



HOW TO VOTE IN CALIFORNIA

A Quick Guide for People with Disabilities Voting in 2023 Local Elections

Note: California only has local elections in 2023. To find out if your city/town has an election in 2023, contact the [local election office](#).

There are lots of different words and phrases used in voting and elections. We explain some of these words and phrases in this guide. Other definitions and examples can be found in our [Voting Language Resource](#).

There are also phrases that might change based on where you live. For example, in this guide, we use the term "local election office." In some cities and towns, this office might have a different name. Your local election office might be called the county clerk, county election commission, board of elections, or something else. You can find that information by clicking on the links for each state that we have included in the guide.



REGISTERING TO VOTE

- **How can I register to vote?**

- You can find out if you are already registered by visiting vote411.org.
- Register to vote online at California's [online voter registration website](#).
- Register to vote by picking up and mailing the California voter registration form. You can pick up a voter registration form at

the local election office, library, Department of Motor Vehicles, or post office.

- **When do I need to register?** The voter registration deadline is 15 days before Election Day. Be sure to register on or before this date. You can also register in person on Election Day.
- **Do I need an identification (ID) to register?** You will need a driver's license or non-driver state ID to register to vote. You can use your Social Security number if you don't have a driver's license or non-driver state ID.
- **Can I vote if I have a disability?** Yes! People with disabilities who are 18 years old or older have the right to vote. Your vote matters and is protected by laws to make sure voting is accessible, independent, and private.
- **Can I vote if I have a guardian?** In this state, just having a guardian does not automatically take away your right to vote. However, sometimes a court may decide that you cannot vote. If you are not sure, you can check your guardianship order. If your guardianship order does not say anything about voting, this means you can still vote! Your right has only been taken away if your order directly says that. For help understanding your right to vote and guardianship, contact the local [Protection and Advocacy Agency \(P&A\)](#).
- **Can I vote if I have gone to jail or prison?** If you have gone to jail or prison, you should check to see if you are allowed to vote. Some states take away your right to vote if you have gone to jail or prison. Learn about voting rights for people who have [gone to jail or prison](#). You can also learn more from the [Campaign Legal Center](#) or [contact the local P&A](#).



LEARNING ABOUT THE ISSUES

- **What is a ballot?** A ballot is a list of who and what you are voting for. Your ballot will list candidates who are running for different offices, such as School Board members, City Council members, or State Representatives. You vote by marking your choice on the ballot. If you are voting by marking a paper ballot, and not using a voting machine, make sure to look at both sides of the ballot. Sometimes, your ballot has choices on both sides.
- **What is a ballot measure?** Sometimes, your ballot will have ballot measures. A ballot measure is a law, issue, or question that you can vote on. Voters get to decide if they agree or disagree with the ballot measure by voting yes to agree or no to disagree. [Learn about ballot measures](#) on our resource page.
- **Can I look at my ballot before I go to vote?** Enter your home address in [Ballotpedia's Sample Ballot Lookup](#). This tool will give you a "sample ballot," which will show you what will be on your ballot when you vote.



VOTING IN PERSON

- **Where do I need to go to vote?** Most voters in California vote by mail. Learn about voting by mail below. If you need help voting or you want to vote in person, you can go to a polling place or vote center. You can find your local polling place or vote center through the California Secretary of State's website. [Find your polling place or vote center.](#)
- **Do I need an ID to vote in person?** In this state, voters may be asked to show an ID if they are voting for the first time in person and they registered to vote without providing a driver's license number, non-

driver state ID number, or the last four numbers of their Social Security number on the voter registration form. [Learn about voter ID.](#)

- **What if I need help with filling out my ballot?** You are allowed to have someone help you fill out your ballot.
- **Who can help me with filling out my ballot?** You may choose someone you know to help you vote or ask for help from a poll worker at the polling place or vote center. Your boss cannot help you vote. If you are part of a labor union at work, the person who helps you vote cannot be your labor union representative. [Learn about labor unions](#) on our resource page.
- **Can I vote before Election Day?** This state allows any voter to vote in person before Election Day during the Early Voting period. The early voting period is set by the local election office. Contact the [local election office](#) for more information.
- **Can I vote outside of the polling place or vote center if it is inaccessible?** Some polling places or vote centers in this state may allow you to vote outside if they are inaccessible. This is called curbside voting. You can also contact the [Secretary of State's office](#) for assistance or vote by mail.



VOTING BY MAIL

- **Can I vote by mail?** Any voter in this state can vote by mail. (If a polling place or vote center is not accessible to people with disabilities, this is another way for you to vote.)
- **Do I need an ID to vote by mail?** No, you do not need an ID when voting by mail unless you are voting for the first time in a federal election in California. Federal elections happen in even-numbered years. [Learn about federal elections](#) on our resource page.

- **How do I request a mail ballot?** If you are registered to vote, the local election office will automatically send you a mail ballot. Be sure to register by the voter registration deadline to vote by mail.
- **Can I get an electronic vote by mail ballot?** This state allows voters with disabilities to request an electronic vote by mail ballot. They can fill out the ballot on their computer, print it, and return the ballot. Contact the [local election office](#) to find out if you can request an electronic ballot to vote in local elections in 2023.
- **What if I need help with filling out my ballot?** You are allowed to have someone help you fill out your ballot.
- **Do I need to sign my ballot envelope?** Follow the instructions on the envelope to sign your envelope when asked. This state requires this signature to match the signature on your voter registration form. If you are unable to sign your name on the return envelope, make a mark by the red X on the return envelope. Have a helper print your name on the return envelope and sign as a witness.
- **How do I return my ballot?** You can return your ballot by mail or deliver it to a polling place, vote center, local election office, or drop box. If you are returning your ballot by mail, it must be postmarked by Election Day, and received no later than 7 days after Election Day. If you are delivering your ballot, it must be received by 8 p.m. on Election Day.
- **Can someone return my ballot for me?** Yes, you may choose to have someone return your ballot for you. They must write their name and relationship to you on the ballot envelope, and sign the ballot envelope.
- **Can I track my ballot?** Yes, you can track your ballot online to see if the local election office has received it. You can do this on the California Secretary of State's website. [Track your ballot.](#)



MORE VOTING HELP

- **Where can I find more information on how to vote?** Check out the [Secretary of State's election website](#). Learn about [voting assistance for voters with disabilities](#).
- **What if I am having trouble voting or registering to vote?** If you have any trouble voting, [contact the local P&A](#). If you need help, the phone number is 1-888-569-7955.
- **What if I have more questions?** Check out these resources:
 - [America Votes: Local Election Office Directory](#)
 - [Guardianship and Voting Laws](#)
 - [Resources for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Voters](#)
 - [Resources for Blind and Low Vision Voters](#)
 - [Easy Read and Plain Language Voting Resources](#)
 - [Campaign Legal Center: Restore Your Vote](#)
 - [VoteRiders: Voter ID Help](#)
 - [ASL Hotline](#): 301-818-VOTE (301-818-8683)
 - Please note: the ASL Hotline is only available for November 2023 Elections
 - [Election Protection Hotline](#): 866-OUR-VOTE (866-687-8683)



The 2023 State Voting Guides for Disabled Voters are made by the REV UP Voting Campaign at the American Association of People with Disabilities. This project was led by Sarah Blahovec. A plain language review was done by Hannah Brecher, Plain Language Consultant and Self-Advocate; Latisha Martin, Plain Language Consultant and Self-Advocate; Liz Weintraub, Senior Advocacy Specialist, Association of University Centers on Disabilities.