Student Voting Guide for Ohio

Registration Deadlines and Election Dates
Special Election Registration Deadline: July 9, 2012
Special Election: August 7, 2012
General Election Registration Deadline: October 9, 2012
General Election: November 6, 2012

Where to vote

Polling place locator online through the Ohio Secretary of State's Office. You may also wish to contact your county board of elections to ensure your polling location will be open for a particular election.

Voters must cast their ballots in the correct precinct. Sometimes there are multiple precincts in one polling place, so confirm your precinct ahead of time and get in the correct line!

Register at School or Home?

Registering to vote at a school residence

Students who do not intend to return to their prior residence after finishing college have the right to register to vote in their college community. Students who declare their college community as a legal residence are eligible to vote even if they are classified as "out of state" by their college or university.

Out-of-state students who register to vote in Ohio must change their license and registration to reflect their residency in the state. You may have to make this change even if you choose not to register in Ohio, if you take a job, sign a lease, buy a home or enroll children in school. For more information, you may wish to contact the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles.

Registering to vote at a home residence

Home residence: Some students may choose to register or remain registered at their home (prior) address if they intend to return there after college. In this case, a student may need to vote by absentee ballot.

Ohio residents attending school elsewhere: You will not lose your voting residency in Ohio if you leave Ohio temporarily for college and intend to return, unless you are absent from the state for four consecutive years. Students who vote or establish residency elsewhere will have to re-establish residency in Ohio in order to vote there again.

Absentee Voting

Registered voters have the right to vote absentee without giving any specific reason, as Ohio has no excuse requirement for absentee voting.

If you wish to vote by absentee ballot, you must request it in writing from the county board of elections where your voting residence is located. The Elections Division encourages voters to use the Absentee Ballot Request Form (Form 11-A).

Absentee Ballot Request Form must be delivered or received via mail by your county board of elections by at least three days before the election (November 3, 2012).

The absentee ballot must be received by the close of polls on Election Day.

Out-of-state students who are considering voting absentee in their home state outside of Ohio should first determine absentee requirements for their state. Some states do not allow voting by mail for first-time voters. Also, some states require copies of identification be mailed with an absentee ballot. Out-of-state students should determine if they want to vote absentee in another state or register in Ohio before the Ohio registration deadline.

ID Requirements & Student IDs

Ohio requires all voters to present identification showing a voter's name and address in order to vote. Acceptable ID includes any of the following:

- Current and valid photo identification issued by the federal government or the State of Ohio (accepted even if the address does not match the address on the voter's registration)
- Military identification that shows the voter's name.
- A copy of a current utility bill (including a cell phone bill), bank statement, paycheck, government check or other government document (including those issued by a public college or university) that shows the voter's name and current address (but not a notice of an election or a voter registration notification sent by a Board of Elections).
- A voter without ID will still be able to cast a provisional ballot after swearing to her identity.

The Secretary of State has issued a memorandum to the state university and colleges requesting that these institutions make an effort to issue students

living on campus a current utility bill so that the students will have appropriate ID to present at the polls reflecting the address of the college residence.

First Time Voters

Some states require voters to turn up in person the first time they vote in the state or in a new county. Ohio does not require this. If you seek to register in a state with this requirement, you should make sure you will be able to go in person to the relevant polling place on Election Day. If not, you should consider registering in Ohio instead.

According to the U.S. Supreme Court, students have the right to register and vote in their college towns if they meet the same requirements as everyone else. Misinformation, such as claims that registering to vote at school may jeopardize eligibility for financial aid or insurance, are sometimes used to discourage students from voting locally.

Common Questions from Out-of-State Students

Will I lose my scholarship if I register to vote in Ohio?

If you receive scholarship money from a state, county or town, or a private entity (i.e., an entity other than the federal government) you should confirm with the entity providing the scholarship that residency in a particular place is not a requirement of the scholarship and/or that voter registration in Ohio will not affect your eligibility.

Will registering to vote in Ohio affect my driver's license or car registration?

Yes. Ohio requires that residents who register to vote in Ohio must change their license and registration to reflect their residency in the state. You may have to make this change even if you choose not to register in Ohio, if you take a job, sign a lease, buy a home or enroll children in school. For more information, you may wish to contact the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles.

Will voting in Ohio affect my federal financial aid?

Federal financial aid such as Pell Grants and Perkins and Stafford loans will not be affected by where you register to vote. Registering in Ohio will also not affect your dependency status regarding FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid).

What do residency and domicile mean?

Residency and domicile are legal terms that state use to describe where you currently live and where you intend to remain for the foreseeable future.

Will registering to vote in Ohio prevent my parents from claiming me as a dependent on their taxes?

No. Students are often told that registering to vote in a different state from their parents will make them lose their dependency status. This is not true. Where you register to vote will have no effect on your parents' tax status.

Will registering to vote in Ohio affect my tuition costs?

It shouldn't. Most schools will still consider you an out-of-state student even if you register to vote in Ohio. Check with you local registrar for specifics of your school.

This Guide was prepared by FELN staff who are not licensed to practice law in Ohio and FELN intends that the information contained herein is used only as a general guide. This document should not be used as a substitute for consultation with a licensed Ohio legal professional.

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