

Conducting a Voter Registration Drive in Texas

Voter Registration Deadline

The 30th day before Election Day.

If that is a Saturday, Sunday, or legal state or national holiday, the application may be submitted to the registrar on or before the next regular business day.

A specific turnaround time applies to voter registration drives turning in applications they collect. See below.

Getting Started

Becoming a volunteer deputy registrar (VDR): All individuals who will deliver registration forms on behalf of applicants must be authorized as volunteer deputy registrars. Those interested must contact the county voter registrar to receive a certificate of appointment and receipt book and may only register voters in the county in which they become volunteer deputy registrars.

To become a volunteer deputy registrar, a person must:

- Be at least 18 years old;
- Be a U.S. citizen;
- Be a resident of Texas;
- Never have been convicted of:
 - a felony or, if so convicted, must have: (A) finished the sentence, including any term of incarceration, parole, or supervision, or completed a period of probation ordered by any court; or (B) been pardoned or otherwise released from the resulting disability to vote;
 - identity theft; or
 - failing to deliver a voter application to a voter registrar.
- Never have been determined by a court to be:
 - Totally mentally incapacitated, or
 - Partially mentally incapacitated without the right to vote

Note: VDRs are not required to be registered voters.

Training: Volunteer deputy registrars may not receive any voter registration applications until they have completed the training developed by the Secretary of State. The County voter registrar will provide you with information about how training will be offered and completed. A VDR will be issued a certificate of appointment, which must be shown to any applicant upon request.

Compensation Restrictions: It is illegal to pay drive canvassers based on how many registrations they collect, present them with a quota of registrations to collect, or use a fixed quota as the sole basis for determining compensation or employment. Do not offer an applicant any incentive of monetary value to register to vote.

Obtaining Applications

State Forms: The county voter registrar provides volunteer deputy registrars with voter registration applications: sos.state.tx.us/elections/voter/votregduties.shtml

Federal Forms: Volunteer deputy registrars can distribute the federal mail-in registration application: eac.gov/voters/national-mail-voter-registration-form/

Handling Applications

Scope of Authorization for Volunteer Deputy

Registrars: Deputies may only accept applications from residents of the county or counties in which they are authorized, and there is no way to become a statewide volunteer deputy registrar.

Volunteers Not Authorized as VRDSs: Volunteers who wish to hand out blank voter registration forms and encourage people to register may do so without becoming a volunteer deputy registrar as long as they do not collect or deliver the registration forms. Volunteer deputy registrars may distribute blank forms in counties where they are not authorized as VDRs.

Assisting Applicants: VDRs may help applicants who cannot read or have physical disabilities fill out the registration form.

Do not fill in any missing information on a registration form unless you have permission from the applicant.

Receipts: Fill out a receipt for each applicant, and give the receipt to the applicant and the duplicate receipt to the voter registrar when the application is delivered. VDRs are advised to keep a copy for their records. The Secretary of State recommends that volunteer deputy registrars retain their receipt books for the 22 months following the election closest to the applications' effective date.

Reviewing Applications: Volunteer deputy registrars must review each application for completeness in the applicant's presence and ensure the applicant has read the statements regarding qualifications to register, and return the applications for completion and resubmission if it is incomplete. Volunteer deputy registrars are not permitted to determine whether applicants are qualified to vote, or make the applicant provide a phone number, or gender.

Photocopying Completed Applications: No one other than a county voter registrar's office may photocopy a filled-out application. VDRs may make copies of the receipts given to the applicant.

Submitting Applications: Volunteer deputy registrars may not deliver completed applications by mail. VDRs must deliver completed registration applications and receipts in person to the voter registrar by 5 p.m. on the 5th day after they are received except that if applications are received after the 34th day before the election and before the registration deadline, they must be turned in by 5pm on the business day after the voter registration deadline for that election. VDRs may also give their applications to another registrar authorized for the same county for in-person delivery. Failure to timely submit applications is a misdemeanor.

Term Length for Volunteer Deputy Registrars: Authorization for each deputy expires on December 31 of the even-numbered year (even if the deputy registrar was appointed that year) and may be terminated by an appointing authority for any of the following reasons: failure to properly review a voter registration application, intentional destruction or physical alteration of an registration application, any other activity that conflicts with volunteer deputy registrar duties, and will be terminated for being convicted of failing to deliver a completed voter registration application to the registrar, or being convicted of violating performance-based compensation restrictions related to voter registration. Upon termination, all election materials issued to a VDR must be returned to the appointing authority. Voters registered by a terminated VRD will be rejected.

Fair Elections Center, Campus Vote Project, and Nonprofit VOTE intend the information contained herein to be used only as a general guide. This document should not be used as a substitute for consultation with a licensed Texas legal professional.

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For more information, visit
www.fairelectionscenter.org