Student Voting Guide for Texas

2015 Registration Deadlines and Election Dates
General Election Registration Deadline: 30 days before Election Day—October 5
Early Voting is Available from October 19–30
General Election: November 3

Voter registration forms, polling place locations, and more information can be found at www.votetexas.gov

What Type of ID Do I Need to Register?
Texas’ voter registration form asks for your Texas driver’s license or ID number, or the last four digits of your Social Security Number. Failure to provide this information could lead to you having to show additional identification when you vote that shows your picture or your name and address. Make sure to provide this information on the registration form so the state can verify your identity and you don’t run into problems when you cast your ballot.

What Type of ID Do I Need to Vote?
• All voters (not just first-time voters) in Texas must present photo ID when voting in person. Election officials will match the name on the photo ID to the official list of registered voters. If the name on the ID does not exactly match but is substantially similar to the name on the official list of registered voters, the voter will be permitted to vote as long as the voter signs an affidavit stating that the voter is the same person on the list of registered voters.
• Acceptable ID includes: A driver’s license, election identification certificate, or personal identification card issued by the Texas Department of Public Safety that has not yet expired or that expired no earlier than 60 days before the date of presentation; a U.S. military identification card that contains the person’s photograph; a U.S. passport that has not expired or that expired no earlier than 60 days before the date of presentation; a license to carry a concealed handgun issued by the Department of Public Safety that has not expired or that expired no earlier than 60 days before the date of presentation.

Register at School or Home?
Students have two choices about where to register to vote:

School residence:
• Students attending college in Texas may register to vote at their school address if they presently intend to make it their residence and to return there after any temporary absence. They do not have to plan to reside at that address permanently or after graduation.

Home residence:
• Some students may choose to register or remain registered at their home (prior) address in Texas or outside the state if they intend to return there after college. In this case, a student may need to vote by absentee ballot.
• Texas residents who move away for college can keep their Texas voting residency so long as they still consider Texas the location of their primary residence and do not register or declare residency elsewhere. These students may request to vote early by mail.

For other states’ registration information visit: www.campusvoteproject.org/studentguides

The Higher Education Act requires most colleges and universities to make a good faith effort to distribute voter registration forms to every student. Does yours?
How Can I Vote?

Vote Early by Mail (Formerly Absentee Voting):
• In Texas, voters may only vote by mail if they will be away from their county on Election Day and during the in-person early voting period; are sick or disabled; are at least 65 years old on Election Day; or are confined in jail not serving a sentence for a felony. Voters must apply in writing to their county elections official by printing and mailing either the official state form or the Federal Post Card Application.

Vote early in person:
• Voters in Texas may vote early in person starting the 17th day before Election Day. If that day falls on a Saturday, the first day moves to the next business day. The early voting period ends the 4th day before Election Day.

On Election Day at the polls
• The polls are open from 7 a.m. until 7 p.m.

Common Questions

Will voting in Texas affect my federal financial aid?
Where you register to vote will not affect federal financial aid such as Pell Grants and Perkins or Stafford loans or your dependency status regarding FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid).

Will I lose my scholarship if I register to vote in Texas?
Generally, no. If you receive scholarship money from a state, county, town, or a private entity (i.e., an entity other than the federal government) you should confirm that residency in a particular place is not a requirement of the scholarship and/or that voter registration in Texas will not affect your eligibility.

Will registering to vote in Texas affect my driver’s license or car registration?
No. Texas does not require newly registered voters to obtain a Texas driver’s license or register their vehicles there.

Will registering to vote in Texas prevent my parents from claiming me as a dependent on their taxes?
No. Students are often told that registering to vote in a different state from their parents will make them lose their dependency status. This is not true. Where you register to vote will have no effect on your parents’ tax status.

Does being an out-of-state student for tuition purposes affect my right to vote in my college community?
No. You may choose to vote in your college community or back home regardless of your tuition status.

According to the U.S. Supreme Court, students have the right to register and vote in their college towns if they meet the same requirements as everyone else. Misinformation, such as claims that registering to vote at school may jeopardize eligibility for financial aid or insurance, are sometimes used to discourage students from voting locally.

This Guide was prepared by FELN staff who are not licensed to practice law in Texas and FELN intends that the information contained herein is used only as a general guide. This document should not be used as a substitute for consultation with a licensed Texas legal professional.

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