



# Voter Guide



**I  
Voted**

# Welcome

Washington County is committed to serving you with transparency and integrity. Our top priority is to guarantee a secure, accessible, and fair voting process that accurately counts every vote. We take pride in serving over 180,000 registered voters in Washington County. Our county provides voter registration and election administration services for federal, state, and local elections.

This voter guide is designed to explain the voting process and provide you with resources to become a more informed voter. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact our office.

Participating in elections is an impactful way to make your voice heard and contribute to shaping the future of your community.

Sincerely,  
Washington County Election Administration

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# Who can vote



## **To vote, you must be:**

- A U.S. citizen.
- At least 18 years old on Election Day.
- A resident of Minnesota for 20 days.
- Not currently incarcerated for a felony conviction.
- Not under a court order that revokes your right to vote.

# Voter rights

You have many rights as a Minnesota voter. You can't be denied the right to vote if you're eligible.

## **You have the right to:**

- Take time off work to vote anytime during the absentee voting period or on Election Day without losing your pay, personal leave, or vacation time.
- Vote if you are in line to vote any time before 8 p.m.
- Register to vote on Election Day if you can show the required proof of residence.
- Orally confirm who you are and to ask another person to sign for you if you cannot sign your name.
- Assistance in marking a ballot, by reason of blindness, disability, or inability to read or write, may be given assistance to do so by a person of the voter's choice, other than the employer or agent of that employer or officer or agent of the voter's union.
- Bring your children with you to vote.
- Vote if you had a felony conviction, if you are not currently incarcerated for the felony offense.
- Vote if you are under a guardianship, unless a judge has revoked your right to vote.
- Vote without anyone in the polling place trying to influence your vote.
- A replacement ballot if you make a mistake on your ballot before you cast it.
- File a written complaint at your polling place if you are unhappy with the way an election is being run.
- Take a sample ballot into the voting booth.
- Take a copy of the Voter's bill of rights into the voting booth.

# Voting checklist

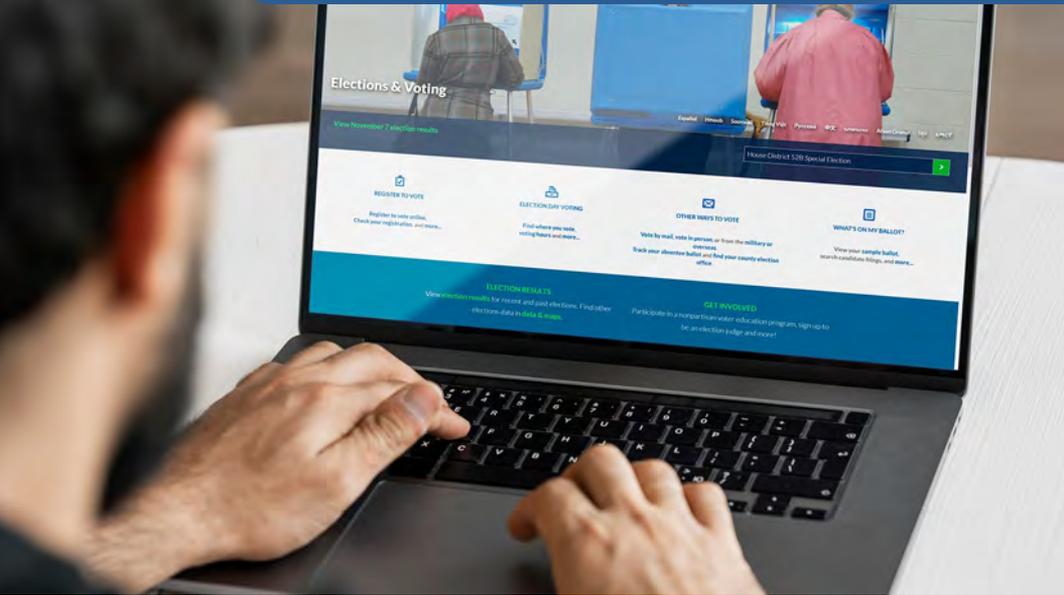


Voting can be overwhelming, but we are here to help. Use this checklist and voter guide to help simplify the process.

## **Prepare to vote:**

- Make sure you're eligible to vote (page 2).
- Register to vote (page 5).
- Know what's on your ballot (pages 14).
- Have a voting plan:
  - I will vote by mail (page 10).
  - I will vote early in person (page 11).
  - I will vote on Election Day (page 12).
- Vote.

# Register to vote



You must register before you can vote.

Registering is a way to prove that you are eligible.

- In Minnesota, you can pre-register up to 21 days before Election Day.
- You can also register when you vote early in person or on Election Day with same-day registration.

Unsure if you're registered? Visit [mnvotes.gov](https://mnvotes.gov).

# Ways to register



There are several ways to register to vote:

## **Online at [MNvotes.gov](https://mnvotes.gov)**

- You will need your Minnesota driver's license or Minnesota identification card number, or the last four numbers of your Social Security number.
- An email address.

## **In person**

- You need to provide proof of a) who you are, and b) where you live.
  - For example, a current and valid Minnesota ID or driver's license.
  - A list of all proof of residence options are available at [mnvotes.gov](https://mnvotes.gov).

## **OR**

- Have a registered voter in your precinct vouch for you (for more info on vouching see page 8).

### **Remember to update your registration when:**

- You have an address change.
- Change your name.
- Have not voted at least once within the last four years.

# Special circumstances

Life is complicated. If you are in a unique situation, we are here to help.

## **I'm a college student**

Register with the address you currently consider home. For example, your dorm, off-campus housing, or your parents' house.

## **I'm in the military or living abroad**

Serving in the military or living abroad? Have an absentee ballot sent to you wherever you are in the world by visiting [mnvotes.gov/uocava](https://mnvotes.gov/uocava).

## **I'm homeless**

If you're eligible to vote, you can do so regardless of your housing situation. Make sure you use a current address (for example, shelter, friend's house, outside, etc.) when registering.

For an outdoor address, write the location of where you sleep. If you don't have proper documentation of your current residence, you can have someone vouch for you on Election Day (see page 8).

## **I fear for my personal safety**

Safe at Home is a statewide program to help people who fear for their safety maintain a confidential address. If you are a participant in the Safe at Home program, please visit the Safe at Home program at <https://sos.state.mn.us/safe-at-home/> to learn more about how to vote. You can also call the Safe at Home number: 1-866-723-3035.

# Vouching



If you don't have proper documentation of your current residence, you can have someone vouch for you when voting in person.

The person vouching for you is required to sign an oath confirming your address.

## **Who can vouch for you?**

- A registered voter who lives in the same precinct.
  - A registered voter can vouch for up to eight voters.
- A facility staff if you live in a residential facility.
  - Staff need to show proof of their employment at the polling place.
  - For example: an employee ID badge or a staff list.
  - There is no limit to how many people a staff member can vouch for.

**Note:** *You cannot vouch for others if someone vouched for you. If your address can't be confirmed, you may be "challenged" at the polls. You are still able to vote. The election judges at your polling place will have you take an oath of eligibility prior to voting.*

# Ways to vote



In Minnesota, you have options on how you can choose to vote.

All voters are eligible to vote in one of the following ways:

- Early by mail (page 10).
- Early in person (page 11).
- On Election Day (page 12).

## **Permanent Absentee Voter List**

Starting in June 2024, eligible voters will be able to request to be added to a list to automatically be sent an absentee ballot during the early vote period, instead of needing to apply again ahead of every election. This will save time for voters who know they want to continue voting from home.

# Early by mail

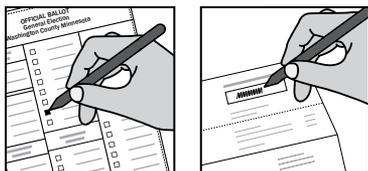
Voting by mail is easy and convenient. You don't have to leave the house and there's no waiting in line.

## Steps:

1. Register to vote (page 6).
2. Apply to have an absentee ballot mailed to you at [mnvotes.gov/absentee](http://mnvotes.gov/absentee) or [washingtontcountymn.gov/Elections](http://washingtontcountymn.gov/Elections).
3. You will receive your ballot by mail.
4. Fill out your ballot.
  - Make sure to carefully read the instructions.
  - A witness signature is required from a registered voter or notary.
  - You will get an additional registration form to fill out if you are not pre-registered.
5. Return your ballot by mail or in person.
  - Your ballot must arrive by 8 p.m. on Election Day. You can track your ballot at [mnvotes.gov/track](http://mnvotes.gov/track).

If you have any issues with your ballot, contact Washington County Elections at 651-430-6790 or [elections@co.washington.mn.us](mailto:elections@co.washington.mn.us).

## Fill out ballot



## Return ballot by mail or in person

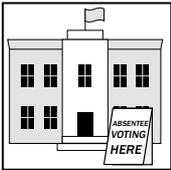


# Early in person

You can vote at your county election office or an early voting location up to 46 days before Election Day. Steps:

1. Pre-register or register when you vote (page 6).
  - If you are pre-registered, you don't need to bring an ID.
  - If you're registering in person, make sure you bring proper proof of residency.
2. Find your early voting locations and hours of operation at [washingtontcountymn.gov/Elections](http://washingtontcountymn.gov/Elections).
  - Remember that wait times can vary.
3. You will complete an absentee ballot application before receiving a ballot.
4. Vote.
  - You will vote in a private area.
  - You have the right to ask for help or get a new ballot if you make a mistake.

## Fill out ballot



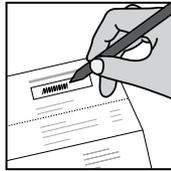
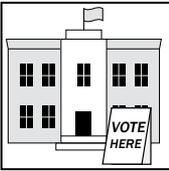
# On Election Day

Election Day is an exciting time to vote, and your polling place is usually close to home.

## Steps:

1. Pre-register or register when you vote (page 6).
  - If you are pre-registered, you don't need to bring an ID.
  - If registering on Election Day, make sure you bring proper proof of residency.
2. Find your polling place at [mnvotes.gov/pollfinder](https://mnvotes.gov/pollfinder).
  - Remember that wait times can vary.
  - Polls are open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Election Day.
3. Vote.
  - You will vote in a private area.
  - You have the right to ask for help or get a new ballot if you make a mistake. If you are in line by 8 p.m., you will be allowed to vote.

## Fill out ballot



# Accessibility

Accessibility is an important aspect of polling places. A voter can bring a friend, family member, or anyone to help them vote. A voter can also ask an election judge for help.

## **Accessible voting technology**

Each polling place has an OmniBallot Tablet (accessible ballot marking device) for voters with disabilities, allowing anyone to mark their ballot independently and privately without using a pen.

The machine has a screen that displays the ballot in large print or with a high-contrast background. It can also read the ballot to you through headphones.

Voters can mark their choices with a touchscreen, Braille keypad, or a 3-button device.



## **Curbside voting**

Election judges can help you vote curbside if you cannot easily leave your vehicle. Two election judges will come out with materials requiring a signature and your ballot. Once you are done marking your ballot, they will bring the ballot inside to the ballot box.

# Elected offices

What's on your ballot changes every year. In 2024, all Washington County voters will have federal, state and county offices on their ballot.

Voters will also have candidates for municipal, school district, or judicial offices. In this section we will explain the offices on the ballot so you can better understand what elected officials do.

***Partisan:*** a candidate who represents a political party.

***Nonpartisan:*** a candidate who does not represent a political party.

## Federal offices

**President:** The head of the United States of America. They sign into law bills passed by the United States Congress, or veto bills. The president is responsible for the execution and enforcement of the laws created by Congress. They appoint the heads of more than 50 independent federal commissions and can issue executive orders. The president nominates Supreme Court justices to be confirmed by Congress. The President is the commander in chief of the U.S. Armed Forces. The president and vice president serve a four-year term and are limited to two terms. ***Partisan***

**Vice president:** The primary responsibility of the vice president is to be ready to assume the presidency if the president is unable to perform their duties. The vice president serves as the president of the United States Senate and casts the deciding vote in the case of a tie. They formally preside over the receiving and counting of electoral ballots cast in presidential elections. The vice president runs on the same ticket as the president, so you will vote for them as a pair. ***Partisan***

**U.S. senator:** The Senate is one chamber of Congress. There are 100 U.S. senators, two from each state. U.S. senators propose, debate, and vote on legislation. They have oversight over the federal budget, approve or reject presidential appointments. The Senate has sole power to approve or reject treaties with foreign governments by a two-thirds vote. They serve six-year terms. ***Partisan***

**U.S. representative:** The House of Representatives is the second chamber of Congress. The 435 U.S. representatives are distributed by population and are redistributed every ten years after the census. Like U.S. senators, representatives propose, debate, and vote on legislation and have the power to impeach federal officials. They serve two-year terms. *Partisan*

## State offices

**Governor:** The chief executive of the state. They appoint heads of departments and agencies, propose state budgets and sign (approve) or veto (reject) legislation. They also appoint judges to fill vacancies and issue pardons and reprieves, and can restore rights to felons. *Partisan*

**Lieutenant governor:** Assumes the governor’s responsibilities in their absence or if there is a vacancy. They also perform other duties assigned by the governor. The lieutenant governor runs on the same ticket as the governor, so you will vote for them as a pair. *Partisan*

**Secretary of state:** Acts as the chief election official and oversees the enactment of election laws and training of county elections staff. They also certify official state documents and register businesses and nonprofit organizations. Additionally, they manage the Safe at Home program. *Partisan*

**State auditor:** Oversees money spent by local governments and performs audits of their financial statements. *Partisan*  
**Attorney general:** Provides legal services to state government, represents the state in court cases, enforces laws concerning charitable organizations and protects public rights. *Partisan*

**State senator:** The state Senate is the “upper chamber” of the state’s legislative branch. Senators propose, debate and vote on legislation. They are involved in the state budget process. *Partisan*

**State representative:** The state House is the “lower chamber” of the state’s legislative branch. Representatives propose, debate, and vote on legislation. They are involved in the state budget process. *Partisan*

## County offices

**County commissioner:** Approves the annual county budget, determines the county's tax levy, appoints the county administrator and authorizes personnel rules. They also work on long-range planning and capital improvements, authorize the use of state and federal grants, adopt county laws and fill early vacancies of county attorney and sheriff. *Nonpartisan*

**County sheriff:** Executes all processes, writs, precepts, and orders issued or made by lawful authority. The county sheriff investigates recreational vehicle crashes involving personal injury or death that occur outside the boundaries of a municipality. They serve all papers, post all notices named by law to be served or posted on behalf of the state or of the county, and maintain the charge and custody of the county jail. *Nonpartisan*

**County attorney:** Provides legal services to the county. They prosecute felony crimes and all cases involving juvenile offenders, oversee juvenile diversion programs, and aid the victims and witnesses who play a vital role in the criminal justice system. The county attorney advises victims of their legal rights and the status of their case, starts legal proceedings to protect the health and safety of vulnerable adults within the county, and brings actions to obtain or enforce child support obligations. *Nonpartisan*

## Municipal offices

**Mayor:** A mayor is often the top executive of a city, municipality or town government. They often make appointments to city offices and preside at council meetings. Mayors are usually involved in proposing a city budget and can veto ordinances proposed by the council. *Nonpartisan*

**City Council:** Members of a city council typically serve as the legislative "branch" of city government (although this varies by municipality, as they may also have executive power). Council members can propose ordinances, set administrative policy, and pass budgets proposed by the mayor. Mayoral appointments to city government typically require council approval. *Nonpartisan*

## School district

**School board member:** Creates school policies, hires a superintendent to provide educational leadership for the district and sets levies to fund the district. *Nonpartisan*

# Be an informed voter

What's on your ballot changes every year and depends on where you live. Before going to vote, it's important to do research on the candidates and questions that will be on your ballot.

Visit [mnvotes.gov/myballot](https://mnvotes.gov/myballot).

Here are some resources to help find more information on candidates, offices or questions on the ballot:

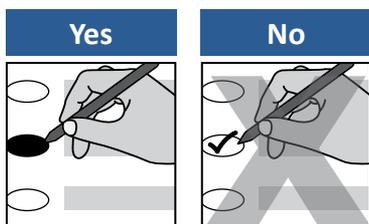
- Visit [mnvotes.gov](https://mnvotes.gov) to get the candidates' contact information, including candidates' websites, emails, and phone numbers. You can contact candidates with questions you have about issues important to you.
- On [mnvotes.gov](https://mnvotes.gov) you can also get the contact information for Minnesota's major and minor political parties.
- Candidates' websites and social media platforms.
- Candidate speeches and debates.
- Press reports from newspapers, television, and radio.
- Voting records (if the candidate is up for re-election).
- Endorsements (public support of a candidate).
- Ballotpedia: [Ballotpedia.org](https://Ballotpedia.org).
- **County offices:** Visit [washingtoncountymn.gov/Elections](https://washingtoncountymn.gov/Elections) to review county board actions and meeting information.
- **City offices:** Go to the city's website and review any information available from their meetings.
- **School board:** Visit your school district's website and review any information available from their meetings.

# Marking your ballot

Once you get your ballot, it is time to fill it out.

## Marking a paper ballot

Voting with a paper ballot and pen is the most common way to vote. Vote with a pen and completely fill in the oval next to each of your choices.



## Marking on a ballot marking device

- Voters can choose to use a ballot marking device.
- The ballot marking device has many accessibility options for marking your ballot, such as large print, spoken instructions, Braille keypad or touchscreen. The machine will print out your marked ballot.



# Get involved

Civic engagement doesn't end at the polls. There are many ways to stay civically engaged all year. Here are some ways you can stay involved in addition to voting:

- Be an election judge or student election judge, visit [washingtoncountymn.gov/ElectionJudge](https://www.washingtoncountymn.gov/ElectionJudge).
- Help others in your community with registering to vote and finding their polling place.
- Join an election campaign.
- Know who your elected officials are and connect with them. They are here to serve you.
- Join your city or county boards or commissions.
- Attend city and county meetings.
- Get involved in your local neighborhood association.
- Volunteer with an organization or political party that does work you care about.
- Run for office.
- Follow us on Facebook [@WashingtonCountyMN](https://www.facebook.com/WashingtonCountyMN).
- Share this guide with friends, family, and neighbors.

# Be an Election Judge



Election judges and election judge trainees are temporary, paid employees of Washington County trained to handle all aspects of voting at the polling place and protect the rights of voters on Election Day. Serving as an election judge is a chance to learn about elections, and is a great service to the community.

The requirements for being an election judge include:

- Be eligible to vote in Minnesota.
- Be able to read, write, and speak English.
- Be at least 18 years old; or 16-17 years old as an election judge trainee.

If you are interested in becoming an election judge, complete the Election Judge Application online at:

[washingtoncountymn.gov/ElectionJudge](https://www.washingtoncountymn.gov/ElectionJudge)

# Washington County Elections

[elections@co.washington.mn.us](mailto:elections@co.washington.mn.us)

651-430-6790

[washingtoncountymn.gov/elections](http://washingtoncountymn.gov/elections)



VOTE