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A Guide to Voting in New Jersey



**Prepared By The
New Jersey Department of State
Election Division**



Thomas H. Kean
Governor

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Secretary of State

Facts About Elections

All General Elections are held the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November.

All Primary Elections are held the first Tuesday after the first Monday in June.

Municipal Elections are held at the General Election, except for municipalities with a nonpartisan form of government. These are held on the second Tuesday in May, and since they are nonpartisan elections, no primary is held.

School Elections are held on the first Tuesday in April.

Polls are open from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. in all elections with the exception of the school elections. Polls for school elections must be open from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. and a school board may choose to keep the polls open any additional hours between 7:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

Facts About Voter Registration

A person may register to vote who is:

- a U.S. citizen
- 18 years old by election day
- living at present address 30 days before election
- not denied right to vote because of idiocy, insanity or criminal record

N.J.S.A. 19:4-1, 19:4-2, 19:31-5.

A qualified person may register to vote at any time prior to the twenty-ninth day before any election. All registration forms postmarked on the twenty-ninth day preceding the election will be accepted. Any person who registers during the 28 day period prior to any election will not be entitled to vote at that election but will be eligible to vote in later elections. 19:31-6.1, 19:31-6.3.

A citizen may register in person at the office of the County Commissioner of Registration or Municipal Clerk any day during office hours or on selected evenings prior to the close of registration. A citizen may also register by mail. Mail registration forms, available in Spanish as well as English, may be obtained by writing or telephoning your County Commissioner of Registration. The applicant must have a registered New Jersey voter witness his signature or mark. 19:31-6.3.

A person who is totally incapacitated or has a chronic or incurable illness may apply in writing to the County Commissioner of Registration for at-home registration. Such application must state that due to such illness or incapacity the applicant cannot attend a place of registration and must be accompanied by a physician's certificate of the applicant's illness or incapacity, mental competence and inability to attend a place of registration. 19:31-6.

If an eligible voter *is unable to write his name*, he must make a "cross" which is followed by the words "his or her mark", as the case may be, written in by the person receiving the application. 19:31-6.

A voter must reregister who:

- fails to vote in any election for four consecutive years
- moves from one county to another county
- changes address within a county
 - ...if the move occurs within 28 days of the election, then the voter may vote in the former election district
 - ...if the move occurs up to and including 29 days before the election, a voter may transfer his voting record to the new district simply by filling out a change of address card at least 29 days before the election
 - ...if the move occurs in the same election district, the voter may vote in that district at any election within 2 years subsequent to the date of such change of residence
- changes name (the voter may vote once by signing both old and new names)

19:31-3, 4, 6, 11 & 13.

Facts About Voting At The Polls

The County Board of Elections selects the polling places for election districts in the county's municipalities. Each Municipal Clerk suggests to the County Board a list of polling places for their municipality. Preference must be given to schools and public buildings and such locations may be outside of the election district. 19:8-2.

The County Board may select a polling place other than a school or public building when the location of the municipal schools and public buildings is inconvenient to voters. When selecting a polling place other than a school or public building, consideration is given to the use of buildings accessible to *elderly and physically disabled persons*. 19:8-3.

A voter who is unable to enter the voting booth due to his *physical disability* is permitted to mark his ballot outside the booth. 19:15-25.

A voter who was *unable to write his name* when he registered, or lost his sight or lost the hand with which he was accustomed to write, or who is unable to write due to disease or accident, will not be required to sign the signature comparison record but must establish his identity at the polls to the district board. 19:31A-8, 19:31-21.

"Any voter who requires assistance to vote by reason of blindness, disability, or inability to read or write may be given assistance by a person of the voter's choice, other than the voter's employer or agent of that employer or officer or agent of the voter's union. Public Law 97; Sec. 205 Amendments to the Voting Rights Act, 1982."

The above voter may also be aided by members of the district board who represent opposite political parties. 19:50-3, 19:31A-8.

Facts About Absentee Voting

Any registered voter is entitled to vote by absentee ballot, upon application to the County Clerk, for the following reasons:

- expecting to be out-of-state
- resident attendance at school
- physical illness or disability* (this includes blindness and pregnancy)

- observance of a religious holiday
- nature and hours of employment

19:57-3.

Military absentee ballots are available to a person whether registered or not who is:

- in the military service
- a spouse or dependent of someone in the military service
- a patient in a veteran's hospital
- a civilian attached to the armed forces and his or her spouse or dependent

Exception: A military service voter claiming his military station as his home address for voting purposes cannot use a military absentee ballot unless registered to vote in the municipality where such station is located.

Any military service voter or any friend or relative acting in behalf of a military service voter may apply to the County Clerk for an absentee ballot. 19:57-3, 19:57-4.

An absentee ballot application may be obtained from the office of the County Clerk or Municipal Clerk and must be returned to the County Clerk to be received:

- no later than 7 days before the election if mailed
- by 3:00 p.m. the day before the election if delivered in person

A sick or confined voter may apply in writing for an absentee ballot to be picked up from the County Clerk and delivered to him by a messenger authorized by him for those tasks. 19:57-4.

A voter may apply for an absentee ballot by completing an application form or by a written request which is signed by the applicant and states his voting residence and the address to which the absentee ballot should be sent and the reason for which the ballot is requested. 19:57-4.

Voters who identify themselves as *totally and permanently disabled* on the absentee ballot application will automatically receive ballot applications for all future elections. 19:57-4.

A *blind absentee voter* is entitled to assistance in the marking of his absentee ballot and in completing and signing the ballot certificate. In such case the person providing assistance must add on the face of the certificate "Voter assisted by _____" signing and printing his name thereto. 19:57-23.

Upon receipt of valid absentee ballot applications, the County Clerk will mail the ballots to the absentee voters. Completed absentee ballots must be received by the County Board of Elections before 8:00 p.m. on election day.

Facts About Party Affiliation

Only party members may vote in New Jersey's primary elections. Voters participating in their first primary, regardless of the number of years registered, state their party preference at the polls on primary election day. In order to change parties, a party declaration form, available at the office of either the County Commissioner of Registration or the Municipal Clerk, must be completed by the voter and must be received by the Commissioner no later than 50 days before the primary election.

Voters retain their party affiliation unless they reregister either because they have moved to another county, or because they have not voted in any election for 4 years. Any voter may disaffiliate from a party by submitting a declaration form.

Any questions on elections can be addressed to the Election Division, N.J. Dept. of State, CN 304 Trenton, New Jersey 08625 or call (609) 292-3760.

IMPORTANT ELECTION DATES

1986

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| April 15 | School Election Day |
| April 14 | Close of Registration for May Municipal Elections. |
| April 14 | Deadline to file party affiliation declaration forms with municipal clerk or county commissioner of registration. |
| May 5 | Last day to register to vote for the Primary Election. |
| May 13 | Non-partisan Municipal Elections. |
| May 27 | Last day to apply for an absentee ballot by mail. |
| June 2 | 3 p.m. is the deadline for obtaining absentee ballots in person at the county clerk's office. |
| June 3 | Primary Election Day - Polls open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. |
| October 6 | Last day to register to vote for the General Election. |
| October 28 | Last day to apply for an absentee ballot by mail. |
| November 3 | 3 p.m. is the deadline for obtaining absentee ballots in person at the county clerk's office. |
| November 4 | General Election Day - Polls open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. |

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| April 7 | School Election Day |
| April 13 | Close of registration for May Municipal Elections. |
| April 13 | Deadline to file party affiliation declaration forms with municipal clerk or county commissioner of registration. |
| May 4 | Last day to register to vote for the primary election. |
| May 12 | Non-partisan municipal elections. |
| May 26 | Last day to apply for an absentee ballot by mail. |
| June 1 | 3 p.m. is the deadline for obtaining absentee ballots in person at the county clerk's office. |
| June 2 | Primary Election Day - Polls open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. |
| October 5 | Last day to register to vote for the General Election. |
| October 27 | Last day to apply for an absentee ballot by mail. |
| November 2 | 3 p.m. is the deadline for obtaining absentee ballots in person at the county clerk's office. |
| November 3 | General Election Day - Polls open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. |