

# VOTING GUIDE FOR STUDENTS AT PENN STATE COLLEGE CAMPUSES

## VotesPA.com is the Primary Resource for Pennsylvania Voters

[VotesPA.com](https://www.pavoterservices.pa.gov) is the place where students can register to vote online, apply for a mail-in ballot, and find a wealth of additional resources for voting in Pennsylvania.

Deadlines are fast approaching:

- The deadline to register to vote in Pennsylvania is October 19.
- The deadline to apply for a mail-in ballot in Pennsylvania is October 27.
- Students who have already registered can confirm their registration status now at [VotesPA.com](https://www.pavoterservices.pa.gov)

## Registering to Vote at a Campus Address

Students attending college in Pennsylvania may register to vote at their on- or off-campus address, providing that they have lived at that address for at least 30 days.

**Students have up until October 19** to change their registration to the campus address but should do so as soon as possible.

Students who register at their campus address may then apply for a mail-in-ballot by October 27, vote early in-person, or vote at their designated polling place on Election Day on November 3. Learn about these three choices below!

**Register to vote at** <https://www.pavoterservices.pa.gov/Pages/VoterRegistrationApplication.aspx>. If students get stuck in the online registration process, they can call the PA Department of State hotline for assistance: 1-877-VOTESPA (1-877-868-3772).

## Requesting, Completing, and Returning a Mail-in Ballot

Students who are registered to vote in Pennsylvania can apply for absentee/mail-in ballot (they are essentially the same thing) for their campus or Pennsylvania hometown address at this link: <https://www.pavoterservices.pa.gov/OnlineAbsenteeApplication/#/OnlineAbsenteeBegin>.

If students get stuck in their online application process, they can call the PA Department of State hotline for assistance: 1-877-VOTESPA (1-877-868-3772).

**The deadline for receipt of absentee/mail-in ballot applications is 5 PM on October 27, but students are encouraged to apply as soon as possible.**

When students receive their mail-in ballot, they should carefully follow the instructions and promptly send back a completed ballot either by the U.S. Mail or at a designated drop box location (if locally registered—see below). Pennsylvania mail-in ballots are already postage paid. Students should be sure to:

Resources compiled by: Jessica O'Hara, Associate Teaching Professor, Communication Arts and Sciences, University Park. *General Education Faculty Scholar, Civic Education Subcommittee; Faculty Advisor, League of Women Voters PSU* and Catherine Rios, Associate Professor of Humanities and Communications, Harrisburg. *Member, Penn State Civic Engagement Collective, a Schreyer Teaching Community*

- 1). Complete the entire ballot in blue or black ink.
- 2). Seal the ballot in the smaller secrecy envelope, then put that envelope in the larger return envelope. Forgetting the secrecy envelope step means the ballot won't count!
- 3). Sign and complete the voter declaration on the back of the larger return envelope.
- 4). Mail the ballot, return it in-person to the county elections office, or use a designated county drop box location. (Keep in mind that only students registered in the county can deposit their ballots in the drop box and that individual voters must deposit their own ballots at the drop box location--see below).

Check out this video for mailing in your ballot: <https://youtu.be/vjEmDYn6bb8>

## **Using a Drop Box to Return a Local Pennsylvania Mail-in Ballot**

Students registered within the county can use any of the county's designated drop boxes. Find the list of drop boxes in each county at this link at: <https://www.votespa.com/voting-in-pa/pages/drop-box.aspx>. Individual voters must deposit only their own ballots in the designated drop boxes. Out-of-state or out-of-county voters CANNOT use the drop boxes to submit their ballots. They must send ballots by mail.

## **Early In-Person Voting**

Pennsylvania law allows early in-person voting at many sites throughout the state. Students should visit their voting county's website to discover more about early in-person voting. They can find their Pennsylvania voting county's website here: <https://www.votespa.com/Resources/Pages/Contact-Your-Election-Officials.aspx>.

This is an incredibly convenient option for students who would like to get voting done early but are concerned about the turnaround time of mailing ballots or the possibility of contracting COVID or experiencing another distraction for Election Day.

## **Voting in-Person on Election Day, November 3**

Pennsylvania polling locations are open from 7 AM-8 PM. Find your polling location here: <https://www.pavoterservices.pa.gov/Pages/PollingPlaceInfo.aspx>. First-time voters are required to show ID.

Students should bring:

- One of the following IDs (if a first-time voter):
  - Employee ID
  - Pennsylvania driver's license or PennDOT ID card
  - ID issued by any Commonwealth agency
  - ID issued by the U.S. Government
  - U.S. passport
  - U.S. Armed Forces ID
  - Student ID
- Mask
- Water and a snack

## **Voting by Absentee Ballot in Another State**

Voting by absentee ballot is a great choice for students who are out-of-state and would like to vote in their home state (or in their hometowns in Pennsylvania). Students who have already registered for an absentee ballot should try to mail it back through the postal service as soon as possible and be sure to check on postal requirements for each state (many states offer free postage).

Vote 411 (<https://www.vote411.org>), a website maintained by the non-partisan League of Women Voters, is a great place for out-of-state students to find deadlines and links they will need to register and apply for a mail-in ballot in their home state.

## **Why Might Students Want to Register at their Campus Address?**

Students have an array of choices for voting in this election. Registering at their on- or off-campus address may give them more choices for how to vote (mail-in ballot, early in-person voting, and in-person on Election Day on November 3) that would allow for the use of drop boxes, rely less on turnaround time from the postal service, offer flexibility for when they might vote in person, and reduce the potential need for travel. With a pandemic underway, flexible in-person voting choices are especially valuable as a safe alternative. Out-of-state students may also want to vote in Pennsylvania where their vote might have a big impact, especially if they hail from a so-called “safe” state. Many election forecasters predict that Pennsylvania’s outcome will swing the election for either presidential candidate. While these are factors to consider, students should vote where and in the manner they see fit.

## **What Should Students Do if They Applied for a Mail-in Ballot but Now Want to Vote In Person?**

Students worried about their votes not counting or being delayed should be relieved to know that both major parties are encouraging mail-in voting, despite some rhetoric, as well as Governor Wolf and the PA Secretary of State. Students who vote by mail will get an email confirmation that their ballot has arrived to the county elections office. If students still feel that they would rather vote in person or are worried about their ballot’s timely arrival through the mail, they need to take their completely intact and unmarked ballot, including all envelopes, to their polling place at the address where they are registered and have a poll worker “spoil” it. Then, the student will be given a fresh ballot. If a student cannot produce all the contents of the ballot, they must vote with a provisional ballot, which is far from ideal.

**Voting in this election is exciting! For more resources on voting as a college student, visit:**

<https://www.votespa.com/Voting-in-PA/Pages/College-Student.aspx>

**For information from Penn State’s student voting initiative, PSU Votes, visit:**

<https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/psu-votes>

**For more information on candidates, visit: “Find What’s On Your Ballot” at [vote411.org](https://www.vote411.org).**

Resources compiled by: Jessica O’Hara, Associate Teaching Professor, Communication Arts and Sciences, University Park. *General Education Faculty Scholar, Civic Education Subcommittee; Faculty Advisor, League of Women Voters PSU* and Catherine Rios, Associate Professor of Humanities and Communications, Harrisburg. *Member, Penn State Civic Engagement Collective, a Schreyer Teaching Community*