



Rhode Island

Voter Registration & Voter List Maintenance Guide

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State Guide to Voter Registration & Voter List Maintenance Statutes

This is a guide to your state's laws relating to voter registration and voter list maintenance.

The statutes/codes cited in this guide may not be the most recent version. States may have more current or accurate information. We make no warranties or guarantees about the accuracy, completeness, or adequacy of the information contained in the individual state guides or the information linked to on the state site.

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Who can I contact with election related questions?

[Link to Elections Official](#)

Rhode Island Department of State, Elections Division	
Address:	148 West River St. Providence, RI 02904-2615
Phone Number:	401-222-2340
Fax Number:	401-222-1444
E-mail:	elections@sos.ri.gov
Webform Contact:	https://forms.sos.ri.gov/Contactus.aspx
Website:	https://vote.sos.ri.gov/

How do I register to vote?

[Link to Register](#)
[Link to Statutes](#)

[CONSTITUTION OF THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND, Article II, Section 1. Persons entitled to vote.](#)

Every citizen of the Unites States of the age of eighteen years of over who has had residence and home in this state for thirty days next preceding the time of voting, who has resided thirty days in the town or ciry from which such citizen desires to vote, and whose name shall be registered at least thirty days next preceding the time of voting as provided by law, shall have the right to vote for all offices to be elected and on all questions submitted to the electors, except that no person who has been lawfully adjudicated to be non compos mentis shall be permitted to vote. No person who is incarcerated in a correctional facility upon a felony conviction shall be permitted to vote until such person is discharged from the facility. Upon discharge, such person's right to vote shall be restored. The general assembly may provide for shorter state and local residence requirements to vote for electors for president and vice president of the United States.

[§ 17-1-3. Eligibility to vote.](#)

(b) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (a) of this section, any person who has not yet reached age eighteen (18), but will be age eighteen (18) at the time of a general election, may vote in a primary election, in which candidates are nominated for a general or special election.

How do I cancel my voter registration?

[Link to Form](#)
[Link to Statutes](#)

A registered Rhode Island voter may voluntarily cancel their Rhode Island voter registration by completing [this form](#) and returning it to the Rhode Island Department of State/Elections Division 148 West River Street, Providence, RI 02904.

[§ 17-10-8. Notice of striking of names.](#)

In each city and town the local board shall, within one hundred and twenty (120) hours after striking the name of any person from any registration or voting list, cause to be mailed to the person, postage prepaid, at that person's last address in the registration records, a notice of the striking of his or her name, and the reason for the striking; except that the notice provided for in this section shall not be required where the voter has requested the action, or has died.

How is voter list maintenance handled?

§ 17-9.1-25. Acknowledgement of registration or change of address — Verification of residence.

(a) The local board of each city or town shall mail an acknowledgement notice to each newly registered voter and to each voter who changes his or her voting residence within seven (7) days after receipt of the registration or change of residence. The acknowledgement notice shall notify the applicant for registration of the disposition of the application, i.e., whether the application is deemed accepted or denied. If denied, the reason for the denial shall be indicated on the notice. The acknowledgement notice shall be mailed to the applicant at the address from which he or she registered and shall be clearly marked: "Do Not Forward — Return If Undeliverable". Provided, however, that the New Shoreham Board of Canvassers may address the acknowledgement notice, and any other notice that may be required by this chapter, to the person's post office box if said post office box is located within the confines of New Shoreham. Provided, further that in any other city or town in which some postal customers are not eligible to receive home mail delivery from the United States postal service, and the respective streets and street ranges are certified as such to the secretary of state, the city or town shall address the acknowledgement card and any other notice that may be required by this chapter to the United States postal service post office box at which the voter receives mail.

(d) Those notices that are returned as undeliverable to the local board shall be reviewed to verify that the address was correctly printed on the notice. All notices returned as undeliverable shall be attached to the registration notices and maintained as a record of the local board.

(e) Any voter whose application to register to vote has been accepted, but whose acknowledgement notice has been returned by postal authorities as undeliverable, shall be placed on an inactive list of voters and shall not be permitted to vote unless an affirmation form is completed. The local board shall be required, upon receipt of the undeliverable acknowledgement notice, to commence the confirmation process described in § 17-9.1-26.

§ 17-9.1-26. Confirmation process — Verification of the address of registered voter.

(a)

(1) Whenever: (i) An acknowledgement card that was mailed to a voter whose application to register to vote has been accepted is returned as undeliverable; (ii) Through the periodic updating of voter registration records as provided in § 17-9.1-27, a change of address is detected for any voter; (iii) As the result of a challenge under § 17-9.1-28, the challenged voter fails to appear before the local board; or (iv) A mailing by the jury commissioner to a voter is returned as undeliverable; the local board shall begin the confirmation process described in subsection (b) of this section.

(2) Whenever any other official mailing, from either the state board or a local board or from the office of the secretary of state, which official mailing has been sent to at least a majority of the registered voters in a particular city or town, is returned as undeliverable to any one or more of the voters to whom it was mailed, the local board may commence the confirmation process described in subsection (b) of this section.

(b) The confirmation notice shall be sent by first-class, forwardable mail and shall be of any size or other specifications that shall be determined by the state board. The notice shall include a voter registration form that may be used by the voter to verify or correct the voter's residence address for voting purposes.

§ 17-9.1-26. Cont.

(c) The confirmation notice shall be prepared in substantially the following form and shall contain substantially the following information, subject to any additional information as may be required by the state board; provided, that the wording of the form may be revised and updated from time to time by the state board in a manner to make its content as easily readable and understandable as possible:

The board of canvassers has received information that you may no longer reside at the address from which you are currently registered. If you have not permanently changed your residence address, or if you have permanently changed your residence address but continue to live in the same city or town, you should immediately return the voter registration form no later than fourteen (14) days after the date of this mailing even if this notice was mailed to your correct current address. If the voter registration form is not returned, affirmation or confirmation of your current address may be required at the polls on election day. If the registration form is not returned and you do not vote by _____, which is the date of the second general election following the date of this mailing, then your name may be removed from the voter registration list. If you have permanently changed residence address to another city or town in Rhode Island, please complete and return the completed voter registration form to the local board of canvassers in the city or town of your current address.

(d) The confirmation notice shall be mailed to both the voter's current registered address and any new residence address, to the extent both addresses are available to the local board.

(e) If a confirmation notice is mailed to a voter and returned as undeliverable, or if delivered and the voter has not responded within fourteen (14) days from the date of the mailing, the voter shall remain on, or be placed on, the inactive list and shall not be permitted to vote until the voter has signed an affirmation form at either the approved polling place or at the local board of canvassers as provided in this chapter. Any application for a mail ballot under § 17-20-2.1 or an emergency mail ballot under § 17-20-2.2 shall serve as a proper affirmation form under this section if the address is the same as the voter's current address on record with the board of canvassers. If the voter fails to vote by the second general election following the date of the confirmation mailing, then the voter shall be removed from the voting list. Notwithstanding the foregoing provisions, if the confirmation mailing was based upon the change of address information provided by or through the United States Postal Service National Change of Address Program, and the voter has failed to respond to the confirmation mailing, the voter shall remain on the active list of voters and shall not be required to sign the affirmation form. In these cases, the voter's residence address for voting purposes will be changed by the local board to the new address as indicated by the National Change of Address Program.

(f) Local boards shall be required to maintain for a period of at least two (2) years a record of all outgoing confirmation mailings, including the reasons for the mailing of the confirmations. Records shall be kept in a fashion that may be determined by the state board.

§ 17-9.1-27. Periodic updating of voter registration records.

(a) Not less than four (4) times within a calendar year, the secretary of state shall update the central voter register using the United States Postal Service National Change of Address (NCOA) Program. The office of the secretary of state shall be responsible for obtaining the NCOA data and providing each local board of canvassers with their data; provided, that the updating shall be performed by each local board. The NCOA list of address changes shall be compared by the local board with lists of registered voters, and if address changes are detected for any voter, the local board shall institute the confirmation process described in § 17-9.1-26.

(b) Each local board of canvassers in each city or town shall send annually, a notice prescribed by the secretary of state and marked "Do Not Forward — Return if Undeliverable", to every active registered voter who has not voted in the past five (5) calendar years and has not otherwise communicated with the board during that period of time, advising them of their current polling place and voting eligibility, and informing them that mail that is returned as undeliverable will initiate the confirmation process described in § 17-9.1-26; provided, however, that the local boards shall not be obligated to send such notice if the state or federal government fails to appropriate the necessary funds.

(c) The secretary of state shall promulgate regulations for the uniform implementation of this section, consistent with all applicable federal voting laws.

(d) Beginning ninety (90) days before any state election and through certification of that election, local boards shall cease all list maintenance procedures required by this section.

§ 17-9.1-28. Procedure on challenge of registration.

(a) Any elector may challenge the registration of a registered voter by submitting to the local board an affidavit prescribed by the state board of elections in accordance with rules and regulations promulgated by the board stating that the voter is not eligible to vote and setting forth evidence that would create a reasonable cause to suspect that the challenged voter is not in fact eligible. The return as undeliverable of a mailing sent to the voter by someone other than the state board or local board shall not, standing alone, constitute reasonable cause. The local board, upon receipt of the affidavit and upon finding that the affidavit establishes reasonable cause, shall cause to be mailed, by certified mail, a notification of the challenge to the challenged voter at his or her registered address. The return of the notice or acknowledgement of its receipt may be admitted as evidence at the hearing. The challenged voter shall appear before the local board at a time and place to be determined by the local board. The objector shall also be notified of the hearing. If the board finds that the affidavit does set forth reasonable cause to suspect that the challenged voter is not eligible, the voter, upon taking the following oath or affirmation, shall answer pertinent questions as provided in this section, and any other questions necessary to establish his or her eligibility.

(b) The oath or affirmation shall be as follows:

“You do voluntarily swear (or affirm) that you will fully and truly answer all questions put to you regarding your place of residence and eligibility as an elector.”

(c) The local board shall then ask the voter the following questions which are appropriate to test his or her eligibility:

(1) If challenged as ineligible on the ground that he or she is not a citizen: Where were you born? If you were not born in the United States, when and where were you naturalized as a United States citizen?

(2) If challenged as ineligible on the ground that he or she has not resided in this state for thirty (30) days immediately preceding the election:

(i) How long have you resided in this state immediately preceding your registration?

(ii) Have you been absent from this state within the thirty (30) days immediately preceding this election? If

yes, then:

(iii) When you left, did you leave for a temporary purpose, with the intent of returning, or for the purpose of remaining away?

(iv) What state or territory did you regard as your residence while absent?

(v) Did you, while absent, vote in any other state or territory?

(3) If challenged as ineligible on the ground that he or she is not a resident of the district where seeking to vote:

(i) When did you last come into this district?

(ii) Did you come for a temporary purpose only, or for the purpose of making it your residence?

(iii) Did you come into this district solely for the purpose of voting here?

(iv) Have you now and have you had for the last thirty (30) days a voting residence in this district? If so, what is the particular description, name and location of your residence?

(v) If the answer to paragraph (iv) of this subdivision is no, then: Have you moved from the district after registering?

(vi) Have you registered to vote at any other place within or outside of this state?

(vii) Have you applied for an absentee ballot at any place in this or any other state?

(viii) What is the address furnished to the division of motor vehicles for your operator's license?

(ix) What is the address from which your motor vehicle is registered?

(x) What is the address from which you filed your last federal income tax return?

(xi) What is the address from which you filed your last state income tax return?

(xii) What is the address furnished to the companies from which you have obtained retail credit cards?

(xiii) What is the address furnished to the financial institutions where you maintain accounts?

(xiv) What is the address furnished to the tax collector and/or assessor in those communities where you own taxable real or personal property for the purposes of notification to you?

(xv) What is the address furnished to the insurance companies with which you maintain policies?

(xvi) What is the address furnished to your employer?

§ 17-9.1-28. Cont.

(4) If challenged as ineligible on the ground that registrant is under eighteen (18) years of age: What is your date of birth?

(5) If challenged as ineligible on the ground registrant has been finally convicted of a felony:

(i) Have you ever been tried or convicted in this state or any other state of any crime? If yes, then:

(ii) Of what crime, when, and in what court were you convicted?

(iii) What sentence was imposed, including provisions relating to probation and parole, and have the provisions of the sentence been fulfilled?

(6) The local board shall ask the challenged person any other and further questions to test his or her eligibility as an elector which the board deems relevant.

(d) If the challenged voter appears at the hearing and testifies under oath or affirmation as provided and the local board determines that the voter is not eligible to vote or not eligible to vote within the city or town, the voter may be stricken from the voting list. If the voter is found to be eligible to vote within the city or town but not within the voting district where the voter is currently registered, the voter shall remain on the voting list and the board shall record the voter's change of address to the new voting district within the same city or town. If the voter does not appear at the hearing, whether or not the notification of the challenge is returned as undeliverable, the voter shall not be stricken from the voting list, but the board shall at that time be required to begin the confirmation process described in § 17-9.1-26. No confirmation mailing shall be sent out and no person shall be removed from the voting list within the ninety (90) day period prior to any election, except that names of voters may be removed from the voting list within that period of time, at the request of the voter, by reason of criminal conviction or mental incapacity, or by reason of the voter's death. Nothing contained in this section shall prohibit the mailing of acknowledgement cards verifying voter registration applications within the ninety (90) day period, and nothing contained in this section shall prevent the recording within the ninety (90) day period of a change of address of a voter who has changed voting residence within the same city or town.

§ 17-10-1. Maintenance of registration — Inactive file.

(a) The local board or its duly authorized agent shall maintain the files of registration cards in a condition that will correctly represent the registration of qualified voters at all times. It shall continually purge the cards of voters no longer qualified to vote in the city or town. It shall promptly record all changes of address, changes of name, and transfers and cancellations of registration.

(b) If a confirmation card has been mailed to a registered voter at an address outside of the city or town of the voter's current registered address for voting purposes, or if the confirmation card has been mailed to an address within the same city or town where the voter is registered, which card was sent to confirm the voter's continuing residence within the city or town and not merely to confirm information provided by or through the postal service concerning a change of address within the city or town, and in both cases the voter has failed to respond to the confirmation card, the voter shall be stricken from the voting list and the voter registration shall be canceled if the voter has not voted or appeared to vote in an election during the period beginning on the date of mailing of the confirmation card and ending on the date after the date of the second general election that occurs after the date of mailing of the card. Provided, that the registration of any person shall not be canceled during his or her service in the armed forces of the United States and during two (2) years thereafter. A voter whose registration has been canceled shall not thereafter be eligible to vote unless that voter shall again register in accordance with the provisions of this title and in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution of this state. The local board shall notify the secretary of state of any cancellation. The local board shall notify each voter whose registration has been canceled by a notice addressed to the voter at the voter's last known address, and a memorandum that the notice has been sent shall be maintained on file by the local board. The local board shall take affirmative action to purge the voter's name from its files of registration cards.

§ 17-10-1. Cont.

(c) Using the central voter registration system, upon receipt of the monthly list of individuals who have died from the office of vital statistics, as prescribed by § 23-3-5 or provided by the federal Social Security Administration's master death list, the secretary of state shall identify all voter registrations that may be reflected on the list and so notify electronically, the local board of canvassers of each applicable city or town. The local board, upon receipt of the list of deceased persons from the secretary of state, or upon receipt of an affidavit of death on forms prescribed by the secretary of state, shall promptly purge its files of registration cards by removing the cards of each deceased elector and canceling the voter registration information of the deceased elector from the central voter registration system.

(d) The local board shall maintain a separate list of all new registrations and all transfers of registration which are received by the board within the thirty-day (30) period prior to the close of registration prior to each primary, regular, and special election. The list shall be maintained until the time that the election is held.

§ 17-10-3. Publication of preliminary lists.

(a) Immediately after the close of registration for each general election and each primary election for a general election, the local board shall publish and post a preliminary list of all persons who appear from the registration cards to be duly registered to vote at the next ensuing election. The preliminary list for a primary election shall be subject to the requirements of chapter 13 of this title. The preliminary list shall contain the names and addresses of registered voters arranged in the same order as the file of original registration cards. The preliminary list shall be computer generated from the statewide central voter registry system. The list shall be available for public inspection at the local board of canvassers, where the list shall be open to examination at all reasonable times. The local board shall, upon request, furnish without charge and without unreasonable delay, five (5) copies of the preliminary list to the state, city, or town chairperson of any political party.

(b) The preliminary list shall be deemed a public record; and any elector of the city or town, upon request, shall be given a copy of the list upon payment of no more than the actual cost of reproduction.

(c) The preliminary list shall contain the following language in bold print:

“You must be registered to vote from your actual place of residence.”

§ 17-10-5. Canvass and correction of preliminary lists.

(a) The local board shall, before the twentieth (20th) day preceding each election, meet and canvass the preliminary lists and hear objections to the inclusion or omission of any person as a registered voter, and it shall at that time make a final canvass and correction of the registration files. It shall give notice of the time and place of the meeting, for at least ten (10) days previous to it, by posting notices of the meeting in the same manner as required by this chapter for the posting of the preliminary list, and by publication once, at least ten (10) days previous to the meeting on the official website maintained by the city or town. At or following the meeting, the local board shall strike from the lists and direct the cancellation of the registration of every person who is not qualified to vote at the election for which the final canvass is made, and shall immediately notify the secretary of state of that action. No registration shall be cancelled or a voter's right to vote be otherwise limited based upon a finding that the voter no longer resides within the city or town unless the voter has confirmed either in person or in writing that the voter no longer resides within the city or town or the board has received written evidence that the voter has registered to vote within another city or town or in another state.

(b) The local boards may meet and canvass the voting lists of any senatorial district, representative district or districts, ward or wards, or voting district or districts in any senatorial or representative district, ward, or voting district, or at their office or other previously designated place, at any other convenient time or times, on the same day or different days, not inconsistent with the provisions of this chapter.

§ 17-10-7. Proof required to strike name.

No name shall be stricken from any voting list by any local board upon evidence given at the final canvass meeting unless sworn proof is presented to the board that that name is the name of a person not qualified to vote at the election for which the registration and voting list is being canvassed. No name shall be stricken for ineligibility to vote on the basis of residence except as provided in this chapter.

§ 17-10-8. Notice of striking of names.

In each city and town the local board shall, within one hundred and twenty (120) hours after striking the name of any person from any registration or voting list, cause to be mailed to the person, postage prepaid, at that person's last address in the registration records, a notice of the striking of his or her name, and the reason for the striking; except that the notice provided for in this section shall not be required where the voter has requested the action, or has died.

§ 17-10-9. Record of vote on adding or striking names.

The clerk of the local board shall record the votes of the members of the board on adding or striking the name of any person from the list of voters whenever requested to do so by any member of the board or by any qualified elector of the city or town present at the time of canvassing, a certified copy of this record shall be evidence of the facts stated in it; and for any willful neglect on the part of the clerk to make a record, whenever requested as provided in this section, the clerk shall be guilty of a petty misdemeanor.

§ 17-10-11. Right to appeal striking of name.

Whenever the local board of any town or city at any meeting held for the purpose of canvassing the rights and correcting the lists of voters rejects, or causes to be stricken from the voting list, the name of any person qualified to vote, the person whose name the board has rejected or stricken from any list may appeal to the state board of elections, setting forth his or her residence, his or her qualifications, and other facts in connection with the rejection or striking of his or her name from the list, as that person may deem material, and praying that his or her name is added to the list.

[The National Voter Registration Act of 1993](#)

Congress enacted the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (also known as the “NVRA” and the “Motor Voter Act”), to enhance voting opportunities for every American. The Act has made it easier for all Americans to register to vote and to maintain their registration. Section 8 of the NVRA contains requirements with respect to the administration of voter registration by States and requires States to implement procedures to maintain accurate and current voter registration lists.

For more information about the NVRA, please visit the [Department of Justice website](#).

List of voter registration statuses and their definitions

Registration Statuses	
Active (A) - eligible voters	§ 17-1-3
Inactive (I) - eligible voters but a piece of official election mail was sent to them and returned as undeliverable—when they vote, they will have to sign an affirmation form that they still live as the address they are registered at.	§ 17-10-1
Active with NCOA change (AC) - eligible voters whose addresses were updated due to information provided by the Post Office.	§ 17-9.1-16.
Pending (P) - individuals who have registered within the last 30 days and will be eligible once the 30 days elapses.	§ 17-10-1
Purged - refers to registrations of voters who are no longer qualified to vote in the city or town.	§ 17-10-1

How do I file a HAVA complaint?

[Link to HAVA Complaint Process](#)

Any person who believes that there has been a violation of any provision of Title III (that either has occurred, is occurring, or is about to occur), by any state or local election official may file a complaint with the Board of Elections in which the alleged violation occurred, as provided under these regulations. All complaints must be in writing, sworn to under oath and under penalty of perjury, signed by the complainant, and notarized. (See HAVA Complaint Process link for additional information.)

How do I file a non-HAVA election complaint?

[Link to Election Offenses](#)

[Link to Form](#)

If you witness what you believe to be election-related crimes or unlawful conduct, please fill out the Attorney General's online complaint form, email the Attorney General at voting@riag.ri.gov, email the RI Department of State's Elections Division at elections@sos.ri.gov, or contact your local police department immediately. The Attorney General's primary jurisdiction in election interference matters arises under R.I.G.L. § 42-9.3-2

[§ 42-9.3-2. Action by attorney general.](#)

(a) Whenever any person, whether or not acting under color of law, intentionally interferes or threatens to intentionally interfere, by physical force or violence against a person, by damage or destruction of property or by trespass on property, with the exercise or enjoyment by any other person of rights secured by the United States Constitution or the laws of the United States or of rights secured by the Constitution of Rhode Island or laws of the state, the attorney general may bring a civil action for injunctive or other appropriate equitable relief in order to protect the peaceable exercise or enjoyment of the rights secured.

Who can I contact regarding an election related complaint?

State of Rhode Island Board of Elections (HAVA)	
Address:	2000 Plainfield Pike, Suite A Cranston, RI 02921
Phone Number:	401-222-2345
Fax Number:	401-222-3135
E-mail:	boe.elections@elections.ri.gov

Attorney General Peter F. Neronha	
Address:	RI Office of the Attorney General 150 South Main Street Providence, RI 02903
Phone Number:	401-274-4400
E-mail:	voting@riag.ri.gov
Webform:	https://riag.ri.gov/forms/election-incidence-form
Website:	https://riag.ri.gov