

# PENNSYLVANIA VOTER PROTECTION QUIZ

Prepared by Vote for Homes and Advancement Project

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## Voter Registration

**True or False: You can be prevented from voting if you are homeless.**

**FALSE:** You cannot be prevented from voting if you are homeless. Just register to vote with the address of a shelter or program that will let you receive mail.

**True or False: You can only register to vote if you are 18.**

**FALSE:** You can register to vote before your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday as long as you turn 18 on or before the very next election.

**True or False: You can vote while you are in prison if you are serving time for a misdemeanor only.**

**TRUE:** You can vote from a penal institution by absentee ballot if you are convicted of a misdemeanor. To get an absentee ballot, you must fill out an absentee ballot request form/application and return it by the appropriate deadline.

**True or False: You cannot vote if you have a prior felony conviction.**

**FALSE:** In Pennsylvania, people with felony convictions on their record can vote as long as they are not actually *serving time* for a felony conviction when they vote or on Election Day. The law requiring people with felony convictions to wait five years after release before voting was eliminated in 2000. Now, all people convicted of felonies can register as soon as they are released, so long as they are not in a halfway house on *pre-release* status.

**True or False: You cannot vote if you're on probation, parole, or house arrest.**

**FALSE:** People who are on probation, parole, or house arrest can vote. Also, people who are awaiting trial can vote, even if in prison. The only time a person convicted of a felony cannot vote is when s/he is serving her/his sentence *behind bars* or is on pre-release status.

**True or False: Registering to vote signs you up for jury duty.**

**Not Necessarily.** When you register to vote, you are put on the list of people who may be asked to serve jury duty. However, you are also put on the list when you apply for a driver's license.

**True or False: You cannot vote in Pennsylvania if you were convicted of a felony in another state and that state did not restore your voting eligibility.**

**FALSE:** Even if you were convicted of a felony in one of the few states that permanently takes away voting eligibility, because Pennsylvania does *not do that*, if you are a resident of Pennsylvania and you meet all of the other requirements for becoming a voter, you can register.

**True or False: College students are always considered residents of the city and state where their parents live – especially if their parents claim them as dependents on their federal income tax form.**

**FALSE:** A student has choices. S/he can be a registered voter in the city and state where s/he attends college or in her/his former city and state of residence. If you choose to remain registered in the state where you used to live, you can vote in that state by absentee ballot.

When deciding what state to register in, consider what registration will say about your residence because your official place of residence may affect other aspects of your life, such as your car insurance premiums and residency-based scholarships.

**Election Day**

**True or False: People are not allowed to have help inside the voting booth.**

**FALSE:** If you are unable to read the information on the machine or the ballot for any reason, or if you cannot operate the machine without help, you are entitled to assistance. Just fill out the *Declaration of Assistance* form available at your polling place on Election Day, then choose someone to help you.

**True or False: Anyone you want can assist you inside the voting booth. FALSE:** While you have the right to choose the person who will help you, your employer, an agent of your employer, your union leader, an agent of your union or the Judge of Elections **CANNOT** be your assistance provider.

**True or False: In Pennsylvania, you can only vote in English.**

**FALSE:** The Voting Rights Act of 1965 (Federal law) requires Philadelphia County, the city of Reading in Berks County and some wards and divisions in Allentown, to provide ballots, poll workers, information, and other resources in Spanish and English.

**True or False: You can see what is on the ballot before you vote.**

**TRUE:** Election officials must post sample ballots in or around the polling place on Election Day. The sample ballot is often printed on colored paper so that it's easy to see.

**True or False: You can bring your children into the polls with you.**

**TRUE:** Bringing your kids with you on Election Day helps teach the next generation that voting is important; and while you can enter the polling place with more than one child/minor(s), only one of them can go into the voting booth with you.

**True or False: You must have ID to vote.**

**TRUE and FALSE:** If you are a first time voter *who registered by mail* (Pennsylvania considers voter registration applications submitted through voter registration drives to be delivered by mail) or if you are voting for the first time at a polling site, you must show ID. If you forget your ID or if you

don't have ID, you can vote by a paper ballot called a provisional ballot. Your provisional ballot will be counted if election officials can match the signature on your voter registration to the signature you add to the outside of the envelope in which you will place your provisional ballot.

**True or False: Your voter ID card can be used as ID when you vote.**

**TRUE:** You *can* use your voter ID card as ID when you vote. If you don't receive your voter card 14 days after you registered, or if you've lost your voter ID card, call your local voter registration office to ask for a new card. Some other acceptable forms of ID include: PA driver's license, any ID issued by PENNDOT, a passport, Armed forces ID, an Employee ID, a utility bill, a bank statement, or a paycheck – if these last three show your current address. Just remember, if you don't have ID, you are still allowed to vote by provisional ballot!

**True or False: You can take as much time as you need to cast your ballot.**

**Not Necessarily:** Pennsylvania voters have the right to remain in the voting booth for up to three minutes and may be given more time by election officials if other voters are not waiting to vote.

**True or False: You can vote if your name is not on the rolls.**

**TRUE:** If your name is not on the rolls but you believe you are a registered voter, ask the poll workers to check the supplemental list. If your name is not on this list either, ask the poll workers to help you figure out if you are at the right polling place. They can compare your home address to its designated polling place. If it turns out you are in the right polling place, ask for a Provisional Ballot.

**True or False: You can use your Student ID to vote on Election Day if you are a first-time voter.**

**TRUE:** Student IDs are valid forms of ID for first-time voters. However, the ID must be current and valid.

**True or False: You should vote by absentee ballot even if you can make it to the polls on Election Day.**

**FALSE:** If you receive and/or cast an absentee ballot but are able to vote in-person on Election Day, you must present yourself at your polling place. Take your absentee ballot with you (if you have not already sent it in), then tell the Judge of Elections you have the absentee ballot and would like to void it. You will be given an affidavit to sign, stating that you have voided your absentee ballot and will be voting by regular ballot (on the machine). If you have already sent in your absentee ballot, ask the poll workers to look for your name on the absentee ballot list, then ask the poll worker to mark your name/ballot as "void" so that you can vote on the machines.

**Voter Intimidation and Suppression**

**True or False: A police officer can always be within 10 feet of the polling place during the election.**

**FALSE:** A commissioned police officer, whether in uniform or in citizen's clothes, may not be within 100 feet of the polling place during the election unless the officer is voting, serving a warrant, or is called upon to preserve the peace.

**True or False: You can be turned away from the polls if you are in line at 8:00pm.**

**FALSE:** You are entitled to vote if you are in line, either inside or outside the polling place, at poll closing time (8:00pm) even if you have not reached the voting machine.

**True or False: Your vote can be challenged based on your temporary mailing address if you are homeless.**

**FALSE:** You are allowed to register to vote and cast a ballot using a temporary mailing address if you are homeless. Your vote cannot be successfully challenged for this reason alone.

**True or False: Poll watchers can always come inside the voting booth with you to cast your ballot for you.**

**Not Necessarily.** The only time someone can cast your ballot for you is if you are physically unable to do so yourself. If you need help reading, writing, or operating the machine, you can request assistance; the level of assistance you receive should be dependent on your needs. For example, if you only need instructions on how to operate the machine, the person giving you those instructions should not enter the booth with you. On the other hand, if you need help operating the machine or reading the ballot, a person of your choosing can enter the booth with you to help you read the information but they should not vote for you because you alone have the right to decide who to vote for.

**True or False: You cannot vote in the General Election if you did not select a political party on your voter registration application.**

**FALSE:** You do not have to pick a political party in order to vote in a General Election. You only have to pick a political party ahead of time if you want to vote in a PRIMARY election. If you did not select a party when you registered, you can amend your voter registration information to add one.

**True or False: You cannot vote if you have unpaid parking tickets, owe child support, or any money to any city, state or federal agency.**

**FALSE:** You cannot be prevented from *registering or voting* because you owe any city, state or federal agency some money. If anyone asks you about your personal debts at or near the polling place, tell the Judge of Elections when you get inside!

**True or False: Poll workers and other election officials can require voters to show ID while they're standing in line – otherwise they will not be allowed into the polling place.**

**FALSE:** There is no federal or state law requiring voters to show their ID to *anyone* while they are standing in line. If you are part of the category of voters who is required to show ID before voting, you are entitled to show your ID once you get inside the polling place. If someone approaches you

demanding to see your ID while you're in line, tell them you will take care of it inside - then tell the Judge of Elections what happened when you get in!

**True or False: If election officials anticipate a lot of voters will show up on Election Day, people can be asked to vote on two separate days in order to help alleviate the crowds.**

**FALSE:** This is a common trick to try to get voters to stay home on Election Day. If you get a flyer or a phone call telling you that some voters are being asked to vote on any day other than Election Day, DO NOT believe it! If this happens to you, tell someone.

**True or False: People handing out information about who to vote for and members of the general public can stand as close to the entrance of the polling place as they want, as long as they are not blocking the door.**

**FALSE:** Only voters, election officers, official poll watchers (they will have a special certificate), people providing assistance to voters in need, and police officers who are voting, serving a warrant or have been called upon to preserve the peace, can be *within 10 feet* of the polling place. If you see non-voters crowding near the polling place, let the Judge of Election know when you get inside.

**True or False: "Voter intimidation" only involves physical threats that take place on Election Day.**

**FALSE:** "Voter intimidation" comes in many forms, can take place in the days leading up to the election, and can involve anything designed to make you believe or feel like you should not or cannot vote on Election Day. Broadly speaking, it is often accompanied by efforts designed to impede or interfere with your right to vote, including phone calls telling you to vote on a different day, flyers telling you your polling place is closed, people videotaping your every move at or near the polling place, people with large dogs blocking sidewalks at or near the polling place, and much more. If you see or experience any form of voter intimidation, call your local voter registration office immediately.

**True or False: New federal laws require some voters to show more than one kind of ID before they can vote.**

**FALSE:** There is no federal law requiring voters to show more than one kind of ID in order to vote. Federal law and Pennsylvania state election law require certain voters to show one kind of ID before voting. The state has created a list of approved ID's that can be used for these purposes. Once you have shown a valid ID from this list, you do not have to show a second form of ID.

**True or False: If you register to vote, your Social Security Number or your Driver's License Number becomes available to the public.**

**FALSE:** While the new Pennsylvania voter registration application requires you to provide either the last four digits of your social security number or the number from your PennDOT ID, the Board of Elections is not permitted to share this information with the general public. Any public list of voters will not include this information.

## After the Election

### **True or False: You can check to see if your vote by provisional ballot was counted.**

**TRUE:** In Pennsylvania, you can call 1-877-VOTES-PA three days after the election to determine if your provisional ballot was counted, partially counted or not counted at all. If it was not counted, you should be told why.

### **True or False: Your absentee ballot can be challenged.**

**TRUE:** Your absentee ballot can be challenged if it turns out you were able to vote in-person on Election Day. In Pennsylvania the public is entitled to know who voted by absentee ballot. For this reason, the Board of Elections makes a list of absentee voters publicly available – and this is how someone can double check to see if you voted absentee when you could have voted in-person!