

2015

VIRGINIA EASY VOTER GUIDE



★ VIRGINIA ★
DEPARTMENT *of* ELECTIONS

Commonwealth of Virginia
Department of Elections
Washington Building, First Floor
1100 Bank Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Phone: (800)552-9754

TDD: (800)260-3466

www.elections.virginia.gov

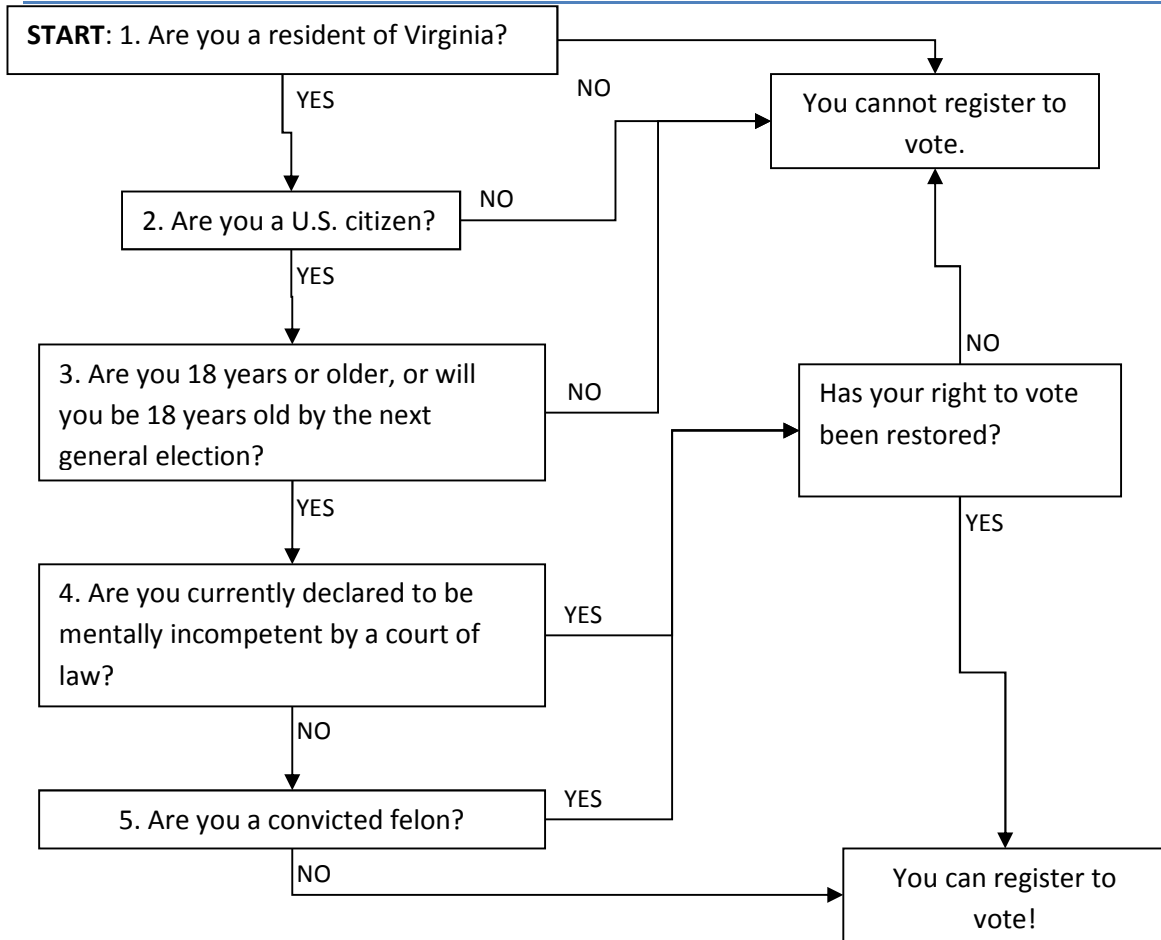
1. REGISTERING TO VOTE	1
1.1 CAN I REGISTER TO VOTE IN VIRGINIA?	1
1.2 HOW DO I REGISTER TO VOTE?	1
1.3 WHAT IS THE DEADLINE FOR REGISTERING TO VOTE?	2
1.4 HOW DO I KNOW IF I'M ALREADY REGISTERED?	2
1.5 HOW DO I REGISTER IF I HAVE NO FIXED ADDRESS?	2
1.6 HOW DO I REGISTER IF I HAVE MORE THAN ONE ADDRESS?	3
1.7 HOW DO I REPORT CHANGES IN MY NAME OR ADDRESS?	3
1.8 I WAS NOT ALLOWED TO REGISTER	3
2. VOTER ID	4
2.1 WHAT FORMS OF ID CAN I USE TO VOTE?	4
2.2 DO I QUALIFY FOR A FREE PHOTO ID?	4
2.3 HOW DO I GET A FREE VIRGINIA VOTER ID?	5
2.4 WHAT IF I DON'T HAVE A PROPER ID WHEN I GO TO THE POLLING PLACE?	5
2.5 I LOST MY VIRGINIA VOTER ID	5
3. ABSENTEE VOTING	6
3.1 CAN I VOTE ABSENTEE?	6
3.2 HOW DO I VOTE ABSENTEE?	7
3.3 I AM SERVING IN THE UNIFORMED SERVICES AND/OR OVERSEAS	7
3.4 I AM A COLLEGE STUDENT LIVING AWAY FROM HOME	8
3.5 I NEED AN EMERGENCY ABSENTEE BALLOT	9
3.6 I AM CONFINED EITHER DUE TO A MISDEMEANOR CONVICTION OR BECAUSE I AM AWAITING TRIAL	9
4. VOTING ON ELECTION DAY	10
4.1 WHEN ARE THE POLLS OPEN?	10
4.2 WHAT DO I NEED TO BRING TO THE POLLS?	10
4.3 HOW DO I FIND MY POLLING PLACE?	10
4.4 SAMPLE BALLOTS	10
4.5 I NEED SOMEONE TO DEMONSTRATE HOW TO USE THE VOTING EQUIPMENT	11
4.6 CAN MY CHILD WATCH ME VOTE?	11
4.7 I HAVE A DISABILITY OR MOBILITY ISSUES	11

TABLE OF CONTENTS

4.8	I CANNOT READ OR SPEAK ENGLISH WELL	12
4.9	I NEED ASSISTANCE FILLING OUT MY BALLOT	12
4.10	DO I HAVE TO VOTE FOR EVERY OFFICE OR QUESTION ON THE BALLOT?.....	12
4.11	HOW DO I CAST A WRITE-IN VOTE?.....	12
4.12	AVOIDING OVER VOTING.....	13
4.13	I THINK I MADE A MISTAKE ON MY BALLOT	13
4.14	IS MY VOTE SECURE?	13
4.15	I VOTED WITH A PROVISIONAL BALLOT	14
5.	YOUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AS A VOTER.....	15
5.1	VIRGINIA VOTER RIGHTS.....	15
5.2	VOTER RESPONSIBILITIES	16
5.3	I WAS NOT ALLOWED TO VOTE, OR I THINK I HAVE WITNESSED AN ELECTION LAW VIOLATION	16

1. Registering to Vote

1.1 Can I register to Vote in Virginia?



1.2 How Do I Register to Vote?

- If you have a Virginia issued driver's license or a DMV ID card, you can apply to register online at www.elections.virginia.gov
- You can also obtain a voter registration application at *any* DMV, Public Library, social service agency, or voter registrar's office in the Commonwealth of Virginia.
 - To find your registrar:
 - See the Department of Elections website, www.elections.virginia.gov
 - You can obtain a form at www.elections.virginia.gov Select the "voter registration form" link. Download, print, and fill out the form and send it to the registrar's office for your locality listed on the second page.
 - Or, look up "voter registration" in the phonebook for your county or city.

1.3 What is the Deadline for Registering to Vote?

- For a general or a primary election, the deadline to register to vote is the 22nd day before a primary or general election. If you are registering by mail, your application must be postmarked no later than that date. The deadline is shorter for special elections.
- Registrar's offices are open until 5:00 PM on the final day of registration before an election if you are registering in person. An application submitted to the Department of Elections online will be timely if completed by 11:59 p.m. on the deadline day.
- Check with your local General Registrar or the Department of Elections website to be sure of the registration deadline for a particular election.

Note: Absent uniformed services members, overseas citizens, and eligible spouses and dependents may be eligible to register late up until election day. These voters should access specialized information provided by the Virginia Department of Elections and Federal Voting Assistance Plan websites.

1.4 How Do I Know if I'm Already Registered?

- You only need to register once to vote in the elections in your jurisdiction. However, if you move your residence, you need to update your registration record with your new address
- There are three convenient ways to check your registration status and whether your record is correct:
 1. You can check online at www.elections.virginia.gov. Click on "Check Your Voter Information" in the blue box in the center of the page.
 2. You can call the Department of Elections:
 - Toll Free: (800)552-9745
 - TTY: (800)260-3466.
 3. You can contact the Voter Registrar in the city or county where you live (see local telephone directory listing under Voter Registration or the Department of Elections website for contact information).

1.5 How Do I Register if I Have No Fixed Address?

- If you have no fixed or permanent address, you can still register to vote!
 1. In the "mailing address" section of the voter application, write the address of an agency where you receive services, or any other address where you are allowed to receive mail.
 2. In the "residence address" section of the application, write the location where you most often spend the night, even if it is not a traditional address.

1.6 How Do I Register if I Have More Than One Address?

- Register in the city or county you consider to be your legal residence. This would be the place you consider your fixed, permanent home.
- If you are unsure which city or county is your legal residence, contact the Voter Registrar for either place you could consider your legal residence. That registrar can help you determine where you should register to vote. See local telephone directory listing under Voter Registration or the Department of Elections website for contact information
- Note that it is **illegal** to be registered to vote in more than one city or county in Virginia, or more than one state in the U.S.

1.7 How Do I Report Changes in my Name or Address?

- It is very important to keep your name and address up to date so that you can vote in every election.
- There are two convenient ways to update your voter registration:
 1. If you have a driver's license or a DMV-issued ID card, you can update your registration information online at www.elections.virginia.gov. Click on "Check Your Voter Information" in the blue box in the center of the page.
 2. You can submit your change in name or address in writing to your local registrar (See Appendix at the end of this guide). You can send your change by mail, fax, or e-mail attachment.
 - You **must** sign the writing. If you are physically unable to sign the writing, you may use a mark (such as an "x") if it is acknowledged by a witness.

1.8 I Was Not Allowed to Register

An applicant denied registration has the right to appeal to the circuit court within ten days. § [24.2-422](#). The applicant must pay a \$10 filing fee. Registrars are required to send each applicant denied registration a letter notifying them of the denial with information about the applicant's appeal right. The general registrar is represented by the Commonwealth's Attorney in the appeal.

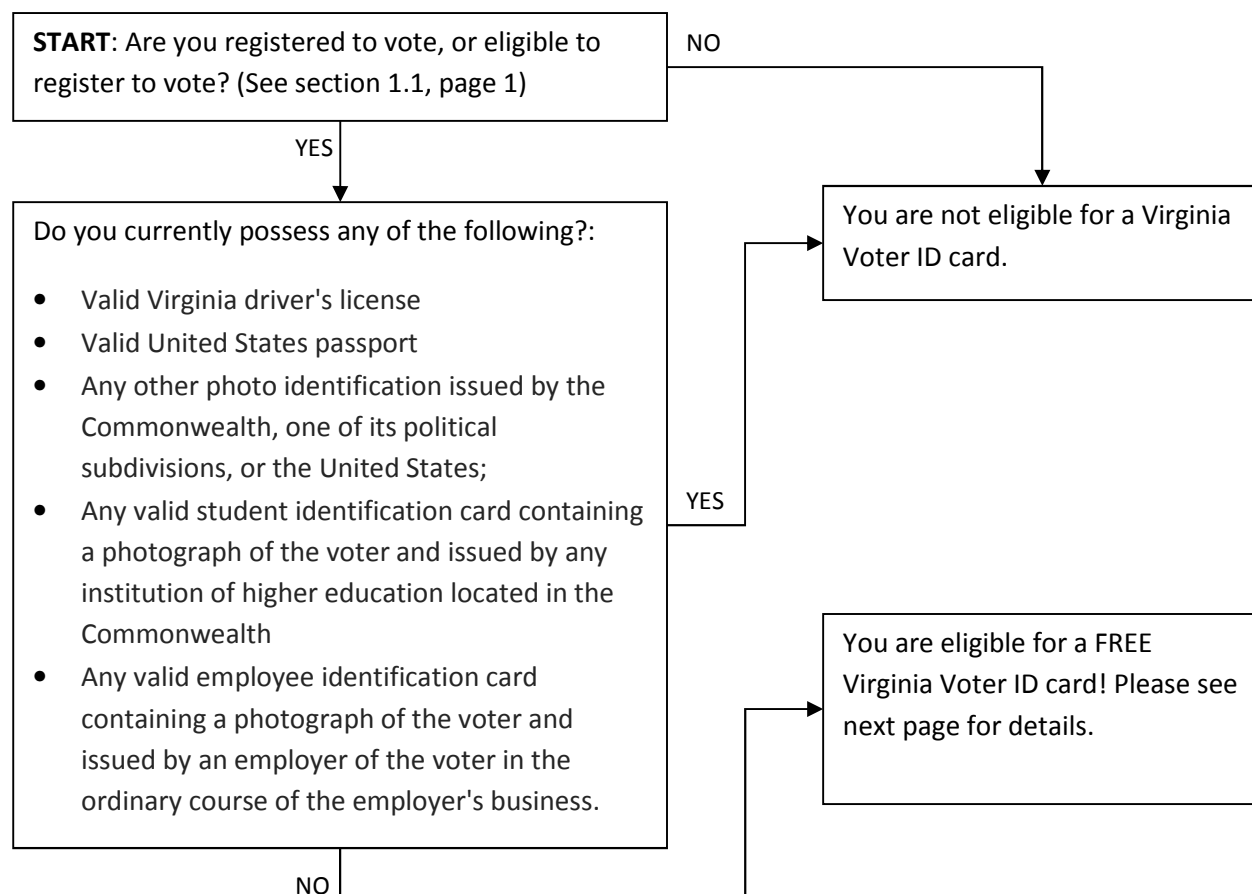
2. Voter ID

2.1 What Forms of ID Can I Use to Vote?

You must present valid *photo* identification to vote in person:

- Valid Virginia's driver's license
- Valid United States passport
- Any other photo identification issued by the Commonwealth, one of its political subdivisions, or the United States;
- Any valid student identification card containing a photograph of the voter and issued by any institution of higher education located in the Commonwealth
- Any valid employee identification card containing a photograph of the voter and issued by an employer of the voter in the ordinary course of the employer's business.
- A FREE Virginia voter photo ID (See below).

2.2 Do I Qualify for a Free Photo ID?



2.3 How do I get a FREE Virginia Voter ID?

1. Contact your local registrar and tell them you need a Virginia Voter ID. See local telephone directory listing under Voter Registration or the Department of Elections website for contact information.
2. You will need to go to your registrar's office so that they can take your picture and collect your signature electronically. If you are unable to get to your registrar's office, you may contact a political party or candidate about arranging transportation for you.
3. Your photo ID will be processed and sent to you through the mail.
4. If you do not receive your Virginia Voter ID within the next several weeks, please contact your registrar.

2.4 What If I Don't Have a Proper ID When I Go to the Polling Place?

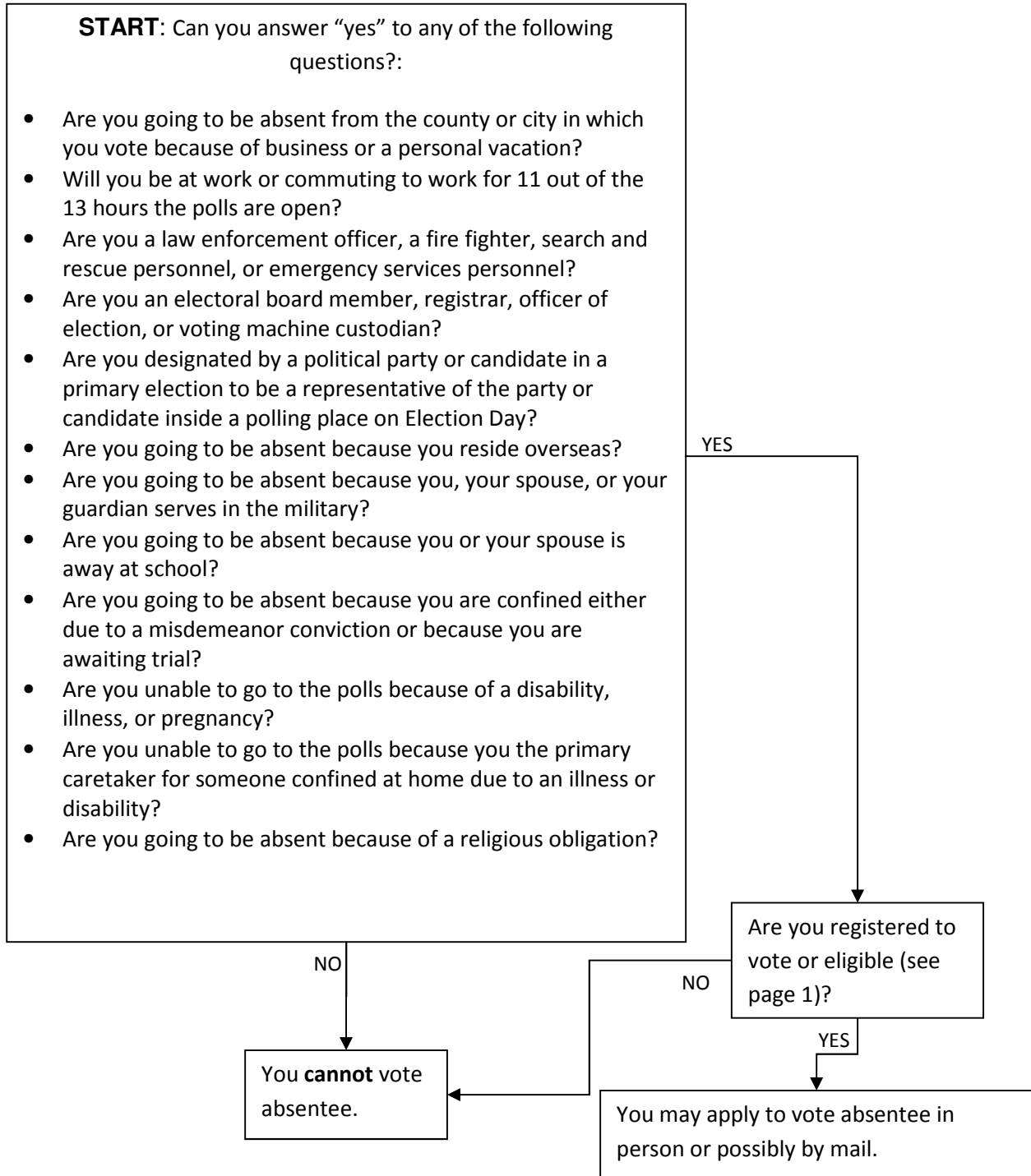
If you do not have the proper ID with you, you may vote a provisional ballot and present a copy of your ID to the Electoral Board by noon on the Friday after the Election.

2.5 I Lost my Virginia Voter ID

If your Virginia Voter ID has been lost, misplaced, or stolen, please contact your registrar immediately. See local telephone directory listing under Voter Registration or the Department of Elections website for contact information.

3. Absentee Voting

3.1 Can I Vote Absentee?



3.2 How Do I Vote Absentee?

- If you are eligible to vote absentee (see table above), there are two convenient ways for you to obtain an absentee ballot application:
 1. Visit www.elections.virginia.gov and click on the orange “Absentee Voting” box on the right side of the page and follow the instructions.
 2. Request an absentee ballot application from your Voter Registrar (see Appendix at the end of this guide.)
- You may complete the application at your Voter Registrar’s office, or you may send it to your Voter Registrar by mail, fax, or e-mail attachment (see Appendix at the end of this guide.).
- If applying for an absentee ballot by mail, you must submit your application by the Tuesday before the election. Your mail-in absentee ballot must be received by your local elections office by Election Day or it cannot be counted.
- If applying for and voting an absentee ballot in the Registrar’s office, you must apply and vote by the Saturday before the Election.
- If you register in person, you must wait five days for your absentee application to be processed. Limited exceptions for uniformed services voters, overseas citizens, eligible spouses and dependents).
- Voters who register by mail may be required to vote in person the first time they vote in Virginia; this vote in person requirement has exceptions, students attending college away from home for example may both register and vote absentee by mail and the registrar will include a notice with the absentee ballot to include a copy of acceptable identification. You may call your local voting official or check the Department of Elections website for details about identification acceptable for this purpose.

3.3 I am Serving in the Uniformed Services and/or Overseas

- For voting purposes, federal law assigns U.S. citizens deployed or living overseas to a specific state based on where the voter lived before going overseas. If you are away from home serving in the military or reside overseas, you, your spouse and dependents are entitled to certain protections under Virginia’s Uniform and Military Overseas Voters Act (UMOVA) and the federal Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA). You may qualify while away from home if:
 - You a U.S. citizen who is a member of the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, Coast Guard, Merchant Marines, or the commissioned corps of the Public Health Service or National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

- You are a U.S. citizen who is the spouse or dependent of a member of the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, Coast Guard, Merchant Marines, or the commissioned corps of the Public Health Service or National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.
- You are a U.S. citizen who currently resides outside the United States either permanently or temporarily (Virginia must have been your last U.S. residence or the last residence of your parent or legal guardian and employment information is required to vote in nonfederal elections).
- If any of these apply to you, you can identify yourself as a covered military or overseas voter by registering to vote and requesting an absentee ballot using a Federal Post Card Application (FPCA). You can fill out and print this application from <http://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/Forms/fpca2013.pdf>
 - Please register to vote and request your absentee ballot early. We recommend registering to vote and requesting your absentee ballot no later than 90 days before the election, if possible.
- Each state has different Absentee Voting guidelines. For Virginia's, visit <http://www.fvap.gov/vao/vag/chapter2/virginia>
- You can access general information at <http://www.fvap.gov/>
- If you need assistance, please contact the Virginia Department of Elections:
 - E-mail: info@elections.virginia.gov
 - Phone: (804) 864-8901
 - Toll Free: (800) 552-9745
 - TTY: 711

3.4 I am a College Student Living Away From Home

- A voter may only register in one place, which means that college students who still consider themselves residents of their home city or county should register to vote there, and not the city or county of where they go to school.
- It is important that residence address provided by the student be specific to allow the registrar to assign the student to a geographic voting precinct. Virginia requires that a voter must be a resident of the precinct where he votes.
- A student should register where he or she attends school only if he or she considers that locality as his or her primary home and residence. A student attending college away from home can vote absentee.
- If you have questions, you may contact your local registrar or the Department of Elections.
- Most colleges and universities offer voter registration and absentee ballot information through their Student Services office.

3.5 I Need an Emergency Absentee Ballot

- Late absentee voting is permitted up to 2:00 PM on the Monday before the election for those recently hospitalized and for those with certain other business or personal emergencies. Call your Voter Registrar to see if you are eligible for a late absentee ballot. See local telephone directory listing under Voter Registration or the Department of Elections website for contact information.

3.6 I am Confined Either Due to a Misdemeanor Conviction or Because I am Awaiting Trial

- You can register and request to vote absentee by mail.
- If you are confined in the city or county in which you vote and are otherwise qualified, you have a right to be taken to the polls if you did not have the opportunity to vote absentee.

4. Voting on Election Day

4.1 When are the Polls Open?

- All polling places are open from 6:00 am to 7:00 pm on Election Day. You are entitled to vote if you are in line by 7:00 pm on Election Day.

4.2 What Do I Need to Bring to the Polls?

- You will need to bring an acceptable form of photo identification. See Voter ID, section above.

4.3 How Do I Find My Polling Place?

- There are three ways to find your polling place:
 - Your polling place name and address are listed on the voter registration card you received in the mail.
 - You can contact your local registrar. See local telephone directory listing under Voter Registration or the Department of Elections website for contact information
 - You can go to www.elections.virginia.gov, click on “Casting a Ballot” and “Poll Location,” then follow the instructions.

4.4 Sample Ballots

- A sample ballot is a copy of the official ballot. Sample ballots may be produced by Electoral Boards, political parties, political committees, and citizens.
- ONLY ballots printed on white or yellow paper are official, unbiased and complete ballots printed by the Electoral Board.
- Every sample ballot must clearly state who authorized or paid for it. Many sample ballots in colors other than white or yellow are meant to persuade you to vote a certain way. You may be offered one of these ballots on your way to the polling place.
- The Electoral Board is required to post the Official Sample Ballot at each polling place on Election Day. Please do not hesitate to ask an election officer to show you a sample ballot.

4.5 I Need Someone to Demonstrate How to Use the Voting Equipment

- You are entitled to a demonstration of the voting equipment. There is a demonstration officer at your polling place who is there to help you with the machines. Please feel free to ask him or her for assistance.

4.6 Can My Child Watch Me Vote?

- Your minor child, 15 years or younger, may go with you into the voting booth.

4.7 I Have a Disability or Mobility Issues

- All elections are required to be accessible to persons with disabilities. This includes accessibility to the polling place and devices to make the voting machine accessible.
- You may also want to consider voting absentee by mail or in person before election day to avoid standing in lines.
- If you have a disability, you can help assure your right to vote by contacting your registrar before Election Day to discuss your particular needs. See local telephone directory listing under Voter Registration or the Department of Elections website for contact information.
- *Anyone who assists you in voting must do so according to your instructions, without trying to influence your vote. Your assistant is strictly prohibited from in any way telling others how you voted.*
- NOTE: No voter is required to accept assistance.
- The following are options for overcoming accessibility issues:
 - Before Election Day, you may request an Absentee Ballot (see Absentee section above).
 - You may vote from your car. All polling places are required to offer “curbside voting” to anyone who has a physical disability or is 65 years or older. You may need to send someone inside the polling place to request curbside voting unless your precinct has a lookout or other mechanism in place to alert the officers of election inside. Calling ahead of time with the approximate time of your arrival can help.
 - You may request an “audio ballot.” You will be given a set of headphones and the ballot will be read aloud to you. Audio ballots are available at all polling places.
 - If you are blind, you may have anyone assist you with your ballot.

- If you are not blind but need assistance with your ballot, you may have anyone assist you EXCEPT your employer or union representative.

4.8 I Cannot Read or Speak English Well

- Persons who cannot read or write English or with limited English proficiency may request assistance in voting. Fairfax County is the only locality in Virginia subject to the Voting Rights Act bilingual elections requirement for Spanish. Voters in other localities or languages other than Spanish in Fairfax County may receive language assistance from a translator they provide or volunteers.
- If you need assistance with your ballot, you may have anyone assist you EXCEPT your employer or union representative.

4.9 I Need Assistance Filling out My Ballot

- *Anyone who assists you in voting must do so according to your instructions, without trying to influence your vote. Your assistant is strictly prohibited from in any way telling others how you voted.*
- NOTE: No voter is required to accept assistance.
- If you are blind, you may have anyone assist you with your ballot.
- If you are not blind but need assistance with your ballot, you may have anyone assist you EXCEPT your employer or union representative.

4.10 Do I Have to Vote for Every Office or Question on the Ballot?

- No, you do not have to vote for every question on the ballot. For instance, if you are only interested in voting for a school board member, you do not have to vote for any of the candidates for mayor. Your vote for the school board member will still be counted.

4.11 How Do I Cast a Write-In Vote?

- Write-in votes are permitted in all elections except primaries.
- Please follow the write-in instructions are provided with each voting system
 - On paper ballots, write the name of the candidate or your choice on the blank space provided for write-in votes
 - On optical scan ballots, follow the instructions to write in the name of the candidate of your choice
- DO NOT write in the name of a candidate who already appears on the ballot, or your vote will not be counted.
- Please ask an election official if you need assistance with write-in procedures.

4.12 Avoiding Over Voting

- An overvote occurs when you cast more votes than are allowed for the office or issue
 - For example, if you vote for 2 people for governor instead of one, neither vote will count.
 - However, if you are allowed to vote for three school board members, and you vote for three people, that is not an over vote.
- Please read over your ballot carefully to ensure you do not over vote.
- An optical scanner will reject your ballot if you over vote, and an election official will offer you a new one.
- A touch screen electronic machine known as a DRE will not allow you to over vote.

4.13 I Think I Made a Mistake on My Ballot

- If you made a mistake on your ballot, you must change your vote BEFORE your ballot is cast
 - If you are using an electronic machine, change your vote before you press or select “cast ballot.”
 - If you are using a paper ballot and have not placed your ballot in an official ballot container, ask an election official to void your spoiled ballot and for a new ballot
- Once your ballot is cast, it CANNOT be changed, even if you made a mistake.

4.14 Is My Vote Secure?

- A voting machine can only record your vote, not your name or any identifying features. No one can tell how you voted based on your submitted ballot. If an assistant helped you vote, he or she is not permitted to tell anyone how you voted.
- All voting machines in Virginia are rigorously tested and certified to be accurate and secure both before being authorized for use in Virginia and prior to each election.

4.15 I Voted With a Provisional Ballot

- Provisional ballots are used when:
 - a person's registration status cannot be verified either by the election officer or the voter registrar.
 - a registered voter has not shown the required ID
 - a court orders the polls to stay open past their normal closing time
- A person is permitted to vote in these situations to give them the opportunity to satisfy legal requirements in time for the provisional ballot to be counted.
- The decision of whether to count the provisional vote is made by the local electoral board in the days after the election. If you cast a provisional ballot, you will be given notice of the time and place of the Electoral Board's meeting, and a toll-free number to check the status of your ballot.
 - You have the right to be present when the Electoral Board makes its decision about whether to count your provisional ballot.
 - You may request an extension up to one business day
 - If you voted a provisional ballot because you did not present the required ID, you have until noon on Friday after the election to provide a copy of your required ID.
- Provisional ballots are also used when a court order the polls to stay open past their normal closing time. This has never happened in Virginia. Provisional ballots are used in case the order extending voting time is reversed by a higher court.

5. Your Rights and Responsibilities as a Voter

5.1 Virginia Voter Rights

- As a Virginia voter you have the right to:
 - Be notified of whether your voter registration application has been accepted or denied.
 - Vote if you have registered at your current address at least 22 days before the election.
 - Receive assistance from election officials if you are unsure about any part of the election process.
 - Be given a demonstration of the voting equipment.
 - Have your vote voided before it is cast if you believe you voted incorrectly. You will be given another ballot.
 - Enter the name of a write-in candidate in a non-primary election.
 - Have your ballot brought to your vehicle if you are 65 or over, or if you have a disability.
 - Have an Election Official or other person help you vote if you have a disability or are unable to read or write.
 - **IMPORTANT:** Anyone who helps you vote must:
 1. Do so according to your instructions,
 2. Not try to influence your vote, and
 3. Not, in any way, tell others how you voted.
 - Vote a Provisional Ballot even if you have no ID with you on Election Day, and to provide a copy of an acceptable photo identification to the Electoral Board by noon on the Friday after the election.
 - Vote a Provisional Ballot if your status as a qualified voter is in question.
 - Attend the Electoral Board's provisional ballots meeting and present evidence supporting your qualifications.
 - Bring your child, age 15 years or younger, into the voting booth.
 - Vote if you are in line at 7:00 PM
 - Cast an absentee ballot if you are eligible to do so.

5.2 Voter Responsibilities

- As a Virginia Voter, you have the responsibility to:
 - Keep your voter registration information up to date
 - Show your photo ID at the polls (see Voter ID Section 2 above). If you do not have the proper ID with you, you may vote a provisional ballot and present your ID to the Electoral Board by noon on the Friday after the Election.
 - Request help if you have any questions about the voting process, do not know how to use the voting equipment, or are disabled or unable to read or write.
 - Check that your ballot is correct BEFORE you cast it.
 - Know that once your ballot is cast, you CANNOT be give another ballot, even if you think you have voted incorrectly.
 - To ask an Election Official to call the Voter Registrar's office BEFORE you leave the polling place if you have problems regarding your eligibility to vote or in the casting of your ballot.

5.3 I Was Not Allowed to Vote, or I Think I Have Witnessed an Election Law Violation

- If you feel your voting rights have been violated, or that you may have witnessed an election law being broken, **contact the Department of Elections** toll free at **1-(800) 552-9745** or info@elections.virginia.gov

These statements are only a summary of U.S. and Virginia election laws. Please read the posters at your polling place and visit the Department of Election's website at www.elections.virginia.gov.

If you have questions about your voter registration status or elections in your locality, contact your local Voter Registrar or go to www.elections.virginia.gov.

PREPARED BY THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF ELECTIONS