

Pa. election 2026: What you need to know about your Election Day voting rights

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HARRISBURG — Whether you cast your ballot for the Nov. 3 election in person or by mail, you want to make sure your vote counts.

The best way to do that is to know your rights.

Here are key state and federal protections for Pennsylvania voters — covering everything from prior criminal convictions to getting a provisional ballot to dealing with disruptions at a polling place.

If you're in line by 8 p.m., you have the right to cast your ballot

Polls are open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. If you are in line by the time the polls close at 8 p.m., you have the right to vote.

You have the right to vote without being intimidated

Voter intimidation is illegal under both state and federal laws, both of which also protect election workers. If you believe someone is trying to intimidate you at the polls, you have recourse.

Intimidation includes explicit physical or verbal threats, interrogation, and being photographed or recorded. A more comprehensive list of intimidation tactics covered under the law [is on the state's website](#).

If you are subjected to intimidation, or if you witness it, you should report it to your county election office, either [online](#) or by finding the phone number for your [county board of elections](#). You can also call the Pennsylvania Department of State's voter hotline at 1-877-VOTESPA (1-877-868-3772).

Once complaints are received, the Office of Attorney General can investigate and prosecute voter intimidation.

Many Pa. voters do not need to present ID at the polls

Different states have different rules around voter identification.

In Pennsylvania, only first-time voters at a given polling location need to present ID. If you have voted at your polling place before, you do not need to show ID to vote.

If it's your first time voting at your polling place, you will need ID. This can include a state-issued driver's license or ID card, passport, or some other document that includes both the name and address that match your voter registration. A full list of acceptable IDs [is available on the state's website](#).

If you are told you're required to present ID but do not have it, you have two options: You can go home, get ID, and return to the polling place; or you can cast a provisional ballot. A provisional ballot is used when poll workers have questions about a voter's eligibility.

Anyone can request a provisional ballot. You will fill out, seal, sign, and date the ballot in your polling place, turn it over to poll workers, and receive a receipt.

Provisional ballots will be tabulated after county workers finish counting all other ballots, and they will pay special attention to make sure you are eligible to vote. This includes confirming that you haven't voted already, that you live in Pennsylvania, and that you are properly registered to vote. In very close elections, these ballots can decide who wins.

You can see whether your provisional ballot was accepted by visiting the state's website, [which has a ballot search function](#). You will need your provisional ballot identification number, which will be on the receipt you got at your polling place.

You have the right to assistance at your polling place

If you are a voter who requires assistance, you have the right to bring someone of your choice to help you, as long as they are not your employer, union representative, or a judge of elections. Voters eligible for assistance include those who need translation in a language other than English, literary assistance, and more.

If it is your first time receiving assistance, you may be required to complete a [declaration](#) (available in [13 different languages](#)), but voters do not need to be designated as "assistance permitted" in the pollbook to receive help.

You also have the right to refuse assistance.

You have the right to accessible voting if you have a disability

In Pennsylvania, every polling place must have at least one accessible voting system. Depending on your polling location, this may be the same machine that is used by all voters, or it may be a different machine with special features such as audio, tactile keys, and other assistive technology. You can [look up the accessible voting system in your county](#) in advance.

You can also [look up your polling location](#) to make sure the building itself will be accessible. If you are not able to access your polling location, you have the right to [vote via an alternative ballot until polls close](#).

If you changed your mind about voting by mail, you have options

If you applied for a mail ballot, but for whatever reason no longer wish to use it, you have options.

If you have the mail ballot and both of its envelopes on hand, you can bring them to your assigned polling place and ask a poll worker to “spoil” your ballot. You’ll be required to sign a form declaring that you haven’t voted by mail. After that, you should be allowed to vote at the precinct.

If you lost or did not receive your mail ballot, you can still go to your polling place to cast [a provisional ballot](#).

If you decide to complete your mail ballot, drop it off at your county election office by 8 p.m. on Election Day. Every county election office has different hours of operation, so make sure to double-check the hours ahead of time. Many counties also have satellite offices or drop boxes where ballots can be returned. You can [find a list of drop-off locations and hours](#) on the Department of State website.

If you are unsure that your ballot will be *received* by your county by 8 p.m. on Election Day, do not mail it. Instead, choose another way to submit it or to vote. Postmarks do not count toward meeting the mail ballot deadline.

If your mail ballot was rejected, you can still vote

If you mail in a ballot and learn ahead of Election Day that the ballot was rejected, you have options.

Pennsylvania election law is vague when it comes to what counties can do to help voters fix mistakes, either before or after returning their ballot. However, decisions from the Pennsylvania Supreme Court have made it clear that at minimum, counties [must notify voters when they return a flawed mail ballot](#), whether that’s due to a missing signature or an incorrect date.

That means if you submit a flawed ballot, your county will tell you about it — no matter where you live.

The high court also established that voters [must be given the opportunity](#) to vote via a provisional ballot on Election Day, should their mail ballot be rejected.

Even so, the process of fixing a mistake on a mail ballot still varies by county.

To learn what the policy is in your county, reach out to your [county election office](#).

Told you can't vote, but think that's wrong? You have rights

You've arrived at what you think is your polling place, and the workers tell you your name isn't in the pollbook.

First, make sure the worker has the right spelling and that you are in fact at the right polling place for your address (sometimes they move). You can find your correct polling place using the [Department of State tool](#).

If you still are not permitted to cast a ballot, you can request [a provisional ballot](#). Once you cast one, county workers will receive the ballot and scrutinize whether you are eligible. If you are, your vote will be counted.

You can often vote with a criminal conviction

The only criminal record that will keep you from voting in Pennsylvania is a conviction for violating the Pennsylvania Election Code within the past four years, or a conviction for a felony for which you are still incarcerated.

If you are on probation or parole in Pennsylvania, you are permitted to vote. You can also vote if you have a previous felony conviction but are no longer incarcerated.

If you are in jail awaiting trial, incarcerated for a misdemeanor, under house arrest, or living in a halfway house, you can vote only by absentee or mail ballot (if you're in a halfway house, you must use a previous or future address).

The deadline to apply for a mail ballot is Oct. 27. The deadline to register to vote is Oct. 19.

You can find more information on voting with a record via [the Department of State](#) and [the ACLU](#) of Pennsylvania.

If you moved but didn't update your address, you can likely vote

If you moved within Pennsylvania less than 30 days before the election, you should vote at the polling place that corresponds to your old address.

If you moved longer ago but haven't gotten around to updating your voter registration yet, [you can still vote using the old address for one election](#). But after that, you must update your address.

You're allowed to take a photo of yourself voting

You voted and want to snap a celebratory photo to share on social media. Is that allowed?

Pennsylvania law [prohibits](#) letting your ballot be seen by other people "with the apparent intention of letting it be known how he is about to vote."

However, [guidance](#) from the Pennsylvania Department of State says that court rulings have found that voters have a First Amendment right to take a "ballot selfie." The guidance says, "The Department recommends that voters who want to take a picture of themselves voting take care that they not disclose the selections of voters other than themselves."

Guidance from the [Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General](#) also recommends that voters wait until after they leave the polling place to post ballot selfies on social media.

Spotlight PA's 2026 Election Center:

<https://www.spotlightpa.org/elections/>

Pennsylvania's voting and election website:

<https://www.pa.gov/agencies/vote>

Find your polling place:

<https://www.pa.gov/services/vote/find-your-local-polling-place>

Contact your county election officials:

<https://www.pa.gov/agencies/vote/contact-us/contact-your-election-officials>

Check your mail-in or absentee ballot:

<https://www.pavoterservices.pa.gov/pages/ballottracking.aspx>

Check your provisional ballot status:

<https://www.pavoterservices.pa.gov/Pages/ProvisionalBallotSearch.aspx>

Ballot return locations and hours:

<https://www.pa.gov/agencies/vote/voter-support/mail-in-and-absentee-ballot/return-ballot>

Voting by alternative ballot:

<https://www.pa.gov/agencies/vote/voter-support/accessible-voting/alternative-ballot>

Voting system demos:

<https://www.pa.gov/agencies/vote/voter-support/voting-system-demos>

Accessible voting forms:

<https://www.pa.gov/agencies/vote/resources/forms-and-documents#accessible>

First time voters:

<https://www.pa.gov/agencies/vote/voter-support/new-voters>

Information about voting for justice-involved individuals:

<https://www.pa.gov/agencies/vote/voter-support/your-rights-and-the-law/criminal-status-and-voting>

Report election complaints and intimidation:

<https://www.pavoterservices.pa.gov/Pages/ReportElectionComplaints.aspx>

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