



# VOTING TIPS FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS

**First time voters and college students often find themselves caught in the technicalities of MI election laws. These are a few tips to help guide you through.**

## VOTING TIPS FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS

### Eligibility

You can register to vote in the State of Michigan if you are:

- 1.) 18 years old or will turn 18 by the date of the next election
- 2.) A U.S. citizen
- 3.) A Michigan resident

### Where to register

If you are eligible to vote in Michigan, you must identify your “principal residence” in the state. This will determine your voting jurisdiction. As a college student, you can choose to register with your campus address, OR the address where you previously resided before moving to campus.

**Michigan will only keep one registration address on file, so you have to choose whether your home or school address is going to be your principal residence.”**

### The 30-Day Rule

Current law requires you to register to vote 30 days before the date of the election. This requirement came from the horse and buggy days when registrations had to be physically carried, but it still applies. If you change your address within the 30 days before an election, you can still vote at the polling place for your old address.

### How to register

You can register by visiting any Secretary of State (SOS) branch or your local city or township clerk’s office. You can also register to vote by mail. A copy of the mail-in voter registration application can be found at the Michigan SOS website: [www.michigan.gov/sos](http://www.michigan.gov/sos)

### Important!

If you register to vote by mail and have never registered previously, you may not vote an absentee ballot in the first election in which you participate (you must physically attend the polls, a potential problem if your principal residence is far from campus). Therefore, if you anticipate that you will need an absent voter ballot for the first election that you participate in after registering, it is necessary to register at a Secretary of State branch or at your local clerk’s office.

### The Bottom Line:

**If you haven't already voted and want to vote absentee, plan to drop in on the clerk to register in person at least 30 days before the election. If you register by mail, plan to vote in person at the clerk’s office (using an absentee ballot prior to Election Day) or attend the polls on Election Day.**

Your clerk’s office is open on the Saturday before every election from 9 AM to 2 PM, by law, to provide absentee ballots. You can also call your clerk to make an appointment to vote.

Absentee ballots are normally available 30 days before the election (given no delays

caused by legal appeals related to the ballot and printing problems). If you need to vote in person and can't make it to your voting place on Election Day, call your clerk to see when you can vote in person or at least have them witness your signature so they can send you an absentee ballot.

### **Obtaining an absent voter ballot**

If you expect to be absent from the city or township where you are registered to vote for the entire time the polls are open on election day (7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.), *you can obtain an absent voter ballot by submitting a written request to the clerk of the city or township where you are registered, or by filling out a pre-printed application.* Your written request must include your signature and the address where you wish to receive your ballot. An absent voter ballot application form can be obtained through your city or township clerk's office upon request.

**You can ask to be placed on the permanent list of absentee voters so that you will receive the application automatically. This can serve as a helpful reminder of upcoming elections!**

### **Other things you need to know:**

The Secretary of State requires residents to use the same residential address for both voter registration and drivers' license purposes. If the address you submit on a voter registration application does not match the address on your driver license, the SOS will provide you with an address update sticker for your driver license by mail or in person at the branch office.

### **About your "principal residence"**

There are a few other things you may want to consider in making your decision regarding your "principal residence." Residency requirements for various colleges and universities follow the rules set down by those institutions. Your residence can determine how much tuition you will pay. Health insurance may require that you "reside" with your parents. Your residence may also determine automobile insurance rates.

Regardless of the address you use for voter registration and driver's license purposes, you can maintain a separate mailing address. You are allowed to change your voter registration/driver license address as frequently as needed, free of cost.

**Since MI only keeps one "principal address" on record for your driver's license and your voter registration, if you change one, you'll change them both. You can tell where you're expected to vote if your driver's license is current.**

For more information, visit:  
[www.michigan.gov/sos](http://www.michigan.gov/sos) and follow the  
'Elections in Michigan' link.

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