

# Restore Your Right to Vote in New Jersey

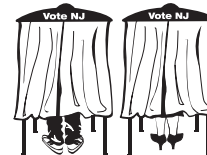
In New Jersey, any person who is no longer in prison or on parole or probation, can register to vote.



**Voting is Freedom. Reclaim Your Right.  
Register & Vote.**



State of New Jersey  
Department of State



## Message from the Secretary of State

Dear Fellow Citizen,

Voting is one of the most precious rights we have as Americans. Of course, it was not always that way. Over time, many people in our nation fought – and some gave their lives – for the cause of equal voting rights for all individuals. That tells us something about the power of the vote. Like all hard-won rights, voting is something we should not treat lightly. It is a right we should respect, and it is a right we should exercise.

In New Jersey, unlike some other states, those who have been convicted of felony offenses in the past are not forever barred from voting. Regardless of anything you may have read or heard, that is the law in our state. Any ex-felon who has satisfactorily completed the terms of his or her sentence can register to vote.

As New Jersey's Chief Election Official, it is my duty to inform all citizens regarding the opportunity to vote. This handbook has been prepared to assist any New Jersey resident who has been convicted of a felony and would like to become a registered voter. The handbook contains information regarding the requirements for becoming a registered voter, and provides answers to some of the most commonly asked questions about the registration and voting processes.

Here in 2009, voter registration in New Jersey is easier and more convenient than ever. If you have been convicted of a felony in the past and wish to become a registered voter, I encourage you to read this handbook.

For those who are eligible, participating in the democratic process by voting is not only a sacred right, it is a civic responsibility. Elected leaders make the decisions that help determine our quality of life, our quality of justice and, ultimately, the quality of our future. Only by voting can we have a voice in choosing those leaders.

Nina Mitchell Wells  
*Secretary of State*

# Questions & Answers

## Voter Registration Requirements

### Question 1

#### ***Who can register to vote?***

Any person who is:

1. A United States citizen,
2. 18 years of age by the next election,
3. a resident of New Jersey at least 30 days before the election, and
4. not serving a sentence, or on probation or parole as the result of a felony conviction.

### Question 2

#### ***Can someone register to vote if he or she has been charged with a crime, but not yet convicted?***

Yes. In addition, any person who is a pre-trial detainee does not lose the right to vote while he or she is awaiting trial, even if the person is in jail.

### Question 3

#### ***Can someone who is out on bail pending appeal of a conviction be eligible to register and vote?***

Yes. Because this person is not in prison while his or her appeal is pending, he or she is eligible to register and vote.

### Question 4

#### ***How does someone register to vote?***

A voter registration application must be completed.

Voter registration forms are available for download on the **Internet** at [www.NJElections.org](http://www.NJElections.org) and are also available in the offices of the **County Commissioners of Registration** (*a list of the names and addresses of New Jersey's 21 County Commissioners of Registration can be found at [www.NJElections.org](http://www.NJElections.org)*), **Municipal Clerk offices** and the agency offices of the **New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission** ([www.nj.gov/mvc](http://www.nj.gov/mvc)).

# Questions & Answers

## Question 5.

### ***What are the requirements to complete the form?***

The registrant should fill out the form by printing clearly in black or blue ink. The form may be difficult to process if this is not done. All the sections that apply to the registrant must be completed, including the birth date and the signature.

There are also check-off boxes at the top of the form that must be completed. The registrant can also use the form to ask for information on voting by mail, the availability of election materials in a language other than English, becoming a board worker, polling place accessibility or voting if the registrant has a disability.

## Question 6

### ***Is it legal to get assistance in completing the form?***

Yes. Another person can help in filling out a voter registration form. That person must provide his or her name and address on the bottom of the form.

## Question 7

### ***Can a voter registration form be used to declare political party membership?***

Yes, in section 10 of the form.

## Question 8

### ***Does a voter have to re-register to vote if he or she moves within the State?***

If a voter moves between counties, he or she must re-register in the new county.

If a voter moves within the county, he or she should notify the County Commissioner of Registration of the new address. This will assure that the voter's name will be in the right poll book when he or she votes.

# Questions & Answers

## Question 9.

### ***Are there any identification requirements to register to vote?***

Every person registering to vote must provide his or her NJ driver's license number or MVC non-driver ID number. If the registrant does not have either a driver's license or MVC ID, the last four numbers of his or her social security number must be provided. These numbers will be verified by the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission. The registrant will be notified if the numbers cannot be matched. If the registrant does not have a driver's license, MVC non-driver ID or social security number, the box in section 5 of the Voter Registration Application must be checked off.

If you are a first-time registrant by mail and you do not have a driver's license number, MVC non-driver ID or a social security number, or the information you provide cannot be verified, you will be asked to provide a copy of a current and valid photo id, or a document with your name and current address on it to avoid having to provide identification at the polling place.

## Question 10

### ***Where is the completed voter registration form sent?***

Completed voter registration applications can go to the State Division of Elections or the Office of the County Commissioner of Registration in the county in which you live.

The form can be **mailed** or **hand-delivered** to one of these offices.

## Question 11

### ***Is there a deadline to register to vote before an election?***

Yes, the registration deadline is 21 days before the election.

A mailed voter registration form that is postmarked on or before the 21st day before the election is considered on time.

# Questions & Answers

## Voting

### Question 12

#### ***Who decides if the application is accepted?***

The County Commissioner of Registration will review the form. The Commissioner will notify the registrant, by mail, if the form has been accepted or if there are any defects. The registrant will have the opportunity to correct any errors so that the form will be accepted.

### Question 13

#### ***How does a voter know where his or her polling place is?***

Every voter is sent a sample ballot, no later than a week before the election, which gives the address of the polling place. The Municipal Clerk or the County Board of Election office can also provide this information.

### Question 14

#### ***Do voters need to show identification before voting at the polling place on election day?***

A first-time registrant by mail who did not provide identification (see #9) before voting for the first time, will have to show identification at the polling place in order to vote in the voting machine. If this voter votes by mail ballot instead, a copy of an identifying document must be included with the ballot.

Any voter may be challenged at the polling place by a challenger who believes the voter is not qualified to vote. That voter may have to show identification at the request of the poll workers in order to resolve the challenge.

**It is a good idea for all voters to bring identification to the polling place in case it is needed.**

# Questions & Answers

## Question 15

***What if a first-time registrant by mail did not provide identification before voting at the polling place for the first time and shows up at the polling place without identification?***

That voter must vote by provisional ballot. He or she cannot vote in the voting machine.

## Question 16

***Can the first-time registrant by mail who voted by provisional ballot show identification after voting?***

Yes, that voter will have up until two days after the election to show identification to the County Commissioner of Registration during regular business hours.

**If this voter does not present identification by this deadline, the provisional ballot will not be counted.**

## Question 17

***What if a registered voter cannot go to the polling place on election day?***

Under New Jersey law, any voter can vote by mail for any election.

An application must be sent to the County Clerk. You can download an application at [www.NJElections.org](http://www.NJElections.org) or call **1-877-NJVOTER** (1-877-658-6837).

## Question 18

***Can a voter who votes by mail or provisional ballot find out if the ballot was counted?***

Yes, the voter can call **1-877-NJVOTER** (1-877-658-6837) after the election to find out whether the ballot was counted or the reason it was rejected. A letter will be sent to the voter's address by the County Board of Election with this information.

# Voter Restoration Handbook

