

# Voter Registration and Deputization

## **GOAL: Register Democratic voters**

To be eligible to register in Texas, you must:

- be a U.S. citizen;
- be a resident of the county. Residency is 30 days and the registration is effective in 30 days. Therefore, a person who has just arrived in town can register to vote immediately. Whatever physical address they claim is legal. It can be a friend's couch or a homeless person may claim a street corner (they must give a mail address for their voter registration card to be mailed: a church, a friend's address, a homeless shelter).
- be 18 years old (you may register at 17 years and 10 months);
- not a convicted felon (unless a person's sentence is completed, including any probation or parole) A person who is "off paper" which means has completed all requirements, automatically gets ability to register.
- not declared mentally incapacitated by a court of law.

Registration can be done by mailing an application or by registering with a Volunteer Deputy Registrar in person.

## Becoming a Deputy Registrar

Requirements are:

- Meet the requirements to be a registered voter and be a resident of Texas.
- You may become a deputy registrar in any Texas county, but you must be deputized in each county in which you are registering voters.
- If you meet qualifications, you may not be denied in your request to be deputized. This is not an optional appointment from the Voter Registrar. They must appoint you if you meet the minimum qualifications.
- You must take the training set out by the Secretary of State to become deputized. Once you've completed it, you only have to present your documentation from the first county in the second county. You do not have to repeat the training course.
- You must turn in completed applications within five days to the voter registrar of the county where they person resides.

You may only accept applications in person from people who reside in the county where you are deputized. Each county voter registrar specifies the type of form and receipts that they use in their county. Be sure to comply with these issues so that they registrar does not reject your applications and disenfranchise your potential voters. You can leave a mail-in application that doesn't have county specified with any

## Accepting Applications

- You may assist a person fill out an application. You can even fill it out for them. Only their signature must be in their own writing.
- Voters may correct or update information on their current voter registration certificate by filling out a new registration form and checking the "change" box.
- You may help a person fill out the registration form if he/she cannot read or has a physical disability. If an applicant cannot sign his/her name on the form, the applicant may make a mark on the signature line. Print the name of the applicant beside the mark. Sign your name and address as the witness and state the reason the applicant is unable to sign.
- You may allow another registered voter (or anyone who has submitted a registration application) to fill out and sign an application for his or her spouse, parent or child. That person must sign the application as "agent" and state the relationship to the applicant on the registration form. The "agent" must have the permission of the applicant to do this.
- Fill out a receipt for each applicant. Give the applicant the receipt. The duplicate receipt must be delivered to the voter registrar along with the application. You should not keep a copy of the completed voter registration application itself because this document contains information that is confidential by law.

## Reviewing the Application

While the applicant is still in your presence, be sure to review the application for completeness. Be sure the application includes the following:

- Full name, including any middle, maiden, or former name;
- Residence address must be a street address or a description of the location of the residence;
- Valid mailing address, if mail can't be delivered to the residence address;
- Signature of applicant and date of signing;

- Date of birth, including month, day, and year;
- Citizenship question is answered either yes or no;
- Be sure the applicant has read the statements that he/she is signing regarding qualifications to register; and
- If an agent is registering for an applicant, be sure the agent provides his/her relationship to the applicant.

What you cannot do:

- Determine if the applicant is actually qualified to register to vote;
- Make the applicant provide his/her gender, social security or driver's license number; or
- Make the applicant provide his/her telephone number.

### **When is the Registration Effective?**

- Tell the applicant that he/she can vote as soon as the 30th day after submitting the application. This 30-day waiting period starts when the volunteer deputy registrar receives the application form.
- If the applicant is under the age of 18, the registration will become effective on the 30th day after the voter registrar gets the application or on the applicant's 18th birthday, whichever comes later.

### **How Long is the Registration Effective?**

Tell the applicant that the registration will be automatically renewed every even-numbered year unless:

- The voter moves to another address; or
- the voter receives a final felony conviction and has not completed the sentence, probation or parole or been otherwise pardoned or released from the resulting disability to vote. Note: "deferred adjudication" does not constitute a "final felony conviction."

### **Address Changes or Name Changes**

The voter must update the address on the registration if the voter moves within the county. Tell voters that if they move to another county, they must re-register in the new county.

- The voter can make the change on the back of the voter registration certificate and mail it to the county voter registrar;
- Submit a new application form to the voter registrar and check the box for "change"; or
- Write a letter to the voter registrar explaining the change of address.

## Delivery of Applications

You must deliver completed registration applications and receipts in person to the voter registrar no later than 5 p.m. on the 5th day after the date you receive them. FAILURE TO DELIVER AN APPLICATION IN A TIMELY MANNER IS A CRIMINAL OFFENSE.

A trusted Volunteer Deputy Voter Registrar may deliver them for the entire voter registration group, but they MUST be deputized.

**SPECIAL NOTE:** To be eligible to vote, a person must be registered 30 days before Election Day. When you receive a completed application after the 34th day and before the 29th day before the date of any election in the county, you must deliver the application to the county voter registrar no later than 5 p.m. of the 29th day before Election Day. If the 29th day falls on a Saturday or Sunday or on a legal state or national holiday, the deadline for delivering the applications is extended to 5 p.m. of the next regular business day.

## Length of Appointment

You may be appointed a volunteer deputy registrar at any time. However, your term expires on December 31 of the even-numbered year.

## Frequently Asked Questions

**Q: I have been designated a deputy registrar from County X. I will be at an event that will have attendees from County X along with County Y and County Z. May I register people from County Y and County Z?**

A: No. Volunteer deputy registrar status is conferred on a county-by-county basis. To accept applications for Y or Z counties, you would have to become a volunteer deputy registrar for those counties. You could certainly give applications to the attendees from County Y and County Z and direct them to mail the application to

the appropriate county voter registrar's office. Under Section 13.044 of the Code, a person commits a Class C misdemeanor by acting as a volunteer deputy registrar when he or she does not have an effective appointment as a deputy registrar. You may also become deputized in multiple counties.

**Q: May I photocopy a completed application before turning it in to the county voter registrar?**

A: No. Section 13.004(c-1) of the Code requires the county voter registrar to ensure that certain information, such as the telephone number, on a registration application is redacted from photocopies of voter registration applications from her office. In our opinion, this means that a photocopy of an application must come directly from the county voter registrar's office, so that he or she may ensure the required information has been blacked out or otherwise obscured. With that said, the Secretary of State says that a volunteer deputy registrar may photocopy the receipt. You may also copy the relevant information from the application in writing just as you would be able to do if you went to the registrar's office and pulled a copy of the original application.

**Q: I am a candidate and/or working for a campaign. May I serve as a volunteer deputy registrar?**

A: Yes. There is no prohibition against a candidate or a campaign worker serving as a deputy registrar, as long as they otherwise meet the "Qualifications" described above and have been officially appointed as a volunteer deputy registrar. Similarly, there is no prohibition against a volunteer deputy registrar registering voters at a campaign rally or event. While working a rally or public event, we believe a volunteer deputy registrar should offer registration to anyone who requests it.

**Q: Is there any way for me to become a statewide volunteer deputy registrar?**

A: No. Volunteer deputy registrar appointments are made on a county-by-county basis. Section 13.032 of the Code provides that a county may not refuse to appoint a resident of the county as a volunteer deputy registrar. A voter registrar may not refuse to appoint a volunteer deputy registrar on the basis of sex, race, color, creed, or national origin or ancestry.

**Q: Is there a minimum age to become a volunteer deputy registrar?**

A: Yes. A person must be at least 18 years of age to become a volunteer deputy registrar.

**Q: I just want to hand out blank voter registration application forms and encourage people to register to vote. Can I do that?**

A: Yes. Anyone can hand out blank application forms to voters for the voters to fill out and mail in themselves. If this is all you want to do, you do not have to be a volunteer deputy registrar. Also, if you are already a volunteer deputy registrar in one county, you can hand out blank forms in other counties where you are not a volunteer deputy. It is the voter's handing the application back to you to review and to deliver to the registrar that triggers the requirement to be an authorized volunteer deputy registrar. **NOTE: See "How to Register Democratic Voters" below!**

**Q: What if someone says he or she is already registered?**

A: You may wish to advise the person that the new application form will be treated as an update if the old registration is in the same county and the voter is providing new information. If the person moved to a new county, he or she will need to register in the new county.

**Q: May a volunteer deputy registrar bundle completed applications and submit them to the voter registrar by mail?**

A: No. There are two methods for a volunteer deputy registrar to submit applications to the county voter registrar. First, the applications may be submitted by personal delivery by the volunteer deputy registrar. Second, the volunteer deputy registrar may give his or her applications to another volunteer deputy registrar for personal delivery to the county voter registrar.

**Q: I failed to submit the applications to the county voter registrar within the allotted period. What should I do now?**

A: Submit them to the county voter registrar as soon as possible. Under the law, the voter's registration is not impacted by your late delivery to the voter registrar. However, you should deliver them as soon as possible. Further delay will create problems in getting the lists ready in time for early voting and election day. The registration process cannot be completed until you deliver the application. The registration is still effective and the voter still receives the effective date of submission to you.

## Processing Voter Registrations for the Party Database

In order to gain access to the Voter Registration Tab in VAN, please email voterfile@txdemocrats.org with your Name, Deputization Number, and County.

If you have a VAN account (voter file of the Democratic Party), you should data enter the applications into the system before you turn them into the Voter Registrar. If your county party office or organization is organized to accept applications from deputies and have a single deputy deliver the cards to the registrar, volunteers should data enter the cards.

## Where and How to Register Democratic Voters

Our goal is to register Democrats, so be strategic. It's not our goal to register voters at the Republican Country Club, or at a Tea Party Rally. Work with your party leadership to determine places to go and neighborhoods to work.

You should never offer voter registration without having determined that the person is a potential Democratic voter. Always introduce yourself as a Democrat, or working for a Democratic issue or candidate. If the person states they are a Republican or supports the Republican position, simply thank them for their time and exit. Wearing a Democratic shirt or buttons helps get people to self identify as Republicans. Of course, use your judgment. If the voters are young, LGBT, minority, or wearing a liberal shirt, assume they are probably our voter and offer to register them. Once you say "I'm registering voters" and a Republican asks you to register them, you legally must do so. If you don't make the offer to register until after you learn the partisanship of the person, you save yourself that pain.

NEVER ask "Are you registered to vote?" People will say yes immediately. However, they may have moved four times, or changed counties. Always make a statement after determining you think they are our voter: "I'm here to register you to vote. Let me assist you in filling out this card to get you on the rolls at your current address." They will then answer appropriately, "I'm registered at my current address."

### NEIGHBORHOOD BLOCK WALK

**Get yourself a VAN account from the Texas Democratic Party, or your local County Democratic Party,** for your precinct. You can use it to print out the registered voters on each street in your neighborhood. Using this list, you can

knock on every door determine if new voters are at that location. Do not assume that the voters on the list are still the current residents. Inquire if new roommates have moved in or a child has turned 18.

After introducing yourself at the door and determining they are potential Democrats, simply state something like, "I have Ray and Mary Smith registered at this address. Is that you? Is there anyone else living here that needs to register to vote?"

You will find former residents still on the list at an address. Make a note of that on your list to code them in the VAN as "moved" so they won't show up on our walk lists later. These voters will show up on future lists at the correct address when they update their address. If they don't do so, they'll become a "Suspense" voter. They remain on the list for two election cycles and can return to this precinct, update their registration, and vote during subsequent elections.

### **EVENTS: MAKE EVERY EVENT YOUR OWN**

Go to all obvious events: LGBT Pride, Juneteenth, Asian Lunar New Year, Cinco de Mayo, African American church events, etc. If you have volunteers who cannot walk or stand for a long time, you might inquire about a table. However, tabling is not the most productive way to register folks. You have to go to them. They rarely come to you, even at an event. A good Democratic registrar will always have a loaded clipboard or a couple of signs and a folding table in their trunk.

Get a group of deputized voter registrars together. Make sure you have a structure to your event. Have 1 event lead who can give a quick pep talk and make sure everyone is trained. This person should be responsible for checking that everyone has their Deputy Voter Registrar Card on them. If you forgot or lost your card, DO NOT register voters that day. At any point a person can ask to see your card.

You should also set a time and place for everyone to meet back up so that 1 person can be in charge of check out. They must:

- review every form before each VDR leaves for the day to make sure every form has been filled out correctly (see chart) If there is a problem reach out to Mimi or Glen immediately.
- make sure all the forms are entered into VAN. ONLY A DEPUTY VOTER REGISTRAR can enter the data in VAN, and only the forms that are available on VAN should be filled in. Any additional information is NOT acceptable to enter. However, if you do have an additional sign in form separate from the VR form, you can enter contact information from that.

- turn in all of the forms no later than 5 p.m. of the 5th day after the date they are received. It is crucial they are turned in on time. If a circumstance occurs where they are not turned in on time, please call Mimi or Glen immediately.

### **Making the Ask**

Always ask voters in the most difficult way to deflect the question. Never ask “Are you registered to vote?” or “Would you like to become registered to vote today?”. These both are too easy to brush off. Rather phrase the question as “Everyone needs to be registered at their current address in order to vote. I can update your registration at your current address today.” This forces the voter to answer more than “yes” or “no” to brush it off and to make the more aggressive statement that their voter registration is up to date, which an unregistered voter is less likely to do.

### **Deadline Events**

If you can find progressive locations in blue neighborhoods, then doing a deadline event can be highly successful. An example of this is having a table from 8:00 a.m. till the midnight deadline on the final day of registration. Reuse old campaign signs by photocopying “Register to Vote at the Dairy Queen – Midnight Deadline” and stick them on street corners in all the surrounding neighborhoods.

If your entire county is mostly Democratic, consider doing multiple locations. Ask a chain business that people will recognize to host your tables. In Travis County, on the final day volunteers are at every Thundercloud Sub Shop. Because the registration is non-partisan, the local TV and radio announce the locations all day long. And in the most heavily registered county in Texas, usually these locations do from 250 to 500 cards each.

Get a group of deputized registrars together and show up at every event where potential voters might be. Engage persons one by one with your intro “I’m with the Democratic Party (or similar organization)” and ask if they are registered to vote at their current address.

Ask for forgiveness, not for permission. If you are attempting to do roving clipboard registration at an event, you’ll often get an answer of “We don’t allow political stuff at the church bazaar”. If it’s your church, then just do it. Most likely you won’t be told to stop if you are low keyed about it. If it’s at an event where everyone would be our voters, then tell the organizers you are doing “nonpartisan” registration. Don’t wear Democratic shirts or buttons or use Democratic stuff on the table. Just register everyone.

At some events, you have to get a booth or rent a table to do your partisan voter registration (the County Fair, the Pecan Street Festival, the Jamboree). Your first choice here is to decorate your booth with Democratic signs and literature. That insures that those who approach are our voters. Rarely will a Republican leaning voter come to your Democratic booth and ask to be registered to vote. (Keep in mind that if they do, you cannot refuse to register them to vote since you are an official county deputy registrar.)