

IOWA VOTER GUIDE

FOR RESIDENTS/TENANTS OF LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES

2024

YOUR VOTE, YOUR CHOICE

Voting is a point of pride—a heartfelt, patriotic duty that has been respected and exercised over the course of a lifetime. As a result, we all have a duty to promote and protect the right to vote. For residents in long-term care, there are often additional obstacles related to the process of voting, including finding documents for voter registration, understanding the voting process and voting options and accessing reliable, unbiased information about the issues and candidates on the ballot. **Under both the United States and Iowa Constitutions, every adult citizen may vote unless he/she has been either (1) declared “mentally incompetent” to vote, or (2) convicted of a felony and have not had their voting rights restored.**

The Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman strongly supports the right of residents to vote. We advocate on behalf of those in long-term care and investigate their complaints to protect their health, safety, welfare and rights—including voting rights. A voting assistance plan can help you identify areas where you may need help and ensure those supports are in place so you can exercise your right to vote in a manner that honors and supports your rights and wishes. This guide is intended to educate on the basics of the voting process in Iowa.

FAQs

Q: May my power of attorney or guardian decide whether or how I vote?

No. A power of attorney (POA) is only designated to make financial or health care decisions; a POA has nothing to do with the right to vote. Unless you are specifically deemed by a judge to be mentally incompetent to vote and it's noted in the guardianship papers, you are in charge of the decisions related to voting.

Q: Is anyone allowed to assist me with the process of voting?

Yes, but only with your permission and in your presence. Voting is not a health care or financial decision, which means an individual serving as your power of attorney or guardian does not have any special authority to act or make decisions related to voting. That individual can assist just as anyone else would, though. Generally, if a voter is unable to fill out forms or sign, he/she can use a rubber stamp or mark to sign—or ask someone else to complete the information and/or sign the voter's name—as long as it is done in the voter's presence, with the voter's permission. If you reside in a facility that is allowed to coordinate in-person ballot delivery, your county auditor's office will send a bipartisan team to facilitate voting. You may also request assistance from this bipartisan team.

Q: Does Iowa require an ID to vote?

Iowa does require an ID to vote. The only exception to this is if an official bipartisan team is delivering ballots at a health care facility under Iowa Code Chapter 53.22. If the resident needs to register to vote in the county, the voter registration form must include either an Iowa driver's license/non-operator ID number or the last four of the social security number. If you want to exercise Election Day Registration, read up on the requirements before you go. If in doubt, don't give up—just call your county auditor for guidance.

WAYS TO REGISTER TO VOTE:

Before you can cast a ballot, you must be registered to vote in Iowa.

1) Pre-Register to Vote

- A voter must complete a voter registration form. The form is available to download on the Iowa Secretary of State's website, or by calling (515) 281-5204.
- If the completed voter registration form is sent at least 15 days before a general election, the auditor will send a voter registration card within two weeks. You don't need to wait for the card to vote, however.

2) Election Day Voter Registration

- The voter registers on the spot, just before voting.
- You will need to show proof of residency (where you reside) and proof of identity (who you are).

WAYS TO VOTE:

1) Absentee Voting at a Health Care Facility

- Iowa has special provisions for voting by absentee ballot for individuals who live in a designated health care facility or who are currently residing in a hospital.
- A bipartisan team of election officials must deliver the absentee ballot to voters in facilities.
- When the officials arrive with your absentee ballot, they must wait while you mark it so they can personally deliver it to the election office. Others may be present while you mark your ballot, if you choose. If you need help marking your ballot, you may also have someone assist you, including the election officials.

In-Person Absentee Voting

- Some prefer this method over using the mail because it feels more like traditional voting on Election Day and offers voters the convenience of going to the polls when it fits their schedule.
- In-person absentee voting begins at the county auditor's office 20 days prior to an election.

Election Day Voting (at your Precinct)

- You need to go to the polling place for your precinct in the county in which you reside.
- Iowa requires all polling places be accessible to all voters with available supports to mark ballots.

VOTER CHECKLIST

- Confirm you are registered to vote at your current address.
- Locate the documents to prove your identity or address if you need to update your registration.
- Update your registration, if needed.
- Know your options and the dates/deadlines for early voting.
- Know where your polling precinct or early voting satellite station is located and how to get there.
- Familiarize yourself with the voting devices used in your county.
- Check into tools or assistance available to aid you if you have declining vision or a disability.
- Know what time the polls open and close.

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Health and Human Services
Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program