

YOUR VOTE IS YOUR VOICE - How to Vote in Bucks County

The engagement of the American people is critical for a strong democracy and to solve problems for the common good. With this in mind, the League of Women Voters of Bucks County (LWVBC), the Bucks County branches of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) and the Bucks County Women's Advocacy Coalition (BCWAC) have developed this Get Out the Vote (GOTV) Toolkit for use by your group, organization or agency.

The purpose of this Get Out the Vote (GOTV) Toolkit is to serve as a resource on topics such as how to register to vote, important dates for the upcoming elections, and who is up for election. This information is completely non-partisan and does not advocate for any particular candidate, point of view or party affiliation. Due to regulations that impact non-profits and governmental agencies, it is critical that any voter registration and educational information remain completely non-partisan. The sole objective is to urge our citizens to vote, not to influence opinions on specific policies, politicians or political parties.

CONTENTS OF THE TOOLKIT

- Background and why voting matters
- How to find out if you are registered and how to get registered
- How to find your polling place
- Where to obtain applications for registration, absentee ballot requests, and important deadlines
- Links for debate schedules for PA and Bucks County Candidates
- Links to candidates' websites for information about their position on issues
- Additional resource materials for more in-depth information

BACKGROUND

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 to register to vote and to maintain voter registration.

The Act requires that states provide the opportunity to apply to register to vote for federal elections by three means: at the time of applying for a driver's license or renewal; at public assistance offices and all offices that provide state-funded programs primarily engaged in providing services to persons with disabilities; and through mail-in forms.

WHY VOTING MATTERS

Democracy is of, by and for the people. Citizens are the employers of our elected officials. Every Election Day democracy's employer (you) get to add your voice on who you would like hired to work for you at the federal, state and local level of government. The people we elect pass laws, design regulations and develop policies that will directly impact your life.

Every vote matters and historically some elections have been very close:

- In 1999 Leslie Byrne was elected to the Virginia Senate by 37 votes, less than one vote per precinct.
- Donald Sherwood was elected to the PA House of Representatives by 515 votes – less than one vote per precinct.
- John F. Kennedy's margin of victory over Richard Nixon in 1960 was less than one vote per precinct.
- One vote per precinct gave women the right to vote in California in 1911.





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DATE:	EVENT:	NOTES:
Now through April 17, 2017	Voter registration open	
May 9, 2017	Last day to apply for a civilian absentee ballot	Applications must be received by the Board of Elections (BOE)* or postmarked at least 30 days before Election Day
May 12, 2017	Last day for BOE to receive voted civilian absentee ballots	Submit Absentee Ballot request to the BOE* ASAP due to deadline date for receipt by the BOE*
May 16, 2017	Municipal Primary Election Day	Polls open from 7:00 AM to 8:00 PM
May 17, 2017 – October 10, 2017	Voter registration open	
October 31, 2017	Last day to apply for a civilian absentee ballot	Applications must be received by the Board of Elections (BOE)* or postmarked at least 30 days before Election Day
November 3, 2017	Last day for BOE to receive voted absentee ballots	Submit Absentee Ballot request to the BOE* ASAP due to deadline date for receipt by the BOE*
November 7, 2017	Municipal Election Day	Polls open from 7:00 AM to 8:00 PM

*BUCKS COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS OFFICE (BOE) | Courthouse, 2nd Floor, 55 E. Court Street, Doylestown, PA 18901 | 215-348-6163.

HOW TO CHECK TO SEE IF YOU ARE REGISTERED

Contact the Board of Elections or check online to see if you are registered at: [Voter Registration Bucks County](#)

HOW TO REGISTER TO VOTE OR CHANGE YOUR VOTER REGISTRATION STATUS

You may register to vote through the Pennsylvania Department of State’s online application through the www.VotesPA.com website by choosing “Register to Vote.” Before you begin, be sure to have your Pennsylvania driver’s license or PennDOT ID card handy. If you don’t have one, there are other options explained on the website. Once you submit your online application, it will be forwarded to the county voter registration office for processing.

The paper version of the voter registration application may be typed on-screen, printed and signed, but must be mailed or hand-delivered to the Board of Elections before the due date.

The county must have a signed original form in its files. Faxed copies are not permitted by law (there are exceptions for military voters and overseas civilian voters - please contact the Board of Elections or visit www.fvap.gov for further information). All voter registration forms being hand delivered, or if mailed in must be postmarked, no later than 30 days prior to the next election.

You may obtain a paper registration form at the Board of Elections, Post Offices, PA Wine and Spirits Stores, municipal buildings, public libraries, or it may be downloaded at www.VotesPA.com or at [Bucks County Board of Elections Voter Registration application](#).

The www.VotesPA.com website is in English and Spanish. Voter Registration forms are also available in French, Khmer, Korean, Russian and Vietnamese at www.VotesPA.com by clicking (in the English version of the website) “Register to Vote” and “How to Register.”



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The www.VotesPA.com website provides specific voting information for special populations at the drop-down box at the top of the home page. This includes: [Citizens with a Disability](#); [College Students](#); [Convicted Felon, Misdemeanant or Pretrial Detainee](#); [Members of Military](#); [Older Pennsylvanians](#); [Persons Who Have Recently Moved](#); [Recent Name Change](#); [Oversees Civilian Voter](#); [Voter Who Wants to Change Party Affiliation](#); [Property Owner in More Than One County](#); and [First Time Voter](#). If you are in the military or a US citizen living overseas, go to <http://www.fvap.gov/> for additional information on how to vote.

Registration forms must be signed and mailed or delivered to the Board of Elections at least 30 days prior to the election. You should receive a Voter ID card by return mail within 14 days; call the Board of Elections if you do not receive it within 14 days.

The Dept. of Transportation provides for voter registration with their driver's license application, renewal or change of name or address. The County Assistance Office and some other governmental agencies provide for voter registration as part of their application for public benefits programs. You may also register in person at the County Board of Elections office.

To be registered to vote you must:

- Be a citizen of the US for at least one month before the next election
- Be a resident of Pennsylvania for at least 30 days before the next election
- Be 18 years of age on the day of the next election.

HOW TO FIND YOUR POLLING PLACE

Call the Board of Elections at 215-348-6154 or check online by entering your name and address at [check Voter Registration Status](#) or at www.VotesPA.com

WHAT TO BRING ON ELECTION DAY

You are not required to provide ID unless you are a first time voter. If you are a first time voter or voting for the first time at a new polling place, you must bring either a photo ID or

non-photo ID with your home address. The ID does not need an expiration date. Approved forms of photo identification include:

- Pennsylvania driver's license or PennDOT ID card
- ID issued by any Commonwealth agency
- ID issued by the U.S. Government
- U.S. passport
- U.S. Armed Forces ID
- Student ID
- Employee ID

If you do not have a photo ID, you can use the Voter ID Card issued by the County when you registered to vote or any of the following forms of non-photo identification that include your name and address.

- Non-photo ID issued by the US Government or the Commonwealth of PA
- Firearm permit
- Current utility bill
- Current bank statement
- Current paycheck
- Government check

HOW TO VOTE

In Person, or by Provisional Ballot, Alternative Ballot or Absentee Ballot

You must vote in person at your assigned polling place while the polls are open. You must be allowed to vote if you go to your assigned polling place. If there is a question about your eligibility to vote at the polling place, ask the Judge of Elections to call the Board of Elections. You may request a provisional ballot at your assigned polling place. Complete the provisional ballot as directed.

If you are unable to vote at your polling place in person you may request an absentee ballot or an alternative ballot from the Board of Elections. Absentee Ballots are primarily granted to persons who cannot get to their polling place due to absence, military service, illness or disability. There are specific deadlines to apply for an absentee ballot or alternative ballot and for the receipt of all voted ballots by the Board of Elections - or your vote will not be counted.





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If you qualify, you may apply for an Emergency Absentee Ballot or Emergency Alternative Ballot.

Persons with disabilities and/or in wheelchairs may request assistive devices at the polling place, such as a hand-held voting device, instructions through audiotape, lowering of the voting machine, or assistance of another person. In advance of the election, they may also apply for an absentee ballot, a permanent absentee ballot or an alternative ballot. For more information see the enclosed documents in this toolkit, or go to www.VotesPA.com and select "[*I am a... Citizen with a Disability.*](#)"

For more information about provisional ballots, alternative ballots, absentee ballots, or emergency ballots phone the Board of Elections at **215-348-6154** or go to www.VotesPA.com and click the pertinent tab under Voting and Elections, Types of Voting. You may also obtain an application for an absentee ballot at [Bucks County Absentee Ballot Application](#).

HOW TO USE THE VOTING MACHINE - VIDEO DEMONSTRATION

You may view a video on how to use the Danaher voting machines used in Bucks County by going to www.VotesPA.com, select "I am...a First time Voter", scroll to the bottom of the page and click on "voting system demonstration" and enter "Bucks" County.

HOW TO BE INFORMED ABOUT THE CANDIDATES VOTER'S GUIDE

The League of Women Voters of Bucks County (LWVBC) asks all candidates for local electoral contests (other than statewide or national contests) affecting Bucks County residents to provide their candidate information for publication in their Voters' Guide. The League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania asks candidates for state offices for their candidate information. The Bucks County Voters' Guide is generally available on the LWVBC website within two weeks of an election at [LWV Bucks Voters Guide](#). National, state and local candidate responses are also available at [Vote411.org](#) at least two weeks prior to the election. All statements and videos on [Vote411.org](#) are posted directly by the candidate

unedited by the League of Women Voters, and do not express the views of the League.

It is more important than ever for voters to fact-check information before making decisions on whether to support a candidate or their position on issues. Several fact-checking websites are: www.votesmart.org, www.ballotpedia.org, www.politifact.com and www.factcheck.org.

CANDIDATE DEBATES

The League of Women Voters of Bucks County (LWVBC) and other organizations sponsor Candidate Debates prior to the elections. Dates for debates sponsored by the LWVBC may be found at: [LWV Bucks Calendar of Events](#). Check frequently since debates are posted as they are scheduled with the candidates.

HOW TO ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO VOTE

501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations should refer to the IRS tax code for guidance on allowable political activities. The IRS prohibits 501(c)(3) nonprofits "from directly or indirectly participating in, or intervening in, any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for elective public office." For more information on permissible activities refer to the enclosed toolkit document "Guidance for Nonprofits" or go to www.nonprofitvote.org or www.irs.gov, www.stayexempt.irs.gov.

For most nonprofits, activities may include:

- Posting nonpartisan posters or notices on voting, etc. on your bulletin boards. Free posters may be downloaded at www.nonprofitvote.org (Resources section) and www.nationalvoterregistrationday.org (Resources section).
- Providing Voter Registration Forms in your offices. To request multiple Pennsylvania Voter Registration Mail Applications for voter registration drives, call **1-800-552-VOTE**.
- Adding graphics to your website, social media, and newsletters to remind people to register and to vote. Graphics are available for free download at www.nonprofitvote.org (Resources section) and



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www.nationalvoterregistrationday.org
(Resources section).

- Sending out reminders to staff of Election Day and deadlines for registration, absentee ballots, etc. Post them in your offices.
- Encouraging staff to learn about the importance of voting, how to vote, and how to encourage others to vote without promoting specific causes, candidates or political candidates. Educate staff about any limitations on their activities due to your nonprofit status.

Prior to engaging in Voter Registration activities, staff and volunteers should receive training on how to assist in voter registration. See the enclosed toolkit document "Helping Register Voters Under Pennsylvania Law" also available electronically at [PA Voter Registration Guide](#).

For ideas about how to engage your non-profit organization in voting activities as part of the services you are already providing go to www.nonprofitvote.org, How it Works/Get Started.

WEBSITES FOR MORE INFORMATION

[Vote 411.org](http://Vote411.org)
VotesPA.com
nonprofitvote.org
Nationalvoterregistrationday.org
LWV-US
[AAUW - Congressional Voting Record](http://AAUW-CongressionalVotingRecord)
LWV BucksCounty
BC Women's Advocacy Coalition

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