

VOTING 101

YOUR GUIDE TO VOTING IN OHIO

"THE VOTE IS PRECIOUS. IT IS THE MOST POWERFUL NON-VIOLENT TOOL WE HAVE IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY, AND WE MUST USE IT." - JOHN LEWIS

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ELECTIONS

Ohio has multiple elections every year. These include, primary elections, general elections, and special elections.

- **Primary Elections:** Ohio has two types of primary elections, nonpartisan primaries and partisan primaries. Nonpartisan primaries are used to narrow the field of candidates for nonpartisan offices in advance of a general election while in partisan primaries, voters select a candidate to be a political party's nominee for a given office in the corresponding general election. Primary elections are held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in May of each year, except for presidential primary elections which are held the first Tuesday after the first Monday of March.
- **General Elections:** General elections are held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. General election voters determine who will be elected to represent the people at a given level of government. Typically, federal, state, and county candidate elections are held in even-numbered years, while city, village, township, and board of education candidate elections are held in odd-numbered years.
- **Special Elections:** Ohio holds special elections when an elected seat is vacant due to death, resignation, or removal from office. Special elections typically are not statewide and take place in the district with the vacant seat. Ohio has several special elections this year including an election on August 3rd for Ohio's 11th congressional district. The former Congresswoman to hold that seat, Marcia Fudge, was appointed to serve in President Biden's Cabinet as the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. Upon accepting this position, she had to resign from congress which left the congressional seat vacant.

An elections calendar is available on the Secretary of States website at www.ohiosos.gov/publications/2021-elections-calendar. This calendar also includes all election related deadlines like candidate filing deadlines and voter registration deadlines.

DISTRICTS

Ohio consists of many electoral districts. These districts are geographical areas represented by a seat or numerous seats in a legislative body. In Ohio, we have Federal Congressional Districts, Ohio House and Ohio Senate Districts, State Board of Education Districts, Appeals Courts Districts, and local districts including counties, municipalities (cities/towns), school districts, and townships.

PRECINCTS

A Precinct, often referred to as a voting district, is a district within a county established by that county's Board of Elections. Precincts are the smallest units of an electoral district. Each precinct has a polling place. This is where elections are held and where eligible voters within the precinct go to vote. Precinct districts cannot exceed 1,400 residents. At least one polling machine in each voting precinct should be accessible to people with disabilities.

REDISTRICTING

The United States Constitution requires states to redraw district lines, known as redistricting, to ensure congressional and state legislature districts are reflective of new population numbers. This process happens after each census which takes place every 10 years. Redistricting efforts are currently happening in Ohio, and in all other states, to reflect the 2020 census data. The number of congressional seats allocated to Ohio will decrease by one (from sixteen to fifteen) due to population changes and growth around the country. In 2022, you may live in a different district than you do today.

REGISTER TO VOTE

You are eligible to vote in Ohio if you reach the following requirements:

- You are a U.S. citizen, are 18 years or older on or before the day of the next election
- You will be a resident of Ohio for at least 30 days before you vote
- You are not incarcerated (in prison) for a felony conviction
- You have not been declared incompetent for voting purposes by a probate court
- You have not been permanently disenfranchised for violating the election laws

Ohioans can register to vote by mail, by printing out the voter registration form and mailing to their County Board of Elections office, or online through the Ohio Secretary of State's website. To register to vote, you must include the following information: your full name, your date of birth, your home address, and either the last four digits of your Social Security number or your driver's license number or your Ohio identification card number.

You can also register to vote at any public library, public high school or vocational school, your local bureau of motor vehicles, or public agencies that provide public assistance.

When you move, you must update your voter registration.

FIND YOUR POLLING LOCATION

Your polling location is where you go to vote on election day, if you are voting in person. During election season, you may receive a letter in the mail with information about your polling location. You can also find this information on your County Board of Elections website or on the Ohio Secretary of State's website. Links are available on page 7 of this packet.

WHAT'S ON YOUR BALLOT

Before you cast your vote, it's important to know what is on your ballot. Before each election, your County Board of Elections will upload sample ballots to their website. A sample ballot is a document sent to registered voters to help them prepare for an election. Sample ballots include instructions to the voter, look very similar to actual ballot you will fill out on election day, and includes all the races and candidates for that election. Write-in candidates will NOT be included on a sample ballot.

Ballots in Ohio include partisan elections, nonpartisan elections, and ballot measures.

Partisan elections or races will include the political party for each candidate while nonpartisan elections will not include a political party affiliation. In Ohio, judicial general elections for Court of Common Pleas, County Courts, and municipal courts are nonpartisan. Yes, we elect judges our judges, from the Supreme Court of Ohio to your local county courts. Many municipalities (city/towns) and county governments also have nonpartisan elections for races like City Council and School Board.

In addition to partisan and nonpartisan races, your ballot may also include ballot measures. A ballot measure is a law, issue, or question that appears on a statewide or local ballot for voters of the jurisdiction to decide. Ohio is one of 26 states that allows citizens to collect signatures to place measures on the ballot. These are called citizen-initiated ballot measures. Statewide and local ballot measures within your district will be included on your sample ballot.

Examples of Ballot Measures:

- Raising the State Minimum Wage
- Clean Energy Programs
- Term Limits for State Legislators
- Ohio Voting Requirements
- School Levies - a tax on property that is collected to support local schools.

WAYS TO VOTE

In person Voting

Voting in person is easy; just go to your polling location between the hours of 6:30 a.m. and 7:30 p.m and cast your vote! Remember to bring your ID and consider bringing water and a snack in case lines are long.

Early Voting

Early voting is formally called, in-person absentee voting. Every County Board of Elections has an early voting location. This information will be available on your County Board's website with all available days and times to early vote before election day. Early voting in Ohio begins the day after the close of voter registration (30 days before the election). If you decide to vote early in-person, remember to bring your ID and consider bringing water and a snack in case lines are long.

Absentee Voting

Absentee voting allows you to vote by mail. All Ohio voters whose registration information is up-to-date are able to request an absentee ballot. Absentee voting has many benefits - You can vote early, it is convenient, it reduces the chance of lines at the polls on Election Day, and absentee ballots are the first votes counted on Election Night. To vote by absentee ballot, voters need to fill out and return an application. Once your County Board of Elections receives your application, assuming your voter registration is valid and all information on the form is correct, they will mail you an absentee ballot with a pre-paid return envelope. Voters can mail their filled out absentee ballot or drop it off at their County Board of Elections.

If you are interested in absentee voting, plan ahead and request your absentee ballot at least one month before the election to ensure you are able to get your ballot in before the deadline. The deadline to request an absentee ballot is three days before the election, but voters can submit their application any time. If mailed, absentee ballots must be postmarked by the day before the election in order to be counted.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Voter Registration

- Ohio has a 30-day voter registration requirement.
- You must update your voter registration if you move or change your name
- County Boards of Elections have the right to remove individual voter registrations for long-standing inactive voters. Always check to make sure you are registered to vote with your Board of Elections especially if it has been several years since you last cast a ballot.

Voting

- Ohio has No Excuse Absentee Voting. Any up-to-date registered voter is able to request an absentee ballot. The deadline to request an absentee ballot is three days before the election in which you want to vote, but voters can submit their application any time.
- When you vote in person, you must meet the Voter Identification Requirements. Valid IDs include an unexpired Government Issued Photo ID, Military ID, utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck, or other government document the correct name and current address. When using a utility bill, bank statement, government check, or paycheck for voter identification it must be current, within 12 months of the election, include your name and address as it appears on your voter registration, and must be an original or printout of an electronically transmitted copy.
- You can bring a sample ballot with you to the polls.

Disabled Voters

Federal laws protect your right to vote as a person with a disability. These laws include Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and The Help American Vote Act (HAVA). Voters with disabilities have numerous voter assistance rights and are protected by federal and state laws. You can find more information about voter rights and assistance on page 7.

RESOURCES

Elections

- Election Calendar: www.ohiosos.gov/publications/2021-elections-calendar

Voter Registration

- Register to vote online: www.olvr.ohiosos.gov
- Find your County Board of Elections: www.ohiosos.gov/elections/elections-officials/county-boards-of-elections-directory

Districts & Precincts

- Find out what congressional district you live in: www.govtrack.us/congress/members/OH
- Ohio House & Senate Maps: www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislators/district-maps
- Find your Precinct: www.ohiosos.gov/elections/voters/toolkit/polling-location
- Redistricting 101: wosu.tovuti.io/lesson-preview/course/map-making

Voting

- Absentee Voting: www.ohiosos.gov/elections/voters/absentee-voting
- Election Day Voting: www.ohiosos.gov/elections/voters/election-day-voting
- Voter Toolkit: www.ohiosos.gov/elections/voters/toolkit

Voter Rights and Assistance for People with Disabilities

- Disability Rights Ohio: Voter Rights and Assistance: www.disabilityrightsohio.org/voter-rights-assistance
- Voters with Disabilities: www.ohiosos.gov/elections/voters/voters-with-disabilities

Other

- Ballotpedia - the digital encyclopedia of American politics and elections: ballotpedia.org/Ohio
- VOTE411 - a "one-stop-shop" for election related information: www.vote411.org

