

## 2016 General Election FAQs

**Q. I need to vote absentee. Can I still do that? What is the deadline to return my absentee ballot? Should I return my absentee ballot by mail?**

A. Voters can vote absentee in-person at their county voter registration and elections office up until 5:00 p.m. on the day before the election. Voters can also vote absentee by mail. However, since first-class U.S. Postal Service mail delivery time is 2-5 days, attempting to vote absentee by mail is not recommended within 10 days of Election Day. If you already have an absentee by mail ballot, the ballot must be returned to the county voter registration and elections office by 7:00 p.m. on election day. The SEC does not recommend returning your absentee by mail ballot through the U.S. Postal Service after the sixth day before the election. If possible, voters should return their by-mail ballot in person to their county voter registration and elections office. Voters can authorize another person to return their ballot with some limitations. Authorized returnee forms are included with absentee ballots and must be completed and returned along with the ballot. Voters may also choose to “overnight” their ballot through the U.S. Postal Service or other delivery service.

**Q. Where do I vote?**

A. At the polling place in your precinct. Your precinct and polling place are listed on your voter registration card. However, it’s possible your polling place may have changed since the card was issued. To be sure of the location of your polling place:

- Visit [scVOTES.org](http://scVOTES.org) and click “Find My Polling Place” in the mySCVOTES section of the homepage.
- Call your county voter registration office.

**Q. What hours will the polls be open?**

A. Polling places will be open 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. As long as you are in line by 7:00 p.m., you will be allowed to vote.

**Q. What do I take with me to the polls to vote?**

A. When voting in person, you will be asked to show one of the following Photo IDs:

- SC Driver's License
- SC Department of Motor Vehicles ID Card
  - includes SC Concealed Weapons Permit
- SC Voter Registration Card with Photo
- US Passport
- Federal Military ID
  - includes all Department of Defense Photo IDs and the Department of Veterans Affairs Benefits Card

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### **Q. What if I don't have one of these Photo IDs?**

- A. If you do not have one of these photo IDs, you can make your voting experience as fast and easy as possible by getting one before Election Day. If you are already registered to vote, you can go to your county voter registration and elections office, provide your date of birth and the last four digits of your Social Security Number, and have your photo taken. You can do this even on Election Day. Free DMV ID Cards are also available from the Department of Motor Vehicles.

If you cannot get a photo ID, bring your non-photo voter registration card with you to the polling place. You may vote a provisional ballot after signing an affidavit stating you have a reasonable impediment to obtaining a photo ID. A reasonable impediment is any valid reason, beyond your control, which created an obstacle obtaining a photo ID. Some examples include: a disability or illness, a conflict with your work schedule, a lack of transportation, a lack of a birth certificate, family responsibilities, a religious objection to being photographed, and any other obstacle you find reasonable. This ballot will count unless someone proves to the county board of voter registration and elections that you are lying about your identity or having the listed impediment. To vote under the reasonable impediment exception:

1. Inform the poll managers that you do not have a photo ID and could not get one.
2. Present your current, non-photo registration card.
3. Sign the affidavit provided by the poll managers stating why you could not obtain a photo ID.
4. Cast a provisional ballot that will be counted unless the county board of voter registration and elections has reason to believe your affidavit is false.

### **Q. What happens if I have a Photo ID but forget to bring it to my polling place?**

- A. If you forget to bring your photo ID to your polling place, you may vote a provisional ballot that will count only if you show your photo ID to your county board of voter registration and elections office prior to certification of the election (on Friday after the General Election).

### **Q. I've lost my voter registration card or my photo voter registration card. Can I still vote?**

- A. Yes. Your voter registration card is your notification that you have registered to vote and shows your precinct and polling place. Your voter registration card is not necessary to vote. If you lost your photo voter registration card, you may also vote with your driver's license, DMV issued ID card, federal military ID, or U.S. passport. If you don't have another Photo ID, you can get a replacement photo voter registration card from your county elections office, even on Election Day. If you can't get a replacement before going to the polls, bring your non-photo voter registration card with you to the polling place. See answer to previous Question "What if I don't have one of these Photo IDs?" for details.

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**Q. What candidates and/or offices are on the ballot today?**

A. The candidates and offices on a particular ballot will differ depending on the county and districts in which you reside. To see the candidates that will appear on your ballot, visit [scVOTES.org](https://scvotes.org) and click “Get My Sample Ballot” in the mySCVOTES section of the homepage.

**Q. How does straight party voting work?**

A. Whether to vote “Straight Party” is the first choice a voter must make on a General Election ballot. Voting straight party is optional. Each political party that has nominated a candidate appearing on the voter’s ballot is represented in the straight party selection area. If a party is selected under straight party, every candidate of that party is automatically selected. The voter then has the option of changing their vote for any particular office (also known as “crossover voting”) simply by touching the candidate of choice for that office. Voters should also be aware that when voting straight party no selection is made for nonpartisan offices and questions. These contests must be voted individually. As always, voters should carefully review their choices on the review screen before casting their ballot.

**Q. How is the ballot order determined for candidates and political parties?**

A. Candidates for partisan offices appear on the ballot in party order. Party order rotates every two years at the time of the general election. When party order rotates, the party that was previously first in the order moves to the bottom of the list. “Petition” is included in this party rotation so that the place for petition candidates rotates with the parties. Multiple petition candidates are ordered alphabetically by last name. Candidates for nonpartisan offices are ordered alphabetically by last name. The write-in space always appears last in the list of candidates for a particular office.

**Q. Is there a write-in option for President and Vice President?**

A. No. In South Carolina, there is no option to write-in a vote for President and Vice President. State law prohibits write-in vote for President and Vice President (S.C. Code of Laws Section 7-13-360).

**Q. If I don’t want to vote on a voting machine, can I vote a paper ballot?**

A. South Carolina’s voting system features both voting machines and paper ballots. Voters must vote on voting machines except under limited circumstances as defined by state law. Paper ballots may be used only for voting absentee by mail, for emergency situations at the polls (voting machines not available), and for provisional voting (when there’s some question about a voter’s qualifications).

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**Q. I've moved since the last election and haven't updated by voter registration card. Can I still vote?**

A. If you...

1. ...moved to another residence within your precinct, you can update your address at your polling place and vote a regular ballot.
2. ...moved to a different precinct within your county, you are eligible vote Failsafe (see below).
3. ...moved to another residence in another county within 30 days of the election, you are eligible to vote Failsafe (see below).
4. ...moved to another residence in another county prior to 30 days before the election, you are not eligible to vote. You would be required to register prior to the deadline.

Two Options for Voting Failsafe:

1. The voter may vote at the polling place in his previous precinct using a failsafe provisional ballot. A failsafe provisional ballot contains only federal, statewide, countywide, and municipality-wide offices.
2. The voter may go to the voter registration office in the county in which he currently resides, change his address, and vote a regular ballot there.

**Q. I moved to South Carolina after the October 9 voter registration deadline. Can I vote?**

A. Voters who move from State A to State B after the deadline to register to vote in State B can vote a ballot in State A for President and Vice President only (42 U.S.C. § 1973aa-1(e)). Contact election officials in your previous state of registration to find out how to get your ballot.

**Q. I saw a candidate/member of candidate's campaign at my polling place talking to voters. Can he do that?**

A. Yes, but there are restrictions:

-Inside the polling place: No campaigning is allowed. Candidates may be inside the polling place and talk to voters as long as they are not campaigning, intimidating voters, or interfering with the election process.

-Within 200 feet of an entrance to a polling place: Candidates and campaign staff may campaign as long as they are not intimidating voters or interfering with the election process. However, no campaign literature, signs, or posters are allowed. Candidates are allowed to wear a badge no larger than 4.25" x 4.25" featuring only the candidate's name and office sought. Candidates must remove their badge upon entering a polling place.

**Q. A candidate is definitely campaigning while in the polling place, or there is campaign literature within 200 feet of the entrance. What can I do?**

A. Inform the poll clerk immediately. If the issue is not resolved, contact the county board of voter registration and elections. The board will address the complaint.

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**Q. Can candidates or their representatives take people to the polls to vote?**

A. Yes. It's ok for any person, even a candidate, to give a voter a ride as long as it's solely to help facilitate voting. However, no one can give a voter anything of value in exchange for voting.

**Q. Are there any laws about candidates posting their signs along the roadway?**

A. Yes, there are several state laws addressing political signs on roadways, as well as county and municipal ordinances. See SC Code of Laws Sections 57-25-10, 57-25-140, and 7-25-210. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the entity that maintains the road (state, county, and municipality) to enforce applicable sign laws.

**Q. Do employers have to give you time off to vote?**

A. No. There is no state or federal law mandating that employers give time off to employees to vote. Voters who know they will not be able to visit the polls on Election Day should vote absentee before the election.

**Q. A candidate is listed more than once on my ballot. Is this correct?**

A. Some candidates may be nominated by more than one political party. If so, candidates are listed once for each party by which they are nominated. This process is sometimes referred to as "fusion voting," and candidates are sometimes referred to as "fusion candidates." All votes for "fusion candidates" go to the candidate. For example, if candidate A receives 100 votes as the nominee for Party 1 and 100 votes as the nominee for Party 2, the candidate receives a total of 200 votes. While the candidate receives all votes cast for the candidate, regardless of party, this total is not displayed in election results. Results are reported separately for each nomination.

**Q. Are "ballot selfies" legal? Can I take a picture of my ballot and share it with others?**

A. No. State law prohibits anyone from showing their ballot to another person (S.C. Code of Laws Section 7-25-100). The use of cameras is not allowed inside the voting booth.

**Q. Are South Carolina's elections secure? How can I trust that my vote will count?**

A. South Carolina election officials take election security seriously and have taken all reasonable measures to protect the statewide voter registration system, the voting system, and the election process in general. South Carolina election officials work with a broad-based team of law enforcement, intelligence, and cyber security professionals to ensure we are doing everything we can to protect the election infrastructure. It's important to know that voting machines and computers used to tabulate results are never connected to the internet. The voting system was tested on the federal and state levels before implementation, and each machine is tested by local election officials before every election to ensure the machines are working properly. The State Election Commission conducts a comprehensive, statewide post-election audit of data from every voting machine and every computer used to tabulate results in the state to ensure votes were counted accurately and completely. South Carolina's

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elections are conducted transparently by nonpartisan election professionals who are dedicated to protecting the sacred right to vote. Voters can go to the polls on Election Day knowing that significant checks and balances are in place to give them the assurance that their vote will count.

**Q. I have heard that voting machines can “flip” my vote. Is that true?**

A. No. It’s not possible for a voting machine to “flip” a vote, but it is possible for a voter to make an unintended selection, or for the voting machine screen to be slightly off calibration. An unintended selection can occur if the voter drags a finger on the screen, touches the screen in two places (both hands), or in some other way inadvertently touches the screen. Touchscreens can also lose proper calibration. Loss of calibration is usually a matter of millimeters, so that if you touched near the edge of one candidate it could highlight and check the adjoining candidate. Unintended selections are likely the source of rumors about “vote flipping.” While these unintended selections can happen, it’s highly unlikely that it would result in a voter casting a ballot for the wrong candidate. Here’s why:

- When a candidate is selected, it’s very obvious. The block including the candidate’s name is highlighted in bright green with a red check mark beside the candidate’s name. It’s hard to miss which candidate has been selected. If the wrong candidate is selected, the voter should try again being careful to touch the machine with only one finger. If a voter is having trouble making a selection, the voter should alert a poll manager.
- Every voter is required to view the review screen before casting their ballot. This shows a summary of all candidates selected and gives the voter the opportunity to make any changes. Again, if incorrect, the voter should either correct the selection or notify a poll manager.
- If a voter experiences a calibration issue and notifies the poll manager, poll managers take that machine out of service until it is recalibrated by a technician.

All voters should be careful and deliberate in making their selections, they should review their selections before casting their ballot, and if they experience any issues voting their ballot, they should immediately alert a poll manager.

**Q. Can alcoholic beverages be sold on Election Day?**

A. Yes, the ban on the sale of alcoholic liquors on statewide election days was lifted as of July 1, 2014. For more information contact the S.C. Department of Revenue, (803) 898-5864.

**Q. Can lottery tickets be sold on Election Day?**

A. Yes, lottery tickets can be sold on Election Day.

**Q. When I left the polls, I was asked to participate in an “exit poll.” Is this legal?**

A. Exit polls are legal and participation is voluntary. They are NOT conducted by the State Election Commission or the county boards of voter registration and elections. Exit polls may not be conducted inside the polling place, and voters should not be approached as they enter

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the polling place. If you feel threatened or intimidated by a pollster, report it immediately to the poll clerk.

**Q. When and where will results be reported?**

A. Unofficial results will be reported by the SEC on election night at [www.scVOTES.org](http://www.scVOTES.org). Results are reported as the SEC receives them from each county board of voter registration and elections. Results are also reported locally at each polling place and at county voter registration and elections offices.

**Q. When is a recount necessary?**

A. When the difference between any winning candidate and any other non-winning candidate is 1% or less of the total votes cast for all candidates for that office, a recount is mandatory.

**Q. Where can I report an issue or file a complaint about the election?**

A. Any issues or complaints regarding a polling place on Election Day should first be addressed to the poll managers. Poll managers may be able to quickly resolve the issue. If not resolved at the polling place, or if the issue or complaint is regarding some other aspect of the election, voters should contact their county board of voter registration and elections.

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