



# VOTING RIGHTS GUIDE

## FOR DC RESIDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

DISABILITY RIGHTS DC  
AT UNIVERSITY LEGAL SERVICES

220 I Street, NE #130, Washington, DC 20002

# Disability Rights DC at University Legal Services

Disability Rights DC at University Legal Services (DRDC) is the federally-mandated Protection and Advocacy Program for people with disabilities in DC.

DRDC is a private, non-profit organization and is not affiliated with the DC Board of Elections or any other DC government agency.

DRDC's Protection and Advocacy Program for Voter Access (PAVA) advocates on behalf of people with disabilities to ensure their full participation in all aspects of the DC electoral process including registering to vote, accessing vote centers, and casting ballots.

For more information or to request additional copies of this booklet, please contact:

Disability Rights DC at University Legal Services  
220 I Street NE, Suite 130  
Washington, DC 20002  
202-547-0198 (voice)  
202-547-2657 (TTY)  
[www.uls-dc.org](http://www.uls-dc.org)

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# VOTING RIGHTS GUIDE FOR DC RESIDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

## Introduction:

### Why vote?

Voting is an important right under the U.S. Constitution and Federal and DC laws. DC's Mayor and Council members, the President and Senator and others are chosen by voters like you.

## Your Right to Vote in DC:

### Voting Rights Laws

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Help America Vote Act (HAVA) are federal laws that require DC government to have voting and elections at places that are accessible to people with disabilities.



Photo of a person in wheelchair entering a vote center through a door with an accessible entry symbol.

The DC Board of Elections controls voter registration (sign-up) and the way we vote.

## **People with all disabilities CAN vote.**

Having a disability or receiving supports and services because of a disability does NOT disqualify you from voting. You CAN vote if you live in a nursing home, group home, shelter, hospital, jail, prison, or other facility. In 2020, DC passed the “Restore the Vote” Amendment Act that allows all DC residents to vote while in jail or prison for a felony conviction.

If you are a DC resident at least 18 years old, you can vote UNLESS:

- You are not a U.S. Citizen
- You have not lived in DC at least 30 days just before election day (if you are in jail or prison, you had not lived in DC for at least 30 days prior to being in jail or prison)
- You plan to vote in another state
- A judge found that you are not capable of voting

## **Voter Registration & Pre-Registration:**

If you want to vote, you must register with the Board of Elections if you are at least 18 years old.

If you are age 16 or 17, you can pre-register to vote. Pre-registering adds your name to the voter list so you will be ready to vote when you turn 18.

### *Primary Election Registration*

A primary election is for each political party (Democratic, Republican,

Statehood Green, Libertarian) to choose a candidate for the general election. To vote in a primary election, you must pick a political party (for example: Democratic, Republican, Statehood Green, Libertarian) before the date of the primary.

*How?*

## Ways to Submit Your Registration Application Form:

### *Online*

Fill out and submit the form online at: [https://forms.dc.gov/f/DC\\_Voter\\_Registration\\_Form](https://forms.dc.gov/f/DC_Voter_Registration_Form).

To complete the form, you need to draw or upload a signature or mark. A typed signature is not allowed.

### *Fax / Email / Mail/ In-person*

Print out the registration form. Fill out and sign the registration form available online at: <https://dcboe.org/Voters/Register-To-Vote/Register-to-Vote>.

Make a copy of your ID or other proof of name and address (see below) to send with your registration application form to:

**DC Board of Elections**  
**1015 Half Street, SE - Suite 750**  
**Washington, DC 20077-0833**  
**Phone: (202) 727-2525**  
**Fax: (202) 347-2648**  
**Email: DCRegistrations@dcboe.org**  
**Hours: 8:15 am to 4:45 pm, Monday through Friday**

Call the DC Board of Elections for the registration form or more information.

If you are Deaf, you can use DC Relay by dialing 711 or the numbers below:

**TTY (Text Telephone): 800-643-3768**

**Voice: 800-643-3769**

**STS (Speech to Speech): 800-898-0740**

**Spanish TTY: 800-546-7111**

**Spanish Voice: 800-546-5111**

### *Mail While in Jail or Prison*

If you are currently in jail or prison, you must include on line 4 of the registration application your DC home address to register to vote.

Your DC home address is:

- the address where you lived prior to being in jail or prison or
- your new DC address if your family has moved or
- a DC address where you will be returning.

You must include on line 5 your jail or prison ID number and the mailing address of your correctional facility to receive your ballot (For example: "(12345-007) USP Marion P.O. BOX 1000 Marion, IL 62959)"). Also include on line 8 the last four numbers of your social security number if you have one. If you transfer to a different facility or are released, you must fill out another registration application (or you can go to a voting center if released) to receive your ballot.

Copies of DC's Voter Registration Application and postage paid return envelopes can also be requested from the Reentry Affairs Coordinators or your Unit Team at federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) facilities.

If you are in DC Department of Corrections' (DOC) care or custody, DOC must register you to vote if you want to register. Voter registration information is available on your housing unit. You can ask for help from the DOC Voting Coordinator to complete your voter registration application.

### *When?*

The deadline dates for voter registration change, depending on the dates of elections.

The law allows you to register to vote by submitting the registration form to the Board of Elections at least 21 days before the official election day. If you miss that deadline, you can register in person on the same day you vote at a vote center. Bring your proof of name and address when you vote. The poll worker will give you the ballot to vote. If you do not have proof of your name and address when you vote, you must give it to the Board of Elections within two days after the election.

## What's Required for Registration?

### *Proof of name and address:*

Give **ONE** of these showing your name and address to the Board of Elections:

- a government-issued ID or
- Pepco, gas, water, cable, internet, or phone bill or
- bank statement or
- paycheck stub or lease or rental agreement or
- letter from a shelter where you stay or
- a tuition or housing bill from a DC college or university issued for



- the current academic or housing term or
- any other government-issued document, other than from the Board of Elections.

Bills, bank or other statements must be dated no more than 90 days before your registration application.

**This proof of name and DC address is the only ID required for you to register and vote.** Proof of name and address is not required for incarcerated DC residents if your jail or prison ID number and the last four digits of your social security number are included on the registration application form.

*How to confirm your registration:*

Call the Board of Elections (see above) or check the website at: <https://www.dcboe.org/Voters/Register-To-Vote/Check-Voter-Registration-Status>.

*How to update registration with a new name, address -or- party:*

Call the Board of Elections for an address change form or update your information online at: <https://dcboe.org/Voters/Register-To-Vote/Register-to-Vote>.

## Voting

*How?*

The DC Board of Elections must let you to vote inside a vote center in private (meaning you do not have to tell anyone how you voted). All vote centers should have ramps or flat entries for you to use.

## **You do NOT need to show an ID to vote on election day.**

Inside the vote center, you can vote on a machine or use a paper ballot. There are signs showing the ballot (list of people running for elections) to look at before you vote. The voting machines use touch screens and audio (for people who are blind or have limited vision).

### *Curbside*

You can vote curbside (from your car or at the sidewalk curb) in front of some vote centers. Check the Board of Elections' website for curbside voting locations. If you choose to vote this way, a poll worker will give you a paper ballot to fill out and return right away.

### *Ballot by Mail or Mail Ballot Drop Box*

You can vote by mail if you want or need to vote by mail. In 2022, you do not need to ask for a mail-in ballot from the Board of Elections unless you will be away from your DC address during the election. You can: email your request to [DCabsentee@dcboe.org](mailto:DCabsentee@dcboe.org) or ask for a request form online at <https://www.dcboe.org/AbsenteeBallotRequest> or fax a request to the Board of Elections (see above).

The Board of Elections will mail your ballot to you if you are registered. You must fill it out and mail it or bring it to the Board of Elections (including any vote center or ballot drop box) by 8 p.m. on election day. (If you mail it, you must sign the official ballot envelope, your ballot must be mailed in this envelope and postmarked on or before election day, and the Board of Elections must receive it no later than 7 days after election day.). If you do not get your ballot by mail, you can still vote in person at a voting center.

## *Accessible Remote Ballot*

Voters with disabilities have the option to vote remotely using an accessible remote ballot (ARB). ARB is an electronic ballot that allows you to electronically read and mark your ballot. ARB is compatible with all major screen readers (JAWS, etc.), tactile switches, closed captioning, and audio-enabled systems. You will need access to a computer with internet access, an email address, and a printer.

You must ask for an ARB from the Board of Elections. To ask for an ARB you can: call the ADA Coordinator at 202-727-5411, email your request to [ogc@dcboe.org](mailto:ogc@dcboe.org), or fill out a request form online at [https://www.dcboe.org/About-Us/Accessible-Voting/The-Accessible-Remote-Ballot-\(ARB\)-Marking-System](https://www.dcboe.org/About-Us/Accessible-Voting/The-Accessible-Remote-Ballot-(ARB)-Marking-System) and print or fax the request to the Board of Elections (see above).

The Board of Elections will email you a link to your remote ballot. You must fill out the ballot online, print it out, and return it to the Board of Elections (including any vote center or ballot drop box) by 8 p.m. on election day. (If you mail it, you must sign the official ballot envelope mailed separately, your ballot must be mailed in this envelope and postmarked on or before election day, and the Board of Elections must receive it no later than 7 days after election day.)

### *What if I need help to vote in person?*

You can bring anyone with you into the vote center if you need help to vote. If you do not understand English, you can get the ballot and instructions in your language in some parts of DC. (Check with the Board of Elections). If you received your ballot by mail and need help completing it, you can ask for help from

anyone of your choosing, including a poll worker at any vote center.

## *When?*

There are two official dates for elections: one for primary elections (in June) and one for general elections (in November). The DC Council sets the official date for the primary elections. **The next primary election will be June 21, 2022.** The general election is always on the first Tuesday in November. **The next general election will be November 8, 2022.**

Early voting starts about two weeks before the official election day. You can either vote early or on election day.

## *Where?*

### Early Voting

There are voting centers in each Ward of DC for “early voting.” You can vote in any of these early voting places: <https://earlyvoting.dcboe.org/>.

### Election Day

You may vote at any vote center in the District. Find vote center locations on the Board of Elections website: <https://www.dcboe.org/Voters/Where-to-Vote/Election-Day-Vote-Locations>.

The closest vote center to your home address is listed on your voter registration card.

If your vote center is not accessible (for example - if it has steps you cannot climb or heavy, closed doors you cannot open), see below about submitting complaints.



Photo of man in wheelchair at closed double doors.

## Accommodations (Changes) for Voters with Disabilities

You may need a change in your voting place or the way you vote because of your disability. These changes are called accommodations. Some examples are:

- opening the door to the vote center
- giving you a magnifying glass to help you read the ballot or voting directions
- using an audio headset that reads out the information on the voting machine and tells you what to do to vote
- allowing you to bring anyone you choose into the vote center with you to help you to vote.

## **How/When to Request Accommodations:**

You can ask anyone at your vote center or at DC Board of Elections if you need accommodations (changes) in voting because of your disability.

You can request accommodations (changes) in the voting process at any time.

## **Disability-based Problems & Complaints:**

### *Types of Problems*

People with disabilities may face voting access problems such as:

- getting into their vote centers,
- not having audio headphones to use the machine,
- not having magnifying glasses to see the ballots,
- lack of space around voting machines.

### *How to file complaints*

If the Board of Elections denies your registration application, the Board of Elections must send a written notice listing the reasons and explain how to appeal.

If you cannot access (enter) your vote center, use the voting machine or paper ballot, or have other problems voting, you can file a complaint in writing or by calling the Board of Elections. You can also call DRDC.

During the elections (early voting or election day): you can contact the Board of Elections or DRDC (202-547-0198) to report access problems.

After election day, you can file a complaint to the Board of Elections in writing or by calling the Board or DRDC. If the Board does not resolve your complaint, you can appeal through the Office of Administrative Hearings.

## **Election Day Jobs**

The Board of Elections hires people to work on election day in different jobs including Poll Workers, Voter Assistance Clerks, ADA Compliance Assistants, and Site Coordinators. These jobs are open to everyone including people with disabilities. Here is a link to the website about election day jobs: <https://www.dcboe.org/FAQS/Election-Day-Workers>.

To qualify for election day jobs, you must:

- be a DC resident (Site Coordinators must also be registered voters)
- be at least 16 years old
- complete at least four hours of training before each election
- have proof of COVID-19 vaccination (boosters are not required)

People with disabilities are not required to pass test(s) or drive or walk to qualify.

How to apply: Fill out an application on the Board of Elections website at: <https://www.dcboe.org/Poll-Workers/Apply-to-be-an-Election-Day-Worker> or call or go to the Board of Elections to get an application.



## DRDC's Role

Disability Rights DC at University Legal Services (DRDC) urges the Board of Elections to make all vote centers and ballots accessible to all DC voters with disabilities by:

- visiting vote centers to check on accessibility
- reporting access problems to the Board of Elections
- recommending improved access such as opening school building doors.

DRDC also helps people with complaints regarding voter registration and voting access on and after election day.

### Questions?

If you have questions or complaints about voting access, please contact DRDC at 202-547-0198 (voice) or 202-547-2657 (TTY). DRDC's website has a section about voters' rights advocacy: <http://www.uls-dc.org/protection-and-advocacy-program/programs/protection-and-advocacy-for-voter-access/>.