

## Wisconsin Voter Registration FAQ's

Wisconsin is fortunate in that our laws allow people to register on all regular (government) business days, including on Election Day, except one; the day before an election. The exception to not allow voter registration or in-person absentee voting (early voting) the day before an election only came into place a few years ago as a necessity when in-person absentee voting became so popular that some clerks did not have enough time to adequately prepare for the polls opening the next morning.

There are three (3) voter registration periods in Wisconsin; Open Registration Period, Late Registration Period, and Election Day Registration Period. The %Open Registration Period+ is from the day after one election and up to 21 days before the next election. The %Late Registration Period+ starts on the 20<sup>th</sup> day before an election and runs through 5:00 PM on the Friday before an election. The %Election Day Period+ is, as its name says, on Election Day. Each registration period has different processes and requirements. The closer you get to Election Day, the more requirements, processes, and statistical reporting there is.

Wisconsin clerks know that the 2016 Elections are forecast to have record high voter turnout and we want to do everything possible to make the Elections run as smoothly as possible for everyone. The greatest thing a new voter (or someone that has to update their current registration) can do to help make Election Day a positive experience, is to register during the Open Registration Period, if able to do so.

### **What are the requirements to register or update a registration?**

In Wisconsin you have to be at least 18 years old on or before the NEXT election. The next state-wide election is November 8, 2016, so anyone who is now 17 and has a birthday on or before November 8, 2016, can register now if they meet the rest of the requirements.

You must be a U.S. Citizen, not currently serving a felony conviction (either jail time or probation), nor been declared incompetent or ineligible to vote by a judge.

You must have resided in your home for at least 28 days prior to Election Day in order to establish a new voting location.

Finally, you must show Proof of Residency; an acceptable document that proves you reside (live) where you say you reside. Note, this is for *Proof of Residency* needed to register, *not the Proof of Identity* AKA %photo ID+ needed to vote. It states your current name, your current address and was issued recent enough to meet date requirements. A full list of acceptable documents and date (issued) requirements can be found at [www.myvote.wi](http://www.myvote.wi) The most commonly used acceptable documents include: a current and valid driver's license or state ID issued by the Wisconsin DMV, a recent utility bill (gas, electric, phone, TV cable or satellite, or internet . not credit card), a paycheck or pay stub, and a bank or credit union statement. The utility bill, paycheck, paystub, or banking statement can be shown either as a paper document or in electronic format.

### **Why is it beneficial to register or update a registration during the "Open Registration Period"?**

The Open Registration Period is the fastest, most efficient, most accurate, and most cost effective time to register.

- Why is the Open Registration Period the **fastest** time to register?

- There usually isn't a waiting line in the clerk's office during regular business hours like there is at the polls on Election Day.
  - The voter's name and address are pre-printed in the Regular Poll Book making the voting process faster for everyone. (Voters that register on Election Day need to be hand written in two supplemental poll books . very time consuming.)
  - If you register during the Late Registration Period+(within 20 days of an election) the voter needs a Voter Registration Certificate in order to vote. The clerk has to complete and mail the certificates to the new / updated voters and the voters must remember to bring their certificate to the polls.
- Why is the Open Registration Period the **most efficient** time to register?
    - In order to register, a voter needs to show an acceptable form of Proof of Residency. If you attempt to register well before an election and find out you do not currently have an acceptable document, then you have ample time to obtain it.
    - During the Open Registration Period you can mail your registration form and a copy of your acceptable Proof of Residency to your clerk's office. You do not need to do it in person.
- Why is the Open Registration Period the **most accurate** time to register?
    - When you register on Election Day your registration form and your information in the supplemental poll books are all hand written. The Election Inspectors (over 70% of which are age 61 and older) are working as fast as they can, writing hundreds of forms, and often working very long hours. Thus misspelled names, illegible handwriting, and missing information are more likely to occur on an Election Day than any other day.
    - On Election Day, Election Inspectors use printed maps or street listings versus the Wisconsin voting software to determine a voter's district and ward. Misreading an address on the maps or listings could result in the voter receiving the wrong ballot which can take hours or even days to find and correct.
    - When a voter registers in the Open Registration Period their names and addresses are pre-printed in the poll book, which the voter sees when they sign the poll book. Therefore, the voter can see how the database has their address and name spelled and can notify Election Inspectors of a typo if they see one.
- Why is the Open Registration Period the **least expensive** time to register?
    - Open Period registrations are processed by the clerk's office staff during their regularly scheduled hours throughout the year. Many municipalities need to hire additional staff to process Late Registrations in the weeks before an election and ALL municipalities hire additional Election Inspectors to process Election Day Registrations.
    - Election Day Registration Postcards. In efforts to ensure voter eligibility and correct data entry, the State mails out postcards to everyone that registers or updates their registration on Election Day. This is a GOOD thing, as it is the most efficient and effective way to maintain the integrity of voting in Wisconsin. However, it is expensive in supplies and employee resources.

- After the Spring Primary in February (our smallest election expected this year), over 50,000 postcards were mailed costing the State over \$12,500 just in postage.
- The 2014 General Election (which did *not* include a presidential race) had 278,765\* Wisconsinites register or update their registrations on Election Day. The postage to mail that many postcards at the current discounted bulk mailing rate of \$.25 each would be \$69,691.25. Considering the current Election climate, it is very likely that the 2016 General Election will have even more new and updated registrations on Election Day. Those are tax dollars that could be saved if voters would register before Election Day, assuming they qualify to do so.
- <http://www.gab.wi.gov/publications/statistics/gab-190/November-2014>

Remember, the Open Registration Period is the fastest, most efficient, most accurate, and most cost effective time to register.

For the General Election on November 8, 2016, the Open Registration Period is August 10, 2016 through October 19, 2016.