

CONDUCTING A VOTER REGISTRATION DRIVE IN ILLINOIS

 Fair Elections Center

 Nonprofit VOTE

VOTER REGISTRATION DEADLINES

- Applications must be received or postmarked by the 28th day before Election Day.
- Illinois also has grace period registration beginning 27 days prior to Election Day at the local election authority's office and other designated locations, and Election Day registration at precincts.
- A specific turnaround time applies to deputy registrars' delivery of completed forms. See below.

GETTING STARTED

Illinois maintains an official volunteer system ("deputy registrar") that is mandatory for drives using state in-person registration forms. Completed applications must be mailed or delivered to the local election authority, and an applicant is considered registered as soon as they receive a voter ID card in the mail. Therefore, the drive should be planned far enough in advance that the forms can be mailed and received by the deadline. For all rules, please review the Deputy Registrar Guide and two-page Deputy Registrar Pamphlet available here, under the "Deputy Registrar Program" section: elections.il.gov/InformationForVoters.aspx?MID=I0cuvBFuZRw%3d

Civic organizations must apply to the State Board of Elections by the 90th day before an election in which they want to conduct a drive. A Civic Organization Application is also available at the link above.

Becoming a Deputy Registrar: Deputy registrars must be trained, take an oath, and be provided the voter registration materials by their own election authority. Deputy registrars may register anyone living in Illinois; but designated employees of Healthcare and Family Services and Employment Security are restricted to registering those who are residents of the county in which they're located. Election authority information is located here: elections.il.gov/ElectionOperations/ElectionAuthorities.aspx

To become a deputy registrar, a person must be:

- at least 17 years old,
- a U.S. citizen,
- a resident of Illinois, and
- registered to vote in the county in which they are appointed or, if appointed by a board of election commissioners, registered to vote within that election jurisdiction.

Labor and citizen organizations are limited to a "reasonable number" of deputy registrars.

Voter registration drives should check their county website for specific qualifications. For more information, you can also contact the state election board: elections.il.gov/Main/ContactUs.aspx

Civic organizations looking to have members deputized as registrars should fill out the Civic Organization Application located under the "Deputy Registrar Program" section here: elections.il.gov/InformationForVoters.aspx?MID=I0cuvBFuZRw%3d. Political parties having certified civic organization status must NOT conduct voter registration activities at political functions.

Training: Only deputy registrars must be trained by the election authority. Deputy registrars, except precinct committee persons, serve two-year terms beginning December 1st following the general election of each even-numbered year; except that the mid-term appointments shall be until December 1st following the next general election.

Compensation Restrictions: Do not pay registration drive participants based on how many registrations they collect. Do not offer an applicant any incentive of monetary value to register to vote.

Location: You may not conduct registration drives anywhere with alcohol.

Electioneering: Electioneering or campaigning while conducting a registration drive is strictly prohibited.



OBTAINING APPLICATIONS

State Form: The state mail (NVRA) voter registration application can be downloaded and printed from the Illinois State Board of Elections website under the "Register to Vote" section here: elections.il.gov/InformationForVoters.aspx?MID=I0cuvBFuZRw%3d

Federal Form: Volunteers may use the federal mail-in registration application: eac.gov/voters/national-mail-voter-registration-form/

Deputy registrars: Deputy registrars obtain their materials from election officials.

Photocopying Blank Forms: Blank applications may be photocopied and used in voter registration drives.

HANDLING APPLICATIONS

Volunteers Not Authorized as Deputy Registrars: Volunteers may distribute and collect voter registration application forms; however, the election authority must receive these forms by the registration deadline.

Deputy Registrars: All deputy registrars may accept completed registrations at any time other than during the 27-day period before any election ("the grace period"), and return them to their appointing election authority. If the person registering is from another jurisdiction, the election authority will forward it to the correct jurisdiction.

Assisting Applicants and Completing Forms: Deputy registrars may assist applicants in filling out the registration form and must witness the applicant personally sign the form. Registrants must show deputy registrars two forms of ID. One of those IDs must contain a current address.

Incomplete Applications: Do not fill in any missing information on a voter registration application unless you have express permission from the applicant.

Photocopying Completed Applications: There is no law or rule prohibiting photocopying or retaining information from completed registration applications. As a best practice, a voter's full or partial Social Security Number and/or driver's license number should not be retained.

Submitting Applications: Deputy registrars must deliver completed registration forms to the appointing election authority by first-class mail within 2 business days of completion or in person within 7 days of completion. However, forms completed 29-35 days prior to the election must be returned within 48 hours, and forms completed on the 28th day prior to the election must be returned within 24 hours. Check local requirements regarding return of unused materials: registrars must account for all registration forms issued to them, including special rules for mutilated or unusable forms.

Fair Elections Center and its Campus Vote Project 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 Illinois legal professional.

Last updated July 2026



Find more information on voting in Illinois: bit.ly/fecilvote

