

Registering and Voting in the November 8, 2016 General Election

Registering to vote –

Requirements to register in California

- 18 years of age by the date of the election
- A resident of California
- A Citizen of the United States
- Not imprisoned or on parole for the conviction of a felony

How to register to vote

- Online at the California Secretary of State's website <http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/> (you can use your smartphone, tablet or notebook – or any computer with internet connection)
- By mail – forms available at Post Offices, libraries, schools, some banks
- In person at any Registrar of Voters Office in California

What is the deadline to register to vote?

- The deadline to register is 15 days prior to the election. For the November 8, 2016 general election the deadline is October 24, 2016.
- Mailed in forms must be postmarked by this date. A mailed form received after the deadline with no postmark is not valid.
- Online forms must be submitted before midnight.
- Do yourself a favor – don't wait until the deadline to register. Your vote is more important than that.

What information is needed to register to vote?

- Your name
- Your residence address (this can be either your home address where you lived prior to coming to school, or your school address, whichever you consider to be your domicile)
- The address to which you want your election materials mailed, if different than your residence address
- Your date of birth
- The State in which you were born, or if born outside of the United States, the foreign Country in which you were born.
- Your California DL number or State ID number, or if you do not have either, the last 4 digits of your Social Security number
- Your signature (if you are registering online and have supplied your California DL or State ID number, the signature you provided for that form will be automatically applied, if you are registering online and do not supply your California DL or State ID number, you can print out the filled in form, sign it and send it in – your

data will be automatically forwarded to the county, awaiting receipt of your signature)

Once I submit the information am I considered registered?

- **NO** and I can't stress this enough. You must receive confirmation from your County Elections Office (or verify online) that you are registered. In order to prevent duplicate or fraudulent registrations there are a number of safeguards in place. Once your registration is approved you will be sent verification of your registration. Unfortunately, so many people wait until the last minute to register, counties can get backlogged and you may not receive the verification for several weeks.

Am I registered to vote?

- If you think you are already registered and want to check your voter registration, some counties have online verification applications, however, if you have just registered be aware that if there is a backlog near the close of registration the posting of your registration may be delayed as well.

So now that you're a registered voter – stay registered.

- Re-register every time you change your residence address. If you register at your dorm address and you're in a different dorm next year – re-register. While you are probably in the same precinct and it would probably be legal for you to vote from your old dorm address, you will never receive your election materials.
- Headed back “home” for the summer? Update your address for the summer – One election only 2 people voted in the primary election polling place at the SSU dorms because all of the students had left for the school year – if you update your address in advance (a phone call will do), your ballot can be sent to your other address.
- Notify the elections office if you change (or drop altogether) your mailing address. Move back in with the folks? Drop that PO Box? Be sure you let the elections office know.
- Vote – at least occasionally. It's pretty hard to get cancelled for not voting. You have to miss 2 consecutive Federal General Elections (not just the local fire district election or school board race).

Voting –

Ok, so the whole point of registering is voting – so how do you vote?

- Polling place. Prior to each election you will be sent a Sample Ballot from the County Registrar of Voters. The Sample Ballot will tell you where your polling place is located.
 - Polls in California are open from 7 am until 8 pm. Times are strictly enforced. Everyone in line at 8 pm will be allowed to vote – but don't gamble your vote and show up at 8:01 p.m.

- Just go to the polling place shown on your Sample Ballot (or look it up at vote.sonoma-county.org) give your name and your Sonoma County address. If it is the first time you are voting in a federal election you may be asked to show identification, your Driver's License, State ID or Student ID card will do.
- Provisional ballots. These are your last resort for voting, but can be a life saver. In one Presidential Election over 200 Provisional Ballots were issued at the polling place at the SSU dorms because MTV was announcing that anyone could go to any polling place and receive a Provisional Ballot – while this was correct, it was incomplete information. Only a handful of those 200 ballots were counted because the students were not registered voters in Sonoma County – so while anyone can request a Provisional Ballot, not all Provisional Ballots are counted (approximately 75% are counted)
 - What they aren't...
 - A Provisional Ballot is not a means to vote if you are not registered to vote.
 - A Provisional Ballot is not a means to vote if you are not in the county in which you are registered.
 - What they are....
 - A Provisional Ballots will be issued to anyone whose right to voted cannot be established at the polls.
 - A Provisional Ballot will only be counted if the voter is registered to vote and is voting in the county in which he or she is registered.
 - A Provisional Ballot will be counted if the voter is in the right county, but at the wrong polling place (only the votes cast on contests on which the voter is eligible to vote are counted).
 - A Provisional Ballot will be counted if the voter's Vote by Mail ballot was not received by the deadline (postmarked by election day and received within 3 days after the election)
- Vote by Mail. The majority of votes cast in Sonoma County are cast via the Vote by Mail process. It is an easy and convenient way to vote.
 - Any voter may request to be a permanent Vote by Mail voter, or may request a vote by mail ballot for a single election.
 - Vote by Mail ballots are mailed approximately 3 weeks prior to the election. If you are a late registrant your ballot will be mailed as soon as possible after your registration is processed.
 - Your vote by mail ballot may be requested by written application, over the phone, or online
 - If your mailing address is not up to date, your ballot will be sent wherever you asked it to be sent.
 - You don't want your ballot to be sent to your parents because you will lose time when they have to forward it to you.

- The deadline for requesting a Vote by Mail ballot is 7 days before the election.
- The deadline for the Registrar of Voters to receive your Vote by Mail ballot by mail is within 3 days after the election, but only if it is postmarked. If the Postal Service doesn't postmark your ballot or the date is illegible, you're out of luck.
- The deadline for returning a Vote by Mail ballot in person is 8 p.m. on election day. Your Vote by Mail ballot may be returned to any polling place, but only in the county from which it was issued.
- Ballots returned in the last few days will not be counted on election night, but will be counted during the Official Canvass following the election.

Register early – Return your ballot early – don't let some snafu cost you your vote!

Source: Janice Morrissey (Atkinson) – Former Sonoma County Registrar of Voters