



Native Vote Alliance of Minnesota and the Minnesota Participation Project

Mobilizing and Empowering Native People



The Fundamentals of Voting and Voter Registration

Voting Eligibility

You may vote if you are:

- at least 18 years of age
- a US citizen
- a Minnesota resident for at least 20 days before the election

Voting Locations

Your polling place will be in your precinct. You can find out your precinct number and where to vote by contacting:

- Minnesota Secretary of State: www.sos.state.mn.us
- League of Women Voters: www.lwv.org
- Call your county auditor or city clerk (see government section in the front of white pages in the telephone book.)

Voter Registration

You need to register and be placed on the official list of voters before you can vote. You can add your name to the list by filling out a **Voter Registration Application**. When you fill out the application, you must give the address where you are living at the time of the election. If you are a student living at school, you can register either at home or at school (but not both!) depending on your residence. It is illegal to vote at a former residence because the new occupants will be using that address.

Registering to Vote Before an Election

Fill out a Voter Registration Application and return it in person or by mail to your county auditor or the Secretary of State. Voter registration forms are available at county courthouses, city halls or you can download a copy from the Minnesota Secretary of State's website: www.sos.state.mn.us/election.

You may also register to vote when you apply for or renew your Minnesota driver's license or state identification card.

It is a good idea to register before November 4, 2008. It represents a commitment to vote on Election Day. It is strongly recommended that you bring proof of identity when you vote.

Registering to Vote on Election Day (Same-Day Registration)

You can register at your polling place on Election Day. You will need one of the following to verify your residence:

- A current, valid Minnesota Driver's License, learner's permit, identification card (or receipt for a new one), or tribal ID containing your address in the precinct, or
- a "Notice of Late Registration" card mailed to you by your county auditor (if you turned in a registration card late), or
- A person who is registered in the precinct where you live to vouch for your residence, or
- A US passport, US military identification card, tribal ID or student identification card that includes your name and photo AND an original bill for water, sewer, gas, electric, phone/cell phone, solid waste or cable television services that includes your name and current address in the precinct and has a due date within 30 days of election day.

If you are a student, you can also use one of the following documents to register to vote:

- Student photo ID, registration or fee statement with your current address
- Student photo ID if you are on a student housing list on file at the polling place

If you are an Ex-Felon and you have completed the terms of your sentence, **including parole**, your civil rights are automatically reinstated and you are eligible to vote. Contact your parole officer if you are unsure about your status. If your status as an eligible voter is challenged, ask for the head election judge, explain your situation, and ask to take an oath swearing your right to vote. Once you have done this you will be able to vote.

If you are a survivor of domestic violence, you can ask your county auditor to allow you to register without adding your name and information to the public voting rolls. Many police officers and judges use this same process. You must provide your county auditor with a written request to have your information taken off the public rolls for fear of your safety or your family's safety. It is strongly recommended that you attach this letter to your voter registration application and submit them together. **NOTE:** Prior to 2005, a court order was required to remove one's name from the public voting rolls. All that is required now is a simple written request stating that the voter fears for their safety and wishes to be removed from the public rolls.

A survivor of domestic violence can also register to vote same day, vote, and then ask their county elections office to remove them from the rolls. If they choose this option, they will have to re-register the next time they want to vote.

If you are homeless or between permanent residences, you can register to vote using the address of a shelter where you are staying. You can register before an election using that address, which will be most effective if you plan on living at this location at least some of the time prior to Election Day. You can also register to vote on Election Day using a person who can vouch for you.

Registering to Vote by Having Someone Vouch for You

A registered voter who lives in the precinct is allowed to vouch for the residence of another voter on Election Day. A person can vouch for up to 15 individuals, as long as they are certain of their residence in the precinct. For example, if you go to the polls with your neighbor, he or she is allowed to tell the election judge that you live in the precinct, and his or her word will be accepted as proof of your residence.

The person vouching for you must live in your precinct. There is one exception to this rule: if you live in a registered residential facility, such as a nursing home or homeless shelter, employees of that facility may vouch for you, and any other residents who require a voucher on Election Day (there is no limit to the number of residents an employee can vouch for in this case).

Voting by Absentee Ballot

You can vote by absentee ballot if you are unable to vote in person on Election Day because you are:

- away from home
- ill or disabled
- an election judge serving in another precinct
- unable to go to the polling place due to a religious holiday or beliefs

To vote by absentee ballot, submit a written application to your county auditor or city clerk. You can cast your absentee ballot either in person at a location designated by your county auditor or by mail. You may also request to be placed on an on-going absentee balloting list, where each and every year your absentee ballot will be mailed to your residence as long as your residence has not changed. You can remain on this list until you request to be removed.

There are limited cases in which you cannot vote:

- You are under court ordered guardianship in which the court order revokes your rights to vote
- You have been found by a court to be legally incompetent to vote

Important dates for the 2008 election year:

Last day to pre-register to vote in the Primary Election

Tuesday, August 19, until 5:00 p.m.

Primary Election Day

Tuesday, September 9, 7:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Last day to pre-register to vote in the General Election

Tuesday, October 14, until 5:00 p.m.

General Election Day

Tuesday, November 8, 7:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.

When can I vote on Election Day?

Most polling places will be open from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. A few township polling places will open at 10:00 a.m. Check with your town clerk for details.

Minnesota law allows you to take time off from work to vote during the morning of the state primary and state general election. The idea is to encourage people to vote early in the day.

Remember: You can always register at the polls and vote.