

Voter Registration

1

Voter Registration

- Voter registration controlled by the states
- Disparate voter registration goals
 - Registration open to the most eligible voters
 - Make registration difficult or impossible, possibly for groups not supporting the party in control of the state

2

© Robert F. Kelly, 2026

ISE369/POL369 – Introduction to Political Informatics

3

Voter Registration

- Requirements
 - At least 18 years of age
 - Citizen
- Maintained in a poll book (paper or electronic) (except for North Dakota)
- Review the form accessible from <https://www.eac.gov/voters/national-mail-voter-registration-form>
- What variations in state requirements do you notice from the form?

We will review the variations

Voter Registration Application

Before completing this form, review the General, Application, and State Instructions.

Are you a citizen of the United States of America?		☐ Yes ☐ No	This space for state-specific instructions for rules regarding eligibility to register prior to age 18.)
Will you be 18 years old on or before election day?		☐ Yes ☐ No	
If you checked "No" in response to either of these questions, do not complete form.			
1 ☐ Mr. ☐ Miss Last Name		First Name	
2 Home Address		Apt. or Lot #	City/Town
3 Address Where You Get Your Mail If Different From Above		City/Town	
4 Date of Birth Month Day Year		5 Telephone Number (optional)	6 ID Number - (State)
7 Choice of Party (see item 7 in the instructions for your State)		8 Race or Ethnic Group (see item 8 in the instructions for your State)	
9 I have reviewed my state's instructions and I swear/affirm that: ■ I am a United States citizen ■ I meet the eligibility requirements of my state and subscribe to any oath required. ■ The information I have provided is true to the best of my knowledge under penalty of perjury. If I have provided false information, I may be fined, imprisoned, or (if not a U.S. citizen) deported from or refused entry to the United States.		Please sign Date: Month Day	

If you are registering to vote for the first time, please refer to the application instructions submitting copies of valid identification documents with this form.

Please fill out the sections below if they apply to you.

If this application is for a change of name, what was your name before you changed it?

A ☐ Mr. ☐ Miss Last Name		First Name	
B Street (or route and box number)		Apt. or Lot #	City/Town/County

3

© Robert F. Kelly, 2026

ISE369/POL369 – Introduction to Political Informatics

4

Voter Registration Process

- Potential voters register in local election offices, DMV offices, service offices, online
- Form – online or paper
- The state (usually the office of the Secretary of State) maintains the data
- Routine synching is done with data matches from state sources (e.g., DMV, death reports, courts, change of address)
- Some interstate checking is done
- Removals based on death, voter request, felony record, move out of state, inactivity, etc.

4

Proof of Citizenship

- 40 states only require applicants to check the citizen box on the application
- Variations among the other states
 - Proof of citizenship required
 - Proof of citizenship required for state and local (not federal) elections
 - Laws passed but not yet implemented
 - Updating registration requires proof of citizenship
 - Proof of citizenship only when registering at a DMV office
 - Proof of citizenship if cannot be otherwise determined

5

Citizenship Verification with the SAVE DB

- SAVE (Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements)
- Department of Homeland Security online service
- DB to allow states to determine eligibility for benefits based on immigration status
- SAVE recently provided citizenship info for voting purposes
- Query based on name, DOB, and a unique identifier (e.g., SSN)
- Texas, Louisiana, and Idaho use the SAVE DB to verify citizenship
- Texas
 - checked 18M+ voters to identify 2,724 possible non-citizens
 - Local analysis of those identified revealed many errors

6

Same Day Registration

- States have varying policies concerning date of registration
 - Cutoff date for registration
 - During early voting period
 - Same day, but only at specific locations
 - Same day, but only for presidential elections
 - Same day at polling place
- Same day, polling place registration increases voter turnout by younger voters, typically renters

7

Voter Registration Drives

- A membership organization (e.g., corporation, union, etc.) can encourage members to register to vote and also provide transportation to the registration location
- If advocating for a candidate or party, expenses are reportable
- Individuals conducting the drive cannot be paid based on the number registered who support a party
- Some states (e.g., New Hampshire, Wyoming) do not allow voter registration drives
- Other states restrict voter registration drives
- Proposed bills requiring documentation would eliminate collection of voter registration forms

8

Felony Disenfranchisement

- Restricts voting rights for individuals with criminal convictions
- 5.85 million people affected (from Wikipedia)
- 75% of affected live outside prison
- Variations
 - None (e.g., Vermont)
 - During incarceration
 - During parole
 - Probation
 - Permanent
 - Nature of the conviction (e.g., felony, financial)
 - Out of state
- 1 in 16 African Americans of voting age are disenfranchised

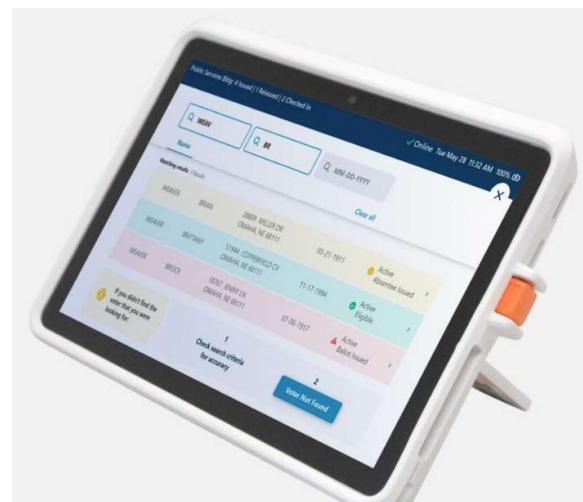
Many states adopted bans
during Reconstruction

Florida has 1.5 million
disenfranchised voters)

9

Poll Book Maintenance

- Many jurisdictions migrating to Electronic Poll Books (EPBs)
- EPBs allow poll workers to check in voters, confirm registration, and issue the correct ballot
- Coordinated with voter rolls
- 84% of registered voters live in a jurisdiction using EPBs
- Useful in vote centers (i.e., multiple precincts)



10

Out of State Registration Coordination

- Most registration coordination limited to in-state changes (e.g., DMV address changes)
- Inter-state coordination possible with the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC)
 - Non-profit organization
 - States submit voter registration and vehicle licensing data
 - Federal records (Social Security death data, postal service move data, etc.) analyzed
 - Identifies voters who have died, moved, etc.
 - Identifies people eligible to vote, but not registered
 - Over 30 states participated as of 2021
 - Recently, 9 states with Republican leadership withdrew

11

Registration Data

- Voter registration data is usually available for download (immediate and following a request, sometimes for \$\$\$)
- Availability at www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/voters/Available_Voter_File_Information.pdf
- Ohio data available immediately, at no cost
- Track
 - Download a district at random from Ohio (not District 7)
 - <https://www6.ohiosos.gov/ords/f?p=VOTERFTP:CONG:::#congDistFiles>
 - View the file (maybe with Notepad++)
 - How many rows do you have?
 - What data do you see?

12