

Conducting a Voter Registration Drive in California

Voter Registration Deadline

Applications must be postmarked or delivered in person by 15 days before Election Day

Drives must return completed applications either in person or by mail to the county elections official within 3 days of receiving it (excluding Saturdays, Sundays and state holidays) or before the close of registration, whichever is earlier.

Getting Started

Training Requirement: California does not require training for registration drives. But local officials may provide training programs and other materials for free. The Secretary of State urges that all those conducting drives get trained on eligibility requirements and ways to accurately complete the registration form. Please also refer to the Secretary of State's Voter Registration Drive Guide (linked on page 2) and FAQs:

sos.ca.gov/elections/frequently-asked-questions

Please also see the SOS' site on voter registration guide rules: sos.ca.gov/elections/publications-and-resources/guide-vr-drives

Notification and Registration Requirements:

Organizations or individuals requesting 50 or more blank state voter registration cards must submit a [Voter Registration Card Statement of Distribution](#) form by fax to (916) 653-3214 or by mail to Secretary of State, Elections Division, 1500 11th Street, 5th Floor, Sacramento, CA 95814. Find the form here: elections.cdn.sos.ca.gov/vrdis.pdf

For requests of 50 or over county-specific voter registration cards, the applicant should use a similar "Statement of Distribution" form provided by the specific county. For a list of county offices, see here: sos.ca.gov/elections/voting-resources/county-elections-offices

Compensation Restrictions: Organizations or individuals that compensate people to help others register to vote by receiving completed forms or assisting with submission of online voter registration applications must:

- Maintain a list of the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of everyone that the individual or organization has agreed to pay for helping register citizens to vote.

- Provide each person who is being compensated to help register citizens to vote with a written statement of that person's responsibilities and liabilities under California law and keep for three years a written acknowledgement that the person received it. A sample statement can be found in Appendix B of the California Secretary of State's "Guide to Voter Registration Drives." Failure to comply is a misdemeanor.
- Only compensate individuals who sign in handwriting and place directly on each registration card their full name, telephone number, and address, and the name and telephone number of the person, company, or organization that agrees to pay those individuals.
- Submit all cards collected to the elections official, even if some cards do not contain all of the information required by Elections Code sections [2150](#) and [2159](#). When submitting the completed cards, place the cards that contain all of the required information into a group and attach a signed acknowledgement that the cards in the group are in compliance with Elections Code sections 2150 and 2159. If there are cards that do not contain all of the required information, place them into a group and attach a signed acknowledgment that the cards in the group are not in compliance with Elections Code sections 2150, 2159, or both.

Compliance with these statutes requires the following information to be included on completed registration cards:

- Name,
- Residence address,
- Mailing address, if different from residence address,
- Date of birth,
- State or country of birth,
- California driver's license or ID card number,
- Last four social security number digits, if the applicant does not have a current and valid California driver's license or California ID card,
- Political party,

Getting Started (cont.)

- Completion of a prior registration portion indicating whether the applicant has been registered at another address, under another name, or as preferring another party and a listing of that prior address, name, or party,
- Signature of applicant,
- Signature of any person and who completes a portion of the application for the applicant including the date, and
- Signature, telephone number and address, and the name of the person, company, or organization, if any, that agrees to pay money or other valuable consideration for the completed affidavit of registration.

It must also include: 1) they are not currently imprisoned or on parole for the conviction of a felony; 2) a space that allows the individual to state race/ethnicity (regardless if it is filled out); and 3) a space to permit them to apply for permanent vote by mail status.

Obtaining Applications

Online Voter Registration: Available at the California Secretary of State's website: registertovote.ca.gov/

May be used by drives, see page 1 of the Secretary of State's voter registration drive guide.

State Form: State voter registration cards with the Secretary of State's address pre-printed on them may be obtained by contacting the Secretary of State's Elections Division at (916) 657-2166. The state card is printed in English, Spanish, Chinese, Hindi, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Tagalog, Thai, and Vietnamese.

Blank forms must be returned to the elections official immediately after the 15th day before a statewide primary or general election.

County Form: County voter registration cards with a county elections office's address pre-printed on them may be obtained by contacting your local county elections office: sos.ca.gov/elections/voting-resources/county-elections-offices/

County cards might be printed in fewer languages, depending on the demographics of the county.

If your voter registration program or event might attract persons from more than one county, use the state form.

Photocopying Blank Forms: Drives are not allowed to use photocopied blank state or county voter registration forms; obtain originals from election officials.

Giving Out Forms: California law requires registration drives to give a blank registration form to anyone who asks for one.

Handling Applications

Incomplete Applications/Application Assistance:

Individuals helping others to register to vote may only fill in information on a registration card for an applicant if the applicant specifically asks for assistance. Any person who assists the applicant in completing the application must fill out the appropriate section of the form including signing and dating the application below the name signature of the applicant.

Completing Forms/Receipt: A person who assumes responsibility for returning another person's completed voter registration card must complete the appropriate section of the form by signing, dating and listing their name, address and telephone number on the card itself and on the receipt portion, as well as the name and phone number of the person, company or organization, if any, that is agreeing to pay them. The receipt portion must be provided to the applicant. You may not offer food, prizes, or anything of monetary value to encourage people to register.

Photocopying Completed Applications/Retaining

Information: California law does not expressly prohibit photocopying completed voter registration cards, however it is illegal for a person or organization in charge of the voter registration drive to disclose a driver license number, ID card number, Social Security Number, and/or signature from an application to someone other than an elections official or the person or organization in charge of the drive. This information should not be retained. Drives must employ reasonable security measures to protect voter registration information from unlawful disclosure and misuse.

Submitting Completed Applications: If a person accepts a completed affidavit from a voter, that affidavit must be returned in person, to the county elections official or Secretary of State, or deposited in the mail within three days of receiving it (excluding Saturdays, Sundays and state holidays) or before the close of registration, whichever is earlier. Failure to submit completed affidavits of registration within this time frame is a misdemeanor. But if the registrant wants to return the registration form themselves, they must be allowed to do so.

California Secretary of State's Guide to Voter Registration Drives:
elections.cdn.sos.ca.gov/guides/guide-to-vr-drives.pdf

For more information, visit
www.fairelectionscenter.org

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 California legal professional.