

**I-866-OUR-VOTE
(1-866-687-8683)****Disclaimer:**

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VOTER REGISTRATION FORMS**1) Where can voter registration forms be obtained?**

There are several places to obtain voter registration forms. The form can be downloaded from the South Carolina State Election Commission website at http://www.scvotes.org/files/VR_Blank_Form.pdf. Voting forms can also be obtained at the following locations: County election office; Division of Motor Vehicles; Department of Social Services; Department of Disabilities and Special Needs; DHEC/WIC Program; Department of Health and Human Services; Department of Vocational Rehabilitation; Commission for the Blind; Department of Mental Health; S.C. Protection and Advocacy System for the Handicapped; and Department of Alcohol and other Drug Abuse Services. Also, the county board of voter registration distributes applications to local libraries and city halls as well as individuals who request an application.

Further, each state motor vehicle driver's license application, including a renewal application, submitted to the Department of Motor Vehicles also serves as an application for voter registration unless the applicant fails to sign the voter registration application.

2) Are there restrictions on registering to vote using a photocopied voter registration form?

No. A photocopied application can be used; however, the photocopied application must be submitted with an original signature. Applications should use the official South Carolina Voter Registration Application found at http://www.scvotes.org/files/VR_Blank_Form.pdf.

3) Are there restrictions on the use of the National Voter Registration Form?

No. The National Voter Registration Form can be used in South Carolina. The form can be found at <http://www.eac.gov/voter/Register%20to%20Vote>.

4) Are there restrictions regarding the use of registration form information?

Yes. The written application becomes a part of the permanent records of the board to which it is presented and is open to public inspection. The social security number contained in the application as required by this section, however, must not be open to public inspection.

5) Are there restrictions regarding pre-filling information on registration forms?

No. In addition, certain government offices are required to offer assistance in filling out forms.

COMPLETING VOTER REGISTRATION FORMS

6) How long must you live in a county before you are eligible to register to vote?

There is no length of residency requirement in South Carolina in order to register to vote. You can register at any time. A person's residence is his domicile. For voting purposes, a person has changed his domicile if he (1) has abandoned his prior home and (2) has established a new home, has a present intention to make that place his home, and has no present intention to leave that place.

7) Are there any restrictions on registering to vote using a P.O. Box, college campus, or dorm address?

Yes. A P.O. Box may not be listed as a person's residence. A person may register to vote using any address he or she considers to be his or her legal residence (current place of abode with intent to remain or return) other than a P.O. Box. Note that a P.O. Box may be used as a mailing address, even though it cannot be used as an address for residence. For information on registering at a college address, see **Question #8**.

8) If I enter or leave the state because of work or school, can I register to vote?

Yes, provided that certain conditions are met. In leaving the state, the voter must have not changed his domicile by 1) abandoning his prior home and (2) establishing a new home, having a present intention to make that place his home, and having no present intention to leave that place. Students may register to vote where they attend college only if they establish that they are a resident of that community. In establishing such residence, students must have (and be able to demonstrate if challenged) a current intention to remain in the community.

9) Are there any identification requirements to register to vote?

Yes. An applicant must provide ID and a valid social security number.

The South Carolina Voter Registration Application states that one must attach an ID to the application if one is registering for the first time in the county. Acceptable forms of ID include a current valid photo ID or a copy of a current utility bill, bank statement, paycheck, or other government document that shows the applicant's name and address in the county where such person is registering to vote. If an applicant does not provide this identification information at the time of application, he/she will be required to provide this information when voting. **See Question #10**.

Further, the application requires the applicant's social security number. If an applicant does not provide his/her social security number, the application for voter registration will be denied.

10) Are there any identification requirements in order to vote?

Yes, there are identification requirements for both State and federal elections.

A voter must produce a valid South Carolina driver's license or other form of identification containing a photograph issued by the Department of Motor Vehicles, if not licensed to drive, or the written notification of registration provided to the voter by the State if the notification has been signed by the voter. Replacement registration notification can be obtained from the county board of registration upon request in person, telephone, or mail.

Pursuant to federal election law, voters casting ballots for the first time in a federal election are required to present: (i) a current and valid photo identification or (ii) a current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck, or other document that shows the name and address of the voter.

11) What are the rules regarding missing or illegible information on registration forms?

If required information is missing or illegible, the application may be denied.

The application to register requires the applicant to provide the following information: name, sex, race, social security number, date of birth, residence address, mailing address, telephone number of the applicant, and location of prior voter registration. The applicant must affirm that he is not under a court order declaring him mentally incompetent; not confined in any public prison; and never been convicted of a felony or offense against the election laws, or if previously convicted that he has served his entire sentence, including probation and parole time, or has received a pardon for the conviction. Additionally, the applicant must take the following oath: "I, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I am a citizen of the United States and that on the date of the next ensuing election, I will have attained the age of eighteen years and am a resident of South Carolina, this county, and of my precinct. I further swear (or affirm) that the present residence address listed herein is my sole legal place of residence and that I claim no other place as my legal residence."

Any application must be rejected if any portion of the application is illegible in the opinion of a member of the Board of Registration of that particular county and the clerk of the board. § 7-5-155(a)(3)(ii). Any person whose application is rejected must be notified of the rejection together with the reason for rejection. The applicant must further be informed that he still has a right to register by appearing in person before the board of registration or by submitting the information by mail necessary to correct his rejected application.

12) Can a person whose name has changed since registering vote on Election Day?

They would be eligible to vote; however, there are no statutory provisions with regard to this issue.

To ensure that there will be no problems on Election Day, a voter can submit the change of address form found at: <http://www.scvotes.org/files/changeofaddress.pdf>

REGISTERING OTHERS TO VOTE

13) What are the laws regarding third-party registration?

South Carolina does not have any statutory provisions or guidelines restricting third-party registration.

14) Are there any laws regarding submission of voter registration forms by individuals receiving compensation?

No.

15) Is training required for voter registration drives?

No.

16) Are volunteers or staff of voter registration drives required to be county or state residents?

No.

REGISTRATION DEADLINES

17) What is the deadline to register to vote?

For the 2008 general election, the deadline is Saturday, October 4, 2008 (since this date falls on a Saturday, hand delivered registrations should be delivered on the preceding Friday to ensure that the office is open). South Carolina requires voters to be registered 30 days before an election.

Mailed applications must be postmarked by the deadline. If the postmark date is missing or illegible, the county board of voter registration must accept the application if it is received by mail no later than 5 days after the close of the registration books before any election.

In the case of registration with a motor vehicle application, the valid voter registration form of the applicant must be completed at the Department of Motor Vehicles no later than 30 days before the date of the election.

18) Must organizations or individuals engaged in voter registration drives submit their forms within a certain period of time?

No. Organizations or individuals conducting voter registration drives must meet the same deadlines as described in **Question #17**.

19) Is Election Day registration allowed?

No. Individuals may register to vote for future elections on Election Day but will not be permitted to vote in that election. For the registration deadline, see **Question #17**.

20) Does state election law allow for early or absentee voting?

Early voting is not permitted in South Carolina; however, absentee voting is permitted.

Eligible voters may vote by absentee ballot only if they are absent from their county of residence on election day during the hours the polls are open, to an extent that it prevents them from voting in person, except that the categories marked with an asterisk below may vote by absentee ballot whether or not absent from their county of residence.

- (1) students, their spouses, and dependents residing with them;
- (2) members of the Armed Forces and Merchant Marines of the United States, their spouses, and dependents residing with them;
- (3) persons serving with the American Red Cross or with the United Service Organizations (USO) who are attached to and serving with the Armed Forces of the United States, their spouses, and dependents residing with them;
- (4) persons in employment;
- (5) physically disabled persons;*
- (6) governmental employees, their spouses, and dependents residing with them;
- (7) electors with a death or funeral in the family within a three-day period before the election;
- (8) persons on vacation (who by virtue of vacation plans will be absent from their county of residence on election day);
- (9) certified poll watchers, poll managers, county voter registration board members and staff, county election commission members and staff working on election day;*
- (10) overseas citizens;
- (11) persons attending sick or physically disabled persons;
- (12) persons admitted to hospitals as emergency patients on the day of an election or within a four-day period before the election;*
- (13) persons who will be serving as jurors in a state or federal court on election day;
- (14) persons sixty-five years of age or older;
- (15) persons confined to a jail or pre-trial facility pending disposition of arrest or trial.

To vote by absentee ballot, a qualified voter, a member of the voter's immediate family, or an authorized representative¹ can request an application to vote in person, by telephone, or by mail from the county registration board, or at an extension office of the board of registration as established by the county governing body, for the county of the voter's residence. The person requesting the ballot must himself be a registered voter and must sign an oath to the effect that he fits the statutory definition of a representative.

Voters can begin applying as early as January 1st to vote absentee for any election held during that same year. http://www.scvotes.org/south_carolina_voting_information_page. However, completed applications must be returned to the county registration board in person or by mail before 5:00 p.m. on the fourth day before the day of the election. Applications must be accepted by the county board of registration until 5:00 p.m. on the day immediately preceding the election for those who appear in person.

A member of the immediate family of a person who is admitted to a hospital as an emergency patient on the day of an election or within a four-day period before the election may obtain an application from the registration board on the day of an election, complete it, receive the ballot, deliver it personally to the patient who shall vote, and personally carry the ballot back to the board of registration.

Applications for absentee ballots can be found at each county voter registration office. **Absentee applications are created on an individual basis; therefore, they are not available online.** A complete listing of county offices can be found at: http://www.scvotes.org/how_to_register_absentee_voting.

VOTER REGISTRATION LEGISLATION

21) Is there any pending legislation that effects voter registration? If so, where is it in the legislative process?

There are two bills pending in the South Carolina Legislature concerning voter registration. Bill No. 3680 is in the House Judiciary Subcommittee and would amend § 7-5-150 and § 7-15-120 to reduce the voter registration deadline from 30 days to 21 days before an election. A similar bill, Bill No. 251, is in the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee.

Bill No. 3682 would add § 7-5-275, requiring 17-year-olds to be mailed voter registration cards before the first election in which they are eligible to vote. It would also require released felons be sent a letter explaining that their voting rights have been restored. This bill is in the House Judiciary Subcommittee. A similar bill is in the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee, Bill No. 254.

22) What applicable statutes are possibly affected?

As stated above in Question #21, § 7-5-275, § 7-5-150, and § 7-15-120 of the South Carolina Code of Laws are possibly affected by the proposed legislation.

23) Are there any helpful election official contacts?

¹ An Authorized representative is a registered voter who, with a voter's permission, can request an absentee ballot application on behalf of a voter who qualifies because of illness or handicap. Candidates and paid campaign workers may not serve as an authorized representative. See http://www.scvotes.org/south_carolina_voting_information_page.

For more information, contact the South Carolina State Election Commission at:
State Election Commission
P.O. BOX 5987
Columbia, SC 29250-5987
803.734.9060
E-mail: elections@elections.sc.gov

24) What web resources are available?

The South Carolina State Election Commission has a website dedicated to providing information on the voter registration process: <http://www.scvotes.org/>. This site includes resources such as frequently asked questions, information on absentee ballots, and special provisions for voters with disabilities. The National Campaign for Fair Elections is another resource: http://nationalcampaignforfairelections.org/pages/south_carolina.