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FIRST VOTE CONNECTICUT

A Guide to
Connecticut Voter Registration
for High School Students
and New Voters



Distributed by the
Office of Secretary of the State
Miles S. Rapoport



▣ FEEL THE POWER. REGISTER AND VOTE.

Today, registering to vote and voting are more accessible than ever. However, many people, whether they are 17 or 70, aren't fully aware of voting procedures.

This booklet is produced by the Secretary of the State's Office as part of the **FIRST VOTE** **CONNECTICUT** program



to answer most of your questions, and is just one of many materials available to inform the public about the sometimes confusing world of voting.

My thanks to teachers for bringing the challenges of citizen participation to classrooms throughout our state -- and to you, the student, for taking advantage of this opportunity to learn about the procedures and responsibilities of voting and good citizenship.

If you have questions that are not answered here, feel free to call your local officials, the Secretary of the State's Office or the League of Women Voters in Connecticut.

You'll find your local Town Clerk or Registrar of Voters listed in the blue pages of your phone book. The Secretary of the State's Office can be reached at (860) 566-3106 or (800) 540-3764, toll free. The League of Women Voters can be reached at (203) 288-7996 or (860) 240-0222.

So get involved! Every vote counts, and you can make a difference. Don't miss the chance to have your say in national, state and local elections. Care. Get involved. Get informed. Make your voice heard. Register and vote.



Miles S. Rapoport
Secretary of the State

■ VOTER REGISTRATION BASICS

Q. When do I register to vote?

A. Deadlines to register are as follows:

- You must be registered at least 14 days before a regular election. You may register up until the day before election day if you turn 18, become a U.S. citizen or move into the town after that deadline.
- If you wish to vote in a primary election, you must be registered to vote and enrolled in the political party of your choice by noon of the last business day before a primary election.
- To vote in a special election or referendum, you must be registered prior to the day before the special election or referendum is held.
- If you live at school part of the year, you may register as a voter in that town or your hometown.

Q. How do I register to vote?

A. You may register IN PERSON at:

- the office of the Town Clerk or Registrar of Voters in any city/town hall in Connecticut during normal office hours.
- special registration sessions held at other times and places.
- your home during a residential voter canvass where permitted by the local Registrar.
- your home if you are physically disabled and submit a written request to the Registrar or Town Clerk.

You may register BY MAIL:

Applications are available from motor vehicle offices, public libraries, military recruitment centers, and from any state office where persons apply for state assistance. Many other public and private organizations and agencies make voter registration cards available. You may also request an application from your Town Clerk or Registrar of Voters.

You will receive an application in the mail from the Department of Motor Vehicles when your driver's license is due for renewal. You can fill out the form and send it directly to your local town hall.

Q. Can I register to vote before I turn 18?

A. You may pre-register beginning when you are 17 years old and you will automatically be added to the voting list when you turn 18.

Q. What are the requirements to be able to register?

A. You must be a United States citizen, a resident of a Connecticut town and 17 years of age. If you have been convicted of a felony and you have completed your sentence, you can regain your right to vote. You must contact the registrar of voters of your town to restore your right to vote.

Q. Will I ever have to re-register?

A. The only time you must re-register is when you move to another Connecticut town. If you change your name (for example, by marriage), or your address in town, notify the Registrar of Voters Office in your community.

Each year your Registrar of Voters may send you a postcard or letter to ask you if your name and address are still current. SEND IT BACK to be certain your name will not be removed from the voter list.

Q. Do I have to choose a political party when I register to vote?

A. No, it is your choice. If you choose not to register with a party (that is, you wish to be an "unaffiliated" voter) simply indicate in the appropriate place on the application form.

Q. Is there any benefit to joining a political party when I register to vote?

A. Declaring a party enables you to vote in that party's primary election, which is open only to party members. You may later choose to switch enrollment to or from a political party.

■ VOTING PROCEDURES

Q. How do I actually vote?

A. Call your town hall to find out where you should vote. Some towns have several voting locations based on street addresses. If you vote in person at your polling place, you should look for a sample ballot listing the candidates and their party affiliations, the offices they are seeking, and any questions placed before the voters. It is wise to study this sample ballot before you enter the voting booth.

Most towns in Connecticut use mechanical voting machines. When you enter the voting booth at your polling place, move the large red curtain handle to the right. Then pull down the pointer over your selection. If you change your mind, push the pointer back up and pull down another pointer. Your vote will be recorded only when you leave the pointers down and exit the booth by moving the large red curtain handle to the left.

If you have any hesitancy about the voting procedures, just ask one of the poll-workers to help you. They are prepared to show you how to use the voting machine.

Q. Do I need to bring identification to vote?

A. Yes. When you enter the area to vote, you must present IDENTIFICATION (your driver's license, social security card, or anything that has your name and one of the following: signature, photo or address). If you forget your I.D., you can sign a statement which indicates you are the person listed on the voting list.

Q. When are the polls open?

A. The polls are open 6:00am to 8:00pm for primaries and elections.

Q. What is a referendum question on a ballot?

A. It is a proposal by a legislative body, to be voted on by citizens who are registered voters.

Q. What are write-in laws?

A. Any voter may write in the name of any person they choose for any office at an election. But only votes for those write-in candidates who have pre-registered their candidacies with the Secretary of the State's Office will be counted.

When you enter the voting booth at your polling place, lift the write-in slide for that office at the top of the machine and write in the name of the candidate of your choice.

Note: Write-in votes are not allowed at primaries.

Q. Where can I get more information on voting and candidates?

A. You can contact the League of Women Voter of Connecticut, the Registrar of Voters, political parties, civic organizations, newspapers, radio, television and computer networks. You may also consider attending a candidates' forum or listening to local political speeches.

Project Vote Smart, a national non-partisan organization, is working with the Secretary of the State's Office to provide information about national and state candidates. They may be contacted at 1-800-622-SMART or <http://www.vote-smart.org>.



STATE OF CONNECTICUT MAIL-IN VOTER REGISTRATION APPLICATION

(Disponible en Español)



Office of Secretary of the State

■ YOU MAY USE THIS EASY FORM TO:

- register to vote in Connecticut
 - change your name and/or address on current registration
 - enroll in a political party or change party enrollment
- IMPORTANT! Keep your voter record up to date!**

■ TO REGISTER TO VOTE IN CONNECTICUT YOU MUST:

- be a United States citizen;
- be a resident of a Connecticut town;
- be at least 17 years old (you can vote when you turn 18);
- have completed sentence if previously convicted of a felony and have had your voting rights restored by Registrar.

■ IF YOU MOVE:

You must fill out a new voter registration card if you have moved to a new town. Also, use this form to change address within town. (See section 1 and section 11 below.)

■ QUESTIONS?

Call your local Registrar of Voters or the Elections Division of the Office of Secretary of the State at **(800) 540-3764** or **(860) 566-3106** (Hearing-impaired people with TDD, 860-566-1730)

■ MAIL-IN REGISTRATION INSTRUCTIONS

1. Fill in *all* boxes that apply to you on this application.
2. Place a first-class stamp on the application card, fold, and mail it to the town hall where you live (or deliver it to your town hall or a voter registration agency).
3. You are not a voter until your application is approved by the Registrar of Voters.
4. If you are not notified by the Registrar within three weeks, contact the Registrar in your town hall.

■ VOTER REGISTRATION DEADLINES

PRIMARY: Your application must be received and approved by the Registrar of Voters by **12:00 noon** on the last business day before a primary.

ELECTION: Your application must be postmarked by the **14th day before an election** (OR received by your Registrar of Voters or a voter registration agency by the 14th day before an election).

(FOLD) ----- PLEASE USE PEN - PRINT CLEARLY ----- (FOLD)

1 Check Boxes that Apply: <input type="checkbox"/> New Voter Registration (includes move to a new town) <input type="checkbox"/> Address Change (within same town) <input type="checkbox"/> Name Change <input type="checkbox"/> Party Enrollment Change							
2 Name of Applicant Last Name		First Name		Middle Name		Jr. Sr. II III IV	
3 Date of Birth (Month/Day/Year) / /		4 Are you a U.S. Citizen? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO		5 Address Where You Live (No., Street, Apt. #)		Town, Zip (CONNECTICUT)	
6 If Different, Address Where You Get Your Mail (P.O. Box, etc.)				7 Telephone Number (optional) ()		8 Gender <input type="checkbox"/> MALE <input type="checkbox"/> FEMALE	
9 Do you wish to enroll in a political party? <input type="checkbox"/> YES. Name of party _____ <input type="checkbox"/> NO, I do not wish to enroll in a party at this time. <i>Note: Declaring a party enables you to vote in that party's primary election, which is open only to party members. You may later choose to switch enrollment to or from a political party.</i>		10 Social Security Number (Voluntary): _____ <i>(Voluntary under Conn. Gen. Stat. §9-23g. For use by election officials in preparing accurate list of electors, but no official may disclose it to the public.)</i>		12 I swear or affirm that: •I am a U.S. Citizen •I live at the address shown in Box 5 above •I am at least 17 years old •I have not been convicted of a felony, or if so, my voting rights have been restored •The information provided here is true			
11 NAME or ADDRESS CHANGE		Previous Voting Address (if none, write "NONE") No. Street Town County State		Name Under Which Registered (if different from above)		Signature _____ Today's Date: / /	
NOTE: The particular office at which you register to vote, or whether you decline to register, remain confidential and will be used only for voter registration purposes.				H WARNING: If you sign this statement even though you know it is untrue, you can be convicted and imprisoned for up to five years and fined up to \$5,000.			
BELOW COMPLETED ONLY BY AGENCY (OR SPECIAL ASSISTANT REGISTRAR OR TOWN CLERK) (Date Received by Agency)				BELOW COMPLETED ONLY BY REGISTRAR OF VOTERS			
DATE RECEIVED BY REGISTRAR		REGISTRAR INITIAL		APPLICATION IS HEREBY: <input type="checkbox"/> ACCEPTED <input type="checkbox"/> REJECTED		DATE NOTICE MAILED	
DATE ENROLLMENT EFFECTIVE IF CHANGING PARTY		REASON FOR REJECTION		NOTICE RETURNED <input type="checkbox"/> UNDELIVERABLE			

PLEASE TAPE - DO NOT STAPLE

FROM: _____

Place
Stamp
Here

REGISTRAR OF VOTERS

_____ TOWN HALL
Name of Town

Address

_____, CT _____
Town Zip

■ ELECTION CALENDAR

Q. What are the key dates for elections in November 1996?

A. Deadline for voter registration is October 22 (except persons who become U.S. citizens, move into town or become 18 years old after October 22, may register in the office of the Town Clerk or Registrar of Voters up to 12:00 noon on November 4, 1996)

Absentee ballots for the November 5, 1996 election are available beginning on October 4, 1996.

Primaries before the November election will be September 10, 1996. Absentee ballots for primaries are available beginning August 20, 1996.

Q. What are the key dates for elections in November 1997?

A. Deadline for voter registration is October 21 (except persons who become U.S. citizens, move into town or become 18 years old after October 21, may register in the office of the Town Clerk or Registrar of Voters up to 12:00 noon on November 3, 1997)

Absentee ballots for the November 4, 1997 election are available beginning on October 3, 1997.

Primaries before the November election will be September 9, 1997. Absentee ballots for primaries are available beginning August 19, 1997.

■ *Attached to this booklet is a voter registration card. Simply detach from booklet, fill out, sign, fold and mail to your local registrar of voters at town hall. Additional copies are available. If you have any questions, contact your local town hall or the Secretary of the State's Office at (860) 566-3106.*

■ WHO IS ELECTED WHEN

Q. Are some elected offices voted on during even-numbered years and others during odd-numbered years?

A. Yes. In every even-numbered year (1996, 1998, etc.)

Connecticut citizens elect, to 2-year terms:

- all members of the U.S. House of Representatives
- all members of the Connecticut House and Senate

In even-numbered non-presidential years (1998, 2002, etc.)

Connecticut citizens elect, to 4-year terms:

- Governor and Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of the State, State Treasurer, Comptroller, Attorney General, Sheriffs, and Probate Judges.

U.S. Senators are elected to 6-year terms in some even-numbered years (1998, 2000, 2004).

In all odd-numbered years (1997, 1999, etc.) Connecticut citizens elect:

- (town/city) officers, city and town mayors, members of council, town clerk, local boards of education, and other officers depending upon municipal charters.

Q. On what day are elections held?

A. In even-numbered years all towns hold elections on the Tuesday after the first Monday in November. In odd-numbered years, most towns hold municipal elections on the Tuesday after the first Monday in November, but about 20 municipalities or portions of municipalities hold elections on the first Monday in May.

If needed, a party primary is held on the 56th day before the election.

■ ABSENTEE VOTING

Q. Can I vote if I won't be home on Election Day?

A. Yes, any qualified registered voter may vote by absentee ballot if unable to vote in person due to: absence from town during all voting hours, illness, physical disability, active U.S. military service or religious reasons.

Absentee ballots are available beginning:

- 21 days before a primary
- 31 days before a regular election

Request an application for an absentee ballot from your Town Clerk, either in person or by mail. Complete the application and return it in person or by mail to the Town Clerk.

If you return the application in person, you may complete your absentee ballot at that time, or you may take it with you and return it at a later date, either in person or by mail.

If you return the application by mail, the absentee ballot will be sent to you by mail. You may return the completed ballot to the Town Clerk in person or by mail.

Absentee ballots must be received by the Town Clerk by mail before the polls close, or delivered in person by the day before elections or primaries.

If you have unexpected illness or physical disability within six (6) days before the polls close on election day or primary day, you can still vote. Call your Town Clerk for the procedures to follow.

If you find you can vote in person after having voted by absentee ballot, you must go to the Town Clerk's Office before 10:00 a.m. on election day to request withdrawal of your absentee ballot. The Town Clerk will issue a signed statement for you to present to the moderator of your polling place so you can vote in person.

Q. What if I join the military and get sent overseas?

A. There are special rules to make it easy for members of the Armed Forces to vote. For example, you or a family member can request a town clerk to mail a ballot to you early, and a ballot mailed from overseas will be counted if received by election day.

Every unit in the Armed Forces has a Voting Officer who has a book explaining the requirements of each state. Or you can use the same procedures described above.

■ ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Q. Will I be called for jury duty if I register?

A. Jury lists are selected randomly from licensed motor vehicle drivers and registered voters. You have just as much chance to be selected as a juror if you drive as you do if you are a registered voter.

Q. If I register for the draft, can I register to vote at the same time?

A. They are totally separate, but recruitment offices distribute and receive voter registration applications and forward them to the appropriate registrar of voters.

Q. Do I have to vote on all the offices and issues on the ballot?

A. No, you may vote for as few as you like. If you really only care about one candidate for one office on the entire ballot, you may vote for that one person and leave the rest of the ballot blank. However, to make your voice heard it is recommended that you find out about all the candidates and vote for all the offices and questions.



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
SECRETARY OF THE STATE



Volunteer Information

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

TOWN _____ ZIP _____

PHONE (h) _____ (b) _____

Yes, I'd like to help. (you may check more than one)

VOTER REGISTRATION

VOLUNTEER IN OFFICE

CITIZEN SPEAKERS BUREAU

Weekdays *Weekends* *Evenings*

Hours _____

Other Comments, special skills _____

Thank you for volunteering to help. Your efforts are greatly appreciated.

Miles Rapoport, Secretary of the State

Return to:

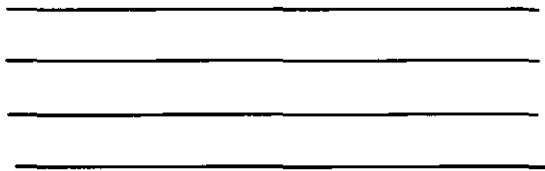
Office of the Secretary of the State

Attn. Vicki Albert

P.O. Box 150470

Hartford, CT 06115-0470

Any questions? Call us at (860) 566-3106



TO:

Office of Secretary of the State

30 Trinity Street

P.O. Box 150470

Hartford, CT 06115-0470

