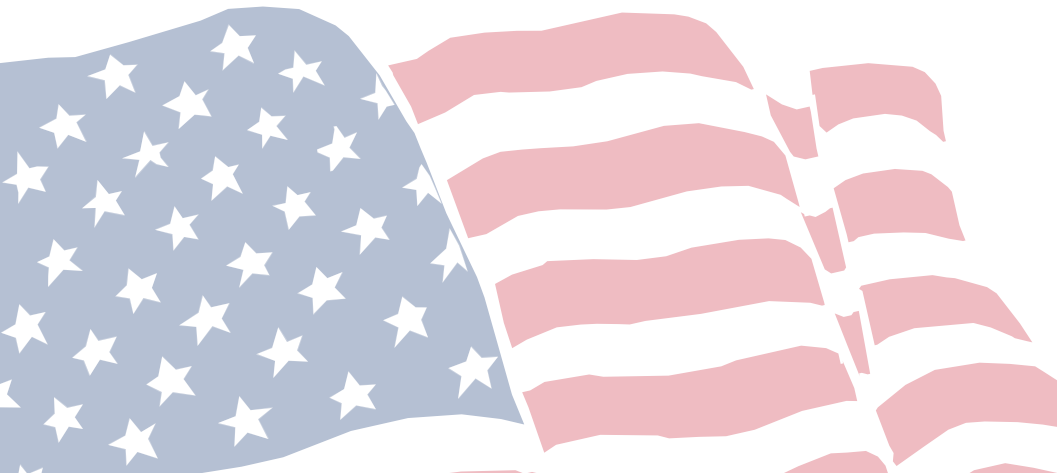


# VOTING IN WISCONSIN



A Guide for Citizens with Disabilities



*This booklet was produced  
in July, 2002 and revised in May, 2006  
as a collective effort of:*

**ADA Wisconsin Partnership**

4126 Lien Road., Suite 104 • Madison, WI 53704  
Voice/TTY: 608-246-3444 • [www.adawipartnership.org](http://www.adawipartnership.org)

**Disability Rights Wisconsin**

16 N. Carroll Street, Suite 400 • Madison, WI 53703  
Voice: 608-267-0214 • FAX: 608-267-0368  
Toll Free: 800-928-8778 • TTY: 888-758-6049  
[www.disabilityrightswi.org](http://www.disabilityrightswi.org)

**Rehabilitation For Wisconsin, Inc.**

1302 Mendota St., Suite 200 • Madison, WI 53714-1024  
Voice/TTY: 608-244-5310 • [www.rfw.org](http://www.rfw.org)

**Wisconsin Coalition of Independent Living Centers**

201 West Washington Ave., Suite 110 • Madison, WI 53703  
Voice/TTY: 608-259-9267 • Toll Free: 800-690-6665

**Wisconsin Council on Developmental Disabilities**

201 West Washington Ave., Suite 110 • Madison, WI 53703  
Voice: 608/266-7826 • Toll Free: 888-332-1677  
TTY/TDD: 608/266-6660 • [www.wcdd.org](http://www.wcdd.org)



disabilityrights|WISCONSIN



# VOTING IN WISCONSIN

## A Guide for Citizens with Disabilities



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# WHY VOTE?

Voting is a constitutional right and responsibility of citizenship. It is an important way to help select the national, state and local officials who make laws, design programs and decide how tax dollars are spent.

National elections for President usually get the most attention, but it is usually the people who get elected for state and local positions that have the real power to impact your daily life.

Take time to learn who your elected officials are and how their decisions can affect YOU. You can go on the internet to [www.legis.state.wi.us](http://www.legis.state.wi.us) and select the button called “Who Represents Me?” to find out who your state and U.S. representatives are. You may also call **1-800-362-9472** or, if you have a hearing impairment, **1-800-228-2115** toll-free.

When you become a part of the election process you can work to elect people who support the issues that matter most to you.



**In 1941 one vote defeated the bill to kill the draft law -- just 3 months before Pearl Harbor.**

# WHO CAN VOTE?

You must be eligible to vote. An eligible person:

- ★ is a **U.S. citizen** on the day of registration.
- ★ is at least **18 years old** on or before election day.
- ★ is a **resident of Wisconsin** and the election district for at least ten days before election day.
- ★ has not **lost the right to vote** because:
  1. *He/she has been judged by a court as incompetent and been appointed a guardian. (Some people lose the right to vote when a guardian is appointed simply because no one thought about letting them keep the right to vote. A person with a guardian can ask the court at any time to restore any right, including the right to vote.)*
  2. *He/she has been found by a court to be unable to understand the voting process. Anyone in the municipality where the person lives can ask the court to make this finding. This order only affects a person's voting rights.*
  3. *He/she is a convicted felon and has not completed probation or parole.*

# REGISTERING TO VOTE

In all Wisconsin communities, you must register to vote before you can vote. If you vote at least once every four years and stay in the same voting district, you only have to register one time. When you register for the first time, you must have lived at your current address at least ten days before election day.

## *Five Ways to Register to Vote*

- 1) Register **at the polls** on election day.
- 2) Register **by mail**. Visit the Wisconsin State Elections Board web site to print a Voter Registration Form or contact (write or call) your city, town or village clerk's office and ask them to send you a Voter Registration Form in the mail. **Follow each instruction carefully and mail it back before the deadline.**
- 3) Register in person at your **city, town or village clerk's office** until 5 p.m. on the day before the election.
- 4) Register in person at other **designated places in your community**. Check with the municipal clerk's office for other registration sites such as a fire station, public library, community center, Independent Living Center or another agency that provides services to people with disabilities.
- 5) Register at **voter registration drives** that may be held during community events.

## *Information You Need to Register to Vote*

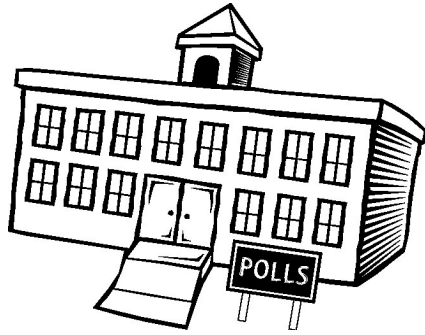
When you register to vote you will need to complete a **Voter Registration Form** and provide the following:

- 1) Your **full name** (last, first and middle name)
- 2) The **address where you live** and **address where you receive mail** (if different from the address where you live)
- 3) **Date of birth**
- 4) Your **signature** (indicating you meet the qualifications to vote) and the date you complete the form. (If you are unable to complete and sign the form yourself, you must provide the name, address and telephone number for the person assisting you.)
- 5) **Proof you have lived in the district for at least ten days.** Documents you can use are a Wisconsin driver's license, Wisconsin I.D. card, utility bill, current lease or other identification with your current address. If you don't have written proof, bring a friend (with identification) who lives in the same voting district. This person can serve as a witness to verify your address.
- 6) **Identification Number:** You must bring your Wisconsin driver's license number or State I.D. card number. If you have not been issued either of these, bring the last four numbers of your Social Security Number. If you have none of these, a unique identifying number will be assigned to you.

# CASTING YOUR VOTE

## *Voting at the Polls*

Locations where you go to vote in person are called polls or polling places. Check with your city, town or village clerk's office to find out the locations of your



polling place. Polls are open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. on election day.

Sample ballots and instructions on how to vote are posted at every polling place. They may also be printed in your local newspaper before the election. You may ask for instructions at the polls on how to use a voting machine or how to mark a ballot.

## *Assistance in Voting at the Polls*

Any voter who needs help at the polls has a right to assistance. By law, a polling place must be accessible to a person with disabilities. It is a good idea to check the accessibility of the polling place ahead of time. You may find the building not accessible or have trouble getting to the polling location inside the building. If so, you may request that a poll worker bring a ballot to the building entrance or bring a friend along to assist you. If your polling place is not accessible, notify your city, town or village clerk's office and the State Elections Board.

You can have help in casting your ballot if you have problems reading or writing, have difficulty with the English language or have a disability which prevents you from being able to mark the ballot or operate the voting machine. Ask for help when you give your name and address to the poll worker. Anyone you choose can help you, except your employer, an agent of your employer, or (if you belong to a labor union), an agent of your labor union.

### *Taking Time Off Work to Vote*

You may ask your employer for time off your job to vote at the polls. State law says you may take up to three hours off, but your employer does not have to pay you for the time off. You must ask your employer for time off before election day. Your employer can decide the time of day for your absence.

**In 1916 Woodrow Wilson won  
by less than one vote per  
precinct in one state.**



# VOTING BY “ABSENTEE”

Registered voters who cannot go to their polling place on election day can vote by absentee ballot.

## *Voting in Person*

You may complete an absentee ballot in person at your city, town or village clerk’s office. The deadline is 5 p.m. on the day before the election.

## *Voting by Mail*

You may go to the Wisconsin State Elections Board web site and access an absentee ballot or request an absentee ballot **by mail**. Mail a written request for an absentee ballot to your city, town or village clerk’s office no later than the Friday before election day. The request must include:

- 1) Your **full name**
- 2) Your **legal voting address**
- 3) Your **ward or election district**
- 4) Your **request** for an absentee ballot
- 5) The **address where you want the absentee ballot sent**
- 6) Your **signature**

When you receive your ballot, **follow all instructions carefully** and mail it back so that the clerk’s office receives it by election day.

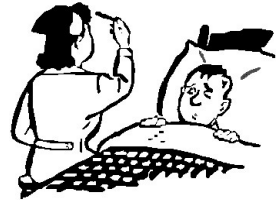
## *Automatic Absentee Ballot*

A voter can request to be mailed an automatic absentee ballot. This means that an absentee ballot will be mailed to the voter for every election automatically. The only voters who can request this option are those who can't get to the polls because of severe and continued physical illness, disability or infirmities of aging.

The voter must sign a statement that requests an automatic absentee ballot due to one or more of these conditions. If a voter ever fails to vote using this option, the voter must renew the automatic absentee ballot application within 30 days of notification from the clerk. Otherwise the voter's name will be removed from the voting list.

## *Voting if You Are in the Hospital*

If you are in the hospital, you may choose someone to pick up an absentee ballot from your polling place before 5 p.m. on election day. You must complete an absentee ballot application unless you are too disabled. The person who picks up the absentee ballot for you must bring the application, know you, live in the same city or town, show identification, and not be a candidate.



## *Voting if You Live in an Institution, Residential Facility or Nursing Home*

If you live in an institution, residential facility or licensed nursing home, you may use this as your legal voting address or you may choose to use your previous address.

Many institutions make plans with their city, town or village clerk's office to provide specific voting times for all registered or qualified voters. These voting times must be held no later than the Monday before election day.

Check with the office of the facility where you live to find out if voting times have been set up. If they have not been set up, you should contact your city, town or village clerk's office and request an absentee ballot. (See previous page on voting by mail.)

## **ADDRESS CHANGE**

If you move, you must change your voter registration to your new address to be able to vote at your new location. You can make this address change at the polls on election day or call your city, town or village clerk's office and tell them your new address before the election. You must bring your identification with your full name and new address to the polls on election day. You must have lived at your new address for at least ten days before the election.

# MORE VOTING INFORMATION

## *Complaints*

If you have complaints about access to voting or believe your voter's rights have been violated you may file a complaint to:

### **Wisconsin State Elections Board**

17 West Main Street, Suite 310

PO Box 2973

Madison, WI 53701-2973

Phone: 608-266-8005

Toll free: 866-VOTEWIS (868-3947)

email: [seb@seb.state.wi.us](mailto:seb@seb.state.wi.us)

web site: <http://elections.state.wi.us>

*For help with filing a complaint or for advocacy assistance you may contact:*

### **Disability Rights Wisconsin:**

131 W. Wilson Street, Suite 700

Madison, WI 53703

Voice: 608 267-0214

FAX: 608 267-0368

Toll Free: 800 928-8778 (for consumers & families)

TTY: 888 758-6049

### **Wisconsin Coalition of Independent Living Centers:**

201 West Washington Ave., Suite 110

Madison, WI 53703

Voice/TTY: 608-259-9267

Toll Free: 800-690-6665

# ABOUT ELECTIONS

## *Types of Elections*

There are two types of elections: nonpartisan and partisan. Nonpartisan elections are for officials that include judges, supreme court justices, county board members and county executives, municipal officials and public education officials.

Partisan elections are for officials that include all other county administrative officials, members of the state legislature, state constitutional officers (except for the state superintendent), members of the U.S. Congress, and president.

## *Primary Elections*

One of the purposes for primary elections is to reduce the number of candidates for the general election. Partisan primary elections are held to select a political party's nominees for offices elected at the general election. Nonpartisan primary elections are held to reduce to two the number of candidates for an office. The nonpartisan spring primary is held on the third Tuesday in February. (In presidential election years, the presidential preference primary vote is held in conjunction with the spring primary in February.) The partisan September primary is held the second Tuesday in September.

## *General Elections*

General Elections are held in even numbered years on the Tuesday after the first Monday in November. In general elections you can vote for your:

- ★ State Representative (every 2 years)
- ★ State Senator (every 4 years)
- ★ Governor (every 4 years)
- ★ Congressperson (every 2 years)
- ★ U.S. Senator (every 6 years)
- ★ President (every 4 years)

## *Spring Elections*

Spring elections are held on the first Tuesday in April to elect judges and local municipal, county and education officials. The presidential primary is also held with the spring election every four years.

## *Special Elections*

Special elections are held to fill vacancies or for other designated purposes.

**In 1948 Lyndon Johnson became a U.S. Senator by a one vote margin.**





# NOTES

Use this page to write down helpful information.

## *Your City, Town or Village Clerk's Office:*

City/Town Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Clerk's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Web Site Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

## *Your Polling Place:*

Name of Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

**For more information about voting rights and  
the electoral process contact:**

***League of Women Voters of Wisconsin***

122 State Street, Suite 405  
Madison, WI 53703-2500  
Phone: (608) 256-0827 • Fax: (608) 256-1761  
email: [lwwwisconsin@lwwwi.org](mailto:lwwwisconsin@lwwwi.org)  
web site: [www.lwwwi.org](http://www.lwwwi.org)

***Wisconsin State Elections Board***

17 West Main Street, Suite 310  
PO Box 2973  
Madison, WI 53701-2973  
Phone: 608-266-8005 • FAX: 608-267-0500  
Toll free: 866-VOTEWIS (868-3947)  
email: [seb@seb.state.wi.us](mailto:seb@seb.state.wi.us)  
web site: <http://elections.state.wi.us>



The information in this publication is based on current Wisconsin election laws and is believed to be accurate. Questions on specific interpretations of the law should be referred to the Wisconsin State Elections Board.

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PDE-3169 May 2006

