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# KNOW YOUR RIGHTS TEXAS

In 2011, the Texas legislature passed new voter photo ID requirements that would make it more difficult for citizens to vote. However, the U.S. Department of Justice refused to pre-clear the new law, which means, for now, the law is not in effect. This issue is now in court and if the law is pre-cleared, much of the information below will change. Here is what the current law says if you're planning to vote in Texas in 2012:

## **VOTER REGISTRATION**

### **Where can I register to vote?**

You may obtain an application from the county voter registrar's office, the secretary of state's office, libraries, many post offices or high schools. You can go to the secretary of state's website and request an official, postage-paid application. You also may register to vote when you apply for or renew your driver's license.

Voter registration forms also can be downloaded from the secretary of state's website and returned to your county's registrar or election official. That form can be found at [www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/voter/reqvr.shtml](http://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/voter/reqvr.shtml). Please note, unlike the official forms you'll find at the registrar's office or your local library, you will be required to affix a stamp before mailing a registration form you download from the website.

### **Where can I find my county's registrar?**

In most Texas counties, the county tax assessor-collector is also the county voter registrar. In some counties, the county clerk or county elections administrator registers voters. To find your county's registrar, visit [www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/voter/votregduties.shtml](http://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/voter/votregduties.shtml) or call the secretary of state's office at 1-800-252-VOTE.

### **When is the deadline to register?**

The application must be received in the county voter registrar's office or postmarked 30 days before an

election for you to be eligible to vote in that election. For the May 29 primary election, the last day to register is April 30. For the July 31 primary runoff election, the last day to register is July 2. For the Nov. 6 general election, the last day to register is Oct. 9.

You will receive a voter registration certificate in the mail after the county voter registrar has processed your voter registration application. Upon receipt of the voter registration certificate, sign it, fold it and keep it in your wallet and take it to the polls with you when you vote.

## **VOTER ID REQUIREMENTS**

### **What do I need to provide when I register to vote?**

To register to vote in Texas, you will be asked to provide your Texas driver's license number or your Texas-issued personal identification number. If you do not have either of these, the form asks you to provide the last four digits of your Social Security number. If you do not provide this information on your voter registration form, you still are eligible to vote, but you will be required to provide proof of your identity at the polling place.

### **Do I need to show ID at the polls?**

Once you register to vote, a voter registration certificate (proof of registration) will be mailed to you within 30 days. When you go to the polls to vote, you will be asked to present your certificate as proof of registration. You may vote without your certificate by signing an affidavit at the polling place and showing some other form of identification (for example, a driver's license, birth certificate or copy of an electric bill). If you lose your certificate, notify your county voter registrar in writing to receive a new one. You will automatically receive a new certificate every two years if you haven't moved from the address at which you are registered.

If you did not provide identification information on your registration form (a driver's license number, state ID number or the last four digits of your Social Security number), you also will be asked to provide one of the following forms of identification at the polls:

- A Texas driver's license or Texas personal identification card. You also may bring a similar document issued to you by an agency of another state, even if the license or card has expired;
- A form of identification that contains your photograph and establishes your identity;
- Your U.S. citizenship papers;
- Your U.S. passport;
- Official mail addressed to you by a government entity;
- A copy of a current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck or other government document that shows your name and address; or
- Any other form of identification prescribed by the Texas secretary of state.

## EARLY VOTING

There are two ways to vote early in the state of Texas—by voting in person during the designated early voting period or by voting by mail.

### Voting early in person:

During the early voting period, voters can go to any open polling place in the county where they are registered to vote. To find a list of early vote polling places, please contact your county's voter registrar's office.

For the May 29 primary election, early voting will begin on May 14 and end on May 25. For the July 31 primary runoff election, early voting will begin on July 23 and end on July 27. For the Nov. 6 general election, early voting will begin on Oct. 22 and end on Nov. 2.

All other voting rules and procedures apply, including eligibility, identification and polling hours.

### Voting early by mail:

You may vote early by mail if:

- You will be away from your county on Election Day and during early voting;
- You are sick or disabled;
- You are 65 years of age or older on Election Day; or
- You are confined in jail, but eligible to vote.

To vote by mail, you will need to submit an application to the clerk/registrar's office in the county where you are registered to vote. To find your county's election official, visit [www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/voter/votregduties.shtml](http://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/voter/votregduties.shtml) or call the secretary of state's office at 1-800-252-VOTE.

You can get an application to vote by mail at the secretary of state's office, at your county voter registrar's office or online at [www.votetexas.gov/early\\_voting.html](http://www.votetexas.gov/early_voting.html). You also can call your local or county office holding the election or the secretary of state's office and request that an application to vote by mail be sent to you.

If you are voting early because of expected absence, you may apply in person for a ballot by mail before the early voting in person period begins (usually the 17th day before the election). You may send your application for a ballot by mail as early as 60 days before an election. This will give you plenty of time to receive your ballot, mark it and mail it back to the registrar's office. Applications must be received (not postmarked) by the last day of the application period. For the May 29 primary election, your application must be received by the registrar by May 22. For the July 31 primary runoff election, your application must be received by the registrar by July 24. For the Nov. 6 general election, your application must be received by the registrar by Oct. 30.

The registrar must receive your marked ballot by 7 p.m. on Election Day or by the fifth day after Election Day if your ballot is submitted from outside the United States.

For more information, please contact [votingrights@afcio.org](mailto:votingrights@afcio.org).

