



Voting in Wisconsin

A Guide for Citizens with Disabilities



***depends on it...
because it does."***

Justin Dart, Disability advocate

The information in this publication is based on current Wisconsin election laws and is believed to be accurate. Questions on specific interpretations of the law should be directed to the Wisconsin Government Accountability Board.

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Why Vote?

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National elections for President usually get the most attention, but it is often the people who are elected to the State Legislature and the County Board whose decisions have the most impact on your daily life. Despite all the money in politics, elections still come down to votes. Many elections are very close: you may have read about recounts in Wisconsin elections because the vote totals were so close. So, your vote matters. We hope this booklet helps you learn more about how to exercise your right to vote.

Getting Involved

When you get involved with elections, you can work to elect people who support the issues that matter most to you.

Who represents me now?

You can go on the internet to www.legis.wisconsin.gov and type in your address under "Find My Legislators" to find out who your state and U.S. representatives are.

You can also visit <https://myvote.wi.gov>, which has a full listing of all national, state and local officials who represent you. It also has information about where you vote. You may also call the Legislative Hotline at 1-800-362-9472.

Who Can Vote?

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In order to be eligible to vote, you must be:

- ➔ a **U.S. citizen** on the day of registration.
- ➔ at least **18 years old** on or before Election Day.
- ➔ a **resident of Wisconsin** and the election district for at least 28 consecutive days before Election Day.

Who Cannot Vote?

Individuals lose their right to vote if:

1. A judge removes that right under the guardianship process. A person with a guardian can ask the court at any time to restore his or her right to vote.
2. A judge has found him or her unable to understand the voting process.
3. He/she has been convicted of a felony and has not completed probation or parole.

Guardianship

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A person's right to vote can only be taken away by a judge. If there is a question, the guardianship papers should be checked.

Some people lose the right to vote when a guardian is appointed simply because no one thought about letting them keep the right to vote. A person with a guardian can ask the court at any time to restore any right, including the right to vote.

A person under an active power of attorney for healthcare can still vote.

Voters Who Are Homeless

Homeless individuals may designate a fixed location as their residence for voting purposes if it is an identifiable location in the state of Wisconsin. This location may be a homeless shelter, a park bench, or other location where a homeless individual may spend time or return to when absent.

People who are homeless and need proof of residence for voter registration can use a letter on public or private social service agency letterhead identifying that person and describing the individual's residence for voting purposes.

Registering to Vote

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In Wisconsin, you can register to vote on Election Day and vote that same day. You can also register to vote before Election Day.

You will always have to provide proof of residence when registering to vote unless you are in the military or permanently overseas.

If you vote at least once every four years and have not moved, you only have to register one time.

Three Ways to Register to Vote

- 1) Register **at the polls** on Election Day.
- 2) Register **by mail**. Visit <https://myvote.wi.gov> to learn more about voter registration. You can use this website to check your registration status and print out a pre-filled Voter Registration Application.

Or, you can write or call your city, town or village clerk's office and ask them to send you a Voter Registration Application. **Follow each instruction carefully and mail it back before the deadline. Please note that you must include a copy of your proof of residence document with your form. It must be postmarked at least 20 days before the election.**

- 3) Register in person at your **city, town or village clerk's office** until 5 p.m. on the Friday before Election Day. A proof of residence document will be required during this process.

Information You Need to Register to Vote

When you register to vote, you will need to complete a **Voter Registration Application**.

If you are unable to complete and sign the form yourself, someone can assist you. You must provide the name and address for the person assisting you.

The Voter Registration Form will ask you to provide the following information:

- 1) Your **full name**
- 2) The **address where you live and the address where you receive mail**
- 3) Your **date of birth**
- 4) Your **signature** and the date you complete the form.
- 5) **Proof of residence at your current address.** Documents you can use should have your full name and current address on them, such as a Wisconsin driver's license, Wisconsin I.D. card, utility bill or current lease. For a full list of documents you can use, please see: <http://gab.wi.gov/publications/voter-guides/proof-of-residence>.

If you register by mail in order to verify your address, a postcard will be sent to you at the address you list. Be sure you look for the postcard. If you do not receive it, notify your local clerk. This address verification process is required in addition to providing proof of residence.

- 6) If you have a Wisconsin driver's license or identification card you must provide that **number**. If you do not have a Wisconsin driver's license or identification card you can use the last four numbers of your Social Security Number. If you have none of these, a number will be assigned to you.

Registering to Vote

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Address Change

If you move, you must change your voter registration to your new address to be able to vote at your new location.

You can make this address change by completing a new voter registration (see page 6). You can complete and submit a new registration form as soon as you move as long as you will be at your new address for 28 consecutive days before the election.

If changing your address on Election Day, you must bring proof of residence with your full name and new address to the polls. You must have lived at your new address for at least 28 consecutive days before the election.

Please be aware that if you have not lived at your new address for 28 consecutive days you can still vote at the polling place or Clerk's Office associated with your previous address.

Confidential Voters

Qualified voters who are victims of domestic abuse, sexual assault or stalking have the option to have their names and addresses withheld from the public poll list or registration list. To find out more, contact your local Municipal Clerk. A list of all Clerks can be found at <http://gab.wi.gov/clerks/directory> or you can view the contact information for your clerk on <https://myvote.wi.gov>.

Going to Vote on Election Day

Locations where you go to vote in person are called polls or polling places.

Check with your city, town or village clerk's office to find out the location of your polling place.

If you have access to the internet, you can find your polling place by going to this website: <https://myvote.wi.gov>. This website also contains information about what you will be voting for, who represents you, and if you are registered to vote.

Polls are open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Election Day.

Sample ballots and instructions on how to vote are posted at every polling place.

You may ask for instructions at the polls on how to use a voting machine or how to mark a ballot.

Getting a Ballot

When you go to vote, the people at the voting location mark off your name on their list of voters. You will need to state your name and address and sign next to your name in the poll book.

You can sign using a stamp or an "x". If you are not physically able to sign by your name, you can request an exemption by asking the workers at the voting place.

Curbside Voting

You may request that a poll worker bring a ballot to your vehicle or the building entrance if you are unable to enter the building due to a disability. That is called “curbside voting.” It is a good idea to contact your municipal clerk to arrange for a curbside vote or bring a friend who can enter the polling place and ask the poll workers to bring the ballot to your vehicle.

Provisional Ballots

A provisional ballot is a ballot that is marked by a voter but is not counted at the time it is cast. It is issued to a voter who is unable to provide the poll workers with documentation as required by Wisconsin and federal law.

There are two situations when a voter is can receive a provisional ballot:

- 1) A qualified elector who has been issued a current and valid Wisconsin driver’s license or identification card registers to vote at a polling place on Election Day, but cannot list the driver’s license or identification card number on the registration form;
- 2) A first-time Wisconsin voter who registered by mail but does not provide an identifying document establishing proof of residence at the time he or she submitted the registration form and is unable to provide the required proof of residence at the polling place.

A voter has until 4 pm the Friday after the election to provide the missing documentation to the municipal clerk.

Accessibility and Voting: It is Your Right

Every voter has the right to vote privately and independently. If you have a disability, there are several options available to you to make certain that is possible.

- 1) All polling places in Wisconsin are required to have an accessible voting machine.
- 2) Any voter who needs help at the polls has a right to assistance.

You can have help in casting your ballot for any reason including: if you have problems reading or writing; have difficulty with the English language; or have a disability which prevents you from being able to mark the ballot or operate the voting machine.

Ask for help when you give your name and address to the poll worker. You may not receive assistance from your employer or a representative of your labor organization if you are a union member.

Any other person, including a poll worker, may assist you. That person does not need to be an eligible voter and can be a minor.

By law, a polling place must be accessible to a person with disabilities. If your polling place is not accessible, notify your city, town or village clerk's office and the Wisconsin Government Accountability Board.

Voting by Absentee

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Any voter can vote by absentee ballot if for any reason that voter cannot go to the polls on Election Day.

Absentee Voting At Your Clerk's Office

You may complete an absentee ballot in person at your city, town or village clerk's office. This can be done Monday-Friday in the two weeks before the election. You must bring a photo ID to get a ballot. Contact your municipal clerk for their office hours.

Absentee Voting by Mail

To vote absentee by mail you need to request an Absentee Ballot. You must request the ballot no later than 5 p.m. on the Thursday before Election Day.

If you have access to the internet, go to the Wisconsin Government Accountability Board website and print the Application for Absentee Ballot form and mail it to your clerk. Or, you can call, fax or email your Municipal Clerk for information about requesting a ballot.

A listing of all municipal clerks can be found at <http://gab.wi.gov/clerks/directory>.

Requesting an Absentee Ballot by Mail

You can also send a written request for an absentee ballot to your city, town or village clerk's office.

Your request must include:

- 1) Your **full name** (first, middle, and last names)
- 2) Your **residential address**
- 3) The **address where you want the absentee ballot sent**, if different from your residential address.
- 4) Your **signature**

When you receive your ballot, **follow all instructions carefully** and mail it back so it is postmarked on or before Election Day. The ballot is sent to you with a special return envelope. Make sure to have another person present while you vote so they can fill out the witness certification section on the return envelope. Your clerk must receive your absentee ballot with your signature and the witness signature no later than 4 p.m. on the Friday after Election Day.

Permanent Absentee Ballot List

You can get on the Permanent Absentee Ballot List and have a Ballot mailed automatically.

The only voters who can request this option are those who cannot get to the polls because they are confined indefinitely due to age, illness, disability or infirmity. The voter must sign a statement that requests an automatic absentee ballot due to one or more of these conditions.

Voting if You Are in the Hospital

If you are in the hospital, you may choose someone to pick up an absentee ballot from your municipal (town, village or city) clerk's office before 5 p.m. on Election Day.

You must fill out an absentee ballot application (see page 11). The person who picks up the absentee ballot for you must bring the completed application to the clerk's office. They will also need to show proof of their identity, provide their name and address, and swear that they are receiving the ballot for your use and will promptly deliver it to you.

You can have the person pick up your ballot no earlier than seven (7) days before the election. They must return the ballot by 8:00 p.m. on Election Day. You also have the option to return the absentee ballot by mail, provided it is postmarked on Election Day and received by 4:00 p.m. on the Friday after Election Day.

Voting if You Live in a Nursing Home, Residential Facility or In-Patient Treatment Facility

Regardless of what type of facility that you live in, you may use it as your address for voting purposes. You may also use a previous address as your voting address, if you intend to return to that address.

Some facilities are visited by a Special Voting Deputy (SVD). An SVD is a representative from the clerk's office who helps to administer an absentee ballot.

If you live in a Residential Care Facility such as a nursing home, Community Based Residential Facility, Residential Care Apartment Complex, or Adult Family Home, you will be visited by a Special Voting Deputy if:

- 1) There are at least 5 people registered to vote in the municipality where the facility is located; and
- 2) At least one resident has requested an absentee ballot for that election

Call your Municipal Clerk to find out if they will be coming to your home.

If you live in a county or state-run inpatient treatment facility they are responsible for asking all patients 18 years or older to see if they are interested in registering to vote and/or vote. There must be enough time to allow the voter to register and/or obtain an absentee ballot before the election. The facility must also contact state and local officials to help with registration and voting.

Elections in Wisconsin

There are two types of elections: nonpartisan and partisan. Nonpartisan elections are for officials including judges, Supreme Court justices, county board members and county executives, municipal officials, and public education officials. These are held in the spring.

Partisan elections are for officials that include all other county administrative officials (like the Sheriff), members of the state legislature, state constitutional officers (except state school superintendent), members of the U.S. Congress, and president. Usually these are held in the fall.

Primary Elections

Primary elections are held to reduce the number of candidates for the general election.

Partisan primary elections are held to select a political party's nominees for offices elected at the general election. These are held on the second Tuesday in August.

Nonpartisan primary elections are held to reduce the number of candidates for an office. The nonpartisan primary is held on the third Tuesday in February.

In presidential election years, the presidential preference primary vote is held in conjunction with the spring election in April.

Fall General Elections

Fall General Elections are for partisan offices. These are held in even numbered years in November. In general elections you can vote for your:

- State Representative (every 2 years)
- State Senator (every 4 years)
- Governor (every 4 years)
- Congressperson (every 2 years)
- U.S. Senator (every 6 years)
- President (every 4 years)

Spring General Elections

Spring General Elections are for nonpartisan offices. These are held in April to elect judges, and local municipal, county, and education officials.

Special Elections

Special elections are held to fill vacancies or for other designated purposes, such as referendum elections or recalls.

These vary as to when they are held. Referendums can also be held during regularly set election times.

Complaints

If you have complaints about access to voting or believe your voter's rights have been violated you may file a complaint with:

Wisconsin Government Accountability Board

212 E. Washington Avenue, 3rd Floor

P.O. Box 7984

Madison, WI 53707-7984

Phone: 608-266-8005

Toll free: 866-VOTE-WIS (868-3947)

TTY: 800-947-3529

Email: gab@wi.gov

Website: <http://gab.wi.gov>

For help with filing a complaint or for advocacy assistance you may contact:

Disability Rights Wisconsin

131 West Wilson Street, Suite 700

Madison, WI 53703

Voter Rights Hotline: 844-DIS-VOTE (347-8683)

Voice: 608-267-0214

Email: info@drwi.org

Website: www.disabilityrightswi.org

Wisconsin Coalition of Independent Living Centers

3810 Milwaukee Street

Madison, WI 53704

Voice/Text: 608-444-3842

TTY: 800-362-9877

Website: www.il-wisconsin.net

Candidate Information

For information about candidates and the voting process

League of Women Voters of Wisconsin

612 West Main Street, Suite 200
Madison, WI 53703
Voice: 608-256-0827
Email: lwwwisconsin@lwwwi.org
Website: www.lwwwi.org

Your Rights and the Voting Process

*For information about your rights as a voter
and the how to vote*

Disability Rights Wisconsin

131 West Wilson Street, Suite 700
Madison, WI 53703
Voter Rights Hotline: 844-DIS-VOTE (347-8683)
Voice: 608-267-0214
Email: info@drwi.org
Website: www.disabilityrightswi.org

League of Women Voters of Wisconsin

612 West Main Street, Suite 200
Madison, WI 53703
Voice: 608-256-0827
Email: lwwwisconsin@lwwwi.org
Website: www.lwwwi.org

Notes

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Use this page to write down helpful information.

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Use this page to write down helpful information.

City/Town Name:

Clerk's Name:

Address:

City:

Zip Code:

Phone Number:

Fax Number:

Use this page to write down helpful information.

Website Address:

Email Address:

Your Polling Place:

Name of Location:

Address:

City:

Phone Number (if available):

***The 2014 Voting Guide for People with Disabilities
was produced in cooperation with:***



Wisconsin Disability Vote Coalition

131 West Wilson Street, Suite 700
Madison, WI 53703
Voter Rights Hotline: 844-DIS-VOTE (347-8683)
Voice: 608-267-0214
Website: www.disabilityvote.org



Disability Rights Wisconsin

131 West Wilson St., Suite 700
Madison, WI 53703
Voice: 608-267-0214
Toll free: 800-928-8778
FAX: 608-267-0368
TTY: 888-758-6049
Website: www.disabilityrightswi.org



**Wisconsin Board for People with
Developmental Disabilities**

101 East Wilson Street, Room 219
Madison, WI 53703
Voice: 608-266-7826
Toll free: 888-332-1677
Website: www.wi-bpdd.org



**Wisconsin Coalition of
Independent Living Centers**

3810 Milwaukee Street
Madison, WI 53714
Voice/Text: 608-444-3842
TTY: 800-362-9877
Website: www.il-wisconsin.net



**Wisconsin Government
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