

**I**f you are a U.S. citizen, will be at least 18 years old on Election Day, and meet your state's residency requirements for voters, then you should exercise your fundamental right to vote on November 6, 2012. But you should also make sure that you are well aware of your rights at the voting booth. Unfortunately, in past elections, many South Asians have faced challenges at the polls due to voter intimidation and suppression and have encountered difficulties in casting their ballot due to language barriers. As a result, many have felt discouraged from participating in the electoral process. Various laws and agencies exist to ensure that all individuals eligible to vote have access to the ballot box.

**This guide answers frequently asked questions about protecting your right to vote on Election Day and where to turn if you feel your rights are violated.**

### **DON'T TAKE THE RIGHT TO VOTE FOR GRANTED!**

South Asians have not always had the right to vote in the U.S. People like Bhagat Singh Thind, Akshay Kumar Mozumdar and Kharaiti Ram Samras and others challenged laws that prevented South Asians from being able to vote in the early 1900s. It was not until 1965 when most immigration and naturalization restrictions affecting South Asians were lifted. Our community's struggle for voting rights is similar to that of other communities of color. It should remind us of the importance of exercising the right to vote on Election Day.

### **YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO...**

- Know your proper poll site and precinct
- Know your rights through posted Voter Bill of Rights signs
- Know how to cast your vote through posted voter instructions
- Bring literature into the voting booth to help you vote or know your rights
- Have a reasonable amount of time to cast your vote
- Receive language assistance
- Vote if you are in line when the polls close
- Be free from intimidation or partisan influence
- Get courteous and non-partisan assistance from poll workers
- Vote by provisional ballot if your name is missing from registration lists or you did not bring required identification
- Be excused from work for up to 2 hours on Election Day to vote



**South Asian Americans Leading Together**  
[www.saalt.org](http://www.saalt.org) ♦ [info@saalt.org](mailto:info@saalt.org)

### **SAALT'S 2012 ELECTION RESOURCES**

- *Know your Rights on Election Day*
- *How Can I get Involved?*
- *A Guide to the Presidential Election*

**We encourage duplication and dissemination. Please visit [saalt.org](http://saalt.org) to download these materials for free.**

Images courtesy of Rini Art®

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# **KNOW YOUR RIGHTS ON ELECTION DAY**



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# ELECTIONS 2012

## I have registered, but when I went to vote, I was told by a poll worker that I wasn't registered to vote at my polling site.

- Before Election Day, verify your registration and polling site by contacting your local elections office. For the contact information of your local elections office, visit [www.866ourvote.org/state](http://www.866ourvote.org/state).
- If you are registered to vote but a poll worker tells you that you are not on Election Day, ask the poll worker to double-check the list and confirm that you are at the correct polling site for your address. In many states, you are required to be at the correct polling site to cast your ballot.
- If you are at the correct polling site but are not on the registration list, the poll worker should offer you a "provisional ballot." A provisional ballot will allow you to cast your vote but will only be counted after the election and once your voter eligibility has been verified. Be sure to ask the poll worker if there are additional steps you have to take after casting a provisional ballot.

## Do I need to show ID or proof of citizenship to vote?

- It depends – in most states, you are not required to show ID at your polling site unless it is your first time voting and you registered by mail.
- Yet, an increasing number of states (including Connecticut, Ohio, Virginia, and Washington) do require some form of non-photo proof of ID while other states (including Florida, Georgia, Michigan, and Texas) require government-issued photo ID be shown to a poll worker by all voters. To check your state's voter ID requirements, visit [www.866ourvote.org/state](http://www.866ourvote.org/state).
- If you show up on Election Day without an ID in states that require it, you can still vote through a "provisional ballot" (described above). To be on the safe side, if you have ID, bring it to your polling site.
- Although a few states (Alabama, Arizona, Georgia, and Tennessee) have recently passed proof of citizenship laws in order to register to vote, it is still illegal for a poll worker to ask you to verify your citizenship status at the polls.

## Can I get help with the voting machines?

- Yes – you can get assistance using voting machines or casting your ballot by bringing a person of your choice (except your employer or union representative) into the voting booth to help you.
- Voting instructions should also be posted at your poll site and you can ask for help from a poll worker.

## Do I need to be fluent in English in order to vote?

- No – there is no English fluency requirement in order to vote. If you speak limited English, you can always get help by bringing

a person of your choice (except your employer or union representative) into the voting booth to help translate the ballot for you.

- Currently, a few jurisdictions should provide written translations of voting materials (such as voter registration forms, election notices, signs at polling places, voting instructions, newspaper advertisements, or ballots) in certain South Asian languages (see chart below). In some jurisdictions, you may need to request these materials before the election.
- In addition, these jurisdictions should also have oral assistance (such as bilingual poll workers or voter hotline staff) in additional South Asian languages in targeted voter precincts.

## What if someone tries to intimidate or harass me while I am voting?

- If your right to vote is challenged based upon your race, religion, or ethnicity or by someone who does not personally

know if you are eligible to vote, then you may be experiencing voter intimidation or harassment.

- If voter intimidation happens to you, inform a poll worker immediately. If a poll worker is causing the problem, record and report any such incidents (see below).
- ### What can I do if my voting rights are violated?
- Several organizations and government agencies have hotlines where voters can immediately report voting rights violations, including the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights (1-866-OUR-VOTE) and the Department of Justice (1-800-253-3931).
  - You can also report incidents to election monitors who may be stationed at your polling site.
  - Be sure to write down all relevant information about the incident, including: the date and time; polling location; name(s) of the individual(s) involved; a summary of what was said or occurred; and names and contact information of witnesses.

## Language Assistance for South Asian Voters in Selected Jurisdictions

Locality	Available Written Translations	Available Oral Language Assistance	To Request/Access Translated Written Materials or Hotlines
Chicago, IL	Hindi; limited information in Gujarati and Urdu	Gujarati, Hindi, Urdu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General voter information/website (Hindi translation available): <a href="http://www.chicagoelections.com/">http://www.chicagoelections.com/</a></li> <li>• "Fast Fact" materials available in Gujarati and Urdu: <a href="http://www.chicagoelections.com/">http://www.chicagoelections.com/</a></li> <li>• Chicago voter hotline on Election Day: (312) 269-7870</li> </ul>
Cook County, IL (Suburban)	Hindi; limited information in Gujarati and Urdu	Gujarati, Hindi, Urdu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voter registration form (Hindi): <a href="http://www.cookcountyclerk.com/elections/DocumentLibrary/Hindi%20Voter%20Registration%20Form.pdf">http://www.cookcountyclerk.com/elections/DocumentLibrary/Hindi%20Voter%20Registration%20Form.pdf</a></li> <li>• Disabled voter form (Hindi): <a href="http://www.cookcountyclerk.com/elections/DocumentLibrary/Disabled%20voter%20Hindi.pdf">http://www.cookcountyclerk.com/elections/DocumentLibrary/Disabled%20voter%20Hindi.pdf</a></li> <li>• To request vote by mail form (Hindi): Call Cook County Clerk's Office - (312) 603-0946</li> <li>• Cook County voter hotline on Election Day (Hindi): (312) 603-6743</li> </ul>
Hamtramck, MI	Bengali	Bengali	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voting instructions (Bengali): <a href="http://www.michigan.gov/documents/sos/ED-125-BN_08-2012_Instrc_for_Voting_Bengali_390981_7.pdf">http://www.michigan.gov/documents/sos/ED-125-BN_08-2012_Instrc_for_Voting_Bengali_390981_7.pdf</a></li> </ul>
Los Angeles County, CA	Hindi	Bengali, Hindi, Gujarati	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General voter information (Hindi): <a href="http://www.lavote.net/VOTER/MULTILINGUAL/PDFS/MAIN_HINDI.PDF">http://www.lavote.net/VOTER/MULTILINGUAL/PDFS/MAIN_HINDI.PDF</a></li> <li>• To request translated materials (Hindi): Call Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk - (800) 481-8683</li> </ul>
New Jersey	Gujarati	Gujarati	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voter registration form (Gujarati): <a href="http://www.state.nj.us/state/elections/form_pdf/voter-regis-forms/voter-reg-form-gujarati-041712.pdf">http://www.state.nj.us/state/elections/form_pdf/voter-regis-forms/voter-reg-form-gujarati-041712.pdf</a></li> <li>• Vote by mail form (Gujarati): <a href="http://www.state.nj.us/state/elections/form_pdf/vote-mail-ballot-gujarti-030212.pdf">http://www.state.nj.us/state/elections/form_pdf/vote-mail-ballot-gujarti-030212.pdf</a></li> </ul>
Queens County, NY	Bengali	Bengali; Hindi; Punjabi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voter registration form (Bengali): <a href="http://vote.nyc.ny.us/pdf/forms/boe/voterreg/voter-regbengali.pdf">http://vote.nyc.ny.us/pdf/forms/boe/voterreg/voter-regbengali.pdf</a></li> <li>• Multilingual voter hotline: Call (866) VOTE-NYC</li> </ul>