



'Be a Voter' is produced by the League of Women Voters of Greater Cleveland Education Fund and supported in part by the [national] League of Women Voters Education Fund. These nonprofit organizations are dedicated to encouraging the informed and active participation of citizens in government. The League of Women Voters does not endorse or support candidates or political parties.

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Information on voter registration, ways to vote, and voter ID was adapted from "Voting 1-2-3," voter information cards developed by the League of Women Voters of Ohio [LWVO]. Before each election "Voting 1-2-3" is updated with current election dates and published by LWVO. Free PDF downloads [which can be use for self-printing] are provided on the LWVO website at [www.lwvohio.org](http://www.lwvohio.org).

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A PDF download of "Be a Voter" is available at [lwvgreatercleveland.org](http://lwvgreatercleveland.org) for self-printing.

August 2016



# BE A VOTER

## A Basic Guide to Voting in Cuyahoga County and Ohio

Everything you wanted to know  
[but were afraid to ask] about voting



**LWV**

presented by  
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF GREATER CLEVELAND EDUCATION FUND



**You want to BE A VOTER if:**

- You want better governmental policies and actions
- You believe elected officials can affect your future
- You feel our country is going in the wrong direction
- You think government is the problem, not the solution
- You want government to be the solution, not the problem
- You believe in representative democracy
- Fairness is important to you

**TO BE A VOTER, MAKE A PLAN**

**Step ONE: Register to vote**

In Ohio, you must register to vote no later than 30 days before the election.

**Step TWO: Decide how to cast your ballot**

There are three ways to cast a ballot.

**Step THREE: Be sure to have the proper ID**

What you need depends on how you cast your ballot.

**Step FOUR: Research candidates and issues**

There are resources to help you decide how to vote.

**Step FIVE: Cast your ballot and be a voter**

With a simple plan, voting is easy to do!

**To learn more about these steps to make a plan, keep reading...**

**FOR MORE VOTING INFORMATION:**

**Cuyahoga County Board of Elections**

2925 Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio 44115

216.443.VOTE (8683)

[boe.cuyahogacounty.us](http://boe.cuyahogacounty.us)

Check your registration, get a sample ballot, request a vote-by-mail application, and find other useful information.

This is also where early voting takes place.

**Ohio Secretary of State (SOS)**

1-877-889-OHIO (6446) (toll free)

[www.sos.state.oh.us/voters.aspx](http://www.sos.state.oh.us/voters.aspx)

SOS "Guide to Voting in Ohio" can be found online at

[www.sos.state.oh.us/SOS/upload/publications/election/GuidetoVoting2015.pdf](http://www.sos.state.oh.us/SOS/upload/publications/election/GuidetoVoting2015.pdf)

**VOTE411**

League of Women Voters of the United States

[www.vote411.org](http://www.vote411.org)

Online Voters' Guide for candidate races and ballot

issues in national, state, and local elections

**League of Women Voters of Greater Cleveland**

216-781-8375

[lwvgreaterleveland.org](http://lwvgreaterleveland.org)

Links to the above sites, candidate forum schedules, and other election information

**Q. DO I HAVE TO VOTE ON ALL THE OFFICES AND ISSUES ON THE BALLOT?**

**A.** No. You may vote for as few as you like. If you only care about one race or issue on the ballot, you may cast your vote there and leave the rest of the ballot blank.

However, “down-ticket” races, such as local and state races, are also important. It is best to research and vote on as many races as you can.

**Q. HOW DO I FIND OUT WHAT WILL BE ON MY BALLOT?**

**A.** Enter your address on VOTE411 ([www.vote411.org](http://www.vote411.org)) and the site will provide information on the races that will be on your ballot.

You can also download a sample ballot from the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections website at [boe.cuyahogacounty.us/en-US/ballot-search.aspx](http://boe.cuyahogacounty.us/en-US/ballot-search.aspx).

You will need to enter your precinct number, but this page has a link to find that information.

**Q. I CAN'T REMEMBER ALL THE DATES AND DEADLINES.**

**A.** The Ohio Secretary of State provides an online calendar with current voting dates and deadlines at [www.sos.state.oh.us/sos/elections/Voters/votingSchedule.aspx](http://www.sos.state.oh.us/sos/elections/Voters/votingSchedule.aspx).

Shortly before the election, the League of Women Voters of Ohio (LWVO) produces and distributes a voter information card, “Voting 1-2-3,” with current deadlines, an early voting schedule, and other basic voting information. PDFs of this card can be downloaded and printed from the LWVO website at [www.LWVOhio.org](http://www.LWVOhio.org).

**★ Essential resources for making your voting plan**

The Cuyahoga County Board of Elections and the Ohio Secretary of State are responsible for executing elections in Cuyahoga County and Ohio. These agencies provide much of the resources, services, and information described in this booklet. Therefore, there will be many references to the websites and contact information of these governmental bodies:

**Cuyahoga County Board of Elections**

Website: [boe.cuyahogacounty.us](http://boe.cuyahogacounty.us)

Phone number: 216.443.VOTE (8683)

**Ohio Secretary of State**

Website: [www.sos.state.oh.us](http://www.sos.state.oh.us)

**★ Step ONE: Register to vote**

To vote you must be:

- A United States citizen
- An Ohio resident (to vote in Ohio)
- Eighteen years old
- A registered voter



**Note:** *In Ohio, convicted felons who have served their time have the right to vote.*



**When to register**

You can register to vote anytime. However, you must be registered no later than 30 days before the election in which you plan to vote.

## Q CAN I VOTE IF I AM IN THE MILITARY OR

### LIVING OVERSEAS?

A. Yes. You are covered by the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA). Complete instructions and deadlines are available on both the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections and the Ohio Secretary of State websites (see web addresses on page 2). This information is also available on the Federal Voting Assistance Program website at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov). A designated relative can request an application for you or you may use the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA), available at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov). The FPCA may be used both to register to vote and to request absentee ballots. You should begin the process as soon as possible before an election.

## Q CAN I VOTE IF I AM AWAY AT COLLEGE?

A. Yes. Follow the vote-by-mail procedure. On the vote-by-mail application form, provide your college address to have your ballot sent there.

Alternatively, you can vote in your college community. Your college or university will have information on how to vote in that locale. You cannot vote in both locations.

## Q IF I REQUEST A PARTY BALLOT IN THE PRIMARY ELECTION, CAN I VOTE FOR CANDIDATES OF A DIFFERENT PARTY IN THE NOVEMBER GENERAL ELECTION?

A. Yes. In November, you may vote for any candidate of any party regardless of how you voted in the primary. Your ballot is secret. No one will know how you vote.

## How to register

Complete a voter registration form, which you can find:

- Online at the websites of either the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections or the Ohio Secretary of State (web addresses listed on page 2).
- At public high schools or vocational schools, driver's license bureaus, public libraries, and some government offices (not the post office).
- From volunteers helping voters register at malls, grocery stores, street fairs, or other public locations.

*Fill in the registration form completely. Yellow highlights on Ohio's voter registration card indicate required information.*

## ID requirements for registering

You need the last four digits of your Social Security Number or your driver's license number.

You do not have to show a photo ID to register to vote.

## Submitting the voter registration card

The board of elections must receive your registration 30 days prior to the election in which you plan to vote. Mail or deliver the completed form to the board of elections. Allow sufficient time for mail delivery.

Volunteers helping you register may offer to deliver your registration card. They are obligated to do so if they make that offer.

## FAQS ABOUT VOTER REGISTRATION AND PROCEDURES

*More voting FAQs are on the LWV of Greater Cleveland website:*

*[lwvgreatercleveland.org/voting-faqs](http://lwvgreatercleveland.org/voting-faqs)*

### **Q. I WON'T BE 18 UNTIL JUST BEFORE ELECTION DAY. WHEN SHOULD I REGISTER TO VOTE?**

**A.** You may register to vote while you are 17 if you will be 18 by the date of the election in which you plan to vote. Register at least 30 days before the election.

You may also vote in the primary election if you will be 18 by the general election. However, you can vote only for primary candidates, not issues. You must register to vote at least 30 days before the primary election.

### **Q. WILL I BE CALLED TO JURY DUTY IF I REGISTER TO VOTE?**

**A.** Some counties use the list of registered voters to select juries. Others use the list of drivers' licenses to select juries. In Cuyahoga County, both lists are used.

### **Q. DO I HAVE TO CHOOSE A POLITICAL PARTY WHEN I REGISTER TO VOTE?**

**A.** No, not in Ohio. The only time you declare a party is when you choose to vote in a party primary election and you request a party ballot.

Even in a primary, you may vote without declaring a party by asking for a "nonpartisan" ballot. However, you will only be able to vote on the ballot issues, not the party candidates.

### **Verify your registration**

After submitting your registration, you can verify that the board of elections has received your registration either by phone or online (see information on page 2).

*If you have not voted for several years, you should verify your registration more than 30 days before the election.*

### **Updating your registration**

If you have moved or changed your name, update your registration at least 30 days before the election. Simply fill out and submit a new registration form. You can also update your registration online at the Ohio Secretary of State website (see page 2).

## ★ Step TWO - Decide how to cast your ballot

There are three ways to cast your ballot in Ohio:

- 1) Vote by mail
- 2) Vote in person early at the board of elections
- 3) Vote at your polling location on Election Day

### **1) Vote by mail**

Request your ballot by filling out a vote-by-mail application form, which can be obtained from the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections either online or by phone (see page 2). Many registration sites mentioned on page 3 under "How to register" will also have vote-by-mail application forms.

*Yellow highlights on the form indicate required information.*

**Note: If you vote by mail, you do not need a photo ID. You only need the last four digits of your Social Security Number or your driver's license number (see Step THREE on page 7).**

If you expect to be away from home, you can have the ballot mailed to an address other than your home address.

The board of elections must receive your completed vote-by-mail application form no later than three days before the election. However, allow time to receive, complete, and return your ballot.

Upon receiving your application, the board of elections will send you a ballot with detailed instructions for completing and returning the ballot. Read and follow the instructions carefully.

You will need to pay postage to return your ballot by mail. The amount needed will be indicated.

Your mailed ballot must be postmarked by the day before the election, or you (or a relative or friend) can hand-deliver your ballot to the board of elections no later than 7:30 pm on Election Day.

**Voting by mail has many advantages: no waiting in line, easier ID requirements, and no weather problems. You don't need to know your polling location and can leisurely evaluate your choices while completing the ballot.**

The League of Women Voters does take positions on some ballot issues. However, the League also attempts to provide more than one point of view on most issues.

### Political party and campaign websites

Candidates, political parties, and issue campaigns have websites that provide their points of view. A Google search can easily find most campaign websites. Political party websites are provided below.

The two major parties will have candidates on everyone's ballot:

- Ohio Democratic Party: [www.ohiodems.org](http://www.ohiodems.org)
- Ohio Republican Party: [www.ohiogop.org](http://www.ohiogop.org)

Websites for other parties that may have candidates on Ohio ballots can be found at [votesmart.org/political-parties/OH](http://votesmart.org/political-parties/OH)

## ★ Step FIVE: You are now ready to be a voter

*Voting is not difficult*, especially after having done it once. If you still have questions, see the following Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on pages 11 to 13 and consult the resources listed on page 14.

**“Bad politicians are sent to Washington by good people who don't vote.”**

- William E. Simon  
Secretary of the Treasury 1974 to 1977

### **For information on judicial candidates:**

- Judge 4 Yourself: [www.judge4yourself.com](http://www.judge4yourself.com)  
On this site four local bar associations and two newspapers rate the judicial candidates.
- Judicial Votes Count: [blogs.uakron.edu/judicialvotescount](http://blogs.uakron.edu/judicialvotescount)  
This site makes no candidate endorsements or ratings. Candidates themselves provide their educational and work background and answer questions about their qualifications and experience.
- VOTE411: [www.vote411.org](http://www.vote411.org) - provides the same information as the Judicial Votes Count website.



**Note:** *Judicial candidates cannot express opinions on issues that may come before the court in a trial or lawsuit.*



### **Attend or watch a candidate forum**

The League of Women Voters of Greater Cleveland website ([lwvgreatercleveland.org](http://lwvgreatercleveland.org)) will have a schedule of upcoming local candidate forums and, in some cases, videos of those forums.

### **Learn about ballot issues**

Information on ballot issues can be found on the following websites:

VOTE411: [www.vote411.org](http://www.vote411.org)

LWV of Greater Cleveland: [lwvgreatercleveland.org](http://lwvgreatercleveland.org)

LWV of Ohio : [www.lwvohio.org](http://www.lwvohio.org)

## **2) Vote early in person at the board of elections building**

Registered voters may vote early at their county board of elections beginning about one month before the election.

Find the schedule of early voting hours on the websites of the board of elections and the secretary of state (website addresses are on page 2), and also on the League of Women Voters of Greater Cleveland website at [lwvgreatercleveland.org](http://lwvgreatercleveland.org).

**You must have proper identification to vote early at the board of elections (see Step THREE).**

## **3) Vote at your polling place on Election Day**

Election Day is the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. Polls are open from 6:30 am to 7:30 pm. By law, if you are in line at 7:30 pm, the polls must stay open to allow you to vote.

**You must have proper identification to vote at the polls (see Step THREE).**

About a month prior to the election, the board of elections sends postcards to registered voters indicating their polling location. You can also verify it on the board of elections website or by calling the board of elections (see page 2). Polling locations can change from one election to another.

At your polling place, poll workers can help you find your correct precinct. After you sign the poll book, poll workers will give you a ballot and some instructions for voting. Directions will also be posted inside the poll booth. You can ask a poll worker for assistance. They are there to help you cast a valid, secret ballot.

## ★ Step THREE: Be sure to have the proper ID

**To vote in person**, either early at the board of elections or at your polling location on Election Day, you must have one of the following forms of identification (ID):

- Ohio driver's license or state ID card with your name and photo. The card must not be expired, but can have a previous address.

- U.S. military ID with your name and photo.

- Unexpired government ID with your name, current address, and photo. Student IDs and passports are not accepted because they do not have your address.

- Original or copy of one of the following documents with your name and current address and dated within the past year: utility bill, cell phone bill, bank or financial advisor statement, pay stub, government check, or other government document.

If you have none of the above, you can use the last four digits of your Social Security Number and vote a provisional ballot. Be sure to complete all fields on the provisional ballot form.

More information on voter ID can be found on the Ohio Secretary of State website (see page 2).

**To vote by mail**, you do not need a photo ID. You only need the last four digits of your Social Security Number or your driver's license number.

**Note: The voter registration acknowledgement notice mailed to you by the board of elections cannot be used as a voter ID.**



## ★ Step FOUR: Research candidates and issues

Voting is easier if you have good information about candidates and ballot issues. Websites with useful information are listed below.

If you do not have access to the Internet, your local library may be able to help you access these resources.

**Start with VOTE411: [www.vote411.org](http://www.vote411.org)**

This national League of Women Voters website provides information on candidates, ballot issues, and more.

Enter your address to access information for those races and issues that will be on your ballot.

Candidates provide their own information, including answers to several questions. The only change that the League may make is to cut off an answer that is longer than space restrictions. No other edits are made.

**Note: The League of Women Voters does not endorse candidates or political parties.**