

No Vote . . . No Voice

Voter Guide to the 2004 General Election in Virginia

The Virginia Organizing Project, a statewide citizens group, is proud to present this “Voter Guide to the 2004 General Elections in Virginia.” The Virginia Organizing Project is a non-partisan organization and does not endorse candidates.

This voter guide includes information about the General Election on November 2, 2004, how to register to vote, absentee voting, voting rights and responsibilities and restoration of voting rights for former felons. It also contains a section on some of the positions of two Presidential candidates, George W. Bush and John F. Kerry.



General Election

November 2, 2004

Polls open at 6 a.m. and close at 7 p.m.

Note: If you are standing in line when the polls close, you will be allowed to vote.

Important Information

- Deadline to register to vote is Monday, October 4, 2004 by 5 p.m.
- Absentee Ballot Applications by mail deadline is Thursday, October 28, 2004 by 5 p.m.
- Absentee Ballot Applications in person deadline is Saturday, October 30, 2004 by 5 p.m.

If you will be away from your home on Election Day or are unable to go to the polls because of illness or disability, you may vote by absentee ballot.

Absentee voting will begin on or about September 20, 2004, in the local voter registration offices for voters who will not be able to vote on November 2nd.

Citizens needing to verify their voter registration status are encouraged to call their local voter registration office as early as possible prior to the October 4th voter registration deadline.

Virginia Voter Registration Information

Can I register to vote in Virginia?

Yes, if you are a U.S. citizen, your home is in Virginia, and you are 18 or older. If you will be 18 by the next general election (November 2, 2004), you can register when you are 17. If you have been convicted of a felony or if you have been declared mentally incapacitated by a circuit court, you must first have your voting rights restored.

When can I register?

You can register at any time. To vote in a general or primary election, you must register at least 29 days before the election. For this election, the deadline is October 4.

Where can I register?

You can register at your local voter registration office, at specially-scheduled registration sites, at the Department of Motor Vehicles, at the Department of Social Services, or at many other local and state social service agencies.

Can I register by mail?

Yes, you can register by mailing in a postal registration application, available at most public libraries and information centers. You can also print out an application on your computer, complete the form and mail it in. (The website is: <http://www.sbe.state.va.us/VotRegServ/Forms/voterregistrationforms.htm>) You can also call your local voter registration office and have an application mailed to you.

What information do I need to register?

You must give under oath your full legal name and current home

address, your social security number, and the address where you were last registered to vote, if any.

Do I have to state my political party preference?

No, Virginia does not have registration by political party.

Do I have to register for each election?

No, your registration remains valid unless you change your address.

What should I do if I change my name or address after I register?

If you have moved within your Virginia locality or changed your name, you must notify your local voter registration office of your new address or name, in writing. To do this, just fill out the back of your voter card and mail it in. Or, stop by your voter registration office or any registration site and complete a new application form. Voters already registered in Virginia who move to another Virginia locality must complete a new application form to update their address.

Once you complete the new application, or the voter registration office receives notice of your address or name change, you will be sent a new voter card with your new polling place information.

The voter registration office must receive your written notification by October 4. (In many cases, you will still be allowed to vote even if you have moved and forgotten to notify the voter registration office. But the laws about this are very complex and it's better to be safe than sorry!)

If you move outside of Virginia, you are no longer eligible to vote in Virginia, and you must register to vote in your new state.

Can I transfer my registration from another state to Virginia?

No, you must register to vote in Virginia, and your previous registration will be canceled.



The Virginia Organizing Project (VOP) is a statewide grassroots organization dedicated to challenging injustice by empowering people in local communities to address issues that affect the quality of their lives. As a non-partisan organization, VOP especially encourages the participation of those who have traditionally had little or no voice in our society. By building relationships with diverse individuals and groups throughout the state, VOP strives to get them to work together, democratically and non-violently, for change.

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About Elections in Virginia

When are elections held?

November General Elections

Statewide general elections are held each year on the Tuesday following the first Monday in November for the purpose of electing federal or state executive and legislative representatives. Local elected representatives may also appear on the November general election ballot. The election schedule for federal and state offices is as follows:

Office	Term	Next Election
Federal Offices		
President and Vice President of the United States	Four years	2004
United States Senate	Six years; two seats on staggered terms	2006 and 2008
U.S. House of Representatives	Two years; eleven seats	2004
Virginia Offices		
Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General	Four years	2005
Virginia Senate	Four years	2007
Virginia House of Delegates	Two years	2005

Most counties and cities also elect Constitutional officers – offices prescribed by the Constitution of Virginia, unless the county or city’s charter provides otherwise – in November general elections. These offices are Sheriff, Attorney for the Commonwealth, Treasurer, Commissioner of the Revenue, and Clerk of the Circuit Court. These offices are usually elected in odd-numbered years and serve for four-year terms, except for Clerk of the Circuit Court, which serves an eight-year term.

In most counties, the members of the Board of Supervisors and School Board and certain other local offices are also elected in November. These offices are typically elected to four-year terms. The frequency of the elections may vary by community. Some cities elect their city offices at November general elections; terms and frequency may vary.

May General Elections

Many cities and towns elect their Mayors, City Council members, School Board members, and other offices at May general elections, held on the second Tuesday in May. Term limits and frequency of elections vary from community to community.

Primary Elections

The Democratic and Republican Parties may choose to select their nominees for offices in November general elections through primary elections. Primaries, if held, are usually on the second Tuesday in June.

Special Elections

Special elections are held when a vacancy occurs in any elected office or when a referendum election is called. Depending upon the timing of the vacancy or the call for the referendum, a special election may take place on the same day as a general election. Special elections are always held on Tuesdays.

Since specific elected offices, terms of office, and frequency of elections vary, please contact your local voter registrar office for specific election information in your community.

Absentee Voting

Who can vote by absentee ballot?

Citizens who will be absent from their city or county on Election Day, or who are unable to go to the polls because of illness or disabilities, may vote early (in person or by mail). Valid reasons for voting absentee are citizens who are:

- Students at institutions of higher learning, and their spouses
- Absent for business purposes
- Absent for personal business or vacation
- Required by employer to work at least 11 of the 13 hours the polls are open
- Unable to get to the polls because of physical disability or illness
- Caretakers of confined family members
- Awaiting trial and under confinement

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Special thanks to Karen Waters and Jim Heilman for their help in developing this voter guide!

The Virginia Organizing Project does not endorse candidates. We are providing the following information on a broad range of issues so that voters can be more informed.

We obtained the information from AOL News/Time President Watch at www.presidentmatch.com. For more information on the candidates' positions, we encourage you to visit their official campaign websites: <http://www.johnkerry.com>, <http://www.georgewbush.com>



*John F. Kerry
Democrat*



*George W. Bush
Republican*

Issues

Position

Abortion

Appoint Judges Who Will Outlaw Abortions	Strongly Opposes	Strongly Favors
Outlaw "Partial Birth" Abortions	Strongly Opposes	Strongly Favors
Outlaw Abortions Except for Rape/Incest	Strongly Opposes	Strongly Favors
Parental Notification for Minors Under 18	Strongly Opposes	Strongly Favors

Gay Rights

Constitutional Gay Marriage Ban	Somewhat Opposes	Strongly Favors
Equal Rights for Civil Unions	Strongly Favors	Somewhat Opposes
Allow Gays to Openly Serve in the Military	Strongly Favors	Strongly Opposes

Religion in Government

Organized Prayer in Public Schools	Strongly Opposes	Strongly Favors
Commandments Displayed in Federal Buildings	Strongly Opposes	Strongly Favors
Federal Funding of Religious Charities	Strongly Opposes	Strongly Favors

Gun Control

Safety Devices on All New Guns	Strongly Favors	Strongly Opposes
Background Checks on Gun Show Purchases	Strongly Favors	Somewhat Opposes
Require Safety Course, License Before Gun Purchase	Somewhat Favors	Strongly Opposes
Allow Lawsuits Against Gun Manufacturers	Somewhat Favors	Strongly Opposes

Death Penalty

Abolish the Death Penalty	Strongly Opposes	Strongly Opposes
National Review of Death Penalty Fairness	Strongly Favors	Strongly Opposes

Education

No Child Left Behind Act	Somewhat Favors	Strongly Favors
Vouchers for Public, Private or Religious Schools	Strongly Opposes	Strongly Favors
Increase Federal Funding for Higher Education	Somewhat Favors	Somewhat Opposes

Homeland Security	John F. Kerry	George W. Bush
The Patriot Act	Strongly Opposes	Strongly Favors
Tighter Immigration Controls	Strongly Favors	Strongly Favors
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Iraq		
The War in Iraq	Somewhat Opposes	Strongly Favors
Turning Over More Political Authority to U.N.	Somewhat Favors	Strongly Opposes
Immediate Withdrawal of U.S. Troops	Strongly Opposes	Strongly Opposes
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Foreign Trade		
Embargo on Cuba	Somewhat Favors	Strongly Favors
U.S. Involvement in NAFTA	Strongly Favors	Strongly Favors
Mandatory Labor/Environment Standards in Trade Agreements	Somewhat Favors	Strongly Opposes
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Health Care		
Universal Government-Supervised Health Care	Somewhat Opposes	Strongly Opposes
Medicare Prescription Drugs Coverage By Private Insurers	Strongly Opposes	Strongly Favors
Expand Medicaid to Cover More Uninsured Americans	Strongly Favors	No Opinion
Limit Malpractice Suits Against Doctors, Insurers	Somewhat Favors	Strongly Favors
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Welfare Reform		
Hiring Welfare Workers Tax Incentive	No Opinion	Somewhat Opposes
Welfare Benefits for Legal Immigrants	Strongly Favors	Somewhat Opposes
Child Care Services for Getting Off Welfare	No Opinion	Somewhat Opposes
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Social Security		
Raise Retirement Age	Strongly Opposes	No Opinion
Privatize Social Security	Strongly Opposes	Strongly Favors
Cap Payments to Wealthy	Somewhat Favors	Strongly Opposes
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Tax Cuts		
Roll Back the Bush Administration Tax Cuts	Somewhat Opposes	Strongly Opposes
Roll Back Cuts for People Making Over \$100,000	Strongly Favors	Strongly Opposes
Additional Tax Cuts for Businesses	Strongly Opposes	Strongly Favors
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Jobs		
Raise the Minimum Wage	Strongly Favors	Strongly Opposes
Extend Unemployment Benefits	Strongly Favors	Strongly Opposes
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Environment		
Oil Drilling in the Arctic Wildlife Refuge	Strongly Opposes	Strongly Favors
Mandatory Clean Air Emissions Standards	Strongly Favors	Somewhat Opposes
Tougher Fuel Efficiency Standards	Strongly Favors	Strongly Opposes

- Serving time for misdemeanor convictions
- Active duty uniformed services or merchant marine personnel and their dependents
- Regularly employed outside the U.S. and dependents
- Unable to go to the polls due to religious obligations

How do I apply for an absentee ballot?

First, you need to get a Virginia Absentee Ballot Application. You can get this from your local voter registration office, or you can print one out on a computer.

The website is: <http://www.sbe.state.va.us/VotRegServ/Forms/voter-registrationforms.htm>.

Be sure the application includes the reason you need to vote absentee; the address you wish the ballot mailed to; your name, address, social security number and signature. A separate application must be completed for each election in which you need to vote absentee.

When can I apply for an absentee ballot?

You can apply for an absentee ballot as early as ten months before an election. If you apply by mail or fax, your registrar must receive your application by the Thursday before the election date. If you apply in person at the voter registration office, you must complete the application and vote your ballot by 5:00 p.m. on the Saturday before the election.

Certain individuals with physical disabilities or illnesses may be eligible to submit an annual application for absentee ballots. Instead of applying separately for each election in a calendar year, this single application, filed just once a year, will allow the registrar to send you ballots for any election that may occur in your district. A statement from your physician or accredited religious practitioner must accompany your first annual application filed.

How do I vote the absentee ballot?

You will receive specific instructions with your ballot. Vote the ballot as soon as you receive it. Seal your voted ballot in the envelope provided, in the presence of a witness. You may deliver your voted ballot in person, or mail it to your electoral board office using the pre-addressed envelope provided with your ballot. Your ballot must be received by no later than 7:00 p.m. on Election Day in order to be counted.

Can I vote my absentee ballot in person?

Yes, all local election offices allow you to vote an absentee ballot in person beginning approximately 45 days before the election, either at the voter registration office or other approved locations.

If you go in person to the voter registration office, you do not need to bring a completed application. You will complete the application at the office and then vote your ballot at the same time.

What if I want to vote on election day, but I have a disability that makes voting difficult?

The election officials are committed to making sure you can vote. If you have difficulty getting into the polling place, the election officials can bring a ballot to you in your vehicle outside.

If you have limited vision, the voting machines are equipped with devices to help you vote in secret.

If you have other disabilities, you can ask someone to assist you with voting.

What do I do if I'm currently living abroad?

All U.S. citizens are entitled to vote in Federal Elections (the offices of President and Vice President, U.S. Senate, and U.S. House of Representatives). If you are an active duty member of the uniformed services, or if you are regularly employed abroad but maintain a permanent domiciliary address in Virginia to which you plan to return at some future date, you and any dependents residing with you are eligible to receive a full ballot, including all state and local offices and issues. Please complete the Federal Post Card Application.

These applications are available at any U.S. military base in the world, or you can print out your form on a computer. (The website is: <http://www.sbe.state.va.us/VotRegServ/Forms/voterregistrationforms.htm>) Complete your application and return it to the voter registration office in the locality where you last resided in Virginia.

I have been convicted of a felony. How do I regain my right to vote?

If you have been convicted of a non-violent felony in Virginia, you lose your voting rights. You may apply for restoration of your voting rights three years after completing your sentence, as well as any suspended sentence, probation, parole or supervised release. There is an easy application form for this process, and once you have completed it, a decision about restoring your rights will be made within six months. Only the Governor can restore your voting rights.

If you have been convicted of a violent offense, drug distribution offenses, or voting fraud, you must wait five years before applying and the application process is more difficult.

To get an application, you can call the Secretary of the Commonwealth at (804) 786-2441. You can also print out an application on a computer. (The website is: <http://www.commonwealth.virginia.gov/Clemency/clemency.cfm>).

If you were convicted of a felony in another state, your voting rights may have been restored automatically and you may be eligible to register to vote in Virginia. Check with your local voter registration office.

If you have been convicted of a misdemeanor, you do not lose your voting rights.

If you are a resident of another state who is temporarily incarcerated in Virginia, you may be able to vote in your home state. You need to con-

sult the law of your home state regarding both criminal convictions and absentee ballots to see if this is a possibility.

Virginia Voters' Rights and Responsibilities

As a Virginia Voter, you have the following rights:

- To be treated with courtesy and respect by the election officials.
- To be notified if your voter registration has been accepted or denied.
- To vote if you have registered at your current address at least 29 days before Election Day.
- To seek help from the election officials if you are unsure about anything relating to the voting process.
- To be given a demonstration of how the voting equipment works.
- To have your paper ballot voided BEFORE IT IS CAST and be given a new one if you feel you have voted incorrectly. (This applies only if your polling place uses paper or paper-style [punchcard or optical scan] ballot.)
- To enter the full name of a write-in candidate if the candidate of your choice is not on the ballot (except in party primaries).
- To have a ballot brought to your vehicle instead of entering the polling place if you are 65 years of age or older, or if you are disabled.
- To have an officer of election or other person help you vote if you are physically disabled or unable to read or write. Blind voters may have any person assist them. Other voters may have anyone who is not their employer or union representative assist them.

Note: The officer of election or other person so designated who assists you in the preparation of your ballot shall do so in accordance with your instructions, without soliciting your vote or in any manner attempting to influence your vote, and shall not in any manner divulge or indicate, by signs or otherwise, how you voted on any office or question.

- To vote even if you have no identification with you at the polling place. You must sign the "Affirmation of Identity" statement before voting if you have no ID.

Exception: Voters who registered by mail on or after January 1, 2003, did not mail in a copy of their ID at that time, and fail to show one of the federally-required forms of ID when voting for the first time in a federal election must vote by Conditional Ballot. They may not use the "Affirmation of Identity" statement.

- To vote a Conditional Ballot if your status as a qualified voter is in question, and to be present when the Electoral Board meets to determine if your ballot will be counted.

- To bring your minor child (age 15 or younger) into the voting booth with you to observe you vote.
- To vote if you are in line by 7:00 p.m. when the polls close.
- To cast an absentee ballot if you are qualified to vote absentee.
- To register to vote absentee in Virginia if you are a U.S. Citizen overseas and your last residence in the U. S. was in Virginia, or you are a Virginia resident away in the military.
- You cannot be denied the right to vote if you are eligible to do so.
- Jurisdictions must not apply standards or practices which deny or abridge the right to vote on account of race, must not deny any individual the right to vote on account of errors or omissions in registration applications which are not material to determining whether such individual is qualified to vote, and must not apply different standards and procedures to voters in determining whether they are qualified to vote.

As a Virginia Voter, you have the following responsibilities:

- To treat the election officials with courtesy and respect.
- To keep your voter registration information up-to-date with your current address.
- To show your identification (ID) at the polls. If you do not have an ID with you at the polling place, you may still vote if you sign an Affirmation of Identity statement, depending on your registration status.
- To request assistance if you do not know how to use the voting equipment or have other questions about the voting process, or need assistance preparing your ballot because of a physical disability or inability to read or write.
- To check your ballot for correctness BEFORE casting it.
- To understand that once your ballot is cast, you CANNOT be given another ballot even if you think you voted incorrectly.
- To ask the election official to call the General Registrar's office BEFORE you leave the polling place if you have problems regarding your eligibility to vote or the casting of your ballot.

If you have any questions about your voter registration status or about elections in your locality, please contact your local voter registration office. The phone number is on the next page.

If you feel your voting rights have been violated or that you may have witnessed an election law being broken, contact the State Board of Elections at 1-800-552-9745, or via e-mail at info@sbe.virginia.gov.

County and City Voter Registration Offices

Accomack County 757-787-2935	Charlotte County 434-542-5856	Frederick County 540-662-8723	Lee County 276-346-7780	Page County 540-743-3986	Smyth County 276-783-4511 Ext: 4
Albemarle County 434-951-6798	Charlottesville City 434-970-3250	Fredericksburg City 540-372-1030	Lexington City 540-462-3706	Patrick County 276-694-7206	Southampton County 757-653-9280
Alexandria City 703-838-4050	Chesapeake City 757-382-6128	Galax City 276-236-7509	Loudoun County 703-777-0380	Petersburg City 804-733-2380 Ext: 2429	Spotsylvania County 540-582-7124
Alleghany County 540-965-1690	Chesterfield County 804-748-1471	Giles County 540-921-2802	Louisa County 540-967-3427	Pittsylvania County 434-432-7971	Stafford County 540-658-4000
Amelia County 804-561-3460	Clarke County 540-955-5168	Gloucester County 804-693-3659	Lunenburg County 434-696-3071	Poquoson City 757-868-3070	Staunton City 540-332-3840
Amherst County 434-946-9315	Colonial Heights City 804-520-9277	Goochland County 804-556-5303	Lynchburg City 434-847-1609	Portsmouth City 757-393-8644	Suffolk City 757-923-3691
Appomattox County 434-352-5302	Covington City 540-965-6380	Grayson County 276-773-2842 Ext: 120	Madison County 540-948-6533	Powhatan County 804-598-5604	Surry County 757-294-5213
Arlington County 703-228-3456	Craig County 540-864-6190	Greene County 434-985-5213	Manassas City 703-257-8230	Prince Edward County 434-392-4767	Sussex County 434-246-5511 Ext: 3270
Augusta County 540-245-5657	Culpeper County 540-825-8441	Greensville County 434-348-4228	Manassas Park City 703-335-8806	Prince George County 804-733-2794	Tazewell County 276-988-1305
Bath County 540-839-7266	Cumberland County 804-492-4504	Halifax County 434-476-3322	Martinsville City 276-403-5122	Prince William County 703-792-6470	Virginia Beach City 757-427-8683
Bedford City 540-587-6007	Danville City 434-799-6560	Hampton City 757-727-6218	Mathews County 804-725-3200	Pulaski County 540-980-2111	Warren County 540-635-4327
Bedford County 540-586-7649	Dickenson County 276-926-1620	Hanover County 804-365-6080	Mecklenburg County 434-738-6191 Ext: 4313	Radford City 540-731-3639	Washington County 276-676-6227
Bland County 276-688-4441	Dinwiddie County 804-469-4512	Harrisonburg City 540-432-7707	Middlesex County 804-758-4420	Rappahannock County 540-675-5380	Waynesboro City 540-942-6620
Botetourt County 540-473-8235	Emporia City 434-634-9533	Henrico County 804-501-4347	Montgomery County 540-382-5741	Richmond City 804-646-5950	Westmoreland County 804-493-8898
Bristol City 276-645-7318	Essex County 804-443-4611	Henry County 276-638-5108	Nelson County 434-263-4068	Richmond County 804-333-4772	Williamsburg City 757-220-6157
Brunswick County 434-848-4414	Fairfax City 703-385-7890	Highland County 540-468-2013	New Kent County 804-966-9699	Roanoke City 540-853-2281	Winchester City 540-545-7910
Buchanan County 276-935-6534	Fairfax County 703-222-0776	Hopewell City 804-541-2232	Newport News City 757-926-8683	Roanoke County 540-772-7500	Wise County 276-328-8331
Buckingham County 434-969-4304	Falls Church City 703-248-5085	Isle of Wight County 757-365-6230 Ext: 6230	Norfolk City 757-664-4353	Rockbridge County 540-463-7203	Wythe County 276-223-6038
Buena Vista City 540-261-8605	Fauquier County 540-347-6972	James City County 757-253-6868	Northampton County 757-678-0480	Rockingham County 540-564-3055	York County 757-890-3440
Campbell County 434-332-9579	Floyd County 540-745-9350	King & Queen County 804-785-5980	Northumberland County 804-580-4655	Russell County 276-889-8006	
Caroline County 804-633-9083	Fluvanna County 434-589-3593	King George County 540-775-9186	Norton City 276-679-1162	Salem City 540-375-3034	State Board of Elections 1-800-552-9745 TTY 1-800-260-3466
Carroll County 276-728-2332	Franklin City 757-562-8545	King William County 804-769-4952	Nottoway County 434-645-8148	Scott County 276-386-3843	
Charles City County 804-829-9210	Franklin County 540-483-3025	Lancaster County 804-462-5277	Orange County 540-672-5262	Shenandoah County 540-459-6195	