

Voting Toolkit: How Can I Protect the Elections?

1. Make A Plan To Vote

The most important way to get engaged in elections is to vote! Remember to verify you are registered to vote at your current address and make sure you have a plan for when and how you will cast your ballot.

Register to Vote

If you are not already registered to vote, [register](#). If you are unsure if you are registered, [check your status](#). Individuals should verify voter registration status well in advance of an upcoming election to be sure to meet any registration deadlines. Some states have registration deadlines up to 30 days in advance of an election, so early verification is key to allow sufficient time to update or re-register if necessary. Many [states](#) have same-day registration, providing voters with the opportunity to register to vote during early voting and on Election Day. States also vary on requirements for registering online and in person.

As voter registration procedures vary significantly by state, individuals are encouraged to consult their state's election authority for specific guidance. You can also find an overview of each state's registration requirements [here](#).

Make A Plan to Vote: Choose Your Voting Method

Voting by mail, also known as absentee voting, is a convenient and accessible method of voting that allows voters to fill out their ballots at home and return them by mail or at specified locations. Each state has its own rules on who can vote by mail and how mail ballots are returned. Some states require a reason or excuse to



vote by mail, while other states do not require a reason, and some states automatically mail every registered voter a ballot before an election. Examples of reasons to vote by mail may include illness, injury, disability, traveling outside of your jurisdiction or locality on Election Day, being a college student, or serving in the military. Individuals should check their Secretary of State's website for specific vote-by-mail requirements.

Note that voting by mail in the United States is protected by multiple layers of independent checks and safeguards. It has existed since the Civil War, and is widely used by voters of all backgrounds and partisan affiliation, including military voters who are more likely to be unable to vote in-person. Claims casting doubt on the integrity of mail-in voting — including recent assertions by the Trump-Vance administration — are not based in fact, but are instead a malicious effort to undermine voters' confidence in the election process. In reality, mail voting systems are carefully designed with overlapping security measures at every stage of the process. It is safe, secure, and widely used across states and trusted by voters of all ideological backgrounds. The history of absentee voting reflects a longstanding bipartisan commitment to expanding access through cost-effective, efficient, and user-friendly public systems.

- [Why Mail Ballots Are Secure: Layered Safeguards](#) – Institute for Responsive Government
- [Mail Voting is Safe and Secure](#) – Bipartisan Policy Center

In-person voting takes place at a polling place or vote center on Election Day or during the jurisdiction's early voting period before Election Day. All but three states [allow](#) early voting, but the number of days provided for early voting varies by state. Hours and voting locations may also vary during early voting. Voters should consult their local election office for detailed information regarding election dates, polling locations and hours, and early voting availability.

Resources

Linked below are other resources that may be useful in finding information on your state's voter registration and voting processes. Please always verify information with your state's election authority.

- [Make a Plan to Vote 101](#) – United States Election Assistance Commission
- [Make Your Plan To Vote](#) – Hopkins Votes
- [Voting Plan Checklist](#) – Hopkins Votes

- [Vote 411](#) – Vote 411
- [Vote.org](#) – Vote.org
- [Rock the Vote](#) – Rock the Vote
- [¡Ve y Vota!](#) – ¡Ve y Vota! Campaign
- [APIAVote](#) – APIAVote
- [866 Our Vote](#) – Election Protection
- [The Gen Z Election Defense Toolkit](#) – Protect Democracy

Note on disenfranchisement for people convicted of crimes: Some states have disenfranchisement laws that limit the ability of Americans who have been convicted of crimes to vote. However, the state-level policies are varied, changing, and oftentimes misunderstood — people who have been convicted of crimes should check with reputable sources to understand whether they are able to vote, and whether there is a path to restoring their voting rights. The [Campaign Legal Center](#), the [Brennan Center](#), and the [National Conference of State Legislatures](#) all provide trusted, vetted state-by-state information. People who have been convicted of crimes should always confirm their voter eligibility with local election authorities, and where appropriate, with an attorney.

2. Become a Poll Worker

Poll workers play a critical role in ensuring that every voter can safely and confidently participate in our democracy. By serving as a poll worker, you help your community run smooth, fair, and accessible elections by assisting voters, supporting election officials, and helping protect the integrity of the voting process. States vary on training requirements, pay, and registration procedures for poll workers. Below are several resources with more information:

- [Power the Polls](#) – Power the Polls
 - [Become a Poll Worker](#) – U.S. Election Assistance Commission
 - [Become a Poll Worker](#) – National Association of Secretaries of State
 - [Report: Election Poll Workers](#) – National Conference of State Legislatures
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3. Volunteer

There are many ways to support free and fair elections through election protection and voter engagement volunteer opportunities. Election protection volunteers help voters navigate the voting process, answer questions about voting rights, monitor polling places, and report problems or barriers to voting. Organizations across the country are recruiting volunteers now for upcoming elections. Below are several volunteer opportunities and resources:

- [Election Protection Volunteers](#) – Election Protection
 - [Protect the Vote: Stopping Voter Suppression](#) – Election Protection
 - [We the Action](#) – Election Protection
 - [Volunteer with Black Voters on the Rise](#) – Legal Defense Fund
 - [Volunteer](#) – Black Voters Matter
 - [Join the League!](#) – League of Women Voters
 - [Get Involved](#) – League of Conservation Voters
 - [Volunteer With Us](#) – APIAVote
 - [Volunteer with VoteRiders](#) – VoteRiders
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For more helpful resources about elections from Democracy Forward, check out:

- [Freedom Summer: All Roads Lead to The South and Protecting Elections](#)
- [The Democracy 2025 Know Your Rights Hub](#)