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# THE POLICY CIRCLE

## THE ACTIVE VOTER GUIDE





# REGISTERING TO VOTE:



## WEBSITES TO CHECK YOUR VOTER REGISTRATION STATUS:

- USA.GOV
- VOTE.ORG
- THE SKIMM 2020

**THE NATIONAL VOTER REGISTRATION ACT OF 1993** (ALSO REFERRED TO AS THE MOTOR VOTER ACT) “REQUIRES STATES TO PROVIDE INDIVIDUALS WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO REGISTER TO VOTE AT THE SAME TIME THAT THEY APPLY FOR A DRIVER’S LICENSE OR SEEK TO RENEW A DRIVER’S LICENSE.”

## WEBSITES TO HELP YOU REGISTER TO VOTE:

- VISIT USA.GOV TO REGISTER
- VISIT U.S. VOTE FOUNDATION TO UNDERSTAND HOW TO REGISTER FOR THE FIRST TIME AND TO REGISTER, EVEN IF YOU ARE A STUDENT LIVING AWAY FROM HOME OR STUDYING ABROAD
- VISIT VOTE.ORG TO REGISTER
- VISIT THE SKIMM 2020 TO REGISTER AND SEE YOUR STATE’S VOTING REQUIREMENTS

# WHERE TO GO:

ON ELECTION DAY, YOU WILL GO TO YOUR DESIGNATED POLLING LOCATION TO CAST YOUR BALLOT.

- VISIT [USA.GOV](https://www.usa.gov) TO FIND YOUR POLLING PLACE OR YOUR STATE OR LOCAL ELECTION OFFICE
- SEE THE U.S. ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMMISSION'S ELECTION DAY CONTACTS
- VISIT [VOTE.ORG](https://www.vote.org)'S POLLING PLACE LOCATOR
- SEE [BALLOTPEDIA](https://www.ballotpedia.com)'S STATE-BY-STATE POLL TIMES

IF YOU KNOW YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO VOTE IN PERSON ON ELECTION DAY, YOU CAN:

- EXPLORE [USA.GOV](https://www.usa.gov)'S EARLY VOTING OPTIONS, SUCH AS ABSENTEE VOTING.
- EXPLORE [VOTE.ORG](https://www.vote.org)'S ABSENTEE BALLOT RULES.

BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR APPLICATION DEADLINES, AND BE AWARE THAT SOME STATES ARE PARTICULAR ABOUT FIRST-TIME VOTERS VOTING IN PERSON.

# WHAT TO BRING:

ALMOST ALL STATES REQUIRE VOTERS TO PRESENT SOME FORM OF IDENTIFICATION WHEN THEY GO TO VOTE.

ACCORDING TO THE HELP AMERICA VOTE ACT, "ALL STATES REQUIRE IDENTIFICATION FROM FIRST-TIME VOTERS WHO REGISTER TO VOTE BY MAIL AND HAVE NOT PROVIDED VERIFICATION OF THEIR IDENTIFICATION AT THE TIME OF REGISTRATION."

- VISIT [USA.GOV](https://www.usa.gov) TO FIND FEDERAL VOTING LAWS, VOTER ID REQUIREMENTS, AND HOW TO GET A VOTER REGISTRATION CARD.
- VISIT [U.S. VOTE FOUNDATION](https://www.usvote.org) TO FIND YOUR STATE'S VOTING REQUIREMENTS
- THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF STATE LEGISLATURES LISTS STATE-BY-STATE VOTER IDENTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS



# RESEARCHING A CANDIDATE:



SEE BALLOTPEDIA'S SAMPLE BALLOT LOOKUP FOR AN IDEA OF WHAT YOUR BALLOT WILL LOOK LIKE AND WHO IS ON IT. THIS CAN GIVE YOU AN OPPORTUNITY TO DO SOME RESEARCH ON THE CANDIDATES RUNNING FOR OFFICE.

ONCE YOU KNOW WHO IS ON YOUR BALLOT AND THE POSITIONS THEY ARE SEEKING, YOU CAN RESEARCH A CANDIDATE'S VOTING RECORDS, PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT SERVICE, AND ENDORSEMENTS THAT HE OR SHE HAS RECEIVED. DO A QUICK NEWS SEARCH TO SEE WHAT ARTICLES HAVE BEEN WRITTEN ABOUT THE CANDIDATES FROM VARIOUS OUTLETS. NEARLY EVERY ISSUE HAS A NATIONAL ORGANIZATION THAT FOLLOW IT AND PRODUCES A 'BALLOT GUIDE' ON TOPICS OF INTEREST.

IF YOU UNDERSTAND YOUR CANDIDATE'S BACKGROUND BUT STILL HAVE REMAINING QUESTIONS, EMAIL THE CANDIDATE TO ASK GET A BETTER SENSE OF WHO THEY ARE AND WHERE THEY STAND ON MAJOR ISSUES:

- WHY ARE YOU RUNNING?
- WHAT IS THE BEST SYSTEM FOR PEOPLE TO CREATE A FUTURE FOR THEMSELVES AND THEIR FAMILY?
- WHAT SHOULD THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT (OR AGENCY THEY ARE RUNNING FOR) BE?
- WHAT IS YOUR VIEW ON \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, AND \_\_\_\_\_? (ASK ABOUT THE MOST PRESSING ISSUES IN YOUR STATE, E.G. THE DEBT, HEALTH CARE, OR INFRASTRUCTURE.)
- HOW WILL YOU WORK WITH YOUR COLLEAGUES IN OFFICE?

# DEVELOPING AN ASSESSMENT SCORECARD

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TO ASSESS A CANDIDATE BASED ON WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU, IT IS HELPFUL TO CREATE A SCORECARD TO RECORD YOUR FINDINGS. CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

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- **BELIEFS** (*GOVERNMENT'S ROLE, TAXES, PRIVATE PROPERTY RIGHTS, AND SPECIAL INTEREST COLLUSION*)
- **GOVERNABILITY** (*RELATIVE LIFE EXPERIENCE, RELEVANT ISSUES KNOWLEDGE, POLITICAL SAVVY, LEADERSHIP AND TEAM-BUILDING SKILLS*)
- **ELECTABILITY** (*CAMPAIGN ABILITY, REPUTATION, FINANCIAL STRENGTH, SPEAKING ABILITY, NAME RECOGNITION*)



# BALLOT MEASURES



IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT TO KNOW WHAT WILL BE ON YOUR BALLOT. A BALLOT MEASURE “IS A LAW, ISSUE, OR QUESTION THAT APPEARS ON A STATE OR LOCAL BALLOT FOR VOTERS TO DECIDE.” A BALLOT INITIATIVE IS A BALLOT MEASURE SPECIFICALLY “PUT ON THE BALLOT FOR VOTER CONSIDERATION THROUGH PEOPLE COLLECTING SIGNATURES.”

ACCORDING TO THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF STATE LEGISLATURES, THE PROCESS BEGINS WHEN A CITIZEN OR GROUP OF CITIZENS PROPOSES A PETITION AND FILES IT WITH STATE OFFICIALS. THE STATE OFFICIALS THEN REVIEW THE PETITION, AND IF APPROVED, GIVE THE INITIATIVE A TITLE AND SUMMARY. THE PETITION IS THEN CIRCULATED TO OBTAIN THE REQUIRED NUMBER OF SIGNATURES OF REGISTERED VOTERS. IF THIS OCCURS, IT IS SUBMITTED TO STATE ELECTION OFFICIALS AGAIN, WHO ORGANIZE FOR THE MEASURE TO GO ON THE BALLOT, EITHER DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY VIA LEGISLATIVE APPROVAL.

SEE BALLOTPEDIA’S BALLOT INITIATIVE MAP FOR MORE ON THE BALLOT INITIATIVE PROCESS AND THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF STATE LEGISLATURE’S BALLOT MEASURES DATABASE FOR BALLOT MEASURES THAT WILL BE ON YOUR BALLOT.



# POLL WORKERS

POLL WORKERS RECEIVE TRAINING SPECIFIC TO THEIR COUNTY OR MUNICIPALITY, BUT IN GENERAL ALL POLL WORKERS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF ELECTION PROCEDURES AT THE POLLING PLACE ON ELECTION DAY. THIS INCLUDES:

- CHECKING IN VOTERS
- ISSUING BALLOTS
- ANSWERING VOTERS' QUESTIONS
- SETTING UP AND TESTING THE VOTING EQUIPMENT PRIOR TO THE POLLS' OPENING
- STAYING PAST THE TIME OF POLLS' CLOSING TO TALLY THE BALLOTS OR SECURE VOTING EQUIPMENT

TO SERVE AS A POLL WORKER YOU MUST MEET THE ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS IN YOUR STATE. MOST STATES GENERALLY REQUIRE THE FOLLOWING:

- BE A CITIZEN OF THE UNITED STATES AND IN GOOD STANDING
- BE ABLE TO SPEAK, READ, AND WRITE THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE
- NOT BE A CANDIDATE FOR ANY OFFICE IN THE ELECTION AND NOT BE AN ELECTED COMMITTEEMAN
- BE REGISTERED TO VOTE IN THE COUNTY IN WHICH THE ELECTION JUDGE SERVES
- COMPLETE A SHORT ELECTION JUDGE TRAINING SESSION PROVIDED BY THE ELECTION AUTHORITY

SEE YOUR STATE'S SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS AT:

- TRUE THE VOTE
- WORK ELECTIONS
- NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF STATE LEGISLATURES

# POLL WATCHERS

## POLL WATCHERS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- OBSERVING ELECTION OFFICIALS DURING ELECTION DAY
- OBSERVING THAT PROVISIONAL BALLOTS ARE GIVEN WHEN REQUIRED, AND THAT VOTED PROVISIONAL BALLOTS ARE PLACED IN THE SECURE RECEPTACLE
- OBSERVING COUNTING PROCEDURES
- KEEPING DETAILED RECORDS OF WHAT GOES ON IN THE POLLING PLACE
- OBSERVING ELECTION OFFICIALS PROPERLY SECURING BLANK BALLOTS, PROCESSING DEFECTIVE OR DAMAGED BALLOTS, CLOSING THE ELECTRONIC LOGBOOK, AND TRANSMITTING VOTES
- CALLING TO THE ATTENTION OF THE ELECTION JUDGES ANY INCORRECT VOTING PROCEDURE OR APPARENT VIOLATION BY ANYONE IN THE POLLING PLACE

**THERE ARE ALSO ROLLS FOR POLL WATCHERS OUTSIDE OF DESIGNATED POLLING LOCATIONS. NURSING HOMES ARE AN IMPORTANT LOCATION FOR POLL WATCHERS TO BE ON ELECTION DAY.**

THE QUALIFICATIONS OF POLL WATCHERS VARY FROM STATE TO STATE. TO BECOME A POLL WATCHER, CONTACT THE CAMPAIGN, POLITICAL PARTY, OR ORGANIZATION OF YOUR CHOICE REGARDING YOUR WILLINGNESS TO SERVE FOR ALL OR PART OF A DAY. CONTACT YOUR LOCAL POLITICAL PARTY OR CANDIDATE OF CHOICE REGARDING YOUR INTEREST. IF YOU CANNOT LOCATE A WAY TO CONTACT THEM, CONTACT ELECTION AUTHORITIES FOR YOUR STATE.





# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



ARE YOU OR IS SOMEONE YOU KNOW VOTING FOR THE FIRST TIME IN AN UPCOMING ELECTION? GET STARTED WITH THE POLICY CIRCLE'S FIRST-TIME VOTER GUIDE.

WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE ESSENTIAL ROLL OF POLL WORKERS? PART 1 OF THE POLICY CIRCLE'S ELECTION SERIES EXPLAINS WHAT IT'S LIKE AND HOW TO GET INVOLVED:

