

2020 Statewide Primaries FAQs

Q. Will the June Primaries and Runoffs be postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic?

A. The June Primaries and Runoffs are scheduled to be held on June 9 and June 23, 2020. The SEC has no authority to postpone the primaries.

Q. I am concerned about voting at my polling place in the pandemic. What are my options?

A. Voting options are unchanged, and the SEC has no authority to implement additional options. If you qualify, you can vote absentee by mail or in person at your county voter registration office. Some qualifications for voting absentee include being age 65 or older, being disabled (including illnesses and injuries), and attending a disabled person. [Click here for a full list of absentee qualifications.](#)

Q. I am self-isolating due to the pandemic. Does this qualify me to vote absentee?

A. On May 13th, Governor McMaster signed into law legislation passed by the General Assembly that authorizes any voter to vote absentee in any election in June 2020. [Click here to learn more about absentee voting.](#)

Q. Why can't everyone vote by mail or vote early?

A. Vote by mail and early voting are not currently authorized by law. The SEC has no authority to enact changes to the way elections are required to be conducted by law.

Q. What are election officials doing to protect voters and poll managers at polling places?

A. The SEC and county election officials are taking steps to make polling places as safe as possible for voters and poll managers:

- Managers will receive special training on sanitizing surfaces and applying social distancing concepts.
- Managers will be equipped with masks, face shields and gloves.
- Managers will be provided with sanitizing wipes and will regularly clean common surfaces throughout the day.
- Check-in stations and voting equipment will be spaced to keep voters and managers at least six feet apart.
- Hand sanitizer will be provided for voters and managers.
- Voters will be provided with a cotton swab for making selections on the touchscreen.
- Voters are asked to wear their own mask if they have one and to bring their own pen for signing the poll list.

[Click here to read the SEC's message to South Carolina's poll managers.](#)

SOUTH CAROLINA

ELECTION COMMISSION

Q. Where do I vote? Will my polling place be open?

A. Vote at the polling place assigned to your precinct. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, some polling places will not be available, and some poll managers have declined to serve for health reasons. Election officials are working to find new locations and recruit more poll managers. However, the situation will require some voters to vote at a different polling place. Be sure to check your polling place before going to vote on election day. [Click here to Find Your Polling Place.](#)

Q. How can I volunteer to be a poll manager?

A. [Click here to learn about serving as a poll manager and to apply online.](#)

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

A. The candidates and offices on your ballot will differ depending on the county and districts in which you reside and the party's primary in which you're voting. [Click here to Get Your Sample Ballot.](#)

Q. Do I have to be a registered member of a party to participate in the Statewide Primaries?

A. No, S.C. does not have registration by party. The Statewide Primaries are open to all registered S.C. voters. Poll managers will ask voters, "In which party's primary do you wish to vote today?"

Q. Can I vote in both primaries?

A. No. State law prohibits voters from voting in more than one party's primary on the same day.

Q. If I voted in one party's primary, can I vote in the other party's runoff?

A. No. The runoff is a continuation of the primary. If you voted in a party's primary, you can vote only in the runoff of the same party.

Q. What hours will the polls be open?

A. Polling places will be open 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. If 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:

- A valid 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

Q. Does my Driver's License/DMV ID Card have to be a REAL ID?

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A. No. You can vote with either a regular Driver's License/DMV ID Card or a REAL ID.

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 elections office to get a SC Voter Registration Card with Photo. You will need to provide your date of birth and the last four digits of your Social Security Number. 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 to 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 elections office prior to certification of the election (on Friday after the General Election).

Q. I've lost my Photo ID. Can I still vote?

A. Yes. See answer to previous Question "What if I don't have one of these Photo IDs?" for details.

Q. I've lost my non-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 non-photo voter registration card is not necessary to vote unless you are voting under the reasonable impediment exception. See answer to previous Question "What if I don't have one of these Photo IDs?" for details.

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Q. I've moved since the last election and haven't updated my 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 the October 17 registration deadline, 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 May 10 voter registration deadline. Can I vote?

A. No. State law does not allow for late registration for those who move into the state after the deadline.

Q. I still have my absentee by mail ballot. What do I do?

A. You can vote your absentee ballot and return it to your county elections office no later than 7:00 p.m. on election day. If you want to vote at your polling place, you will need to return your unvoted absentee ballot to your county elections office and receive a letter authorizing you to vote at the polls.

Q. Can I return my absentee ballot to my polling place on Election Day?

A. No. Poll managers cannot accept absentee ballots at polling places.

Q. I received my Runoff absentee ballot in the mail. Why are some offices and candidates marked out?

A. This is common practice and nothing to be alarmed about. Because of the short time frame between the Primaries and Runoffs and the time it takes for ballots to be delivered by mail, recreating and reprinting Runoff absentee ballots is not an option in most cases. Candidates that did not make the runoff, as well as offices for which the nominees have been decided, are marked through. Any votes for offices or candidates that are marked through will not be counted.

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

A. State law requires candidates in primaries to be listed in alphabetical order by last name.

Q. How is the winner determined in a Primary?

A. To win in a primary, a candidate must receive a majority of votes cast for the office. In offices with one seat to fill (most offices), majority is determined by dividing the total votes cast for the office by two. Any number of votes in excess of the quotient is a majority. If no candidate has a majority, then the two candidates remaining with the highest number of votes will appear in a runoff two weeks after the date of the primary (June 23).

Q. When and where will results be reported?

A. Unofficial results will be reported by the State Election Commission (SEC) on election night at www.scVOTES.org. Results are reported as the SEC receives them from each county elections offices. Results are also reported locally at each polling place and at county elections offices.

Q. How is the winner determined in a runoff?

A. The candidate with the highest number of votes wins.

Q. When is a recount necessary?

A. A recount is mandatory in a primary in two situations:

- 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.
- When the difference between any candidate qualified for the runoff and any other candidate not qualified for the runoff is 1% or less of the total votes cast for all candidates for that office.

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 county election offices. Exit polls may not be conducted inside the polling place, and voters should not be approached as they enter the polling place. If you feel threatened or intimidated by a pollster, report it immediately to the poll clerk.

Q. What is South Carolina’s new voting system and how does it work?

A. South Carolina has been using the ExpressVote ballot-marking system in all elections since October 1, 2019. After checking in at your polling place, you will be given a blank ballot and be directed to an ExpressVote. You insert the ballot into the ExpressVote to begin making your selections on a touchscreen. Making selections on the touchscreen is very similar to making selections on the old voting system. After making your selections, you will do a final review then print your ballot. To cast your vote, you will be directed to a ballot scanner. Review the selections on your printed ballot and insert it into the scanner. The scanner tabulates the votes on your ballot and feeds the ballot into a locked ballot box. The paper ballots are then used to verify and audit election results. [Click here for more on South Carolina’s Voting System.](#)

Q. What are the benefits of a ballot-marking device?

- A. Ballot marking devices (BMDs) offer many of the benefits of touchscreen voting machines while also providing the assurance and security of a paper ballot.
- BMDs are fully accessible for people with disabilities allowing every South Carolinian to vote independently using the same equipment. Hand-marked paper systems are not accessible and require voters with disabilities to vote with assistance or on a device different from other voters.
 - BMDs prevent voters from overvoting (selecting more candidates than allowed). Hand-marked paper ballots can be overvoted. Election officials are unable to determine voter intent in an overvoted office leading to the voter's vote not being counted.
 - BMDs prevent stray marks. Unintended marks on a paper ballot can cause overvotes or votes to be cast differently than intended.
 - BMDs prevent improper marks. Voters do not always mark paper ballots by filling in the oval as instructed. It is common for voters to circle a candidate's name, make a check mark, or even cross through a name. Improper marks require election officials to try to interpret these marks to determine voter intent. Ultimately, marking the ballot differently than instructed can cause a voter's vote to not be counted.
 - BMDs reminds voters if they have undervoted (missed an office or voted for fewer candidates than allowed).
 - BMDs offer the easiest transition for voters. South Carolinians have been voting on touchscreens for the past 15 years. Voting on the ExpressVote will offer a familiar experience with the added assurance of verifying their vote on a paper ballot.

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 is 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 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. For more on what is being done to secure South Carolina's elections, visit <https://www.scvotes.org/securing-south-carolina-elections>.

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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 material 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 elections office. The board will address the complaint.

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

A. Yes. It is permissible for any person, even a candidate, to give a voter a ride as long as it is being done 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. Can I take my child with me to vote?

A. Yes. Minor children (under age 18) of a voter may accompany the voter in the voting booth.

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. 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.

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Q. Can lottery tickets be sold on Election Day?

A. Yes, the sale of lottery tickets is restricted only on Presidential Election Days (the Presidential Primary is not a Presidential Election).

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 elections office.

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