



TOOLKIT FOR VOTING IN JAIL REGISTRATION DRIVES

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This toolkit is intended for use by County Sheriffs, Jail Administrators, and other Jail staff to help ensure voting is accessible in your county jail and for local Leagues that wish to work with them.

NOTE: HB1330 passed in 2024 and effective July 1, 2024. Provides that any registered voter who is confined while awaiting trial or for having been convicted of a misdemeanor may vote by absentee ballot and requires the institution or facility in which such voter is confined to (i) provide the means and opportunity for such voter to complete and submit a timely application for an absentee ballot and to properly mark his absentee ballot and (ii) ensure such voter's marked absentee ballot is returned in accordance with law.

Four Ideas to Make Voting Accessible in Your County Jail

1. **Have a clear policy and procedure about jail voting.** We can help. Ask us for sample policy and procedure documents that incorporate best practices from county jails around the state.
2. **Make information about how to vote easily accessible on kiosks, tablets, via posters etc.** Allowing jail residents access to websites like MyVote.wi.gov and VOTE411.org will allow those voters to access information about how to register to vote, request an absentee ballot, and find unbiased information about the candidates on their ballot. Posters and other printed materials made available in common areas can similarly make information about voting easily accessible.
3. **Provide training for key staff on voting.** Again, we can help by providing training for staff, training resources for staff, and/or assisting with forming connections with local election officials who can provide training.

4. **Partner with community organizations.** Community organizations like the League of Women Voters can help you. Contact us for information on your local league.

A Voter Registration and Voting Guide for Jails

Any American citizen and Virginia resident is allowed to vote unless jailed for a felony offense or adjudicated mentally incompetent by a judge. There are procedures to have voting rights restored for these people. Please see ROR Handout in this toolkit. Sharing information about how a jail resident can vote while in jail, or in the future when eligible, can be valuable in allowing individuals to build connections to their communities once they are out of jail.

This guide is designed to help jail staff, utilizing knowledgeable volunteers, develop a program to register voters and request absentee ballots for eligible jail residents.

The guide and its associated documents are available to be downloaded, saved, and/or printed to be shared offline.

Overview:

1. Options for voter registration and voting for jail residents.
2. The process for voting in the jail setting.
3. Preparing for the voter program event(s).
4. The Restoration Process

1 – Options for voter registration and voting in jail

A voting process in jail can be as simple as providing the necessary voter registration and absentee ballot request forms which are in this toolkit.

Registration forms must be returned to the registrar's office within 10 days of receipt by you. Local registrars can be found here <https://vote.elections.virginia.gov/VoterInformation/PublicContactLookup> or contact us and we can provide assistance.

If the potential voter has a Virginia driver's license and access to the internet, they can register at <https://bit.ly/LWVVARegister>,

Every jail is unique, and processes for running a jail voting event or program are of necessity tailored to each situation.

2. – The process for voting in the jail setting

Once registered, a person may request an absentee ballot here: <https://bit.ly/LWVVARegister>,

Registration and absentee request deadlines for each election are published by the Virginia Board of Elections

<https://www.elections.virginia.gov/casting-a-ballot/calendars-schedules/>.

Janet - this is where we need HAVA info and probably elsewhere in these docs.

Before you hold a jail voter event, you'll need to assemble a team. Here are a few ideas of where to get started:

- **Include jail staff and affiliated agencies.** The jail administrator or interested other staff or visiting agencies, could help by encouraging participation in the program or handling logistics such as setting up education or registration opportunities. S

- **Identify voter registration groups that are already active in your area.** Your area might already have nonpartisan groups that engage in voter registration, including chapters of the League of Women Voters and others. Volunteers with voter registration expertise can be a tremendous help in assisting voters in getting registered and requesting absentee ballots. They will be familiar with timelines and requirements in advance of elections. Your local municipal or county clerk may have information about such groups and may also conduct voter registration drives. You could reach out to see if you can work together. CONTACT US to find a local League in your area.

3. - Preparing for the voter program event

Preparation for the voter program event or events includes setting your dates and calendar, promoting the event to jail residents, the logistics of using the jail space and availability of staff, volunteer orientation and background checks, if needed.

- **Setting your calendar of events.** The voting calendar will dictate when it is possible for voters to register and request absentee ballots. Two important dates to keep in mind:
 - o Thirty days before an election is the last day that voters can register online, and paper registrations must be received at the registrar's office by 5 PM.
 - o Ten days before election day is the last day requests for absentee ballots can be accepted - by mail, 5 PM to the registrar's office. Keep in mind, there is no guarantee they will be delivered by the Post Office in time if you wait until that deadline.

Experience has shown us that holding a voter registration/absentee ballot request event about a week before the deadline (about 25-

30 days before the election) works out well.
Those extra few days can be helpful for sorting out any individual situations that arise.

- **Promoting your voter program event.**
Administrators should post and/or distribute non-partisan posters and flyers to jail residents prior to the voter registration event, with information on how to prepare to register/request an absentee ballot and how to indicate interest in the event. We can help with the design of these fliers.
- **Preparing jail residents to participate.** You must have your full social security number to register to vote.
- **Absentee ballot request logistics.** The logistics for how a jail voting event would be managed varies by jail. Some jails have residents meet with experienced volunteers in their semi-contact rooms. Here, the volunteers can assist with filling out voter registration forms and absentee ballot applications. Other jails have multiple volunteers in a meeting room within the jail, and residents can meet face to face, facilitating completion of forms. These forms must be sent to the registrar's office within 10 days of the event. Find a local registrar here <https://vote.elections.virginia.gov/VoterInformation/PublicContactLookup> or contact us.
- **Prepare your volunteers.** If you are working with a group of nonpartisan experienced volunteers, such as the League of Women Voters, the organizer of that group can manage a lot of this for you. They will need to know logistics of the where, when and how's so they can prepare the volunteers. Training is available from the Virginia Department of Elections.

<https://www.elections.virginia.gov/registration/registration-drives/>

- **Obtain Materials Necessary**

Again, if you are doing this event in conjunction with the League, we will provide this information. Voter registration forms and absentee ballot applications can be found at <https://www.elections.virginia.gov/registration/how-to-register/>

- **Provide LWV Members or Other Outside Groups That May be Assisting you**

With the necessary information as to parking, security, COVID (if necessary) and other details they need to enter the jail.

4. The Restoration Process

If you have people with felony convictions who are about to be released, they can petition to have their rights restored.

Ask us for our Restoration Toolkit in advance of your event.

5. Suggested Agenda

Start Time: _____

- Introductions
- Welcome from Jail contact person and introduction of League members - if there
- Overview of today's event
- Review of hand outs
- Restoration Information
 - Questions
 - Proceed to meeting with jail residents
- Collection of materials - and remember to make a plan to return them to the registrar.

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