

# VOTE

## Because It Matters!

### Why is Voting Important?

Voting is one of the easiest ways to make your voice heard and your vote can make a difference! There are many laws and policies that directly impact issues important to individuals with disabilities, such as housing, transportation, health care and many others. Voting empowers you by giving you a say in who will be the officials making the laws and policies that directly affect your daily life. Our local officials want our vote and voting is one way to hold them accountable to us!

With more accessible ways to vote, voters with disabilities have been showing up more than ever. In 2016, 56% of people with disabilities voted. In 2020, 62% of people with disabilities voted. Let's keep the momentum going and show our elected officials we are paying attention!

***So get out and VOTE!***

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### Registration

#### ***Who can register to vote in Maryland?***

To register to vote you must:

- Be a United States citizen
- Be a Maryland resident
- Be at least 18 years old by the next General Election
- Not be under guardianship for a mental disability AND found by a court to be unable to express your desire to vote
- Not have been convicted of buying or selling votes
- Not have been convicted of felony and currently serving a court-ordered sentence of imprisonment (If you are on parole or probation, you can still vote!)

## ***How do I register to vote?***

### ***In-Person:***

You can register to vote in person at your County Elections Office, the State Board of Elections or at a state agency such as the Motor Vehicle Administration, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the Department of Social Services, the Offices on Aging, the MTA paratransit certification office, and all public institutions of higher education, offices for students with disabilities at all Maryland colleges and universities.

### ***By Mail:***

You can also register by mail. Applications can be obtained by contacting your County Election Office. You can also print out an application at the State Board of Elections' website at [www.elections.state.md.us](http://www.elections.state.md.us) or use its 24-hour toll-free number, 1-800-222-8693. Mail the application to the address of your County Board of Election found on the form.

### ***Online:***

You can also register to vote online using Maryland's Online Voter Registration System at [Voter Registration \(maryland.gov\)](http://VoterRegistration.maryland.gov). To fill out a voter registration application, you need either a Maryland driver's license number, MVA ID number, or the last four digits of your social security number. You can also use this portal to change or update your voter information including changing your party affiliation.

Maryland also has same day voter registration on election day. You can register to vote at an early voting location in your county or your assigned polling location on election day. You need to bring proof of your residency such as a bank statement, utility bill or any government issued document with your name and new address, if you register to vote on election day.

You will receive a voter notification card 3 weeks after submitting your voter registration application which will include your assigned polling location. You can also confirm your voter registration status here: [Voter Search](#). Your voter registration is permanent, even when you move within the State, if you keep your name and address updated.

### **Deadlines to register to Vote for 2024 Election Cycle:**

Primary election: April 23, 2024  
General Election: October 15, 2024

### **2024 Election Days**

Primary Election Day: May 19, 2024  
General Election Day: November 5, 2024

## ***Primary Elections vs General Elections***

In Maryland, we have closed primary elections, meaning only registered Democrats or Republicans can vote in the primary election. Those who win the primary election will continue to the General Election which is open for anyone registered to any party.

Although primary elections are generally reserved for those registered to either the Democrat or Republican Party, there are non-partisan races such as the school board that is open to everyone for voting. Check with your local board to see if there are non-partisan ballots you can vote during the primaries if you are an unaffiliated or 3<sup>rd</sup> party voter.

## **Voting**

### ***Can I get assistance if I need it to vote?***

Yes! You may bring someone to assist you if the person who is assisting you is not your employer or officer or agent of your union or a candidate. If you decide not to bring someone with you, you can obtain assistance from an election judge. Just inform an election judge that you will need assistance when you check-in to vote. If you are using the audio ballot you can tell an assistant or the election judge which numbers to press on the keypad and your audio ballot will remain private.

### ***Are the voting machines accessible?***

Yes. Maryland now has touch screen voting machines that are accessible to individuals with disabilities. They are called Ballot Marking Devices (BMD) and any voter can use them. Just tell the election judge checking you in that you want to use a ballot marking device to mark your ballot. For more information about Ballot Marking Devices in Maryland: [HowMDVotes BMD.pdf \(maryland.gov\)](https://www.maryland.gov/HowMDVotes/BMD.pdf)

- Blind and low vision voters, voters with difficulty reading, you can request a magnified ballot or an audio ballot, which requires the use of headphones and a keypad. The BMD also has a high contrast and large print feature.
- Other assistive devices such as sip and puff can be plugged into the BMD.
- The angle of the voting machines can also be adjusted for greater access.

### ***Do I need to show identification before I vote?***

Under federal law, if you register to vote by mail on or after January 1, 2003, you must provide identification before voting for the first time in Maryland. It is always a good idea to have identification with you when you go to vote.

### ***What if my name is not on the list of voters?***

If your name does not appear on the official list of eligible voters and you claim that you are eligible to vote, then you must be given the opportunity to vote using a provisional ballot. The County election office will determine whether your vote will

be counted. You will be given information on how to check the status of your ballot using the Internet or by calling a toll-free number.

***If I reside in an institution, can I still vote?***

Yes. If you are confined or restricted to an institution, you can vote by using an absentee ballot if you meet the eligibility requirements listed above. If you are confined or restricted to an institution and need a voter registration application or if you are registered and need a mail-in ballot application, please call us at 443-692-2492

***If I am under guardianship, can I still vote?***

Under Maryland law, if you are under guardianship for a mental disability, YOU CAN STILL VOTE, as long as you do not have an order from a court that states you cannot express your desire to vote. You also retain your right to vote if you are under power of attorney.

**Accessible Forms of Voting**

There are more ways to vote than just going to your assigned polling location or early voting center. You may vote by mail receive your ballot online, or have your ballot faxed.

***By Mail:***

You can request a mail-in ballot online, in person or by mail. The deadline to request a a mail in ballot is May 7, 2024 for the primary election and October 29, 2024 for the general election. You can return this form by email, fax, in person, and mail. You will receive your ballot and prepaid envelope in the mail where you will fill it out and return by mail, drop box or in person by 8 PM on election day.

***Online:***

You can request for the State Board of Elections to email your ballot to your email. You will receive a link to access your ballot through your ballot. The link will take you to a portal where you can print your blank ballot, fill out by hand, and return by mail, in person, or drop box. You can also fill out the ballot online with a ballot marking device tool. You will still have to print and return your ballot in person, by mail or drop box. In Maryland, voted ballots cannot be returned online. The deadline to request your ballot online for the primary election is July 15 and November 4 for the general election. Consider if you have access to a reliable printer before utilizing this option.

***Fax:***

Your ballot can be faxed to you, marked, and returned by mail or in person

To use either of these accessible ways to vote, fill out the mail in ballot request form here: [Maryland Mail-in Ballot Request Form](#)

## Polling Site Accessibility

### ***Does my polling place have to be accessible?***

Yes. This includes:

- Accessible parking spaces
- An accessible path of travel from the parking area to the polling place, including curb cuts where needed;
- An accessible entrance to the building, including ramps if necessary, and which is at least 32" wide;
- Signage indicating the accessible entrance; and
- Seating for voters waiting to vote

### ***What do I do if my polling site is not accessible?***

Before election day you can call or write to your County Board of Election to request an accessible polling site assignment. You must make the request for reassignment no later than the close of registration for any election.

You can also report inaccessible voting locations and drop boxes within your county to your local board of elections, State Board of Elections, and Disability Rights Maryland [Voting@DisabilityRightsMD.Org](mailto:Voting@DisabilityRightsMD.Org)

## Filing a Complaint

Any person who believes that there has been a violation of Title III of the Help America Vote Act may file an administrative complaint with the Maryland State Board of Elections. Title III includes voting system standards, accessibility of voting systems to persons with disabilities, instructions on correcting voting errors, identification requirements for voting in federal elections if registration is by mail, computerized statewide voter registration lists, and provisional ballots. The complaint must be in writing and notarized and must be filed within 60 days after the alleged violation. A copy of the complaint process and a complaint form can be obtained from the Maryland State Board of Elections at <http://www.elections.state.md.us/citizens/hava/>.

## For More Information Contact:

Maryland State Board of Elections  
(410) 269-2840 | (800) 222-8683  
[www.elections.state.md.us](http://www.elections.state.md.us)

Disability Rights Maryland  
443-692-2492 | TTY 410-235-5387  
[Voting@DisabilityRightsMD.Org](mailto:Voting@DisabilityRightsMD.Org)

## **Additional Resources:**

American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD Disability Vote Project):  
(202) 457-0046; (800)840-8844; [www.aapd.com](http://www.aapd.com)

National Federation of the Blind Maryland: [National Federation of the Blind of Maryland](#)

The National Mental Health Voter Empowerment Project: (NCSTAC):  
[www.ncstac.org](http://www.ncstac.org)

National Organization on Disability; [www.nod.org/political/index.cfm](http://www.nod.org/political/index.cfm)