

Rhode Island

Registration Deadline

Forms must be received or postmarked 30 days before an election.¹

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Database Implementation Status

Rhode Island is currently using a new top-down voter registration system (the “CVRS”), in which municipal officials directly access one centralized statewide database. This system was built with the assistance of Covansys and PCC Technology Group, and is managed by the Elections Division at the Office of the Secretary of State.²

Entering Voter Registration Information

Who inputs voter registration information? On behalf of the local boards of canvassers, municipal clerks generally review and enter information from voter registration forms in their jurisdictions directly into the statewide system.

What happens to voter registration forms submitted at state registration agencies? Forms received by the State Board of Elections are forwarded to the appropriate local board of canvassers for review and entry. Data and signatures from forms received by the DMV are sent electronically to the statewide database, and automatically forwarded along with a hard copy of the application to the appropriate local board of canvassers.³ Other voter registration agencies are required to send forms within 10 days of receipt to the State Board of Elections or the appropriate local board of canvassers.⁴

How are most forms submitted? Rhode Island did not report how voter registration forms were submitted in 2004.⁵

Voter Registration Form

The relevant portions of the voter registration form are included at the end of this section.

Processing of Forms Without Identifying Numbers

How will the state treat an application with an affirmative indication that the applicant has no valid identifying number? If the applicant is otherwise eligible, she will be issued a unique voter registration number, and will be registered, but must show identification either before the election or at the polls.⁶

How will the state treat an application without an identifying number and without an affirmative indication that the applicant has no such number? If the applicant is otherwise eligible, she will be issued a unique voter registration number and will be registered, but she must show identification either before the election or at the polls.⁷

*How will the state treat an application listing an identifying number that is either incomplete or illegible? If the applicant is otherwise eligible, she will be issued a unique voter registration number and will be registered, but she must show identification either before the election or at the polls.*⁸

Matching Against Motor Vehicle and Social Security Records

What fields from the voter registration form will the state seek to match to motor vehicle or Social Security records? Identifying number, name, and date of birth.

How precise is the match standard? Rhode Island will use a “substantial match” standard to match information on forms with a driver’s license number: the number must match exactly, but discretion is left to the state elections official to determine whether any of the returned records match substantially. Rhode Island will use the standard AAMVA criteria for matching information on forms with SSN digits: exact match of the SSN-4, first name, last name, month of birth, and year of birth.

How much human intervention is involved in determining whether information is matched? The process for matching information on forms with SSN digits will be fully automated. For matching information on forms with driver’s license numbers, the system will return a list of records with an exact match of the identifying number. The local election official has the discretion to determine whether a likely match exists among the possible matches returned.

Description of matching process: For matching information on forms with driver’s license numbers, the DMV will return to the local election official a list of all records that match the driver’s license number exactly. The local official will review these records for a “substantial match” of name and date of birth. Information on forms listing SSN digits will be automatically checked against the SSA database through the standard AAMVA process: the DMV will automatically submit the appropriate fields to the SSA and return a code indicating whether the record was successfully matched or not.

*Note: Municipal clerks will also manually check the address on a voter registration application against a database of valid street addresses. If no match is found, the application will be rejected (and the applicant will be contacted by the local board of canvassers to correct the invalid information).*⁹

*What are the consequences if the state cannot find a match? If the applicant is otherwise eligible, she will be issued a unique voter registration number, and will be registered, but must show identification either before the election or at the polls.*¹⁰

Notice and Opportunity to Resolve Errors

*Does the applicant have the opportunity to correct a missing or incomplete identifying number, without submitting a new form? Yes. The applicant may correct missing or incomplete information at any point before Election Day.*¹¹

Does the applicant have the opportunity to resolve a failed match, without submitting a new form? Yes. The applicant may submit information to resolve a failed match at any point before Election Day.¹²

If information on an otherwise timely application is corrected after the voter registration deadline, is the correction timely? Yes.

Description of notice and correction process: The municipal official will attempt to notify, by an automatically generated letter, an applicant whose identifying number is missing, incomplete, illegible, or unverified. The applicant may attempt to resolve the issue at any point before Election Day. If the identifying number cannot be verified, the applicant will be registered, but will have to provide identification at the polls.

Identification Requirements at the Polls

Who must provide identification at the polls? Any voter whose identifying number has not been verified, and who has not previously presented a copy of valid identification to a municipal elections official, must provide identification at the polls.¹³

Forms of ID:

voters without a verified identifying number:	current and valid photo ID current utility bill w/ name, address bank statement w/ name, address government check w/ name, address paycheck w/ name, address other gov't document w/ name, address
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What forms of identification are accepted? A current and valid photo ID, or a copy of a current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck, or other government document that shows the name and address of the voter.¹⁴

What are the consequences of failing to show identification? The voter may cast a provisional ballot.¹⁵ The ballot will be counted if the voter's name, date of birth, and municipality, as presented on the provisional ballot, correspond to a record in the municipality's list of registered voters.¹⁶

Statutes and Regulations

R.I. GEN. LAWS tit. 9.1 generally concerns registration. R.I. GEN. LAWS §§ 17-6-1 and 17-6-1.2 direct the Secretary of State to establish and maintain a single statewide voter registration system. R.I. CODE R. pt. 32 comprises the applicable regulations.

End Notes

¹ R.I. GEN. LAWS §§ 17-9.1-3, 17-9.1-9; 32-000-023 R.I. CODE R. § 5 (Weil 2004).

² electionline.org, *Assorted Rolls: Statewide Voter Registration Databases Under HAVA*, June 2005, available at <http://www.electionline.org/Portals/1/EB11.FINAL1.pdf>, at 22; electionline.org, *Statewide Voter Registration Database Status*, at <http://www.electionline.org/Default.aspx?tabid=288>.

³ R.I. GEN. LAWS § 17-9.1-7, *as amended by* 2005 R.I. Laws ch. 05-204 (05-H 5754A) (2005).

⁴ *Id.* § 17-9.1-8(e)(2); 32-000-018 R.I. CODE R. §§ 17-9.1-7, -8 (Weil 2004).

⁵ Election Assistance Commission, *The Impact of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 on the Administration of Elections for Federal Office 2003-2004*, June 30, 2005, tbl. 2, *available at* http://www.eac.gov/NVR_Spreadsheets/NVRA_table_2.html.

⁶ Rhode Island regulations provide that if a verifiable identifying number is not presented on the voter registration form, the state will first attempt to match name and date of birth against records collected by the DMV, to determine whether an appropriate identifying number can be found. If so, that number is applied to the applicant's record; the voter will have a chance to reject the assigned number upon receiving confirmation of her registration. 32-000-023 R.I. CODE R. § 7 (Weil 2004). However, Rhode Island officials indicated that this did not reflect state practice; it would correct simple transpositions and other obvious data entry errors but would not correct more substantial omissions or mistakes.

⁷ *See supra* note 6.

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ R.I. GEN. LAWS § 17-9.1-27.

¹⁰ 32-000-023 R.I. CODE R. § 7(C) (Weil 2004). *See also supra* note 6.

¹¹ Note: missing, incomplete, or unverified identifying numbers do not cause a Rhode Island registration form to become incomplete, and need not trigger the correction procedures of 32-000-023 R.I. CODE R. § 6(A) (Weil 2004), which state that the voter may correct errors by the 20th day before the election.

¹² *But see* 32-000-023 R.I. CODE R. § 6(A) (Weil 2004) (stating that the voter may correct errors by the 20th day before the election).

¹³ *Id.* § 7(C) (Weil 2004).

¹⁴ *Id.* § 7(C) (Weil 2004).

¹⁵ R.I. Bd. of Elec., *Rules & Regulations for Provisional Voting* (Mar. 27, 2005) (to be codified at 32-000-___ R.I. CODE R. § 4(A) (Weil 2005)).

¹⁶ *Id.* § 6(B) (Weil 2005).

RHODE ISLAND VOTER REGISTRATION FORM

TO REGISTER TO VOTE IN RHODE ISLAND, YOU MUST BE:

- A resident of Rhode Island.
- A citizen of the United States.
- At least 18 years of age on or before election day.

YOU MAY USE THIS FORM TO:

- Register to vote in Rhode Island.
- Change your name and/or address on your voter registration.
- Choose a political party or change parties.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE VOTER REGISTRATION FORM

Please Print and complete form **IN INK**

1. Declaration of "Citizenship" & "Age" - The applicant must check the appropriate boxes indicating whether or not he/she is: a) a citizen of the United States, and b) will be 18 years of age on or before election day. *An applicant who answers "NO" to either question is ineligible to register to vote and must not complete this form.*

2. RI Driver's License Number / Last 4 Digits Of Social Security Number - The applicant shall provide his/her driver's license number if the applicant has a current and valid Rhode Island driver's license. In the case of an applicant who does not have a Rhode Island driver's license he/she shall provide the last 4 digits of his/her social security number. An applicant who does NOT have a Rhode Island driver's license or social security number shall place a check mark in the box provided.

3. Applicant's Full Name - The applicant shall enter his/her last name, first name and middle name (or initial).

4. Home Address - The applicant shall enter the full address of the location where he/she resides. Persons are required to register to vote using the address at which they live. (Note: A post office box is not a sufficient declaration of residence.)

5. Mailing Address - If the applicant receives mail at an address which is different from the home address (Item #4) that address should be included here. If the mailing address is the same as the home address leave Item #5 blank.

6. Date of Birth - The applicant shall include his/her month, day and year of birth.

7. Phone Number or E-Mail Address (Optional) - The inclusion of a phone number or e-mail address is optional.

8. Party Affiliation - Check one. If an applicant wishes to register with a political party he/she must place a check mark in the box next to the party of his/her choice. If an applicant does not wish to register with a party he/she should check the box next to "Unaffiliated."
(Note: Applicants who leave Item #8 blank will be registered as "Unaffiliated.")

9. Affirmation, Signature & Date - The applicant shall read the "Affirmation" and "Warning" in this item. After doing so, the applicant must SIGN and DATE the registration form in the space provided.

10. Applicant's Requiring Assistance - If an applicant is unable to complete the voter registration form the person who assisted the applicant must record his/her name, address and phone number (phone number is optional).

IF YOU WERE REGISTERED UNDER A DIFFERENT NAME AND/OR ADDRESS, COMPLETE ITEMS 11, 12 & 13.

11. Last Year You Voted - The applicant shall include the last year he/she voted in a primary or election.

12. Under The Name Of (If Different From The Name In Item #3 Above) - If an applicant is registered to vote and has since changed their name, the registrant's name as it appears on their previous registration must be included here.

13. Your Previous Address - If a registrant was previously registered to vote from another address, then the old address must be entered here; include the previous street number, city or town, and state.

If you are interested in working at the polls on Election Day, check the box provided on the reverse side of this form.

NOTICE: Registrations Submitted by Mail

A first time applicant for voter registration in Rhode Island who submits his/her registration by mail must submit to election officials either: a) a copy of a current and valid photo identification; or b) a copy of a current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck, or government document that shows the name and address of the applicant. **An applicant who fails to include a copy of the required identification with his/her registration shall be required to do so prior to, or at the time of, voting for the first time.**

*Completed Voter Registration Forms may be returned or mailed to your local board of canvassers or the State Board of Elections.
For instructions on mailing this form, see reverse side.*

NOTICE: An application for voter registration will not be accepted or processed and will be returned to the applicant if the application fails to include the information required in Item 1 ("Declaration of Citizenship & Age") of the Rhode Island Voter Registration Form or if the applicant fails to sign the application (Item 9 of the Registration Form).

<p>1 Are you a citizen of the United States? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Will you be 18 years of age on or before election day? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>	<p>2 RI Driver's Lic. No. / Last 4 Digits of Soc. Sec. No. <input type="checkbox"/> I do NOT have a RI driver's license or social security no.</p>	<p>3 MISS Last Name First Name (or initial) Middle Name (or initial) JR. SR. II III <i>For office use only</i></p>
<p>4 Home Address (include Apt. number) City State RI Zip Code</p>		
<p>5 Mailing Address (if different from Home Address) City State RI Zip Code</p>		
<p>6 Date of Birth Month Day Year</p>	<p>Designation</p>	<p>7 Phone No. or E-Mail Address (optional)</p>
<p>8 Party Affiliation - check one (party) <input type="checkbox"/> Democratic <input type="checkbox"/> Green <input type="checkbox"/> Republican <input type="checkbox"/> Unaffiliated <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____</p>		
<p>9 I swear or affirm that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am not in jail or serving a sentence for conviction of any felony. • I am not on parole or probation for conviction of any felony. • I am not under any suspended sentence, probation or parole – regardless of a nolo contendere plea – for any felony committed after November 5, 1986. • I am not presently judged "mentally incompetent" by a court of law. • I have told the truth on this registration. <p style="text-align: center;">Signature or Mark. </p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: small;">WARNING: If you sign this form and know it to be false, you can be convicted and fined up to \$5,000 or jailed up to 10 years.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Date: Month Day Year</p>		
<p>10 If the applicant is unable to sign, who helped the applicant fill out this application? Give name, address, and phone number (phone number is optional)</p>		
<p>11 Last Year That You Voted</p>		
<p>12 Under The Name Of (If Different From The Name In Item #3 Above)</p>		
<p>13 Your Previous Address (Street, City or Town and State)</p>		

RHODE ISLAND VOTER REGISTRATION FORM

IMPORTANT!! If you do not receive a notice acknowledging receipt of this voter registration form within three (3) weeks of its submission, call the board of canvassers in your community.