



# MISSISSIPPI

This guide is designed to help protect everyone’s right to vote. Share it, keep it handy, and take it to the polls on Election Day.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) is a nationwide, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization with more than a million members, supporters and activists dedicated to defending the principles of liberty and equality embodied in the Constitution and our nation’s civil rights laws. The ACLU does not endorse or oppose any candidate or party, but we believe that no civil right in our democracy is more important than the right to vote.

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## ★ QUICK TIPS FOR VOTERS ★

- Call your circuit clerk to check your voter registration or to locate your polling place. You can find contact information for the circuit clerk in your county by going to <http://www.sos.ms.gov/Elections-Voting/Pages/County-Election-Info.aspx>.
- Note the hours of operation at your polling place. Vote early in the day to avoid the last-minute rush.
- If you are going to be away on Election Day, plan to cast an absentee ballot. You may be able to vote absentee in person or by mail – see below for more info.
- Bring a photo ID. See below for a list of IDs you can show. If you don’t have a photo ID, you can get a FREE ID for voting.
- Check to see if your polling place is accessible (if you have a mobility disability and need the access).
- Read all instructions carefully. Take your time, and ask for help if you need it.



## ABSENTEE VOTING

How do I vote by absentee ballot?

- Voters who meet certain qualifications can vote by absentee ballot. You may be able to vote absentee in person or by mail – keep reading to see which options apply to you.

How do I vote absentee in person?

1. Check if you qualify to vote absentee in person. You can vote absentee in person if you meet any of the following criteria:

- you will be away from your county of residence on Election Day for any reason;
- you are required to be at work on Election Day during voting hours;
- you have a temporary or permanent physical disability and cannot vote without substantial hardship;
- you are 65 years old or older;
- you are temporarily residing out of your county;
- you are the parent, spouse, or dependent of a person who is hospitalized outside of your county of residence or 50+ miles from your residence, and you will be with that person on Election Day.

If you meet any of these qualifications, you can cast an in-person absentee ballot at the circuit clerk's office.

2. Go to your circuit clerk's office during business hours. You can fill out your application and cast your ballot all at once.

3. Show ID. To vote, you have to show ONE of the following photo IDs:

- a Mississippi driver's license;
- an ID card with your photo issued by the State of Mississippi;
- a U.S. passport;
- a U.S. military ID with your photo
- a government employee ID card with your photo;
- a Mississippi firearms license with your photo;
- a student ID with your photo from a Mississippi college or university;
- a tribal photo ID;
- a photo ID issued by any branch, department, or agency of the U.S. government or the government of any other state;

- a Mississippi Voter Identification Card.
  - Your ID CAN BE EXPIRED as long as it is no more than ten years old.
  - If you don't have one of these IDs, you can get a FREE ID for voting. See below for more info.

How do I vote absentee by mail?

1. Check if you qualify to vote absentee by mail. You can vote absentee by mail if you:
  - are temporarily residing outside the county,
  - have a temporary or permanent physical disability,
  - are sixty-five (65) years of age or older, OR
  - are the parent, spouse or dependent of a temporarily or permanently physically disabled person who is hospitalized outside of your county of residence or more than 50 miles away from your residence and you will be with the person on election day.
  
2. Apply for an absentee ballot. If you fall into ANY of the above categories, you may apply for a mail-in absentee ballot from your circuit clerk by mail.
  - If you apply for an absentee ballot by mail, your application MUST be notarized unless you have a temporary or permanent physical disability. If you have a physical disability, your application MUST be witnessed by a person who is over 18 years old. To have your ballot witnessed, mark the ballot in front of the witness and ask the witness to sign the certificate on the ballot before you send it.
  - If you have a permanent physical disability, you can sign up to automatically receive an absentee ballot in the mail for every election without submitting a new application. With your application, send a signed letter from a licensed doctor or nurse practitioner explaining that your permanent disability makes it difficult for you to vote in person.
  - There is no official deadline for your application, but you'll need to leave enough time to receive your ballot and send it back by Election Day.
  - If you meet the criteria to become a mail-in absentee and your application is approved, a ballot will be sent to you.
  
3. Fill out and return your mail-in absentee ballot.
  - You must mark your ballot in front of a witness and ask the witness to sign the certificate on your ballot before you send it.
  - If you are 65 years old or older or have a disability, any person who is at least 18 years old can witness your ballot.
  - Otherwise, if you mark your ballot in your county of residence, you MUST bring your

absentee ballot to your circuit clerk's office and ask the registrar to witness your ballot before you mail it. If you mark your ballot outside your county of residence, any notary public or postal clerk can witness your ballot.

- You do not need to show a photo ID if you cast an absentee ballot by mail.
- To be counted in full, your absentee ballot must be received (not postmarked) by your circuit clerk no later than 5 p.m. on the Monday prior to Election Day. In presidential elections, your vote for president and vice-president (but no other offices) will be counted if your ballot is received before 7 p.m. on Election Day.

## VOTING ON ELECTION DAY

When are the polls open?

- Polling places will be open from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. You have the right to vote if you're in line or inside your polling place when the polls close.

Can I get time off from work to vote?

- Maybe. The law doesn't require employers to give their employees paid or unpaid time off from work to vote, but your employer might have its own policy allowing you to do so. Ask your employer well before Election Day.
- If you know in advance that you'll have to work on Election Day, request an absentee ballot by mail or cast an in-person absentee ballot at your circuit clerk's office.

Where do I vote?

- On Election Day, you have to vote at your assigned polling place.
- Your assigned polling place will be listed on the voter registration card you receive in the mail when you register.
- If you don't have your card, you can call your local elections office.

What if I have a physical disability?

- You have the right to an accessible voting place. It should be easy to get in the door, to the registration table and to your voting booth.
- You have the right to an accessible voting machine. This machine can read the ballot to you and record your vote privately. Every polling place must have one.

What if I am disabled and my polling place is not accessible?

- Send someone into the polling place to request curbside voting on your behalf. Poll workers will bring a ballot or voting machine outside so you can vote.
- If you need help voting because you are blind, have a disability, or cannot read the ballot, bring one or more people to assist you. You have the right to have anyone you choose assist you as long as the person is not your employer, an agent of your

employer, or an officer or agent of your labor union.

What if I am blind or I have a learning disability and I cannot read the ballot?

- You have the right to an accessible voting machine. This is like a computer that reads the ballot to you. It allows you to choose your candidate and cast your vote by pushing buttons. Every polling place must have at least one of these machines.

What if I have a mental disability?

- You have the same right to vote as anyone else.
- The only exception to this is if a judge, in a court proceeding, has found you incompetent to vote, then you cannot vote.
- A poll worker cannot give you a test to decide if you can vote. Only a judge can do this.

Can I get a ballot in my native language?

- You have the right to assistance in Choctaw if you vote in Attala, Jackson, Jones, Kemper, Leake, Neshoba, Newton, Noxubee, Scott, or Winston County. Poll workers are required to offer this assistance to you. If they don't, tell a poll worker that you want assistance in Choctaw. You're entitled to a translation of all ballots and other election materials.
- If language assistance isn't required where you vote, you have the right to bring a translator with you to the polls or to get assistance in your language from anyone you choose, including a poll worker. This person cannot be your employer, an agent of your employer, or an officer or agent of your labor union. Explain to the poll worker why the translator is necessary. Call your circuit clerk or Secretary of State's office if you experience an issue with this.

What if there are long lines?

- Tell a poll worker if it is hard for you to stand in long lines because of a physical or mental health condition or disability.
- Elections officials must help you if they can. For example, if it is hard for you to stand, they should give you a chair or a place to sit while you wait. If the crowds or noise are too hard for you, they could find you a quiet place to wait until it is your turn to vote. Or, they could call you on your cell phone when it is close to your turn, and you could wait in a place of your choice.

What if I need help in the voting booth?

- If you need help because you are blind, have a physical disability or cannot read the ballot, tell a poll worker when you get to your polling place. You have the right to vote privately and independently on an accessible voting machine. You also have the right to have anyone you choose assist you in the voting booth, including a poll worker. That person cannot be your employer, an agent of your employer, or an

officer or agent of your labor union.

- If you need language assistance, bring an interpreter with you to the polls. You have a right to bring an interpreter with you to communicate with poll workers and to translate the ballot. Explain to the poll worker why the translator is necessary. Call your circuit clerk or Secretary of State's office if you experience an issue with this.
- If you need instructions on how to use the voting equipment, ask a poll worker for help. Poll workers are required to help you at any time you ask—even after you have entered the voting booth.

What if I've moved recently?

- If you've moved to a new precinct in the same county, you can still vote. If you've moved less than 30 days before the election, you can vote by affidavit at the polling place for your new precinct. You will be asked to fill out a form explaining why you have not yet transferred your registration to your new precinct.



VOTER ID

Do I have to show ID?

- Yes. Beginning in 2014, you **MUST** show a photo ID to vote in person (early and on Election Day). You do not need to show a photo ID if you cast an absentee ballot by mail.
- The exception is if you have a religious objection to being photographed. If you have a religious objection to being photographed, ask to cast an affidavit ballot. Go to your circuit clerk's office before 30 days prior to the election and sign a form confirming that your religious objection prevented you from showing photo ID to vote.

What are the accepted forms of ID?

- To vote in person, you have to show **ONE** of the following photo IDs:
  - a Mississippi driver's license;
  - an ID card with your photo issued by the State of Mississippi;
  - a U.S. passport;
  - a U.S. military ID with your photo
  - a government employee ID card with your photo;
  - a Mississippi firearms license with your photo;
  - a student ID with your photo from a Mississippi college or university;
  - a tribal photo ID;
  - a photo ID issued by any branch, department, or agency of the U.S. government or the government of any other state;
- OR
- a Mississippi Voter Identification Card.
- Your ID **CAN BE EXPIRED** as long as it is no more than ten years old.
- If you don't have one of these IDs, you can get a **FREE** ID for voting .

What if I don't have any ID?

- Try to can get ID before Election Day. If you are registered to vote, you can get a **FREE** ID for voting, called a Voter Identification Card, by applying at your circuit clerk's office. You can only get a Voter Identification Card if you do not have another accepted photo ID.
  - Go to your circuit clerk's office between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, anytime before Election Day. You can even go on Election Day, but make sure you leave yourself enough time to get to the polls.
  - If you need transportation assistance to get to the circuit clerk's office, call the Mississippi Secretary of State at 1-855-868-3745.
  - The circuit clerk will ask you to prove your identity before issuing your Voter Identification Card. If you can, bring **ONE** of the following IDs:

- an expired photo ID from the list above;
  - a birth certificate or other document with your full legal name, date, and place of birth;
  - a social security card;
  - a Medicare or Medicaid card;
  - a Mississippi voter registration card without your photo;
  - a utility bill, bank statement, or government check with your name and current address issued in the last six months;
  - an IRS Form W-2 issued in 2014.
- If you do not have any of these IDs, you can still get a free Voter Identification Card. Tell the clerk your full legal name, date of birth, state of birth, gender at birth, and mother's maiden name. The clerk will verify your identity.
  - Once your application is approved, your card will be mailed to you. If you apply after Saturday, Sept. 20, the clerk will give you a receipt. You can show the receipt instead of photo ID to vote at the polls.
  - If it is hard for you to apply for the free ID because of a physical or mental condition, you have the right to ask for help from your circuit clerk in getting your ID.
- What if I don't have the money to pay for an ID?
    - A Voter Identification Card with your photo is FREE.
    - Also, the clerk will check your identity for free if you don't have any documents to prove who you are.
  - What if I need accessible transportation to the circuit clerk's office?
    - Call 1-855-868-3745 and ask for accessible transportation.

What if I go to the polls without an ID?

- You can cast an affidavit ballot, but that ballot won't be counted unless you bring an acceptable photo ID to your circuit clerk by Sunday, Nov. 9. If you have time and have ID at home or work, it's usually better to get your ID and return to the polls to cast a regular ballot. If you don't have an ID, you can get a free Voter Identification Card through Election Day.

What is an affidavit ballot?

- An affidavit ballot is used to record your vote when there's an unresolved question about your eligibility.

Will my affidavit ballot be counted?

- Your affidavit ballot will only be counted if election officials determine after the election that you were eligible to vote. Most affidavit ballots aren't counted, and you should use one only if there's no way for you to vote on a regular ballot.





## PROBLEMS AT THE POLLS

What if I'm not on the voter list?

- First, ask a poll worker to check the list again and to confirm that you're at the right polling place. Offer to spell your name.
- If you're at the right polling place but your name isn't on the voter list, ask for an affidavit ballot. You have the right to cast an affidavit ballot, even if your name is not on the voter list, as long as you can swear that you believe you are registered to vote.

What if I go to the wrong polling place?

- Go to the right polling place. You can ask a poll worker to help you find the polling place where you're registered. You can also call your circuit clerk's office or look up your polling place online at <http://www.sos.ms.gov/page.aspx?s=7&s1=1&s2=58>.
- If you can't figure out where you're registered, go the polling place that you think is the right one and ask for a provisional ballot. You have the right to cast an affidavit ballot even if you're not sure that you're at the right polling place.

What if someone challenges my right to vote?

- Poll managers will ask you and the challenger some questions and rule on the challenge. If the poll managers unanimously decide in your favor, your ballot will be counted. If the poll managers unanimously decide against you, your ballot will not be counted. If the poll managers cannot determine the legitimacy of the challenge, the ballot will be set aside and counted or not counted at their discretion.

What if someone tries to intimidate or harass me?

- Tell a poll worker right away. If the poll worker is the problem, tell a poll watcher, call your circuit clerk, or call one of the election hotline numbers listed below.

What if I make a mistake on my ballot or the voting machine malfunctions?

- Tell a poll worker before you cast your vote. If you make a mistake on a paper ballot, you have the right to up to two replacement ballots as long as you catch your mistake before you cast your ballot. If your voting machine malfunctions, you can request a substitute ballot.

How do I make a complaint?

- First, ask for a poll manager at your precinct. He or she can handle most routine complaints that arise on Election Day. Candidates, political parties, and nonprofit groups may also have poll watchers at your polling place who might be able to assist you. If any of those people ask you who you voted for, or if they can't resolve your complaint, call your circuit clerk or the Secretary of State.
- You can also call one of the election hotline numbers listed below.



## MORE INFORMATION



- If you need information about the rules for voting, contact the Secretary of State's office at: (800)-829-6786 or [www.sos.ms.gov/Elections-Voting](http://www.sos.ms.gov/Elections-Voting). You can also call the Election Protection hotline at: 866-OUR-VOTE (866-687-8683)
- If you feel your right to vote has been denied, contact the ACLU at 601-354-3408 or [letmevote@aclu.org](mailto:letmevote@aclu.org). You can also call the US Department of Justice Voting Rights Section at: (800) 253-3931
- For assistance in Spanish, call 888-VE-Y-VOTA (888-839-8682)