual intends to vote.

19) Is Election Day registration allowed?

A person who is not registered or whose registration has been canceled may cast a vote for president and vice president on Election Day at his or her city or town hall if the person acknowledges that he/she is at least 18 years of age, a U.S. Citizen, a resident of R.I. and presents a valid form of identification (see **Question 9**).

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

Early voting is not permitted in Rhode Island, but absentee voting is permitted.

Eligible voters may vote by mail ballot (i.e., absentee voting) only if they are:

- (1) An individual who will be absent from the state on Election Day during the entire period of time when the polls are to be open;
- (2) An individual who will be absent from the city or town of his or her voting residence on Election Day during the entire period of time when the polls are to be open due to the individual's status as a student or the spouse of a student at an institution of higher learning located within the state;
- (3) An individual who is incapacitated to the extent that it would be an undue hardship to vote at the polls because of illness, mental or physical disability, blindness, or serious impairment of mobility;
- (4) An individual who is forbidden by the tenets of his or her religious faith from engaging in secular activity, including voting, on the day of election;
- (5) An individual who is confined in any hospital, convalescent home, nursing home, rest home, or similar institution, public or private;
- (6) An individual who is being detained while awaiting trial or is being imprisoned for any cause, other than final conviction of a felony, and by reason of that detention or imprisonment is unable to vote at the polls;
- (7) An individual who will be temporarily absent from the state because of employment or service intimately connected with military operations or who is a spouse or legal dependent residing with that person; or
- (8) An individual who is employed by the state board of elections, elections division of the secretary of state, a member of the staff of a local canvassing authority, or a poll worker assigned to work on Election Day outside of their voting district.

Applications for mail ballots must be received by the local Board of Canvassers by 4:00 p.m. on the 21st day before Election Day. For circumstances arising 20 days or less prior to any election, emergency applications for mail ballots must be submitted by 4:00 p.m. on the day before Election Day. Except for category seven (7) above, mail ballots, applications for mail ballots, and emergency applications for mail ballots must be signed and notarized or witnessed by two (2) people. Applications for mail ballots can be obtained at the local Board of Canvassers office or online at <http://www.sec.state.ri.us/elections/formapplications/FormsApplications.html>.

VOTER REGISTRATION LEGISLATION

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

Several bills relating to maintaining voter rolls have been introduced. See 2008-S2818 (purge names of deceased voters); 2008-S2819 (prohibit registration at multiple addresses); and 2008-S2826 (ensure that voters who register using a college address are not purged from the voter list after graduation).

22) Where can I find Rhode Island's statutes on voter registration?

Statutes that generally apply to voter registration are under Title 17 of Rhode Island's General Laws, including:

- Chapter 9.1 on registration of voters;
- Chapter 19 on conduct of elections;
- Chapter 20 on mail ballots; and
- Chapter 21 on voting by members of the Armed Forces.

23) Are there any helpful elections official contacts?

For more information, you may contact:

Rhode Island Board of Elections
50 Branch Ave.
Providence, RI 02904-2790
(401) 222-2345
www.elections.ri.gov

Office of the Secretary of State
Elections and Civics Division
148 W. River Street
Providence, RI 02904
(401) 222-2340
elections@sec.state.ri.us
www.sec.state.ri.us/elections

24) What web resources are available?

The Rhode Island State Board of Elections website (www.elections.ri.gov) contains voter registration information, such as FAQs, dates of upcoming elections, provisional voting information, absentee ballot information, and voter registration forms.

The Rhode Island Secretary of State's website (www.sec.state.ri.us/elections) contains voter registration information, such as FAQs, absentee ballots information, and special provisions for military officers.

The National Campaign for Fair Elections website also has a page (http://nationalcampaignforfairelections.org/pages/rhode_island) that contains Rhode Island voter registration information.