

**HOW DOES THE NEW VOTING EQUIPMENT AFFECT MY VOTING PROCESS?**

This year everyone will be voting using paper ballots and optical scanning equipment; the old lever machines will not be in use. You will be given a pre-printed paper ballot with a "privacy sleeve" (which allows poll workers to help you, if necessary, without being able to read your ballot). You will go to a "privacy booth" to mark your choices with a designated marking tool. Be careful to read and follow the directions about marking the ballot. You will take the marked ballot to the assigned optical scanning equipment and feed the ballot into the scanner for tabulation. If you have made a procedural mistake, such as voting for too many candidates in one race or if you marked too far outside an oval, your ballot will be rejected. In this case you should request and fill out a new ballot so that all your votes will be counted. Then that new ballot is submitted to the optical scanner. Or you may submit the original again and ask the machine to cast that ballot, knowing your vote in the race in question will not be counted. The screen on the machine will say your ballot is being processed and then it will say it was successful. Your paper ballot is securely stored in the machine after scanning. There is provision on the paper ballot for write-in candidates. The equipment is simple to use, and poll workers have been trained to assist voters in using it; be sure to request their assistance if you are not clear about the new process. Voters who need to because of disability, or who wish to, can mark their ballots with a ballot marking device (BMD) as described in the section below.

**I NEED TO USE THE BALLOT MARKING DEVICE. HOW DO I DO THAT?**

Individuals with disabilities who cannot mark a paper ballot (and any other voter who wishes to) can use the ballot marking device (BMD) to create a marked paper ballot for casting their votes. This equipment assists the disabled voter through special interfaces, features and accessories. Tell the poll worker that you would like to use the BMD and what accessibility options you will need; they are trained to help you. If you are marking your ballot with the BMD you will follow a process similar to those marking their ballot in the privacy booth: you will check in and be handed either a pre-printed or blank paper ballot with a privacy sleeve, will place it into the BMD, and will mark it using the BMD accessible interfaces. The machine will display the ballot choices, and, when you are satisfied, the BMD will print the completed ballot out into its privacy sleeve. Then you will scan the ballot as described above. On some BMD machine models, the marked ballot is automatically scanned and counted from the BMD or is automatically stored after printing without transporting it. Poll workers can help you with scanning and submitting the ballot.

**COUNTDOWN TO ELECTION DAY 2011**

**PRIMARY ELECTION – TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13**

- Last day to register for the Primary Election by mail: Postmarked by **August 19**, received by **August 24**
- Last day to register for the Primary Election in person: **August 19**
- Last day to postmark an Absentee Ballot Application for the Primary Election: **September 6**
- Last day to submit an Absentee Ballot Application in person for the Primary Election: **September 12**
- Last day to submit your Absentee Ballot by mail: Postmarked by **September 12**, received by **September 20**
- Last day to deliver your Absentee Ballot in person to your county board of elections: **September 13**

**GENERAL ELECTION – TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 8**

- Last day to register for the General Election by mail: Postmarked by **October 14**, received by **October 19**
- Last day to register for the General Election in person: **October 14**
- Last day to register for the General Election in person for those honorably discharged from the military or who become naturalized citizens after **October 14**: **October 28**
- Last day to postmark an Absentee Ballot Application for the General Election: **November 1**
- Last day to submit an Absentee Ballot Application in person for the General Election: **November 7**
- Last day to submit your Absentee Ballot by mail: Postmarked by **November 7**, received by **November 15**
- Last day to deliver your Absentee Ballot in person to your county board of elections: **November 8**

**Primary Election**  
**Tuesday, September 13, 2011**

Polls are open on Primary Day from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. in the following localities: New York City and the counties of Nassau, Suffolk, Westchester, Rockland, Orange, Putnam and Erie. In all other counties in New York State, polls are open on Primary Day from 12 noon to 9 p.m.

**General Election**  
**Tuesday, November 8, 2011**

Polls are open 6 a.m. – 9 p.m.

**Please Join Us**

Membership is open to women and men. There are over 50 local Leagues across NY state. Joining at any level automatically confers membership at every level: local, state and national. Membership enables you to support the League and receive publications from all three levels, and provides the opportunity to be involved in local, state and national issues.



**VOTERS GUIDE**

**League of Women Voters® of New York State**  
1-866-598-6971 • [www.lwvny.org](http://www.lwvny.org)

**LWV of New York State Membership Application**

To join at the local League level, please look for the local League dues information at: <http://lwvny.org/localLeague/LLcontact.html>.

- Individual Membership – \$55/year
- Household Membership – \$80/year (2 people)
- Student Membership – \$25/year
- I would like to support the League with a tax-deductible contribution (make payable to the LWVNY Education Foundation)  
 \_\_\_\$500 \_\_\_\$250 \_\_\_Other

You can also donate on-line at [www.lwvny.org](http://www.lwvny.org)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

- Check (Payable to the League of Women Voters)
- Mastercard  Visa  Discover  AmEx

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Exp Date \_\_\_\_\_

Credit Card Number \_\_\_\_\_

Name on Card \_\_\_\_\_

**Please mail or fax to:**  
League of Women Voters® of New York State  
62 Grand Street, Albany, NY 12207  
Phone (518) 465-4162 • Fax (518) 465-0812  
[www.lwvny.org](http://www.lwvny.org) • [lwvny@lwvny.org](mailto:lwvny@lwvny.org)

*The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.*

**PART I**  
**FACTS FOR VOTERS**

# Election Day 2011

**Primary Election – September 13**  
**General Election – November 8**

Voting is an important part of being a United States citizen. Elected officials make important decisions that directly affect your life. Voting is your chance to choose the decision makers and tell them what you want. This *Voters Guide* will answer many of your questions about registering and voting. You may also consult the following:

**League of Women Voters of New York State**

www.lwvny.org  
1-866-598-6971

**New York State Board of Elections**

www.elections.state.ny.us  
1-800-367-8683

*Voter Registration Search/Polling Place Lookup:*  
<https://voterlookup.elections.state.ny.us/votersearch.aspx>

*Voting Machine Information:*  
[www.vote-ny.com](http://www.vote-ny.com)

**FOR WHOM/WHAT WILL I BE VOTING  
IN THE 2011 ELECTION?**

In the Primary Election (September 13th) and the General Election (November 8th), voters in New York State (NYS) will elect local officials (e.g. your mayor, town supervisor, town council members, etc.) and possibly NYS Supreme Court Justices. When two or more candidates from the same political party seek election for the same office, voters registered in that party vote in the Primary Election to choose the candidate who will represent that party in the General Election. In the General Election, you may also be voting on statewide and/or local ballot proposals.

**WHO CAN VOTE?**

To vote, you must:

- be a United States citizen
- be 18 years old by the date of the election in which you want to vote
- live at your present address at least 30 days before the election
- not be in prison or on parole for a felony conviction, and
- not claim the right to vote elsewhere.

In New York State, before you can vote you need to register.

**HOW DO I REGISTER?**

You can register to vote by mail or in person. You must fill out a new Voter Registration Form if you move to a new address, change your name, or want to change your political party; otherwise your registration is permanent. If you change your political party enrollment, the change will not take effect until after the next general election.

**Registration by mail**

Voter Registration Forms are available on the New York State Board of Elections website, at the League of Women Voters website, at your county board of elections office, town and city halls, your post office and library, from political parties, state offices, many social service agencies, and the League of Women Voters. Consult the COUNTDOWN TO ELECTION DAY portion of this guide for the deadline dates.

**Registration in person**

You may register on any business day throughout the year at your local board of elections or any state agency participating in the National Voter Registration Act (most do, including State University and City University campuses). Consult the COUNTDOWN TO ELECTION DAY portion of this guide for the deadline dates.

**WHAT IF I MOVE?**

Submit a Voter Registration Form with your new information. If you move to a new county, send the form to your new board of elections. If you are already registered, your change of address must be received by your board of elections by August 24th to vote in the Primary Election, or by October 19th to vote in the General Election. If you move within your county and cannot notify your board of elections, you can go to the polling place for your new address and vote by affidavit (paper) ballot. The ballot will be sent to the board of elections to verify the new address. If verified, your vote will be counted and your change of address will be made a part of their records. If you have a driver's license or motor vehicle registration and need to file a form with the Department of Motor Vehicles to change your address, you can notify the Board of Elections of your address change at the same time by checking "yes" for that option on DMV's Form MV-232.

**HOW DO I MAKE SURE I AM REGISTERED TO VOTE?**

New York State has a centralized data base of all registered voters and creates the voter rolls at the polling places from this information. You can access the information online by using the Voter Registration Search facility on the NYS Board of Elections website. As with all computer systems, there can be problems with the data, and your name could be erroneously eliminated from the rolls. Protect your right to vote by watching your mail for a card from your board of elections with the location of your polling place. If you do not receive such a card well before the election date, call your local board of elections to inquire about your status. Ask them: "Am I registered to vote? Will my name appear in the polling place roll book on Election Day?"

**WHAT IF I DON'T KNOW WHERE TO VOTE?**

The board of elections should send you a card telling you the location of your polling place. If you do not receive it, call your board of elections to verify your registration and ask about your polling place, or use the online Voter Registration Search facility on the NYS Board of Elections website.

**WHAT IF I CAN'T GO TO MY LOCAL POLLING  
PLACE ON ELECTION DAY?**

If you will be away on Election Day or will be unable to go to your polling place because of illness or disability, you can vote by absentee ballot. First you must obtain an Absentee Ballot Application form from your board of elections, or download one from the New York State Board of Elections website or the League of Women Voters website. Complete the application and submit it by mail or in person; consult the COUNTDOWN TO ELECTION DAY portion of this guide for the deadline dates. Once it has received your Absentee Ballot Application, the board of elections will send or give you an Absentee Ballot form. Complete the ballot and submit it by mail or in person; consult the COUNTDOWN TO ELECTION DAY portion of this guide for the deadline dates.

**I AM IN THE MILITARY AND WILL BE AWAY.  
HOW WILL I VOTE?**

Both the federal government and New York State have recently enacted laws that make it easier for military voters and their family members to vote in a timely and efficient manner. You can now receive forms and ballots by electronic means, and enough lead time to be sure that you receive forms and ballots in time to meet election deadlines. Call the Federal Voting Assistance Program at 1-800-438-8683, consult your Voting Assistance Officer on base, or visit [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov) for forms and information.

**HOW DO I VOTE WHILE I AM IN COLLEGE?**

When you are attending college outside your hometown, you may vote in person or by absentee ballot in your home community. You must be registered in your hometown district to vote there. You can only claim the right to vote in one locality. If you attend college in NYS, consider yourself a resident of your college community, and have lived there for at least 30 days before an election, you may register and vote in that community, but not elsewhere. If you are from NYS and attend college in another state and consider your college community your residence, consult the elections authority of that state to determine your voting rights.

**CAN I GET TIME OFF FROM WORK TO VOTE?**

New York State law states that if you do not have sufficient time outside your working hours to vote, you may take off up to 2 hours at the beginning or the end of your shift, with pay, to allow you time to vote. You must notify your employer no more than 10 and not less than 2 days before the day of the election that you will take that time.

**WHAT CAN I EXPECT WHEN I GO TO THE POLLS?**

A sample ballot should be posted. If you do not know how to use the voting machine, ask one of the election inspectors for assistance. If you are not on the rolls at your polling place, but believe you are registered to vote, and have verified with the poll worker that you are at the correct polling place for your address, you are legally entitled to vote on an affidavit (paper) ballot. You should also ask the poll worker for advice about following up on your status. After validation by your county board of elections, your affidavit ballot will be counted. If you determine that you are in the wrong polling place, go to the correct one to vote. Be sure to bring some identification, especially if you are voting for the first time.

**WHAT IS AN AFFIDAVIT BALLOT?**

An affidavit ballot, sometimes called a "provisional ballot" or "paper ballot," is used when a voter's name has been omitted from the computer-generated roll book. If you need to use one, you must swear that you are a registered voter and provide your current and previous addresses. At a primary election, you must include the party in which you are enrolled. You may also use an affidavit ballot to challenge your party enrollment as stated in the roll book.

**WHAT IDENTIFICATION DO I NEED TO VOTE?**

Federal law requires persons who register by mail and are voting for the first time to provide identification, either on the Voter Registration Form or in person at the polling place. Identification usually means a current NYS driver's license or the last four digits of your Social Security number. If you do not have a current NYS driver's license, you need to provide the last four digits of your Social Security number. If you do not have either of these, you may provide a copy of a valid photo ID, or a current utility bill, bank statement, government check or some other government documentation that shows your name and address. It's a good idea to bring your ID to the polls, especially if you registered by mail and are voting for the first time.

**WHAT KIND OF MACHINE WILL I BE USING?**

The old lever machines, which were inaccessible to many disabled persons and which did not comply with several federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA) requirements, have been replaced in NYS by paper ballots and optical scanning equipment. This new equipment will be in use at all polling places for the 2011 elections. In addition NYS polling places will each have at least one ballot marking device (BMD) that makes it possible for individuals with disabilities to vote independently and privately. To get an advance look at the machines, go to the NYS Board of Election's equipment information website at [www.vote-ny.com](http://www.vote-ny.com).