



# Your Voice: Your Vote



Kentucky Protection & Advocacy  
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## Your right to vote

The United States Constitution gives almost everyone over age 18 the right to vote. Your gender, race, religion or disability doesn't matter. This is a



special right—**YOUR VOICE:  
YOUR VOTE!**

Protection and Advocacy wants you to know that you have a right to vote unless a court has said that you can't or you've been convicted of a

felony. If you have a legal guardian, you may want to check with the guardian about your right to vote.

## Why vote? Does my vote really count?

### What is voting for?

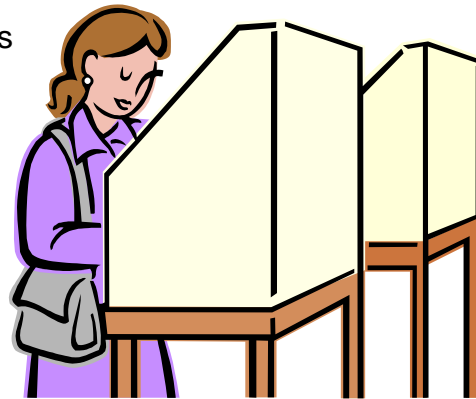
- ✓ To elect people who are running for offices, such as the mayor or the governor or the president
- ✓ To make or change laws

### Why should I vote?

- ✓ To make a change in your community, state, or country
- ✓ To keep things the same as they are now

- ✓ To set an example to others, especially children
- ✓ Because you care about what happens in Kentucky and the United States
- ✓ To let your voice be heard

It's easy! You can't complain about changes if you didn't vote to help make the change or to keep the changes from happening. Your vote counts! One person can make the difference.

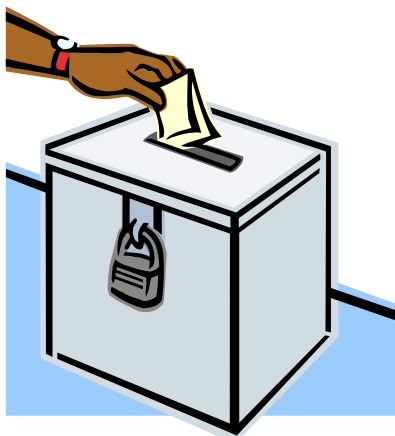


## Voting Eligibility

### Voting requirements

To register to vote you must

- ✓ Be 18 years old by the next regular election
- ✓ Be a United States citizen
- ✓ Be a Kentucky resident for at least 28 days



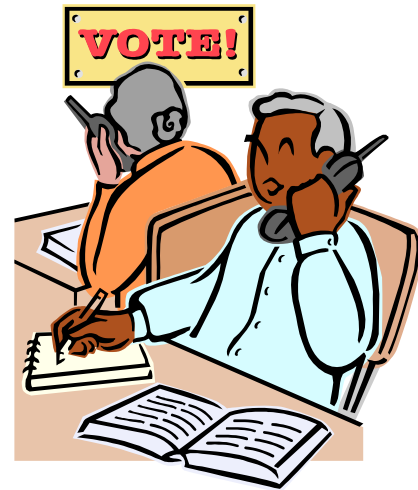
You can't register to vote if

- ✓ You claim the right to vote outside Kentucky
- ✓ You are a convicted felon (unless a judge restored your civil rights)
- ✓ A judge took away your voting rights when appointing a legal guardian

## How to register

You can register to vote by filling out a voter registration card at

- ✓ The Kentucky Board of Elections web site:  
<http://www.kysos.com/Elecfil/register/reginstruction.asp>
- ✓ The county clerk's office—you can pick up a card in person, the clerk can mail you a card or you can download one from the county clerk's web site
- ✓ The circuit clerk's office—when you renew or apply for your driver's license
- ✓ Any local agency where you sign up for food stamps, WIC checks (extra food for pregnant women and small children), or Medicaid
- ✓ Any armed forces recruitment office
- ✓ Your local high school, if you are a student
- ✓ Protection and Advocacy



The latest that you can register to vote is 29 days before the election. If you want to change your address or your political party, you should call the county clerk to find out what to do. Time deadlines may apply. If you need help registering to vote, any of the agencies above can help you.

## Political Parties in Kentucky

When you register, you must choose a political party. This will show the clerk which primary elections that you can vote in. The Kentucky Board of Elections says people can choose to be a

- ✓ Democrat
- ✓ Republican
- ✓ Independent
- ✓ Other



If you register as "Independent" or "Other," you will not be able to vote in primary elections for the Democrat or Republican parties. But you still will be able to vote in regular elections.

Different political parties usually have different beliefs about issues. Some of the other parties are the Libertarians, the Green Party and the Natural Law Party.

After your registration form is processed, you will receive a note in the mail saying you are registered. It will tell you the place where you go to vote (polling place) on Election Day.



## What kinds of things will I vote on?

### What's important to me

Now that you know how to register to vote, you can think about how you will decide to vote on Election Day.



During an election, the people who are running for office will say how they feel about different issues. They will say what they will do if you elect them. Issues that concern your community may be placed on a ballot for people to say whether they agree with a proposed change.

Before you go to vote, you may want to think about what is important to you. What would you like to change in your community? What do you want to stay the same?

Some of the things people vote on are

- ✓ Low-income housing
- ✓ Transportation
- ✓ Jobs
- ✓ Help for people with disabilities
- ✓ Other things that are important



## How do I find out about issues?



Information is given to voters in two different ways: non-partisan and partisan.

Non-partisan information just gives facts about a candidate or issue and doesn't take sides. Examples of this would be a candidate's voting record or ideas that are written down

Partisan information tries to convince you how to vote. Examples of this would be TV advertisements and newspaper editorials.

## How do I vote?

People who live in Kentucky can vote in one of three ways.

- ✓ At your polling place
- ✓ By paper absentee ballot
- ✓ By absentee machine

## What will happen at my polling place?

### All polling places must be accessible

Everyone should be able to get into their polling place. The doors should be wide enough for a wheelchair to go through. There should be ramps or

elevators if there are steps up or down. Even the parking lot and the walkway must be accessible.

Unfortunately, not all voting machines are accessible. You may have to ask someone for help. But by January 1, 2006, the Help America Vote Act says that at least one voting machine in each polling place must be accessible to everyone who has a disability.



### **When you go in to vote**

First, you will be asked to tell the poll worker your name. The poll worker will ask you to show some identification. If you registered to vote by mail and have never voted in Kentucky before, you can show a picture I.D., a copy of a current utility bill, a bank statement, a government check, a paycheck or any other government document that has your name and address on it. If you have voted before, you must show a driver's license, a credit card, a social security card, or a picture ID that is signed. If a precinct officer knows you personally, you don't have to show ID. Next, the poll worker will find your name in a big book of voters. You will sign or make your mark next to your name.

### **What is it like in the voting booth?**

When it's your turn, you will go into the voting booth. To vote you will touch the screen, mark the ballot, pull the lever or hit the buttons.

- ✓ You will vote for the people you want to elect into office.
- ✓ You will vote yes or no on any issues that may be on the ballot.

✓ *Next, you should check to see that you voted for everyone and everything you wanted to.*

Then you press the “vote” button or turn in your ballot. Your vote will be added in with the other votes.

## **What happens if I need help?**

There are two kinds of help that you can ask for. First, anyone can ask one of the elections officers at the polling place to show them how to operate the voting equipment or mark the ballot. If you don't understand after it has been explained to you, ask the elections officer to show you again. You can also ask for a sample ballot to study.

Second, if you have certain kinds of disabilities you can ask one of the elections officers to help you read the ballot, mark it or push buttons in the voting booth. You can also bring along someone of your choice to help you, but it can't be your boss or an agent of your union.

To qualify for help because of a disability, you must be blind or have a physical disability.



You can also get this kind of help if you can't read English. You will have to sign a voting assistance form saying that you need help because of the disability or because you can't read English. If you bring a friend to help you, that person will have to sign a form, too.

## What happens if they say I can't vote?

If the elections officers say that you can't vote, you should ask why. Then you should contact Protection and Advocacy right away. But if you are voting for President, Vice-President or a United States Senator or Congressman, you should ask for a provisional voting ballot. You should not leave the polling place without voting on one.

Provisional ballots are used if there is a question about your right to vote in a federal election. You can ask for a provisional ballot

- ✓ If your name doesn't appear in the big book of voters
- ✓ If you don't have proper ID with you, or
- ✓ If all four elections officers challenge your right to vote



You will turn in the provisional ballot at the polling place. The county board of elections will let you know after the election whether your vote was counted. You will need to call the local county clerk or check the State Board of Elections' web site at [www.elect.ky.gov](http://www.elect.ky.gov) to find out if your vote was counted.

## What happens if I make a mistake?

If you make a mistake on a ballot card, you must return it to one of the elections officers and get a new ballot. You can have up to three ballot

cards. You can also get up to three provisional ballot cards if you make a mistake. Unfortunately, if you are using a voting machine instead of a paper ballot, and you realize you have made a mistake after you've pushed the vote button, you cannot change your vote.

Some new protections will be in place after January 1, 2006. The Help America Vote Act says anyone who makes a mistake in voting must be given a second chance. This means that before your ballot can be officially cast, you must have a chance to review it, change it, or request a new ballot. The voting system also must tell you if you overvote, so that you can correct your ballot. An overvote is when you accidentally vote for two candidates at the same time, such as voting for two candidates for President.

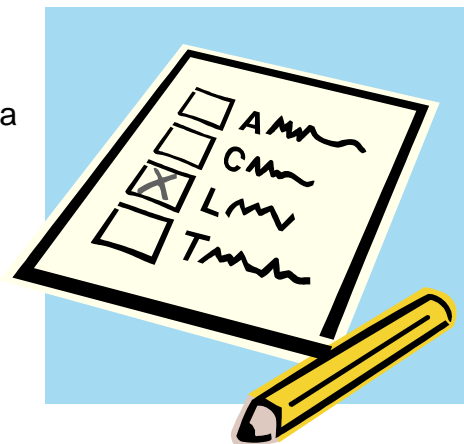
## **Absentee voting**

Even if you can't go to your regular polling place to vote, you can still vote. You can use an absentee paper ballot or voting machine.

### **Voting by absentee paper ballot**

You can vote by absentee paper ballot if you can't go to the polling place because

- ✓ You are elderly
- ✓ You have a disability, illness, or a medical emergency
- ✓ You are in the Army, Air Force, Marines, Navy, or National Guard



- ✓ You live with your family member who is in the armed services
- ✓ You are a student at a school outside of your home county
- ✓ You are temporarily outside of Kentucky but are still eligible to vote in Kentucky
- ✓ You are in jail but haven't yet been convicted of a crime

You can get an application for the paper ballot by contacting your county clerk's office. It must be returned at least one week before the election.

### **Voting by absentee machine**

If you aren't going to be home on Election Day, and you don't meet the requirements for paper ballot voting, you may vote on an absentee machine. You must vote in your county clerk's office about 12 days before the Election Day. To find out more, contact your local court clerk's office.

### **Important things to remember**

People with disabilities have the right to vote. Voting is your decision. You have the right to vote unless a court has said that you can't.

- ✓ No one can tell you what party to join
- ✓ No one can tell you how to vote
- ✓ Your vote is private—you don't have to tell anyone how you voted
- ✓ The polling place must be accessible to you



- ✓ You can ask for help to read the ballot or push buttons in the voting booth

Voting is easy! So, why not do it?





**If you find problems when you go to vote, please tell the county clerk or Protection and Advocacy as soon as possible!**

Protection and Advocacy  
100 Fair Oaks Lane, Third Floor  
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(502) 564-2967  
(800) 372-2988  
<http://www.kypa.net>

Protection and Advocacy produced *Your Voice: Your Vote* with a grant from the United States Department of Health and Human Services under the Help America Vote Act (HAVA). The Help America Vote Act directs P&As to "ensure the full participation in the electoral process for individuals with disabilities, including registering to vote, casting a vote and accessing polling places." This includes election access for a wide range of people with disabilities, including people with cognitive, sensory and physical disabilities.

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