

LWV-VA ULTIMATE FAQs ON VOTING IN VIRGINIA

Q.1. What are the steps for voting in Virginia?

A.1. Virginia has four steps for voting:

1. Register (Q.5-7)
2. Check registration (Q.8)
3. Vote
 - a. Early (Q.9-23)
 - b. Election Day, from 6 am to 7 pm (Q.24-28)
4. Watch for results (Q.29)

Details are provided in questions below.

Q.2. How can I contact my Local Registrar for more information? Where is my Local Registrar's Office?

A.2. Your Local Registrar's contact information, including the location of your Local Registrar's Office is [online](#).

Q.3. Do many non-citizens attempt to vote, and how are they stopped?

A.3. No. Only registered voters can obtain a ballot, and only citizens can register. Prosecution can carry heavy penalties, including deportation. There have been no convictions in Virginia in the last 20 years.

Q.4. What if I get a phone call saying that the date for the election has been changed?

A.4. Ignore it. Your Local Registrar may phone a voter about his or her status, but never to change a date.

Registration

Q.5. Am I qualified to register to vote?

A.5. You must be a U.S. citizen who permanently resides in Virginia and is at least 18 years old on Election Day (your birthday must be on or before November 3, 2002). You are not eligible if you are already registered in another state and plan to vote there, or if you are currently "declared mentally incompetent by a court of law". If convicted of a felony, you must have your right to vote restored by the Governor.

Q.6. How do I register to vote in Virginia? What if my primary language is not English?

A.6. Qualified Virginians may obtain a voter registration application:

1. Online, either through the [Citizen Portal](#) or your [Local Registrar's Office](#)
2. In person, at Virginia government offices including the [Local Registrar's Office](#) or other public locations which may include, depending on your area, a public library (may be located by the front door), the Department of Motor Vehicles (where registration is now automatic), or through voter registration drives.
3. You can download an application [online](#) (Spanish, Vietnamese and Korean versions are available).

A completed paper application must be mailed or hand carried to your [Local Registrar's Office](#). If an application for voter registration is rejected, you will receive a denial letter and a new application form from your Local Registrar.

Q.7. Is there a deadline for registering to vote?

A.7. Yes, October 13 for the November 2020 election. In Virginia, you must register to vote, or update your registration for address or other changes, for any general and primary election in Virginia at least 22 days before Election Day.

Check Registration

Q.8. How do I know if my registration was accepted?

A.8. After you have submitted your registration form, you should receive a voter registration card or other correspondence from your Local Registrar confirming your status within two weeks. If you did not receive this correspondence, you should contact your [Local Registrar](#) to make sure your application was processed. You can also confirm your status with the [Citizen Portal](#).

Voting – Early Voting (September 18 – October 31)

Q.9. I have confirmed that I am a registered voter; can I vote early?

A.9. Yes. You no longer need a special reason to vote early. You may vote in-person or by mail.

Q.10. What are my In-Person options for Early Voting? Do I need an ID? Can I vote Curbside?

A.10. You have many options to vote In-Person during the Early Voting Period; contact your [Local Registrar](#) for hours:

1. In-person at your Local Registrar's Office, between Sept. 18 and Oct. 31, includes the Saturday before Election Day
2. In-person at Satellite Locations (optional by jurisdiction; contact [Local Registrar](#) for locations and when they will open)

You will be asked to present one of the same acceptable forms of ID as needed to vote In-Person on Election Day (described in Q.27). As with In-Person voting on Election Day, curbside voting and/or equipment for voters with disabilities is available for those who request it.

Q.11. If I want to Vote by Mail, how and when do I obtain my ballot?

A.11. You MUST REQUEST a Vote by Mail ballot be mailed to you, and you can apply for a ballot NOW through October 23. There are many ways to apply for a ballot; you must complete the application carefully and include all required information, including your correct, registered address (you can request that your ballot be sent to a temporary address):

1. Online: Use the [Citizen Portal](#), if you have a Driver's License or other ID from the Department of Motor Vehicles.
2. Paper Application: complete and return to [Local Registrar](#)
 - a. Obtain application from [Citizen Portal](#), [Local Registrar](#), or public library
 - b. Deliver the application to your [Local Registrar's Office](#) by 5 pm on October 23: by hand, FAX or mail.

Registrars will start mailing the ballots to those whose application were accepted, on September 18, the start of the Early Voting period. If your application for an absentee ballot is rejected, you will receive a denial letter and a new application from from your Local Registrar.

Q.12. Can I ask that I receive Vote by Mail ballots for every future election?

A.12. Not this year, although you can make an annual election. Virginia law changes next year, beginning July 1, where voters can be placed on a Permanent Absentee List, which means you will automatically receive a ballot in the mail every election year. You will need to make sure your address is updated, as needed.

Q.13. Can I Vote by Mail if this is my first election after registering or changing my registration by mail?

A.13. Yes. November 3 is a federal election. Under federal law, you may vote by mail in federal elections, even if there are state and local contests on the ballot. You will receive instructions requiring you to include a copy of a qualified ID when you return your ballot. If you register to vote through a third-party drive, such as one from the League of Women Voters, your registration will be treated the same as if you had registered by mail.

Q.14. What do I receive from my Local Registrar in my Vote by Mail ballot package?

A.14. You will receive:

- Your ballot in an envelope that has an IMB (barcode) on it (keep the envelope for tracking purposes)
- Envelope A, containing the ballot
- Envelope B, in which the voter must place the completed (i.e., voted) ballot
- Outer return envelope, and
- Instructions

The information on Envelope B is part of the security system used by your Local Registrar, who will check-in your ballot when received, using that barcode and making sure you have signed the envelope. This prevents someone who already voted a Vote by Mail ballot, from coming to their Local Registrar, or on Election Day, and saying their Vote by Mail ballot was lost, destroyed, or misplaced, and requesting a replacement ballot to vote twice.

Q.15. How do I deliver my Vote by Mail ballot to my Local Registrar?

A.15. You have four options for delivering your Vote by Mail ballot:

1. By USPS mailbox or Post Office (must be postmarked on or before Election Day). While the law allows you to mail your ballot as late as on Election Day, you are strongly urged to mail your ballot at least two weeks before the Election, because the ballot must arrive at your Local Registrar's Office by noon on November 6.
2. Hand carry to your [Local Registrar](#) on or before Election Day (some will provide curbside service upon request)
3. By commercial delivery service (such as FedEx or UPS), delivered on or before the polls close on Election Day
4. *New!* By delivery to a drop-off location (at Satellite locations and General Registrar's Office before Election day; at the polling locations on Election Day).

Q.16. Am I required to put a stamp on my Vote by Mail outer envelope?

A.16. *New!* No, Virginia pays for the postage for USPS mail service.

Q.17. Do I need someone to witness and sign my Vote by Mail ballot envelope?

A.17. No. For November, you do not need anyone to witness or sign your Vote by Mail ballot envelope. This is a recent change in support of public health during the COVID-19 health crisis.

Q.18. How do I know if my Vote by Mail ballot has been accepted and processed? What if I made a mistake?

A.18. Pay close attention to the instructions you receive with your Vote by Mail ballot, so your vote can be counted. Virginia offers electronic bar code ballot tracking services, so you can check the status of your Vote by Mail ballot. Use the [Citizen Portal](#) to see dates for your ballot's processing stages. If you have questions regarding the status of your ballot, contact your [Local Registrar](#). If your ballot is misdelivered, and you notify your Local Registrar that you did not receive it, you can be issued a replacement ballot, and your original ballot will be voided.

New! Virginia offers voters a chance to correct missing information on their Vote by Mail ballot, if the voter's ballot is received by their Local Registrar on or before October 31. Your Local Registrar will contact you, and give you an opportunity to correct the mistake, up to noon on the Friday after the election.

Q.19. What do I do if I made a mistake when I marked my ballot? Can I get a new ballot? Cross out my mistake?

A.19. Contact your [Local Register](#) as soon as possible if you make a mistake on your Vote by Mail ballot; you cannot cross out your mistake. You must obtain a new ballot from your Local Registrar.

Q.20. I live outside the US. How can I obtain a Vote by Mail ballot?

A.20. If you live outside the US, you can use the [Citizens Portal](#) to complete a Vote by Mail application, or you can obtain the application online. Start the process early, because it will take time for your ballot to reach you by mail and for your ballot to return to your registrar in the mail. Voters who are overseas or stationed outside the state while in the U.S. military and who have not received a state ballot in time may fill out a Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot and either email a scanned copy to info@elections.virginia.gov or fax it to 804-371-0194.

Q.21. Can I trust the USPS mail system? Did Virginia receive a letter from the Postmaster General expressing concern about mailing ballots in the Commonwealth?

A.21. While the Postal Service has coordinated trustworthy vote-by-mail programs for years, including Virginia's absentee voting system, an unprecedented number of voters are expected to cast a ballot this way in November. The Postal Service warned Virginia that the state had mailing deadlines that could leave voters disenfranchised, but those deadlines have been changed to ensure that all voters can vote. At the same time, Virginia's Department of Elections and your Local Registrar are working with the Post Office to make deliveries efficient and to ensure that postal workers can identify and prioritize election mail. We advise applying for your Vote by Mail ballot immediately, not later than October 7, 2020, and mailing your ballot back not later than October 14, if possible.

Q.22. Can I vote In-Person if I requested a Vote by Mail ballot?

A.22. Yes. On Election Day, you can bring your Vote by Mail ballot to your polling location. That ballot will be voided, and you can vote In-Person. You cannot cancel your Vote by Mail request after September 18. If you do not bring your Vote by Mail ballot to your polling place, you will need to vote a provisional ballot, which will be counted as valid after Election Day, if your Local Election Board determines that your Vote by Mail was not voted.

New! Additionally, you can drop off your completed Vote by Mail ballot to a drop box at your polling location, without having to vote In-Person.

Q.23. What if an emergency forces me to miss the application or voting deadlines for Early Voting? What is Emergency Voting?

A.23. You can request an emergency absentee ballot if you were unable to meet the application deadline because of hospitalization or illness involving you or a member of your family or another emergency that justifies receiving such a ballot. If you need an emergency ballot, you must request it from your [Local Registrar](#) by 2 p.m. on November 2. You can get an application from that office or by downloading a copy from the state Elections Department website. If approved, your Local Registrar will provide the ballot to your designated representative so it can be delivered to you. That ballot must be returned to your [Local Registrar](#) before polls close at 7 p.m. on Election Day.

Voting – Election Day

Q.24. Some states are cutting the number of polling stations and using larger voting centers to reduce the possibility of coronavirus infections. Is Virginia?

A.24. No. As of now, under Virginia law, every precinct in the state must have a polling station operating on Election Day. Some precinct stations can be consolidated, provided special approval is given by local governments and the Department of Elections.

Q.25. When are polls open on Election Day?

A.25. Polls open at 6 a.m. and close at 7 p.m. If you are in line by 7 p.m., polls will stay open until you can vote. You can check the [Citizen Portal](#) or with your [Local Registrar](#) to make sure you arrive at the correct polling location.

Q.26. Will my polling location be safe?

A.26. Your Local Registrar will provide face covers, gloves and hand sanitizer for every election officer. Signs will be posted about wearing masks, and election officials will limit the number of voters in the room and ask them to maintain social distancing. (Election officers cannot deny a ballot to someone who is not wearing a mask.)

Q.27. What ID is required to vote in-person? If I use a driver's license, does it have to be unexpired? If I use a student ID, does the school have to be in Virginia?

A.27. Virginia passed a law earlier this year that eliminated the requirement that voters show a photo ID to vote. However, voters still need to show a [qualified ID](#), including:

- Voter confirmation documents you received after you registered to vote
- Virginia DMV-issued Driver's License or Identification Card (even if expired)
- Valid United States Passport
- Any ID card issued by the US, Virginia, or a local Virginia government
- Any student ID card issued by a US university or community college
- Valid student ID issued by a public school or private school in Virginia
- Employer-issued photo ID card
- Any current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck, or other government document with your name and address

If you do not have a qualified ID, you can sign an ID Confirmation Statement to confirm who you are and that you regularly vote. Or, you can vote by provisional ballot, which means you have to provide a qualified ID or signed ID Confirmation Statement to your Local Registrar within a couple of days after the election. You will receive detailed instructions on how to provide that information when you submit your provisional ballot.

Q.28. How do I volunteer at a polling station?

A.28. Most Local Registrars are eager to sign up polling station volunteers and election officers. You can do so through your [Local Registrar's office](#). To be an election officer, you must be a registered voter in Virginia who does not hold an elected office or work for an elected official. A registered Virginia voter can work at any polling place in Virginia. You should be available between 5 a.m. and 9 p.m. on Election Day (some jurisdictions allow shifts). Election officers undergo about three hours of training before working on Election Day. Under Virginia law, an employer cannot fire someone who was out on Election Day because they were working at a polling station or force them to take a sick day. Election officers can be paid a modest stipend, which varies by locality.

Election Results

Q.29. When can I expect to receive results of the November 3 election?

A.29. Vote by Mail ballots mailed on or before Election Day can be counted in Virginia, as long as the ballot is received by the Local Registrar by noon, Friday, November 6. This means final election results in Virginia will not be available until after then. Record turnout is widely anticipated. Voter patience will help support accurate results.