

## How can I learn more about voting, elections, candidates, and issues?

Every voter needs to have information about the issues and candidates. The websites below provide nonpartisan information about voting, elections, candidates and issues.

### [www.votinginfo.info](http://www.votinginfo.info)

This League of Women Voters of Massachusetts website provides voters with comprehensive information about voting and elections in Massachusetts, including an electronic election reminder service, comprehensive voter registration information and more. The League of Women Voters, a grassroots political organization, has been providing nonpartisan information about elections and voting for over 80 years. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.

### [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org)

To find elections and voting information for all 50 states, go to this League of Women Voters of the United States' website. It provides information on voter registration and elections and links to pages on how to educate and inform yourself about issues and candidates.

### [www.dnet.org](http://www.dnet.org)

Sponsored by the League of Women Voters, this website allows voters to learn about candidates' positions on issues and about ballot questions. Voters enter their zip code to find out which candidates will be on their ballot.

### [www.fec.gov](http://www.fec.gov)

The Federal Election Commission monitors elections, receives campaign finance reports, compiles election results and voting demographic statistics and has information on voter registration requirements for every state, including which states accept the National Mail Voter Registration form.

### League of Women Voters of Massachusetts Citizen Education Fund

Lotte E. Scharfman Memorial Fund

133 Portland Street, Boston, MA 02114

Phone: 617-523-2999 - Fax: 617-248-0881

E-mail: [lwvma@lwvma.org](mailto:lwvma@lwvma.org)

**Voter Information Phone**

**800-882-1649 or 617-723-1421**

[www.votinginfo.info](http://www.votinginfo.info)

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# Where Do I Vote?

## Q & A for College Students



## Where do I vote?

### Q & A's for College Students

The right to vote is fundamental in a democratic society. This pamphlet will help make it easy for you to exercise this right. For additional information, call the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts' Voter Information Phone, 800-882-1649 or visit the League's election and voting website, [www.votinginfo.info](http://www.votinginfo.info).

To be eligible to vote, you must be a U.S. citizen who will be at least 18 years old on Election Day, and you must also have registered to vote. If you are in college, the following information will help you decide whether to vote in your home district/state or at your college address. There are many good reasons for registering and voting at either residence. The choice is yours.

### Can I register to vote in my college community?

Yes, you have the right to register and vote where you go to school, even if you live in a dorm. It is illegal for a community to set different registration standards for students.

### Should I register and vote in my college community?

You should vote in your college community if you consider your residence there to be your home. Registering and voting at college gives you the opportunity to become involved with and informed about the local issues in your college town or city. Becoming involved in the issues and learning about local politics are ways in which you can begin to build a relationship with other community residents.

You have a vested interest in the local issues of your college community. Issues such as off-campus housing and zoning restrictions, the environment, taxes, transportation and personal safety all affect your quality of life. Voting in your college community is more convenient and relieves you of the need to vote absentee.

You can register to vote in your college community and still receive financial support from your parents and

have bank accounts, register a car, or file state tax returns in your prior home state.

Your Massachusetts registration may have implications, however, for your tuition, insurance, taxes and any scholarships or loans you might have from your home state. If you have a scholarship funded by the state, a privately funded scholarship designated for a local student, or a student loan, be sure to check the terms of your scholarship or loan before registering in your college community. You could lose your eligibility.

### I am currently registered at my prior address. Can I reregister in my college community instead of voting absentee?

Yes. You have the right to vote in your college community if you register there, but you can only vote in one place.

### Should I register at my home address?

If you don't consider your residence in your college community to be your home or you have a special interest in the local issues at your old address, you have a good reason for voting at your previous home address. Also, the people and issues you vote for will have a more lasting impact on you if you intend to return there to live.

Remember, if you want to vote at your prior residence, you must be registered at that address and be aware of absentee ballot regulations and procedures. These differ by state.

### Where and how do I register?

In Massachusetts, you can register to vote in person at any registration event, in any local election office\* (most local election offices are in the City or Town Hall) and at the following state agency offices:

Registry of Motor Vehicles, Department of Transitional Assistance, Division of Medical Assistance, Commission for the Blind, Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, Department of Mental Health, Department of Mental Retardation and Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth.

\* You can register at any local election office or at any of the locations listed here, but you must vote in the community where you are registered.

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You can also register to vote by mail. Mail-in Voter Registration Forms are available at all local election offices, and anyone can pick one up for you. Or you can use the Internet to request that a Voter Registration Form be mailed to you. Go to the League of Women Voters' site [www.votinginfo.info/receive\\_a\\_voter\\_registration\\_form.htm](http://www.votinginfo.info/receive_a_voter_registration_form.htm) or call 800-882-1649.

To register in most other states you can use the National Mail Voter Registration form. Go to [www.luv.org/voter/register.cfm](http://www.luv.org/voter/register.cfm), which will lead you through the process of filling out the form and will produce a completed form for you to print and mail. This League of Women Voters site also has links to voting and election information for all states.

### *When do I register?*

In Massachusetts, the last day to register to vote for all elections is 20 days before the election. Go to [www.luv.org/voter/register.cfm](http://www.luv.org/voter/register.cfm) to find the voter registration deadlines for other states.

### *How do I fill out the Voter Registration Form?*

Fill out the form as directed, sign it, complete the address for the local election office in the city or town where you are registering, place a first-class stamp on it, and mail. The mail-in Voter Registration Form must be postmarked by the registration deadline. It can also be hand-delivered to any local election office by the registration deadline.

Voter Registration Forms require your driver's license number or the last four digits of your Social Security number. If you have neither, write "none" in the box on the form. You must then provide a copy of your identification either with your mail-in Voter Registration Form *or* at the polling location when you vote for the first time.

Suitable identification, which must show your name and address, includes a copy of a current and valid photo identification, current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck or other government document. Your school photo ID is acceptable as identification if it shows an address

in the city or town in which you are registering.

### *What if I can't get to the polls on Election Day?*

If you are registered to vote in Massachusetts, you can cast an absentee ballot if you will be absent from your city or town on Election Day, if you have a physical disability preventing you from voting at the polling place, or if your religious beliefs prevent you from voting on Election Day.

### *How do I apply for a Massachusetts absentee ballot?*

You must apply in writing to the local election office in the city or town where you are registered, either by filling out an application form or by writing a letter. Application forms for absentee ballots are available at your local election office. You can also download the absentee ballot application form at [www.votinginfo.info](http://www.votinginfo.info).

If you write a letter requesting an absentee ballot, include your name, address as registered, ward or precinct if you know it, address where you want the absentee ballot sent, which political party ballot you want if the election is a primary (you must be either registered to vote in the party you request or unenrolled, that is, not registered as belonging to any party), and your signature.

If you wish to vote absentee for more than one election in a year, you can make one application and ask that ballots for all elections in that **calendar year** be sent to you.

### *Can someone else apply for me for an absentee ballot?*

Yes, in Massachusetts a family member can apply for an absentee ballot for you to the city or town where you are registered. They can apply either by letter including all the information listed above or they can use a special absentee ballot application for family members, which is available at [www.votinginfo.info](http://www.votinginfo.info).

### *Do I have to include identification with my Massachusetts absentee ballot?*

You do not have to include identification with your absentee ballot if you have voted previously in a state

or presidential primary or in a state or federal election. You do have to include suitable identification *the first time you vote in Massachusetts* if you registered to vote by mail after January 2003 and did not include a copy of identification or if the identification number you provided on your Voter Registration Form (your driver's license number or the last four digits of your Social Security number) could not be verified.

Suitable identification, which must show your name and address, includes a copy of a current and valid photo identification, current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck or other government document.

If you don't mail in the required identification, your absentee ballot will be considered *provisional*. Provisional voting means that every voter will be able to cast a ballot. If you do not send in suitable identification your provisional ballot may not be counted.

### *What are the deadlines for voting absentee in Massachusetts?*

The deadline for **applying** for an absentee ballot is noon on the day before an election. Of course, if you plan to vote by mail, your application must be submitted with enough time for the absentee ballot to get to you and for you to mail it so it is received at the local election office before the deadline for **return** of absentee ballots, which is the close of the polls on Election Day.

If you are planning to vote in the local election office, you may be able to apply for an absentee ballot and vote in the same visit. Absentee ballots are generally available three weeks before an election. If you reside outside the U.S., for local and primary elections your absentee ballot must arrive by the close of polls (8 p.m.) on Election Day. For federal elections your absentee ballot must be postmarked by Election Day and arrive at the local election office no later than 10 days after the election.

### *Do I have to reapply for an absentee ballot for every election?*

Not necessarily. The Massachusetts absentee ballot application asks you to designate which election(s) you are applying for. An absentee ballot application can be made for a single election or for all elections in a calendar year.

*Note:* If your address changes within a calendar year you must submit a new application for an absentee ballot. *This is especially important for college students who are usually focused on an academic year, not a calendar year.*

If you are permanently disabled, you can file a doctor's letter with the local election office that states that you are permanently unable to vote at the polls due to a physical disability. The local election office will automatically mail you an application for an absentee ballot for all elections in a calendar year. You must sign the application and send it back to your local election office.

### *How do I complete and return the Massachusetts absentee ballot?*

Do not fold, bend, or damage the ballot in any way. Place the ballot in the small envelope that has an affidavit on the front. Sign the affidavit and seal the ballot in that envelope. Be sure to sign your name as you registered. The absentee ballot is mailed to you in the name you are registered. Then place the sealed envelope in the larger envelope provided and mail or bring it to your local election office.

The absentee ballot can be delivered to your local election office by a family member. In some cases, a designated health care facility will have election officials distribute absentee ballots.

### *Can I change my mind and vote at the polls if I have sent in a Massachusetts absentee ballot?*

Yes, as long as your absentee ballot has not been processed at the polling place.

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