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VOTING RIGHTS AND PROCEDURES IN PHILADELPHIA

The election process in Philadelphia can be confusing, especially for new residents. This guide provides some basic information on voting in Philadelphia. If you have any further questions, please contact the Committee of Seventy at 215-557-3600. We are happy to help!

Introduction

Philadelphia is divided into 66 political wards, which are further divided into 1,681 divisions. Divisions are the smallest political unit in the City, and which division you live in determines where you vote on Election Day. Each division has its own election board; some election board members are elected by the voters and some members are appointed.

While local election boards conduct elections in each division, the Philadelphia City Commissioners are in charge of the overall process. The City Commissioners office administers elections in Philadelphia from beginning to end, from making sure voters are properly registered, to tabulating and reporting results.

How do I register? What if I have a question about the status of my registration?

If you are a U.S. citizen, a resident of Pennsylvania, and will be at least 18 years old on or before the next election, you can register and vote in Pennsylvania.

The deadline to register in Pennsylvania is thirty days before the election. You can get a voter registration application by contacting the Philadelphia City Commissioners at 215-686-1591 or 520 N. Delaware Ave., 5th Floor, Philadelphia, PA 19123.

You can also print a voter registration application from our website, www.seventy.org, or from the Pennsylvania Department of State's website, www.votespa.com. After you complete and sign the application, mail it to the City Commissioners at 520 N. Delaware Ave., 5th Floor, Philadelphia, PA 19123.

You can also pick up a voter registration application at liquor stores and public libraries, or register in person at PennDOT photo license centers and state assistance agencies.

You should receive your voter registration card 3-4 weeks after you mail in your registration application. If you don't receive a card, call the City Commissioners office before the election to make sure you are registered.

Do I need identification to vote?

In general, Pennsylvania does not have a voter identification requirement.

However, an individual voting for the *first time ever* or for *the first time at a new polling place* must show valid proof of identification to vote on a voting machine. You can show either photo identification or non-photo identification. Approved forms of voter identification include:

Photo Identification:

- Pennsylvania driver's license or PENNDOT ID card
- ID issued by any Commonwealth agency
- ID issued by the U.S. Government
- U.S. passport
- U.S. Armed Forces ID
- Student ID
- Employee ID

Non-photo Identification:

(showing name and address)

- Voter registration card issued by the City Commissioners
- Non-photo ID issued by Pennsylvania
- Non-photo ID issued by the U.S. Government
- Firearm permit
- Current utility bill
- Current bank statement
- Current paycheck
- Government check

If you are a first time voter but do not bring your ID on Election Day, you can still vote with a provisional ballot. Don't leave without voting!

Where is my polling place?

Your polling place location is listed on your voter registration card. If you misplace your voter registration card or don't receive one, and live in Philadelphia, visit the **Committee of Seventy's Citizen Access Center** polling place locator either by logging on to www.seventy.org or by calling 1-866-268-8603. Or, call the Philadelphia City Commissioners office at 215-686-1590.

You can also locate your polling place using the www.votespa.com website, which serves all of Pennsylvania.

Polls are open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Election Day. If you are in line at 8p.m. DON'T leave; you still have the right to vote!

Can someone help me in the voting booth?

If you are visually impaired, physically disabled, or unable to read or write English well, a person of your choice can help you vote as long as that person is NOT your employer, union leader or the Judge of Election (unless the Judge of Election is the only person who speaks the same language as you and you choose him or her to help you). You can also contact the Philadelphia City Commissioners office in advance to request assistance at the polls. Be sure to fill out a Declaration of Assistance form if the poll book does not indicate "assistance permitted."

You have the RIGHT to vote independently. If someone is trying to "assist" you and you don't want or need their help, politely ask them to leave you alone.

What if I am unable to vote in person?

If you are registered but unable to vote in person on Election Day, you may be eligible to vote by absentee ballot. To see if you qualify for an absentee ballot, visit or contact the City Commissioners office, or visit the Pennsylvania Department of State's website at www.votespa.com. With few exceptions,

all absentee ballot applications must be completed, signed and received by the City Commissioners no later than 5:00 p.m. on the Tuesday before Election Day.

What do I do if my name is not in the poll book on Election Day?

If you show up at your polling place and your name isn't in the poll book you should:

(a) Call our Citizen's Access Center at 1-866-268-8603 to be sure that you're at the correct polling place. If you're at the wrong location and have time to go to the correct polling place, you should do so and vote using the machine at your assigned polling place - this is the best way to cast your vote and make sure it counts. If you are unable to travel to the correct polling place, ask to vote using a provisional ballot (see (c) below).

(b) Ask the Judge of Election to call Voter Registration at 215-686-1590. If you're at the correct polling place, have the Judge check if you are in the main voter registration database. If the Judge of Election can get official confirmation that you are registered, he or she should allow you to vote using the machine.

(c) Ask for a provisional ballot. If you think that you are properly registered, but your name is not in the poll book, you can vote using a provisional ballot. Provisional ballots are paper ballots that are used when a voter can't be verified using the materials at the polling place. The ballots are counted only if the voter is actually registered. If the voter is registered at another division, the only votes that will count are those for races which are on the ballot in the division the voter is actually registered in.

What if I have a problem on Election Day?

If you have a problem on Election Day, call the **Committee of Seventy's Election Day Hotline at 1-866-OUR-VOTE.**

Where can I find more information?

Committee of Seventy: 215-557-3600 or www.seventy.org

Pennsylvania Department of State: 1-877-VOTESPA (1-877-868-3772) or www.votespa.com
(This website can be translated into Spanish, Chinese, French, Khmer, Korean, Russian and Vietnamese.)

Visit the following website for a Voting Guide for New Pennsylvania Citizens, provided by the Pennsylvania Department of State:

http://www.dos.state.pa.us/voting/lib/voting/new_citizens/votingguide.pdf

*The **Committee of Seventy** is a non-partisan, non-profit organization conducting a permanent campaign to improve the Philadelphia region by demanding ethical conduct of public officials, safeguarding elections, promoting government efficiency and educating citizens.*

If you are interested in learning more or volunteering on Election Day, please call (215) 557-3600 or visit www.seventy.org.