

# IOWA

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## VOTER REGISTRATION

These resources are current as of 6/19/14. We do our best to periodically update these resources and welcome any comments or questions regarding new developments in the law. Please email us at [advocacy@afj.org](mailto:advocacy@afj.org).

### What's New in This Guide

The following changes/additions have been made since the previous version of this guide:

- ◆ Updated discussion of the state's rules regarding when photo ID is required to register and/or vote

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This guide summarizes key aspects of laws governing voter registration on the *state* level. It is not intended to provide legal advice or to serve as a substitute for legal advice.

In some jurisdictions, city and/or county regulations may also apply to certain political activities. Check with the appropriate local jurisdiction before undertaking any activity.

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## DEADLINES FOR REGISTRATION

### Deadline for registering

- For primary and general elections, regular in-person registration closes at 5 p.m. ten days before the election. For all other elections, registration closes at 5 p.m. eleven days before the election. [Iowa Code § 48A.9\(1\)](#).
- In-person registration is available at the office of the commissioner of elections in the county in which the registrant resides, at a motor vehicle driver's license station, or at any voter registration agency. [Iowa Code § 48A.7](#).

### Does state offer Election Day registration?

- Yes. Voters may register on Election Day by appearing at the polling place for the precinct in which the person resides and completing a voter registration application, making written oath, and providing proof of residence and identity. Iowa [Code § 48A.7A\(1\)\(a\)](#). See below for identification requirements.

### Does state allow by-mail registration?

- Yes. Registration by mail must be received by the commissioner of elections by 5 p.m. on the day registration closes or postmarked no later than 15 days preceding an election. [Iowa Code § 48A.9\(3\)](#).

### May voter register before turning 18?

- A qualified elector may register after the person turns 17½ years of age; however, the registration shall not be effective until the registrant reaches the age of 18. [Iowa Code § 48A.5\(2\)\(c\)](#).

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## PHOTO ID REQUIREMENTS

### Required for registration and voting? If so, what kinds of ID?

- **Registration by Mail:** Voters are required to provide a photo ID only in limited circumstances. New registrants do not need to provide a photo ID if they provide either their Iowa driver's license number ("DLN") or the last four digits of the registrant's social security number ("SSN"). If the voter provides their Iowa DLN or their last four digits of the SSN, the county auditor will verify the identification information provided by the voter through either the Department of Transportation data (if registrant provided DLN) or Social Security Administration data (if registrant provided last four of the SSN) in advance of the election. If the county auditor is not able to verify the identification number provided, or the voter indicates they do not have one of these numbers, the registration is processed but the voter is required to show or mail a copy of one of the following current forms of identification before they are allowed to cast a ballot:
  - Utility bill

- Bank statement
- Paycheck
- Government check
- Other government document.

If a person registers and provides an identification number that cannot be verified as described above and that person appears in person at a polling place on election day, but does not have the ID listed above, they are offered an opportunity to essentially re-register using election day registration procedures described below. The voter can cast a provisional ballot, but should first be offered the election day registration option outlined below.

**Election Day Registration:** To register on election day, voters must provide both proof of identity and proof residency. Under the election day registration framework, if a voter is not able to provide proof of identity, proof of residency or both, then the voter has the option to have another registered voter in the precinct attest to their identity and residency.

An individual registering to vote, either on Election Day or in person before election day, must provide proof of residency and identity. Acceptable photo ID and proof of residence includes:

- A current and valid Iowa driver's license or nonoperator's identification card
- An out-of-state driver's license or nonoperator's identification card
- A United States passport
- A United States military identification card
- An identification card issued by an employer
- A student identification card issued by an Iowa high school or an Iowa postsecondary educational institution

[Iowa Code § 48A.7A\(1\)\(b\)\(1\).](#)

- If the photographic identification does not contain the person's current address in the precinct, the person shall also present one of the following documents that shows the person's name and current address in the precinct:
  - Residential lease;
  - Property tax statement;
  - Utility bill (including cell phone bill);
  - Bank statement;
  - Paycheck; or
  - Check or other document issued by a unit of government.

[Iowa Code § 48A.7A\(1\)\(b\)\(2\).](#)

If an elector cannot provide proof of residence, the information contained in the registration form may be corroborated by written oath from an elector that resides in the same precinct that is signed in front of the appropriate precinct election official. [Iowa Code § 48A.7A\(1\)\(c\).](#)

If a person who is trying to register on election day does not have identification as listed above or an attester, the person is required to cast a provisional ballot. [Iowa Code § 48A.8\(4\)](#).

**Requirement to provide proof of citizenship to register and/or vote?**

- Iowa does not require a voter to provide proof of citizenship



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## VOTER REGISTRATION DRIVES

**May groups “cage” completed registration forms (i.e. asks voters to mail them back to the group, which will then send them to the appropriate county auditors)? If so, may they copy the forms or any of the data included on them? If so, any deadlines for sending the completed forms to the state or to local officials?**

- Individual voters may complete and submit the form directly to the county auditor or groups may cage voter registration forms. Groups should send collected registration forms to the county auditors’ offices or the Secretary of State’s Office as soon as possible.
- Groups may print and make copies of the official Iowa voter registration form available [here](#), or they may contact the Iowa Secretary of State’s Office to purchase copies of the voter registration forms at costs.

**May a group “pre-fill” some or all of the form before sending/giving it to a would-be registrant?**

- No statute, rule, or regulation precludes an organization from filling in information in the registration form before giving the form to a would-be registrant.
- The elector’s original signature is required on each voter registration form.

**May voter registration drive workers assist a voter in completing their registration form?**

- Yes. Voter registration drive workers may assist a voter in completing their registration form. [Iowa Code § 48A.25](#).

**Does state require training of voter registration workers?**

- No, Iowa does not require training of voter registration workers.

**Does state require registration of voter registration drives?**

- No, groups undertaking voter registration drives do not have to register with the Iowa Secretary of State’s Office to hold a voter registration drive.

**Are there requirements that a group must provide information to voters about how they may contact the group to determine the status of their registration?**

- No statute, rule, or regulation requires a group to provide information to voters about how the voter may contact the group to determine the status of their registration.

**May a group pay voter registration drive workers? If so, is it permissible to pay on a per-voter-registered basis?**

- Groups may pay workers to assist others in completing voter registration forms. Iowa law prohibits paying someone based on the number of registration forms or political party affiliations collected. Payment may be made only for a person's time. The Democratic and Republican parties are exempt from this requirement. [Iowa Code § 48A.25](#).

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## ABSENTEE VOTING

### Who may vote by absentee ballot?

- Iowa law allows a registered voter to request an absentee ballot when:
  - The voter expects to be absent on election day during the time the polls are open from the precinct in which the voter is a registered voter;
  - Through illness or physical disability, the voter expects to be prevented from going to the polls and voting on election day; or
  - When the voter expects to be unable to go to the polls and vote on election day.

[Iowa Code § 53.1](#).

- Iowa law does not require the voter to state the reason on the request form. It is the duty of the commissioner to provide an absentee ballot to any person who requests one.

### When can a person request an absentee ballot?

- Any registered voter may apply in person at the county auditor's office not more than 70 days in advance of the election. [Iowa Code § 53.2](#).
- A written application for an absentee ballot must be received by the county auditor no earlier than 70 days prior to the election and no later than 5 p.m. on the Friday before the election. [Iowa Code § 53.2](#).

### Does Iowa allow early voting?

- Yes. Not more than 40 days before the date of a primary or general elections, the county auditor shall provide facilities for absentee voting in person at the auditor's office. [Iowa Code § 53.10](#).

### Can a group petition for an early voting satellite station?

- Yes. A county auditor must establish a satellite absentee voting station upon receipt of a petition signed by not less than 100 eligible electors

requesting one be established at the location described in the petition.  
[Iowa Code § 53.11\(1\)](#).

**Does Iowa require absentee ballot couriers to provide a voter with a receipt?**

- Yes. When an absentee ballot courier retrieves a completed absentee ballot from a voter, the courier shall fill out a receipt to be retained by the voter, which includes:
  - The name of the courier;
  - The date and time the completed absentee ballot was received from the voter;
  - The name and date of the election for which the absentee ballot is being voted;
  - The name of the group for which the courier is acting;
  - A statement that the completed absentee ballot will be delivered to the county auditor within 72 hours or before the closing of the polls on election day, whichever is sooner; and
  - A statement informing the voter that the voter may verify the person collecting the absentee ballot is a registered absentee ballot courier by contacting the county auditor's office.

[Iowa Code § 53.17\(4\)](#).

**May a group “pre-fill” some or all of the absentee ballot request form before sending/giving it to a would be voter?**

- Yes. Groups working to collect absentee ballot requests may print voter information on the official form or apply stickers with the voter's name and address. No one may preprint or pre-address an absentee ballot application with instructions to send the absentee ballot to any person except the voter. [Iowa Code § 53.2\(2\)](#).

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**VOTER ACCESSIBILITY**

**Does Iowa allow for curbside voting for disabled voters?**

- Yes. If a voter is unable to enter the building where the polling place is located because of a disability, curbside voting is available at each precinct. Two precinct officials, one from each political party, may take voting materials to the individuals to have the ballot marked in his or her

vehicle. [Iowa Code § 49.90](#).

- If a voter needs help marking his or her ballot, the voter may choose any person to assist in marking the ballot. Alternatively, the voter can request assistance from two precinct officials, one official from each political party, to assist in marking the ballot. [Iowa Code § 49.90](#).

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## CONTACT INFORMATION FOR STATE AND LOCAL AGENCIES

**Iowa Secretary of State**  
Voter Registration  
First Floor, Lucas Building  
321 E. 12<sup>th</sup> St.  
Des Moines, Iowa 50319  
Tel: 515.281.8849  
Fax: 515.281.7142  
<http://www.sos.state.ia.us/>

**Directory of County Auditors:**

<http://www.sos.state.ia.us/publications/countydirectory/index.html>

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## FOR FURTHER ASSISTANCE

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**For assistance regarding these resources or for more information about federal law, please contact our attorney one-on-one counseling service:**

**Email: [advocacy@afj.org](mailto:advocacy@afj.org)  
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