

Voting Rights

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1. What is the County Election Commission

3 member commission is elected each odd year by political parties. The majority party, currently Republican, elects 2 members. The minority party, currently Democratic, elects 1 member. The majority party is determined by number of the 7 state constitutional offices. Commissioners must be unbiased and impartial and treat all candidates and issues the same.

2. Duties

Secretary of State / County Clerks are responsible for voter registration.

State Board of Election Commissioners / County Election Commission are responsible to conduct elections. Program and print ballots, hire poll workers, count votes, and certify elections.

3. Who can vote?

1776 – Only male land owners could vote

1868 – 14th Amendment gives African Americans citizenship, but not right to vote.

1870 – 15th Amendment prevents government from denying the right to vote to citizens. Didn't really work, especially in some southern states which made some voters prove literacy or other restrictions.

1920 – 19th Amendment gives women right to vote, but not Native Americans or Asians.

1924 – Indian Citizen Act gives Native Americans right to vote.

1952 – McCarran-Walter Act gives Asian Americans right to vote.
African Americans males got to vote before women, Native and Asian Americans.

1965 – Voting Rights Act removed barriers and discrimination for all voters. Now, if one voter must provide Photo Id, every voter must provide Photo Id.

4. Register to vote

Complete a voter registration form and mail/take to County Clerk's Office. If registered at DMV, call County Clerk 2 weeks later to confirm. It is each voter's responsibility to verify their registration.

5. Vote

Voting automatically maintains your registration, still each voter's responsibility to confirm.

6. If you don't vote

If you do not vote in 2 consecutive Federal Elections (4 years) your registration will be suspended and you need to re-register. 1st notice to confirm your address is mailed in odd years if you did not vote in previous General Election, you must confirm, or you will become "inactive". Inactive voters can still vote in next election. 2nd notice to cancel your registration is mailed in odd years if you did not vote in 2 previous General Elections. After this notice, you must re-register to vote. You should respond to all notices, even if all information is correct.

7. Misdemeanors

You can vote. If you are in jail, you have to vote absentee, by mail or bearer. A bearer is a person authorized to pick up / deliver absentee ballots. Contact the County Clerk for information on absentee voting.

8. Felonies

Convicted felons lose their right to vote while incarcerated, on parole or probation, and their voter registration is cancelled. If charged with a felony, it does not cancel voter registration.

9. Restoration

For non-violent offenders, once sentencing, parole and probation is complete, and all fines and fees have been paid, voting rights may be restored. You must present documents showing that this has been met, along with a completed voter registration form to the County Clerk's office to request voting rights restored.

Contact Arkansas Department of Corrections Central Records, Circuit Clerk or Probation Office, for documents.

If conviction was in another county or state, or for violent offenses, you may need to have the court in that state issue an order stating that obligations have been met.

10. Check

It is the voter's responsibility to verify their voter registration prior to attempting to vote. You should check at least 30 days prior to an election, so if you are not currently registered, you can submit a voter registration form.

11. Types of Elections

Primary – Usually in May in even numbered years. May move to March during Presidential Election years. Primaries are currently separate, by party, but conducted at the same time. In Arkansas, you can choose which party's primary you wish to vote in.

Nonpartisan / Judicial

Elections for judges and prosecutors are held at the same time as primary elections, and appear of ballots for both parties. If there is a run-off, it is held in Nov with the general election.

General – In November, the first Tuesday following the first Monday. Can't be on Nov 1 because it is a religious holiday (All Saints Day), so always Nov 2-8. Winners of Primaries,

Independent candidates (no political party), municipal candidates, and ballot issues may be on ballot.

Why November – Before the Civil War, only county seats had polling places. Garland County did not exist, we were Hot Spring County, and so you had to travel to Rockport which was the seat of Hot Spring County.

This was horse and buggy days. Communities centered around churches, so they did not want to travel on Sunday, so they travelled on Monday, voted on Tuesday, and returned home on Wednesday.

Since it might involve 3 days, farmers did not want to vote during spring planting season, summertime when they tended their crops, and fall during harvest time.

The Electoral College, which elects the President, was designed to prevent states with large populations dominating the election. They must meet mid-December, and they needed to allow time to travel to Washington, so November was chosen.

Annual School Election – School Districts choose, in even numbered years, to have school election with the Primary or General. The choice lasts for 2 years. All Garland County schools chose the Primary date, so school elections will be on May 21 this year.

Special Elections – Must be called by an entity, State, County Quorum Court, or School District.