



Fighting for the  
well-being of Illinois'  
youngest children.

*Powered by Illinois Action for Children*



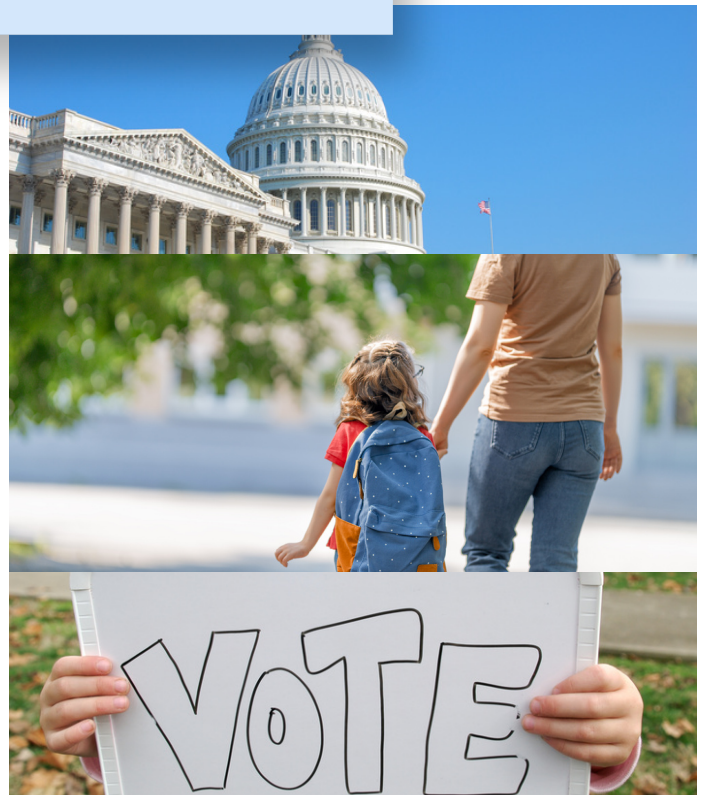
# How to Register & Vote in Illinois

A simple, nonpartisan guide to registration, vote by mail, early voting, and Election Day

Illinois 2026  
General Election

September 2026

[www.wethevillageil.org](http://www.wethevillageil.org)



# About We, the Village

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Powered by Illinois Action for Children, We, the Village is a coalition of families, caregivers, educators, and providers working together to ensure all families have access to quality education and care of their choosing.

## Our Mission:

- We want adequate, equitable, sustainable, reliable funding for children's services from birth through age 5.
- We want to ensure that the early childhood workforce is adequately compensated, and that providers and educators have the resources and support they need to provide high-quality care.
- We want to ensure all children can access quality education and care, as their parents choose.



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# Key dates for the Midterm election



| Date               | What it means                                                                                                               |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| August 5, 2026     | First day to apply for a vote-by-mail ballot for this election.                                                             |
| September 24, 2026 | Early voting begins at election-authority offices. Election authorities may begin mailing vote-by-mail ballots.             |
| October 6, 2026    | Last day for regular paper or in-person voter registration. A mailed form must be postmarked by this date.                  |
| October 7, 2026    | Grace-period registration and voting begin in person and continue through Election Day.                                     |
| October 18, 2026   | Last day to register or update your registration online. The state portal closes at 11:59 PM.                               |
| October 19, 2026   | Many additional permanent early-voting locations begin operating. Dates and hours vary locally.                             |
| October 29, 2026   | Last day your election authority can receive a request for a vote-by-mail ballot. Applying earlier is strongly recommended. |
| November 2, 2026   | Last day of early voting.                                                                                                   |
| November 3, 2026   | Election Day. Polls are open 6:00 a.m.–7:00 p.m. A mailed ballot must be postmarked by this date.                           |
| November 17, 2026  | Last day an election authority may receive a mailed ballot that was postmarked by Election Day.                             |

*Local early-voting and drop-box hours vary. Always confirm with your local election authority.*

# Who Can Register to Vote in Illinois?

## Start here:

Check your voter registration now—even if you have voted before. Confirm that your name and current address are correct, then choose how you want to vote.

- 1 **Citizenship:** You must be a United States citizen.
- 2 **Age:** You must be at least 18 years old on or before November 3, 2026.
- 3 **Residence:** You must live in your Illinois voting precinct for at least 30 days before Election Day.
- 4 **One voting residence:** You cannot claim the right to vote in another place.
- 5 **Criminal record:** A past conviction does not permanently take away your right to vote in Illinois. You may vote if you are on probation or parole or are being held before conviction. Under current Illinois rules, a person serving a sentence of confinement after conviction cannot vote until released and must register again.

## No traditional home address?

People experiencing homelessness may still register and vote. Contact your local election authority for help identifying a voting residence and a mailing address.

# Register or Update Your Registration



## Online

- **Deadline:** Sunday, October 18, 2026, at 11:59 p.m.
- **You will generally need:** An Illinois driver's license or state ID number, the last four digits of your Social Security number, and the date your license or ID was issued.
- [Register online at ova.elections.il.gov](https://ova.elections.il.gov)



## By paper form or with a deputy registrar

- **Regular deadline:** Tuesday, October 6, 2026. If mailed, the form must be postmarked by this date.
- **Where:** Your local election authority, many public libraries, some government offices, or another authorized voter-registration location.
- **If you do not have an Illinois license or state ID:** Use the paper or in-person process instead of the online portal.



## Grace-period or same-day registration

- **When:** October 7 through November 3, 2026
- **Where:** Designated early-voting or grace-period locations and, on Election Day, your polling place or another location designated by your local election authority.
- **Bring:** Two forms of identification. At least one must show the current address where you are registering.
- **Important:** You must vote at the same time that you complete grace-period registration.

### You can still register after October 6

October 6 is the regular paper-registration deadline—not the final chance to register. Online registration continues through October 18, and in-person grace-period registration continues through Election Day.

# Choose How You Will Vote



## Option 1: Vote by mail

**Who can use it:** Any registered Illinois voter. You do not need an excuse.

**Request deadline:** Your election authority must receive your application by Thursday, October 29, 2026. Request it as early as possible so there is time to receive and return the ballot.

**Ballots begin mailing:** Thursday, September 24, 2026, or as soon as ballots are available.

**Complete it carefully:** Follow the instructions, mark the ballot, place it in the correct envelope, and sign the certification envelope where required.

**Return it:** Mail it, return it to your election authority, or use an authorized ballot drop box if available in your jurisdiction.

**Mail deadline:** The return envelope must be postmarked by November 3 and received by November 17. Do not wait until the last day if you can avoid it.

**Permanent option:** Illinois voters may apply for permanent vote-by-mail status. Confirm the option with your local election authority.

- [Illinois Vote-by-Mail Information](#) | [Official Vote-by-Mail Drop Box Search](#)

### If you requested a mail ballot but decide to vote in person:

- **Best option:** Bring the unused mail ballot and envelope to the voting location and surrender them before receiving an in-person ballot.
- **If you do not have the ballot:** Tell the election judges. You may be asked to sign an affidavit or cast a provisional ballot, depending on the circumstances.

## Find your polling place and local election office

**Polling place:** Your Election Day voting location is based on your current registered address. Check it shortly before voting because locations can change.

**Learn more:** [Illinois Polling Place Lookup](#) | [Check Your Illinois Voter Registration](#) | [Find Your Local Election Authority](#)

# Choose How You Will Vote



## Option 2: Vote early in person

**When it starts:** September 24, 2026, at the office of your election authority. More locations often open later.

**When it ends:** November 2, 2026.

**Where and when:** Locations and hours vary by county or election jurisdiction. Check the official lookup before you leave.

**Registration:** Many early-voting locations also offer grace-period registration. Bring two forms of ID, including one with your current address, if you need to register or update your address.

- [Official Early Voting Location Search](#)



## Option 3: Vote on election day

**Date and hours:** Tuesday, November 3, 2026, from 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

**Where:** Vote at the polling place assigned to your registered address unless your election authority offers countywide vote centers.

**If you are in line at 7:00 PM:** Stay in line. You are entitled to vote.

**If your name is not on the list:** Ask an election judge to check your registration and address. You may be able to complete grace-period registration or cast a provisional ballot.

# Do You Need Identification to Vote?

1

**If you are already correctly registered:** Illinois generally does not require you to show photo identification before voting. Election judges usually verify your identity by comparing signatures.



- **You may be asked for ID if:** You are registering or changing your address, your registration is challenged, or you registered by mail for the first time and did not previously provide the required identification.

2

**For grace-period registration:** Bring two forms of ID, and make sure at least one shows your current address.

- **Examples may include:** An Illinois driver's license or state ID, utility bill, bank statement, pay stub, government document, lease, school record, or another accepted document. Check with your local election authority if you are unsure.

## Voting Assistance & Accessibility

1

**Accessible voting:** Polling places must offer an accessible way to vote. Accessible voting equipment is available for voters who need it.

2

**Help marking your ballot:** A voter who is blind, has a physical disability, or cannot read, write, or speak English may request assistance. You may usually choose a person to help, subject to legal limits, or ask for help from election judges.

3

**Curbside voting:** A voter with a temporary or permanent disability who cannot enter the polling place may request curbside voting. Contact the local election authority ahead of time when possible.

4

**Language access:** Ask your local election authority what translated materials or language assistance are available in your jurisdiction.

5

**Accessible vote by mail:** Illinois offers an accessible vote-by-mail process for eligible voters with print disabilities. Contact your election authority for details and deadlines.

# Other Useful Voting Protections

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**Time off from work:** If your work schedule does not leave two consecutive hours while polls are open, Illinois law may allow up to two hours away from work to vote. You must notify your employer before Election Day, and the employer may choose the time.

**Provisional ballot:** If an eligibility or registration issue cannot be resolved at the polling place, ask whether you are entitled to a provisional ballot and how to provide any follow-up information.

**Report a problem:** Ask for the polling-place supervisor and contact your local election authority. You may also contact the Illinois State Board of Elections.

## A Simple Voting Plan

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- 1 **Check:** Confirm your registration, name, address, and polling place.
- 2 **Choose:** Decide whether to vote by mail, early in person, or on Election Day.
- 3 **Learn:** Review your sample ballot and reliable, nonpartisan information about candidates and ballot questions.
- 4 **Prepare:** Note the location and hours, arrange transportation or child care if needed, and gather ID if you are registering or updating your address.
- 5 **Vote:** Return your mail ballot early or arrive with enough time to complete your ballot.
- 6 **Follow up:** Use the official tools to check a mail or provisional ballot if needed.

# Official Resources

- [Illinois State Board of Elections](#)
- [Online Voter Registration](#)
- [Registration Lookup](#)
- [Polling Place Lookup](#)
- [Early Voting Location Search](#)
- [Local Election Authorities](#)
- [Voting by Mail](#)
- [Vote-by-Mail Drop Box Search](#)
- [Illinois Voters' Guide](#)
- [Illinois State Board of Elections: Voter FAQs](#)
- [Illinois State Board of Elections: Information for Voters](#)
- [Illinois State Board of Elections contact information](#)
  - Chicago: 312-814-6440 | Springfield: 217-782-4141

## Final Reminder

Election procedures can change because of new laws or court decisions. Check the Illinois State Board of Elections and your local election authority before relying on a deadline or location.