Voter Engagement Guide

Prepared by Gail Miller, HOME Line Public Policy Intern (August 2020)

According to a [2016 Nationwide study](#), homeowners are much more likely to participate in elections by voting than those who rent. This level of engagement could mean that legislators are more likely to listen to the concerns and preferences of homeowners than renters.

Issues that affect you as a renter are important and should be heard by your representatives. Landlords, property owners, developers and city planners are all talking to candidates and, therefore, their preferences are being heard.

The issues renters care about will not be addressed unless people like you get involved!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

WHO REPRESENTS ME?

Minnesotans have a lot of representation in local, state, and federal government. City Council members, school board members, County Commissioners, Minnesota Senators and Minnesota Representatives in the State Legislature, as well as U.S. Senators and U.S. Representatives in Congress.

City Council

For information related to your local city council, visit your city council's website. You will find the names of your council members and information related to the local issues they are working on. If your council member is up for re-election, they will also have a separate campaign website.

- City governments are responsible for areas that include:
  - City codes related to housing and building codes, noise and nuisance, sidewalks, and street lighting
  - Public Works: The maintenance of streets, parks, water, and sewer
  - Community Development – Building zoning and inspections
  - Many others – explore your city website to learn more!
- You many contact your city council members for questions or concerns you have related to these issues.

County Commissioners

For information related to your county, visit your county's website. You will find the names of your county commissioners and information related to county issues they are working on. If your county commissioner is up for re-election, they will also have a separate campaign website.

- o County governments are responsible for areas that include:
    - ▪ The administration of many social programs such as child care assistance, food assistance, and housing assistance.
    - ▪ Public Safety including the Sheriff's office, the County Attorney's office, and corrections.
    - ▪ Employment and training programs.
    - ▪ Many others – explore your county website to learn more!
- o County commissioners are elected to districts. You may contact your county commissioner if you have questions or concerns related to these issues.

Minnesota State Legislature

For information on who represents you at the State level, visit the Minnesota Legislature's website: https://www.leg.state.mn.us/

- o Some issues State government is responsible for include:
    - ▪ Building and maintaining state roads and highways.
    - ▪ Issuing driver's licenses and state identification cards.
    - ▪ The administration of Federal mandates. For example, workplace safety standards, air pollution requirements, Fair Housing laws, and public education.
    - ▪ Tenant and landlord rights and responsibilities.
    - ▪ Many, many others! Explore the State of Minnesota web portal for links to state agencies, counties, and cities.
- o You may contact your Minnesota State Senator or Representative for questions or concerns you have related to these issues.

To find out who represents you in the Minnesota Legislature:

1. From the Minnesota State Legislature home page, you can search for your representatives by entering your full address into the HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES search tool, or the SENATE search tool:

Or, by using the WHO REPRESENTS ME? Link at the bottom of the Legislative Home Page:

2. RESULTS - Based on the address you entered; your results will show:
   - The name and photo of your representative in the Minnesota House of Representatives, including your district number
   - The name and photo of your senator in the Minnesota State Senate, including your district number
   - The name and photo of your representative in the U.S. House of Representatives, including your district number
   - The names and photos of your U.S. Senators

3. RESULTS continued - Included on the RESULTS page is a "contact" button. Clicking this will bring you to that members profile page where you can find their office address, phone number, and email address. (Also included is the name and contact information for their Legislative Assistant.)

   From the profile page you can also learn about the committees the member sits on, any bills they have authored or co-authored, and any news items or updates they have posted.

U.S. Congress

The name, photo, and contact information for your U.S. Representative and U.S. Senators are also included on your RESULTS page when you search "Who Represents Me?" at the Minnesota State Legislature website. The "contact" button will direct you to their congressional website where you can learn more about what your representatives are working on.

- o Federal government is responsible for:
    - Education
    - Labor
    - Homeland Security
    - Veteran's Affairs and Armed Services
    - Housing
    - Many, many other areas – information related to Federal issues can be found at the Congressional website: https://congress.gov/
- o You may contact your U.S. Senators or your U.S. Representative for questions or concerns related to these issues.

For more resources related to Elections and Voting:

USA.gov – Voting and Elections https://www.usa.gov/voting

Minnesota Secretary of State – Elections and Voting
https://www.sos.state.mn.us/elections-voting/

HOW DO I VOTE?

In 2018, Minnesota led the nation in voter turnout for the midterm election. Our state laws make it as easy as possible for people who meet the eligibility requirements to get registered and to vote. Our next opportunity to vote is in the General Election, Tuesday, November 3rd, 2020.

Once you've decided which candidates you support -- those already in office (also known as "incumbents") or their potential challengers -- you need to get ready to cast your ballot. The Minnesota Secretary of State website is a one-stop-shop that includes all the information you need for voting in Minnesota. Casting your ballot is a two-part process: First you register, then you vote!

Part 1: Register to Vote

From the Secretary of State Homepage, hover your mouse over the ELECTIONS & VOTING tab. Select REGISTER TO VOTE from the drop-down menu.
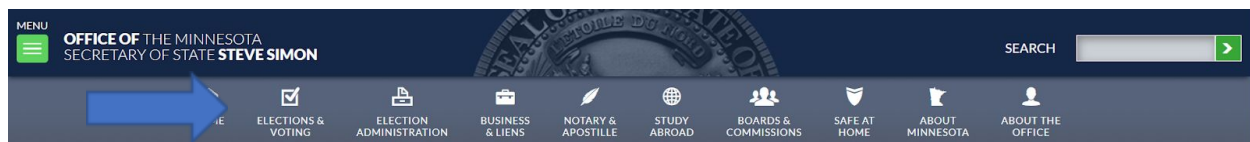
On the REGISTER TO VOTE page, all of the requirements for voting in Minnesota are listed. After you confirm that you meet those requirements, there are three ways to register:

Online- you will need:
- A computer with internet access
- An email address
- Your MN driver's license or Minnesota identification number, OR
- The last four numbers of your Social Security number

On Paper – you will need
- Ability to download and print the paper application
  - Forms are available in more than a dozen languages
- Ability to mail in the completed form
- Your MN driver's license or Minnesota identification number, OR
- The last four digits of your social security number

Important to Note – *Registration closes* 20 days before the election. For the 2020 General Election you must register by October 13th. Registration opens again on Election Day, so if you miss the October 13th deadline, you may register in person instead.

In Person on Election Day – you will need:
- o Valid Minnesota driver's license, learner's permit or ID; or a receipt for any of these
- o An approved photo ID along with an approved document, usually a utility statement or lease agreement that includes your name and current address. You can see the list of approved documents here.
     OR
- o Tribal ID with name, address, photo and signature
     OR
- o A registered voter from your precinct who can go with you to the polling place to sign an oath confirming your address.
- o Review the Election Day Registration Fact Sheet for all the in-person voting details.
- o You are encouraged to register before Election Day – it will save you time at the polling place

The REGISTER TO VOTE page has information about a lot of registration related issues including for college students, those in the military or living abroad, those who are experiencing homelessness, for those with a criminal record or households who are moving, and many others.

Already Registered? Not sure?

If you think you may have registered to vote, but you're not sure – or if it has been a long time since you voted – you can CHECK YOUR REGISTRATION from the REGISTER TO VOTE page. You will be prompted to enter your name, date of birth, and address. If you are a registered voter your registration will be confirmed, and you will be provided the date for the next election as well as your polling place.

Part 2: Vote!

In Minnesota, you can vote on Election Day, or you can vote early. If you decide to vote early, you can do so by mail or in person. You can find all the voting details on the [Secretary of State](#) website.
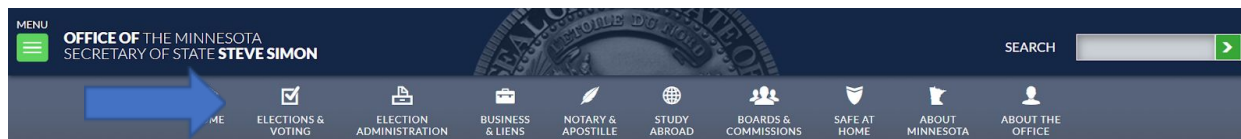
ELECTION DAY VOTING

Let's start with Election Day voting. From the Homepage, hover your mouse over the ELECTIONS & VOTING tab and select [ELECTION DAY VOTING](#) from the drop-down menu. On this page you can find out the [dates of upcoming elections](#), [where you vote](#), your [polling place hours](#), and what to do if you [have to work](#) on Election Day.

From [this page](#) you can also learn about your voting rights, the polling place rules, and how elections are kept secure and fair in Minnesota.

Importantly, if you need help voting you can learn about available options, such as bringing a friend or family member to assist you, using a ballot marking machine, or getting a large-print ballot. You can also learn about polling place accessibility rules. For example, Curbside Voting is available if you cannot easily leave your vehicle to enter the polling place. You can read more about that [here](#). Or, you can download this [Voter Assistance Factsheet](#) for all the assistance and accessibility information.

What to expect when you vote:

1. When you arrive, you will either sign in or register. (REMINDER: You can register before October 13th to save time!)
2. You will be given a ballot and will be directed to a private area for marking your choices. (You have the right to ask for a replacement ballot if you make a mistake.)
3. Once you have made your choices, you will place your ballot in the ballot-counting machine.
4. Finally, get your "I Voted" sticker!

For a full description of what to expect, visit the [TIPS FOR NEW VOTERS](#) page or download this handy [New Voters Factsheet](#).

Sample Ballot

And, if you really like to plan ahead and be prepared, you can view your Sample Ballot! The sample ballot shows a list of candidates in your area and the offices they are running for. It also includes any ballot questions you will be voting on. For example, in 2012 voters were asked about a marriage amendment and a requirement for a photo ID to vote, and in 2016 voters were asked about the salaries for legislators.

When I entered the information for my sample ballot, I was provided information about the August 11th 2020 MN State Primary Election. Below is a sample ballot. Looking over your sample ballot ahead of the election can be a very helpful step in preparing to vote.

Official Ballot
Judge_____
Judge_____

State Partisan Primary Ballot
Anoka County, Minnesota
August 11, 2020

Instructions to Voters:
To vote, completely fill in the oval(s) next to your choice(s) like this: ●

This is a partisan primary ballot. You are permitted to vote for candidates of one political party only.

Legal Marijuana Now Party	Grassroots-Legalize Cannabis Party	Republican Party	Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party
Federal Offices	**Federal Offices**	**Federal Offices**	**Federal Offices**
United States Senator Vote for One	**United States Senator** Vote for One	**United States Senator** Vote for One	**United States Senator** Vote for One
○ Kevin O'Connor	○ Oliver Steinberg	○ Jason Lewis	○ Paula Overby
		○ John L. Berman	○ Steve Carlson
		○ Cynthia Gail	○ Christopher Lovell Seymore, Sr.
		○ Bob "Again" Carney Jr.	○ Tina Smith
		○ James Reibestein	○ Ahmad R. Hassan
		United States Representative District 6 Vote for One	**United States Representative** District 6 Vote for One
		○ Patrick Munro	○ Tawnja Zahradka
		○ Tom Emmer	

The WHAT'S ON MY BALLOT page contains great tools for learning who is running for office in your area, what office they hold (or want to hold), and what party the candidates belong to. Knowing who your candidates are means you can find out what they think about issues that are important to you. We encourage you to visit the websites of both the incumbents and the challengers.

OTHER WAYS TO VOTE:

Absentee Ballot

If you are not able to vote in person on Election Day, in Minnesota you can vote early with an absentee ballot. Absentee ballots are available starting 46 days before Election Day, **which is September 18ᵗʰ for the 2020 General Election**. You can vote early two ways – in person or by mail. All of this information is available on the Minnesota Secretary of State website under OTHER WAYS TO VOTE.

Vote Early by Mail

You must request an Absentee Application. You can do that online here. Or, you can download and print an application here. Once you receive your absentee ballot, you must:

- Read and follow the instructions carefully
- Pay attention to the special COVID-19 instructions about a witness signature
- Return the ballot forms as soon as possible. (Your returned ballot must be postmarked on or before Election Day (November 3, 2020) and received by your county within the next seven calendar days (November 10)). You may return the ballot forms to your county election office by mail, fax, or email. You can find that information here.
  - Click on your county link for the elections contact information. For example, below is the information listed for Dakota County:

Dakota County

Election official: Andy Lokken
General phone: 651-438-4305
Fax: 651-438-4391
Website: http://www.dakotacounty.us
Email: elections@co.dakota.mn.us

ADDRESS

Dakota County Elections
1590 Highway 55 Ste 2300
Hastings, MN 55033

ABSENTEE VOTING CONTACT

Dakota County Elections
Phone: 651-438-4305
Fax: 651-438-4391
Email: elections@co.dakota.mn.us

MILITARY AND OVERSEAS ABSENTEE VOTING CONTACT

Dakota County Elections
Phone: 651-438-4305
Fax: 651-438-4391
Email: elections@co.dakota.mn.us

[Vote early in person](#)

You can vote early in person at your [local elections office](#). If you are not already registered, you may do so in person if you show [proof of residence](#).

In addition to the local elections office, some counties offer additional locations for in-person absentee voting. Check this [list of counties](#) to see if there are additional options available for you.

Note: Please pay attention to any special in-person instructions during COVID-19.

2020 Early Voting Dates

GENERAL ELECTION

First day to vote early in person: Friday, September 18

Last day to vote early in person: Monday, November 2