

## Handout 3 - FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) 2024 Voter Guide

### Does everyone get a ballot in the mail?

Yes. Under state law, vote-by-mail ballots are sent to every registered voter.

### When will I receive my mail-in-ballot?

Counties will begin mailing ballots by Feb. 5.

### How do I return my mail-in ballot?

- Mail it to your county elections office
- Drop it off at a ballot drop box or polling location anywhere in the state
- Ask someone you trust to do it for you, but that person can't get paid by the ballot

### Can I vote in person? Where is my polling place or vote center?

Yes. You can find out where to vote in the following ways:

- Check [voterstatus.sos.ca.gov](https://voterstatus.sos.ca.gov)
- Text "VOTE" to GOVOTE (468-8683)
- Call the Secretary of State's hotline at (800) 345-VOTE
- Check the back of your county Voter Information Guide, or contact your county elections office

If you live in [one of 29 counties](#), you'll have increased options, including as many as 10 days of in-person voting.

### If a candidate gets more than 50%, is there still a November election for that race?

Yes. The top two vote-getters advance to the general election regardless of whether one candidate receives a majority in the primary. And if there are only two candidates in the primary, there's still a November election. In 2024, only candidates in special elections can win outright by 50%-plus in a primary.

### Can write-in candidates run in the primary?

Yes. And they can advance to the general election if they finish in the top two.

### **Do I have to be registered with a party to vote in its presidential primary?**

For Republicans, yes. The state GOP has a “[closed](#)” [presidential primary](#), which means that voters registered with no party preference *cannot* participate. (The same applies to the Green and Peace and Freedom parties). On the Democratic side, [unaffiliated voters are allowed](#) in its primary. The American Independent and Libertarian parties also allow no party preference voters. But you have to [request a ballot that includes the presidential race](#).

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

#### **Am I registered to vote?**

You can check the [Secretary of State’s website](#) ([www.voterstatus.sos.ca.gov](http://www.voterstatus.sos.ca.gov)): You’ll need to enter your name, date of birth and either your California driver license, identification card number or the last four digits of your Social Security number. If you don’t have those available, contact your county elections office or the Secretary of State [via email](#) ([elections@sos.ca.gov](mailto:elections@sos.ca.gov)) or phone at (800) 345-8683.

If you’ve changed your name since the last time you voted, or if you moved and didn’t notify the Department of Motor Vehicles or U.S. Postal Service, you may have to register again. If you haven’t voted in several consecutive general elections, your registration may have been canceled.

#### **How do I register?**

You can do so [online](#) ([www.registertovote.ca.gov](http://www.registertovote.ca.gov)). You’ll need the same information as above.

If DMV has your signature on file, you’ll be able to complete the process online. If not, you’ll need to print, sign and mail your completed application to your county elections office. You can also pick up a paper application at elections offices, any DMV office and at many post offices, public libraries and government offices. You’ll be contacted when your application is approved, or if you need to provide more information.

#### **What happens if I miss the voter registration deadline?**

The last day to register online for the primary [is Feb. 20](#). If you are registering or re-registering less than 15 days before March 5,

you must complete [same-day voter registration](https://sos.ca.gov) (sos.ca.gov) and request your ballot in person at your county elections office or polling location.

### **How do I change my political party if I'm already registered?**

You'll need to [re-register to vote](https://registertovote.ca.gov) (registertovote.ca.gov).

### **FAQ: What if I need help with voting?**

#### **What if I need voter information in a language other than English?**

CalMatters' Voter Guide is available in Spanish. The Secretary of State's office has voter instructions in the following languages: [Spanish](#), [Hindi](#), [Chinese](#), [Japanese](#), [Khmer](#), [Korean](#), [Tagalog](#), [Thai](#), [Vietnamese](#). Visit [registertovote.ca.gov](https://registertovote.ca.gov) and select your language. Your county elections office may offer additional languages.

#### **When will I receive my voter guide?**

The statewide voter information guide, which is [available online](https://sos.ca.gov) (sos.ca.gov), will be mailed to voters between Jan. 25 and Feb. 13. County election offices will mail their local guides from Jan. 25 through Feb. 24. Voter guides will be available in [audio and large-print](#). Order one here: <https://sos.ca.gov/elections/voting-resources/large-print-order-form>

#### **What am I voting on?**

U.S. House member, state senator (if you're in an odd-numbered district) and state Assemblymember. The U.S. Senate race will appear twice on your ballot — once for the term that ends in January 2025 and once for the full term that expires in January 2031. And your ballot will include local offices, depending where you live. You'll also be voting on one ballot measure.

#### **Which parties are on the ballot?**

Six parties [qualified for the primary](#): Democratic, Republican, American Independent, Green, Libertarian and Peace and Freedom. Some candidates are also running with no party preference.

### **Can I leave work to vote?**

Yes. California is [one of at least 31 states](#) that requires time off for voting [if employees don't have enough time outside work hours](#). You can take as much time as you need, but employers are only required to pay for a maximum of two hours. Employers may require advance notice. The time off must be at the beginning or the end of your shift. Employers are required to post a notice about this [10 days before a statewide election](#).

### **How can I track my ballot?**

Go [online](#) ([voterstatus.sos.ca.gov](http://voterstatus.sos.ca.gov)) then select “My Voter Status” to check if your vote was counted and if not, what the issue was.

### **FAQ: What if I have special circumstances?**

#### **I'm in the military, living abroad or out of state temporarily. How do I vote?**

If you know where you'll be, you can re-register and request a special absentee ballot. and can choose if you want your ballot mailed, faxed or emailed to you.

#### **Will I get my ballot if my mail is being forwarded?**

No, that's not allowed. So if you plan to be out of state, make sure your county has your new address on file. If you suspect the ballot went to your California address, contact your county elections office as soon as possible.

#### **Can I vote if I don't have a permanent address?**

Yes. [Under California law](#), whether you are unhoused, or in between residences for any reason, you can still use your last address. You can also use a business address, if that's where you live.

If you don't have a specific street location to fill out on your voter registration card, you can provide the city, zip code and closest intersecting cross-streets. This may be a public camp or park.

You must also provide a current mailing address where you can receive your voting materials, such as a P.O. box. The [U.S. Postal Service](https://faq.usps.com/s/article/Is-there-mail-service-for-the-homeless) (faq.usps.com/s/article/Is-there-mail-service-for-the-homeless) offers general delivery mail services to customers with no fixed address and no identification.

### **FAQ: What if I make a mistake on my ballot?**

#### **What should I do if I marked my ballot wrong, or otherwise messed it up?**

If you have turned in your ballot, there's no way to fix it. So the safest bet is to get a new ballot. Contact your county elections office, or take your ballot to your local polling place or voting center and request a replacement. Remember to bring the old ballot — otherwise you won't be able to vote in person.

#### **What if the signature on my ballot doesn't match the one on file?**

County election officials check the signatures on the return envelope against signatures on your voter registration card to make sure no one tries to improperly cast your ballot. It still remains confidential; the ballot is separated from the envelope before it is counted.

Voters with ballots with missing signatures or ones that don't match are notified and given an opportunity to correct the problem before the election is certified.

#### **What happens if I don't receive my ballot?**

Contact your county elections office.

#### **Help! I dropped off my ballot to a drop box in the wrong county.**

Don't worry – the county will pass it on to the correct elections office.

**I forgot to detach the stub from my ballot. Can I open the sealed envelope and reseal it myself?**

You can, but the Secretary of State's office recommends contacting your local [county elections office](https://sos.ca.gov/elections/voting-resources/county-elections-offices) (sos.ca.gov/elections/voting-resources/county-elections-offices). They'll ultimately be processing your ballot and they can offer the best guidance on whether you should reopen it or just leave the stub attached.

**Do I have to vote in every race on the ballot?**

No. Your ballot will still be counted if you skip some races. Many voters do so when they are uncertain of how to vote.