
Massachusetts

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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CONTENTS:

[Who can I contact with election related questions?](#)

[How do I register to vote?](#)

[How do I cancel my voter registration?](#)

[How is voter list maintenance handled?](#)

[List of Voter Registration Status and their definitions](#)

Who can I contact with election related questions?

[Link to Elections Official](#)

Massachusetts Secretary of the Commonwealth Elections Division	
Physical Address:	One Ashburton Place Room 1705 Boston, MA 02108
Mailing Address:	Elections Division Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth One Ashburton Place Boston, MA 02108
Phone Number:	617-727-2828
Fax Numbers:	617-727-3238
E-mail:	elections@sec.state.ma.us
Local Election Offices:	https://www.sec.state.ma.us/divisions/elections/voter-resources/find-my-local-election-office.htm



How do I register to vote?

[Link to Register](#)

[Link to Statutes](#)

[Section 1: Qualifications of voters](#)

Every citizen eighteen years of age or older, not being a person under guardianship or incarcerated in a correctional facility due to a felony conviction, and not being temporarily or permanently disqualified by law because of corrupt practices in respect to elections, who is a resident in the city or town where he claims the right to vote at the time he registers, and who has complied with the requirements of this chapter, may have his name entered on the list of voters in such city or town, and may vote therein in any such election, or except insofar as restricted in any town in which a representative town meeting form of government has been established, in any meeting held for the transaction of town affairs. Notwithstanding any special law to the contrary, every such citizen who resides within the boundaries of any district, as defined in section one A of chapter forty-one, may vote for district officers and in any district meeting thereof, and no other person may so vote. A person otherwise qualified to vote for national or state officers shall not, by reason of a change of residence within the commonwealth, be disqualified from voting for such national or state officers in the city or town from which he has removed his residence until the expiration of 6 months from such removal.



How do I cancel my voter registration?

[Local Election Offices](#)

To cancel your voter registration, contact your local election office.

How is voter list maintenance handled?

Section 14: Death of resident; notice

The city or town clerk or other officer having charge of the registration of deaths in each city or town shall, on the first day of every month, and also two days before every election, transmit to the registrars of voters a list of the names of all residents thereof eighteen years of age or older who died in the preceding month or since the date of the list previously transmitted, with a statement of the ward, street and number therein, if any, where such person resided at his death.

Section 14A: Assistance in making lists

In the making of lists under sections four to fourteen, inclusive, the registrars, except in the city of Boston, may, with the approval of the mayor or selectmen or the school committee, as the case may be, have the assistance of the police department, assessors, supervisors of school attendance, or other suitable officers or employees of the city or town or other qualified persons employed by them for the purpose, in visiting buildings and residences and performing the duties of assistant registrars in securing the information required by said sections.

In the making of lists under sections four to fourteen, inclusive, the registrars of the city of Boston may, with the approval of the mayor, have the assistance of the police department in visiting buildings and residences and performing the duties of assistant registrars in securing the information required by said sections.

Section 35: Omitted listings compared with annual register of voters; exceptions.

Except in any city or town as to which it is otherwise provided by special law, registrars shall compare all omitted listings with the annual register of voters for the preceding year, and if it appears to their satisfaction that any of said omitted listings is that of a person entitled to vote in such preceding year they shall at any time up to and including the day of the next primary or election enter such name on the current annual register. In every case they shall require the vote by virtue of which such entry or correction is made to be attested by their clerk. Notwithstanding any inconsistent provision of this section or of any other general or special law, this section shall apply to the city of Boston and the election commissioners thereof.

Section 37: Annual register; omitted names; notice

The registrars, as soon as they have prepared the lists required by section four, shall prepare an annual register containing the names of all qualified voters in their city or town for the current year, beginning with January first, except the name of any person who provides the registrars with a copy of a court order granting protection, or evidence of residence in a protective shelter, or an affidavit signed by a chief of police or his designee that said person is entitled to have certain information withheld from the public under section 24C of chapter 265. Such names shall be arranged in alphabetical order, and, opposite to the name of each voter, shall be placed his residence on January first preceding or on any subsequent day when he became an inhabitant of the city or town. The registrars shall enter in the annual register every name contained in the lists prepared by them under section four which they can identify as that of a person whose name was borne on the voting list of the city or town at the last preceding election or town meeting, giving the residence of each such person on January first of the current year.

Section 37 (Cont.)

They shall make all inquiries and investigations necessary to identify such person, and they shall not enter in the annual register the name of a person objected to by any registrar, nor shall they enter in such register as residing at any licensed inn, lodging house or public lodging house the name of a person which has not been reported to them under section ten A, until such person has been duly notified and given an opportunity to be heard. They shall forthwith enter in the annual register the name of every person who has registered as a voter in the current year. They shall, on or before the first Monday of June in each year, send notice in writing to each voter of the preceding year whose name has not been entered in the annual register of the current year that the name of such voter may be removed from the voting list if the voter fails to respond to the notice and does not vote in the next two biennial state elections following the mailing of such notice. Such notice shall (1) be postage prepaid; (2) contain a preaddressed and postage prepaid return card; (3) be sent by forwardable mail; (4) instruct the voter to return the card before the last day to register if the voter did not change residence from the city or town; and (5) contain additional information about remaining eligible to vote, as prescribed by the state secretary. The registrars shall prepare a list of the names of voters not so entered, which shall be open to public inspection in their principal office, and shall be posted by copy in accordance with the same schedule of times and in the places where copies of voting lists are required to be posted under section fifty-seven. The registrars, in addition, may publish such lists in a newspaper devoted wholly or chiefly to the publication of local or general news. Copies of said lists shall be made available to members of the public upon payment of the cost of the copying thereof.

Section 37A: Inactive voters list

The name and address of a voter that is not entered in the annual register pursuant to section 37 for 2 consecutive years and who during that time fails to vote in any election shall be maintained on an inactive voters list until such voter has failed to vote in two consecutive biennial state elections and has thereafter been notified, by mail, of such removal from the inactive voters list.

Section 38: Revisions and corrections of registers, etc.

The registrars shall, upon the personal application of a listed person for the correction of any error in their original lists, and whenever informed of any such error, make due investigation, and, upon proof thereof, correct the same on their books. When informed that a person whose name has been omitted from the voting lists of a city or town is in a hospital, a sanatorium, a rest home or convalescent or nursing home in another city or town, they shall make due investigation and, upon proof thereof, they shall restore the name of such person to the list of voters at his address of last registration, provided that he has not acquired the qualifications for registration as a voter in the town where he then resides. When informed of the omission of the name of a person who is averred to have resided in the city or town on January first in the then current year and to have been listed there in the preceding year, they shall make due investigation, and, upon proof thereof, add the name to their books. They shall revise and correct the current annual register in accordance with any facts they may have presented to them. They may, for this purpose, require that such facts be presented to them in writing, signed under the penalties of perjury. They shall strike therefrom the name of every deceased voter which has been transmitted to them under section fourteen or which has been electronically transmitted to them. After the name of a voter has been placed upon the current annual register or upon the inactive voters list, they shall not strike such name therefrom unless: (a) the voter has died; (b) they have received a duplicate copy of an affidavit of registration from the registrars of another city or town; (c) they have received a change of address notification from the registry of motor vehicles; (d) they have received a written request from the voter or the voter has confirmed in writing that he has moved to another city or town; or (e) the voter has not responded to the notice described in section thirty-seven and has not voted in the next two biennial state elections following the mailing of such notice.

Section 46A: Transmittal of duplicate certificate of registration to place of voter's last registration

Except as provided in section forty-seven, the registrars, upon receipt of an affidavit of registration, shall transmit a duplicate copy thereof to the registrars in the city or town where the person last registered to vote, if within the commonwealth, or to the state secretary of the state where the person last registered to vote, if the person had indicated that his previous residence was in that state.

Section 47B: False statements in affidavit of registration; complaint and summons; examination of qualifications

If at any time subsequent to the registration of a voter the registrars have probable cause to believe that the voter has made a false statement in his affidavit of registration, they may prepare a complaint setting forth the basis for their belief, and summon the voter to appear before them in the manner set forth in section forty-eight. They shall examine the voter and determine his qualifications to vote in the manner set forth in section forty-nine.

Section 47C: Central registry of voters; agreement with Electronic Registration Information Center, Inc.

Subject to appropriation, the state secretary shall maintain a central registry of voters which shall contain, if provided by the registrars, the names, addresses and effective dates of registration of all registered voters in the commonwealth and which shall contain the name, date of birth, occupation, veteran status, nationality, if not a citizen of the United States, for street list purposes only, and residence on January first in the preceding year and in the current year, of every person three years of age or older in the commonwealth, and shall adopt regulations governing the operation of said central registry. The names and addresses contained in said central registry shall not be a matter of public record; provided however, that they shall be available to state party committees, statewide candidate committees, state ballot question committees, the jury commissioner, adjutant general and any other individual, agency or entity that the state secretary shall designate by regulation consistent with the purposes of this section, at a fair and reasonable cost not to exceed the cost of printing or preparing computer readable documents.

The state secretary shall enter into an agreement with the Electronic Registration Information Center, Inc. on behalf of the commonwealth that shall specify the terms and conditions of the commonwealth's membership in the Center. The agreement shall include terms providing for the periodic sharing of data between the central registry, the registry of motor vehicles and any other automatic voter registration agency as designated by the secretary, and the Center, including, but not limited to, voter names and addresses.

To the extent feasible, the state secretary shall make the statewide list of registered voters contained in the central registry of voters established in this section available to the local election officers at each polling location.

Section 48: Complaint; time for filing; summons and service of process

Upon complaint signed and sworn to by a registered voter and filed with the registrars at least fourteen days in a city, or at least four days in a town, before a primary, election or town meeting, stating that the complainant has reason to believe and does believe that a certain person by him therein named has been illegally or incorrectly registered, and giving the reasons for such belief, the registrars shall examine into such complaint and, if satisfied that there is sufficient ground therefor, they shall summon the person complained of to appear before them at a certain place and time before the next primary or election or town meeting to answer to the matters set forth in the complaint, and the substance of the complaint and a copy of this section and of section forty-nine shall be set forth in the summons.

Service of the summons shall be made by an officer qualified to serve civil or criminal process, not more than fourteen nor less than two days before the day named for appearance, by delivering in hand a copy of the summons to the person therein named, or by leaving it at his place of residence, or, if personal service cannot be made and the person's residence is unknown to the officer and cannot be ascertained by inquiry at the place of alleged illegal or incorrect residence or at any later residence of such person appearing on the register, then at such person's last residence, if any, known to the officer, or, if the person's last residence is unknown, at the last place appearing as his residence in the register. The officer shall return the summons to the registrars before the day named for appearance with the certificate of his doings endorsed thereon.

Section 49: Examination of persons summoned; status for annual register; failure to appear

If a person summoned before the registrars to answer such complaint appears before them, they shall examine him on oath, and shall receive such other evidence which may be offered in regard to the matters set forth in the complaint and, if satisfied that he is properly registered as a qualified voter, they shall enter in the register a statement of their determination of the facts required for registration. If the registrars are satisfied that he is not a qualified voter, they shall strike his name from the register. If they are satisfied that, although he is a qualified voter in the city or town, he is illegally or incorrectly registered in a ward or voting precinct other than the ward or voting precinct in which he is required by section three to be registered, and have determined the ward or voting precinct in which he is so required to be registered, and his place of residence therein, they shall change his place of residence as given on the register accordingly. If a person duly summoned as aforesaid does not appear as directed in the summons and the complainant produces sufficient testimony to make out a prima facie case, the name of such person shall be struck from the register; but if such person appears before the registrars before the election or town meeting following and shows sufficient cause for his failure earlier to appear, the hearing shall be reopened and the matter decided on its merits, as determined from the evidence presented on both sides. The complainant and the person complained of may be represented by counsel, and all witnesses may be cross-examined.

Section 66: Provision of data to state secretary for maintenance of voter lists; provision of data to Electronic Registration Information Center, Inc.; centralized data management

The registry of motor vehicles, and any other state agency, shall provide data, as deemed necessary by the state secretary, for the purposes of maintaining accurate and complete voter lists. Not less than every 2 months, the registry of motor vehicles, and any other state agency the state secretary designates, shall electronically transmit to the state secretary all data, as directed by the state secretary, that is relevant to the purposes of voter registration, including, if available, the following record fields: (i) name, current address, mailing address, date of birth, driver's license number or last 4 digits of the social security number and telephone number; (ii) date, time and nature of the last change to the information; and (iii) any additional information designated by the state secretary for such purposes and reasonably related to maintaining accurate and complete voter lists.

The state secretary shall provide the names and addresses and other data contained in the central registry of voters, as well as information received from the registry of motor vehicles and any other agency received for the purpose of maintaining accurate and complete voting lists, to the Electronic Registration Information Center, Inc. The state secretary shall implement, if practicable, a centralized system to manage and evaluate data received from the Electronic Registration Information Center, Inc. to send mailings to voters centrally rather than from the local level. In the absence of such central management, if any actions regarding possibly inaccurate information in the central registry requires any action by the registrars, the secretary shall provide any such information to the registrars in electronic form and in a manner minimizing data management at the local level.

[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 qualified voter	Title VIII, Chapter 51, Section 37
Inactive - The name and address of a voter that is not entered in the annual register pursuant to section 37 for 2 consecutive years and who during that time fails to vote in any election shall be maintained on an inactive voters list until such voter has failed to vote in two consecutive biennial state elections and has thereafter been notified, by mail, of such removal from the inactive voters list.	Title VIII, Chapter 51, Section 37A

How do I file a HAVA complaint?

[Link to HAVA Complaint Process](#)

Any person may complain to the Secretary that a pattern of conduct, or a standard, practice or procedure, of a local election official is contrary to the election laws. Additionally, a person may complain to the Secretary, in accordance with the provisions of Section 402 of HAVA, that Title III has been violated, is being violated or is about to be violated.

- (1) Complaints need not use the language or refer to the relevant provision of the election laws, nor M.G.L. c. 56, § 60, nor 950 CMR 56.00. The complaint shall be in writing, except in urgent circumstances. The Secretary's office may initiate a complaint.
- (2) Complaints filed in accordance with Section 402 of HAVA, must be in writing and notarized.
- (3) Any complaints must be made to:

Elections Division
Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth
One Ashburton Place, Room 1705
Boston, MA 02108

How do I file a non-HAVA election complaint?

[Link to Statutes](#)

Concerns about the election process may be directed to the Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth, Elections Division or local election offices.

If you believe an election crime has been committed, please file a report with law enforcement.

Who can I contact regarding an election related complaint?

Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth	
Physical Address:	Elections Division One Ashburton Place, Room 1705 Boston, MA 02108
Mailing Address:	Elections Division Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth One Ashburton Place Boston, MA 02108
Phone Number:	617-727-2828
Fax Number:	617-727-3238
E-mail:	elections@sec.state.ma.us
Local Election Offices:	https://www.sec.state.ma.us/divisions/elections/voter-resources/find-my-local-election-office.htm

Office of the Attorney General	
Address:	One Ashburton Place 20th Floor Boston, MA 02108
Phone Number:	617-727-2200
E-mail:	ago@state.ma.us
Criminal Complaint Form:	https://www.mass.gov/how-to/file-a-request-for-review-with-the-attorney-generals-criminal-bureau