



# HOW TO VOTE IN IOWA

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

**Note:** Iowa 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](http://vote411.org).
- Register to vote online at Iowa's [online voter registration website](#).
- Register to vote by downloading, filling out, and returning the Iowa [voter registration form](#).

- **When do I need to register?** The deadline to register online or by mail to vote is 15 days before Election Day. The deadline to register in person to vote is 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?** The place where you go to vote in person is called a polling place. You can find your local polling place through the Iowa Secretary of State's website. [Find your polling place.](#)
- **Do I need an ID to vote in person?** This state requires voters to show an ID to vote in person. If you don't have an ID, you can have another voter swear that you are who you say you are. You and the other voter must sign a form that says that you are telling the truth. You can also use other state-allowed documents to show that you live in Iowa. Iowa has a list of acceptable documents for proving your identity and that you live in Iowa. [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. The person who helps you must sign a form called an affidavit. An affidavit is a written statement. When someone signs an affidavit, they promise that they are telling the truth.
- **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. 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 at the local election office before Election Day. Iowa calls this period the "In-Person Absentee Voting Period." The in-person absentee voting period begins 20 days before Election Day. Contact the [local election office](#) for more information.
- **Can I vote outside of the polling place if it is inaccessible?** This state allows voters to vote outside the polling place if it is inaccessible. This is called curbside voting. Contact the [local election office](#) for more information about curbside voting.



## VOTING BY MAIL

- **Can I vote by mail?** Any voter in this state can vote by mail. This is called absentee voting. (If a polling place is not accessible to people with disabilities, this is another way for you to vote.)
- **Do I need an ID to vote by absentee ballot?** You must include your Iowa driver's license number, non-driver state ID number, or four-digit personal identification number (PIN) from your Voter Identification Card when requesting an absentee ballot. You do not need to include a copy of an ID when you return your ballot.
- **How do I request an absentee ballot?** You must request your ballot through the local election office by mail or in person. [Request your ballot.](#)
- **Can I get an electronic absentee ballot?** This state does not have an electronic absentee ballot available for voters with disabilities, so you must vote on a paper ballot.

- **What is the deadline for requesting my ballot?** The last day to request a ballot by mail is 15 days before Election Day. The last day to request an absentee ballot at the local election office is the day before Election Day. Request your ballot as soon as possible to make sure that you receive your ballot on time.
- **What if I need help with filling out my ballot?** You are allowed to have someone help you fill out your ballot. That person cannot be your boss or a candidate who is currently running for office and whose name is on the ballot you are voting on. 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. The person who helps you may need to complete a form called an affidavit to be returned with the ballot. An affidavit is a written statement. When someone signs an affidavit, they promise that they are telling the truth.
- **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. Some voters may use a personal stamp or have someone help them write their signature. Contact the [local election office](#) for more information.
- **How do I return my ballot?** You can return your ballot by mail or deliver it to the local election office. Your ballot must be received before the polls close on Election Day.
- **Can someone return my ballot for me?** If you have a disability, you may have someone return your ballot for you. There are special instructions on the ballot envelope that you and your helper must follow.
- **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 Iowa Secretary of State's website. [Track your ballot.](#)



## MORE VOTING HELP

- **Where can I find more information on how to vote?** Check out the [Iowa 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 800-779-2502.
- **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.