

Easy Voter Guide

By Disability Rights Idaho

**MAKE
YOUR
VOICE
HEARD.**



VOTE!

www.disabilityrightsidaho.org

1-866-262-3462



Disability Rights Idaho

Make YOUR VOICE heard.

An Easy Voter Guide by Disability Rights Idaho

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About this guide

All eligible Idahoans have a right to make their voice heard by voting. A disability should not prevent you from exercising your right to vote.

This Easy Voter Guide is published by Disability Rights Idaho. The purpose of this guide is to explain voting so that all eligible people with disabilities in Idaho can have their voice heard.

This guide is not legal advice. If you have specific questions about your legal rights related to voting, please contact Disability Rights Idaho at 1-866-262-3462.

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“This right to vote is the basic right without which all others are meaningless. It gives people, people as individuals, control over their own destinies.”

- President Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965

Definitions

Voting can sometimes involve unfamiliar words. The following is a short overview of some of the words you might see while registering to vote, requesting an absentee ballot, early voting, or casting a vote.

Absentee ballot: a ballot cast by a voter who cannot make it to the polls on election day.

Reasonable Accommodation: Something a polling site does to make sure voters with disabilities have the same access to voting as other voters. A disabled voter can ask for things like using an Assistance Terminal, curbside voting, braille ballots, or the assistance of another person in the voting booth.

Affiliation: In terms of voting, this usually refers to voters who identify with a political party.

Assistance Terminal: An assistance terminal is sometimes called a “ballot marking device” or “voter assistance device.” This machine is designed to assist voters with disabilities to vote privately and independently, including voters who have difficulty seeing or marking a ballot. It must be available in every precinct in Idaho.

Ballot: The official presentation of all the choices you get to make during an election. A ballot can be on paper or

electronic. This is what you mark when you make a choice about whom or what to vote for.

Candidate: A person you can choose during the election to hold a specific office. Often, there are many candidates attempting to win the same position.

Caucus: Some states have a caucus to choose their political candidates instead of a primary election. Caucuses are meetings run by political parties that are held at the county, district, or precinct level. The purpose of the meeting is to choose the party's candidate for the general election. The political party chooses how they want to operate their caucus. Idaho currently has a caucus for presidential candidates. Idaho has a primary election for other candidates.

Usually, you can only participate in the caucus for the same political party you register with. You can choose a party when you register or you can choose to be "unaffiliated" which means you do not identify with any party.

For example, if you identify and register as a Republican, you can only participate in the Republican Party caucus. If you identify and register as a Democrat, you can only participate in the Democratic Party caucus. If you choose to stay "unaffiliated," a party can choose to let you participate in its caucus if you do not make the choice to

register with a Party. It can also choose to not allow “unaffiliated” voters to participate in its caucus.

County Clerk: A county official who is responsible for managing the election in their county.

Drop Box: A locked container, either indoor or outdoor, where voters can return an absentee ballot.

General Election: An election where candidates are elected to office. Generally, the candidates for a general election are selected during the primary election earlier in the year. The presidential election is an example of a general election. School board member elections are another example.

Home Address: The address where you live. Your home address may be different than your mailing address where you get mail. For example, if you have a P.O. Box, this would be different from your home address.

Mailing Address: The address where you receive mail. Your mailing address may be different than your home address where you live. For example, if you have a P.O. Box, this would be different from your home address.

Polling Place: The place where voters go to cast in-person ballots. You are assigned a polling place based on

your home address.

Precinct: Each county is divided into smaller sections for elections. These sections are called “precincts” and help determine which races and issues you can vote for based on your location. Some elected officials represent small groups of people in a small area, and only those voters can choose that official. Usually, you must vote on election day in the precinct where you live.

Primary Election: Elections that help choose which candidate will represent a party at a general election. A state may either have a caucus or a primary election to choose candidates. Currently, Idaho has a caucus for presidential candidates and a primary election for other candidates.

Proof of Identity: A document from the list provided under “How do you register to vote when you vote in person?” on page 15 that shows you are who you say you are.

Proof of Residence: A document from the list provided under “How do you register to vote?” on pages 15-16 that shows your home address. This helps determine your precinct voting location.

Vote: A mark on an official ballot indicating your choice for a candidate or ballot question. To be counted, the

mark must follow the rules shown on the ballot.

Write-in: A vote for a candidate who was not listed on the ballot. In every election you can write your own choice if you do not like any of the candidates listed. For your write-in vote to count, the candidate must file paperwork with the State saying they want to hold office, and they are qualified.

What is voting?

Voting is when people in Idaho and across the country choose our government and the laws that affect us. Voting is your decision to choose an elected official or to make a choice about a law that might be passed based on what *you* think is best for you and best for the country.

Why is voting important? Voting is one of our most important rights as citizens. Voting gives us a say about the laws that impact our lives and is one way we can make our voices heard. By voting you get to help decide who is in charge of your city, state, and country.

What do you vote on? You typically vote on who will become an elected official. These elected officials lead parts of the government. For example, your school board member, your city council member, your Mayor, the Governor of Idaho, and the President of the United States are all elected officials.

You also vote on issues during an election. An example of an issue might be whether we should give schools more money or give people more rights.

How do you choose who to vote for? Deciding who and what to vote for can be hard. Many candidates run for office and each one has different ideas on what the government should do. You can vote for the candidates

and ideas you agree with most.

You can find information about a candidate or an issue by talking to the people you trust, reading a newspaper or book, watching the news, or by finding reliable information online.

Are you eligible to vote?

In Idaho, all voters must be:

- a United States citizen.
- at least 18 years old.
- an Idaho resident for at least 30 days.

You can still vote if:

- you live at a residential assisted living facility, skilled nursing facility, or similar facility.
- you are a patient at any type of hospital (including psychiatric hospitals).
- you have a guardian or a conservator.
- a judge has ordered a mental health hold.

See page 32 for more information about voting from a facility or hospital.

You cannot vote in Idaho if:

- You are currently in jail or prison.
- You have a felony conviction and have not completed your sentence. *
- A judge has determined specifically that you are not allowed to vote.

* If you have completed your felony sentence, including prison time, any probation, parole, or extended supervision you may be allowed to vote again. Certain felonies affect this, and you should consult an attorney

about your right to vote. You can register to vote before the election or on the day of the election.

How do you register to vote when you vote in person?

In Idaho you can register to vote at the polls when you vote in person. You can do this either on election day or in early voting. To register to vote at the polls in person you must provide both proof of residence and a photo identification card.

Photo Identification includes one of the following:

- Idaho driver's license
- Idaho ID card (can get for free to vote!)
- U.S. Passport
- ID card issued by a federal agency (with photo)
- Tribal ID card
- Concealed Carry License from a county sheriff in Idaho

Proof of residence is any one of these documents that has your home address where you live. This includes:

- Idaho driver's license
- Idaho ID card (can get for free to vote!)
- Tribal ID card
- Concealed Carry License
- Current proof of insurance
- Deed of trust, mortgage, lease or rental agreement
- Property tax assessment, bill or receipt
- Utility bill (no cell phone bills)
- Bank or credit card statement

- Paystub, paycheck, government-issued check
- Intake documents from a residential care or assisted living
- Enrollment papers from Idaho high school or a higher education institution
- Letter from a social service agency

You will also need to fill out an application that includes:

- Full name and sex
- Residence address
- Mailing address
- Amount of time before registration you have lived in Idaho
- Confirming you are a U.S. citizen
- Confirming you have the right to vote
- Last address where you were registered to vote (if you have registered before)
- Date of birth
- Current Idaho driver's license or ID card number OR and last four of your social security number.

How do you register to vote before an election?

You can register to vote online at <https://voteidaho.gov/>, on a paper form, or in-person at your county elections office. You also need to update your registration if you move, change your name or mailing address, want to select or change your political party, or have not voted

within the last 4 years. You can find your county elections office at <https://voteidaho.gov/>.

You must have a current and valid Driver's License or Identification Card issued by the Idaho Department of Motor Vehicles to register or update your registration online.

You will also need to show proof of identification and residency. (See forms listed above on pages 15 and 16.)

You can get a paper registration form from:

- your county elections office.
- the Vote Idaho website: <https://voteidaho.gov/>.
- Disability Rights Idaho: 1-866-262-3462.

Check your voter registration status by going to the Vote Idaho website: <https://voteidaho.gov/>

****You must register 25 days before an election.****

What is your party affiliation?

A party affiliation is when you officially select which political party you want to identify with. In Idaho there are four recognized parties: the Republican Party, Democratic Party, Constitution Party, and Libertarian Party. You can also select "Unaffiliated." Unaffiliated means that you don't identify with any party. When you register to vote, if you select a party, it will become your official party affiliation.

Just because you registered with a political party, it does not mean that you can only vote for candidates of that party. You can still vote for any candidate during a general election.

Choosing your party affiliation is most important during caucuses and primary elections. In Idaho, a political party can choose to allow only those who register with it to vote in its primary or participate in its caucus. In other words, if you do not register as a Republican, you will not be able to vote in their primary or participate in the caucus. Also, if you register as a Republican, you may only participate in the Republican caucus. You can also only vote for Republican candidates during the **primary** election. Or, if you are registered as a Democrat, you can participate in the Democratic caucus and can only vote for Democratic candidates during the **primary** election.

Remember, you can vote for whoever you want in the general election!

You can only vote in one party's primary election or participate in one party's caucus. However, a Party may choose to open their caucus or primary election process to unaffiliated voters. If so, you might be able to vote in a primary even if you do not choose a party.

What is Early Voting?

Early voting is an opportunity to cast your vote in-person before election day. Not every county offers early voting though, so check with your county elections office to see if this is an option for you.

Early voting locations are normally open 15 to 22 days before the election and close 4 days before the election. They are also only open during normal business hours on weekdays. During this time, you can go to any early voting location in your county and cast your vote. **You can also register to vote at an early voting location, but you will need proof of identification and proof of residence (see pages 15-16).**

How do you vote before the election?

First, register to vote following the instructions on pages 16-17 of this guide.

Check to see if your county offers early voting. You can find contact information for your county elections office at <https://voteidaho.gov>.

If your county offers early voting, you can go to the early voting location during the early voting period and vote in person.

If your county does not offer early voting, call your county elections office, and ask if an “Absent Elector’s Voting Place” is an option in your county.

An “Absent Elector’s Voting Place” is just like any other polling place and must follow the same state and federal election laws. However, at some locations you must make an appointment or other special plans before voting. To learn more about this choice, contact your county elections office.

What is Absentee Voting?

Absentee voting allows you to vote before Election Day if you are not able to vote in-person. **To vote using an absentee ballot you must register in advance,** request an absentee ballot, fill out the paper ballot when it arrives and return it to your county election office by mail or in-person before the deadline. Just remember that your request is only good for one year.

How do you get an absentee ballot?

You must register to vote before requesting and receiving an absentee ballot. You can check your registration status by going to the Vote Idaho website at <https://voteidaho.gov/>. Instructions on how to register to vote are on pages 16-17 of this guide.

Request the form: You can request an absentee ballot by filling out an absentee ballot request form. You must request your ballot from the county where you registered. You can get an absentee ballot request form from:

- your county elections office.
- the Vote Idaho website: <https://voteidaho.gov/>.

Fill out the request form: fill out the form completely.

Verify your identity: You must sign the absentee ballot

request form if you are filling out a paper copy. You will need to provide your driver's license number or state ID number, and the last four digits of your social security for all online request forms.

Submit your request form: You can fill out your absentee ballot request online, through the mail, or in-person at your county elections office. Make sure your county elections office gets your completed request form no later than **5:00 p.m., 11 days before the election.**

How do you fill out your absentee ballot?

In most situations you will receive your absentee ballot by mail. Your county elections office will send your ballot to the "mailing address" you listed on the request form. In special situations (such as being in the hospital), you can also request the county elections office hand-deliver your absentee ballot to you.

When your absentee ballot arrives, it will be in a sealed envelope, along with a return envelope. Open the envelope, remove the ballot, and fill it out.

Remember:

- You do not have to vote for every race. If you don't want to vote for anyone, you can leave that section blank.
- You can write in a candidate for any race.

- If you vote for more choices than allowed, your vote will not count.
- You have the right to a new ballot if you make a mistake or lose your ballot. To get a new ballot, contact your county elections office.

If you need help filling out the ballot, you can ask almost anyone for help. Please note, your employer, a representative of your union, or a political candidate listed on the ballot **cannot** help you with your ballot.

How do you return your absentee ballot?

Seal your ballot in the return envelope: Fold your ballot to hide your choices, place it in the return envelope, and seal the envelope. If there is a section left blank, **include it** in your envelope.

Sign the envelope: You **must** sign the back of the envelope. When county officials receive your envelope, they will confirm your signature by checking it against your voter registration or driver's license signature. **You must sign the envelope, or your vote will not count!**

Return the envelope: Once you have sealed your absentee ballot in the return envelope and signed it, return it to your county elections' office. **To count your vote, your ballot must arrive at the county elections office by 8:00 pm on election day.** You can return the ballot by:

- mailing the ballot, no postage necessary.
- hand delivering the ballot at your county elections office.
- putting the ballot in a designated county ballot drop box (if available).

How do you vote on election day?

Find your polling place: The first step in voting on election day is to find your polling place. You can find your polling place in Idaho by going to <https://elections.sos.idaho.gov/ElectionLink/ElectionLink/ViewPollingLocation.aspx>. When you arrive at your polling place there might be a line so make sure you are ready to wait until it is your turn.

If you cannot access your polling place due to physical disability, curbside voting or another method should be provided to you. If not, please contact Disability Rights Idaho at 1-866-262-3462.

Register (if necessary): If you have not registered to vote yet, you can register at the polls. For instructions on how to register at the polls go to pages 15-16 of this guide.

Show Photo ID or Sign an Affidavit: Everyone must show a state issued Photo ID when they vote. If you do not have a photo identification card **and you are already registered**, you can sign an affidavit stating you are who you say you are.

Vote: Once you have signed in, a poll worker will give you a ballot. Take your ballot to an empty voting booth and fill it out. If you need an assistance terminal, it should be

provided to you.

Turn in your completed ballot: Once you fill out your ballot, turn it in. Take your completed ballot to the ballot counting machine and follow the instructions from the Poll worker. Congratulations! You voted and made your voice heard!

What should you do if your polling place is not accessible?

Polling places must be accessible so people with disabilities can vote just like everyone else.

Outside: Each polling place must have accessible parking that is clearly marked. They also must clear all sidewalks of snow, debris or anything else that might prevent someone from using the sidewalk. If the polling place has stairs, there must be a ramp or elevator available for people who need it.

Entrance: Entrances must be wide enough so that people who use a wheelchair can enter the building. Any doors along the path must be easy to open or have a call button in case someone requires assistance.

Inside: All paths inside the polling place must be wide enough so that someone using a wheelchair can easily move around. Just like outside, if there are any stairs, there must be a lift or ramp available for people who need it.

All paths should also be free from any obstacles that may get in the way of low vision or blind voters.

Bathrooms: If bathrooms are available to the public at a polling place, they must be accessible. A polling place may not have public restrooms available to the public.

Problems with accessibility?

If your polling place, ballot drop off box, or county elections office is not accessible, please call Disability Rights Idaho at 1-866-262-3462 or ask to speak with a poll worker on the day of the election. **You must be provided access to vote even if your building is not accessible.**

Do you need help voting?

You have the right to private and independent voting. You also have the right to assistance if you need help. **If you know you will need assistance, the best practice is to call ahead to your local County Clerk office.** Some common accommodations are:

Large print ballots: These ballots are printed in large font so that people with low vision can see their options more clearly.

Assistance terminal: All in-person voting places must have a working assistance terminal. "Ballot marking device" is another name for this machine. People who are blind or who might have trouble marking a vote frequently use this device. But anyone can use the ballot marking device, even if they do not need assistance. Any poll worker should be able to explain how to use the device and help you cast your vote.

Curbside voting: Curbside voting might be available in your county if your polling place is not accessible. To request curbside voting, contact your county elections office. If curbside voting is not available and your location is not accessible, please contact Disability Rights Idaho at 1-866-262-3462.

Poll workers: Poll workers receive training to help people

vote. However, they should not assume you need assistance. You will need to ask them for help if you need it. If your poll workers are not trained to help you vote, please contact Disability Rights Idaho at 1-866-262-3462.

Someone you choose: You can ask almost anyone you want to help you vote. The only people that cannot help you vote are your employer or their agent, your union representative, or a political candidate in the election that you are voting in. A helper can never choose for you, mark their own choices, or try to influence your choices. **It is your ballot so all the choices must be yours.**

Plan ahead: If you think you are going to need an accommodation to vote, call your election office ahead of time to officially tell them that you are going to need some help, and to make sure they have a plan for you and voters who need the same accommodations. Find your County Clerk information here: <https://voteidaho.gov/county-clerks/>

How do you vote from a hospital or facility?

If you are staying at a hospital or facility and cannot leave that facility to vote in-person on election day, absentee voting might be the best option for you.

For more information about absentee voting please see pages 22-24 of this guide.

You **can** ask facility staff to help you vote if you have a disability, and they must help you. Staff can help you by:

- getting you a voter registration form.
- helping you register to vote online.
- contacting the county elections office for you.
- helping you request an absentee ballot.
- helping you fill out your ballot.
- helping you return an absentee ballot.

If the facility where you live is your permanent address, you might need to update your voter registration with your new address. You will also need to request an absentee ballot from the county where you are now living.

If you are not sure where you will be staying when your absentee ballot comes, make your best guess, and tell facility staff, friends, or family your ballot is coming. Plan for them to get your ballot to you if your situation changes before the ballot arrives.

Do you need more help?

If you need more help or have any questions, please contact Disability Rights Idaho.

Toll Free: 1-866-262-3462

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E-Mail: info@disabilityrightsidaho.org

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