

2010-01 GUIDELINES FOR VOTER REGISTRATION: Preregistration

The North Carolina State Board of Elections by publication in the North Carolina Register pursuant to G.S. § 163-82.12, gives notice of adoption of new voter registration guidelines:

Preregistration Guidelines

2009 N.C. Session Laws 541 mandated a policy for preregistration of sixteen and seventeen year-olds in North Carolina. See G.S. §§ 163-82.1, -82.4(d) and -82.6(f). Preregistration essentially will follow the same processing flow as all other voter registration applications, with the exception that the applicant will not be registered until he or she is eligible by age to vote. County boards will enter the application into the computerized voter registration processing system and will review the application for completeness. Once the application is entered, the county board will send the registrant a preregistration acknowledgment and the application will be kept in a holding status until the registrant reaches voting age according to the law. Although preregistration applicants will be entered into the computerized system, they will not become part of the database of registered voters until the registrant is eligible by age to vote. The outline below sets out the procedures for handling preregistration applications in the current SEIMS system:

I. Handling the Preregistration Application

- A. Upon receiving a preregistration application, the County Board of Elections shall scan the form and enter the data into the SEIMS system.
- B. Based on the applicant's date of birth and the date of an impending election, the County Board shall verify whether the applicant is eligible for preregistration, is eligible for voter registration, or is ineligible for preregistration or voter registration.
 - 1. If the applicant is seventeen (17), but will be eighteen (18) on or before the next general or regular municipal election, then the county board shall register the applicant no earlier than 60 days prior to any partisan or non-partisan primary election held for the impending general or regular municipal election.
 - 2. If the applicant is at least sixteen (16), but will not be age eighteen (18) on or before the next general or regular municipal election, then the applicant is eligible only for preregistration.
 - 3. If the applicant is under the age of (16) sixteen, then he or she is not eligible for preregistration or registration and the application must be denied. A denial letter must be sent to the applicant by certified mail within two (2) business days after denial pursuant to G.S. § 163-82.7(b).

C. The county board shall review the application for completeness and then shall save the application in the computerized system. Preregistration applications will be retained in the Incomplete Queue of the VoterScan module until such time that they are eligible to be processed through to the voter registration database. The applicant will be flagged in the system as a “preregistrant.” For purposes of preregistration, the county board shall accept both the North Carolina voter registration application and the national voter registration form.

D. The preregistration database will be searchable from the State Board of Elections’ website.

II. Preregistration Acknowledgement

A. Once a preregistration application is processed and saved in the system, the county board shall mail the applicant a preregistration acknowledgement letter. The acknowledgment letter will convey the following information:

1. Confirmation that the applicant is preregistered in the county of residence;
2. Clarification that the applicant is not yet eligible to vote;
3. Explanation to the applicant that he or she will automatically be registered to vote when he or she becomes eligible by age;
4. Instruction on what to do if the applicant moves;
5. Indication as to whether the county board is missing any required element that will delay the processing of the actual voter registration application upon the applicant becoming eligible to vote. Missing required elements will not prevent a preregistration applicant from being preregistered; however, once the applicant reaches the age of eligibility pursuant to Section III below, the county board shall send the preregistrant an Incomplete Notice and follow the standard policies and procedures for handling incomplete voter registration applications at that time.

B. The preregistration acknowledgment letter will be mailed immediately upon processing the preregistration application.

C. If the preregistration acknowledgment letter is returned as undeliverable, the county board shall make all reasonable efforts to contact the applicant to determine the correct address. If the correct address cannot be determined, the preregistration application must not be denied. Instead, once the applicant becomes eligible to vote, his or her voter registration application shall be processed and will be subject to the standard mail verification policies and procedures. It will not be necessary to mail a second preregistration acknowledgment letter to an undeliverable address.

III. Automatic Voter Registration

Upon reaching the age of eligibility, the county board shall automatically register the preregistrant and follow the standard policy for processing voter registration applications. The age of eligibility is determined as the earlier of the following dates:

- A. Sixty (60) days before a partisan or non-partisan primary election, if the voter will be eighteen (18) by the date of the general election or regular municipal election for which the primary is being conducted.
- B. The applicant reaches his or her 18th birthday.

IV. Mandated Voter Registration Drives

Each year, the Governor of North Carolina in conjunction with the State Board of Elections, will designate a month as Citizens' Voter Registration Month. During the designated month, the State Board of Elections will initiate a statewide voter registration drive. Each county board of elections shall participate in the statewide voter registration drive and conduct voter registration and preregistration drives at public high schools in accordance with local board of education policies and school system administrative procedures.

In addition to registering new voters, county boards of elections also shall focus on ensuring that voter information is current (names, addresses, etc), informing voters on how they can vote absentee (mail-in and in-person), and election day procedures.

The statewide voter registration drives may be held on any day of the week, including weekends, for a minimum of four (4) hours. While county boards are encouraged to conduct registration drives on multiple days, only one voter registration drive is required. It will be permissible to work with any non-partisan local group in the county willing to undertake this effort (e.g., PTA, Chamber of Commerce, individual citizens). The training for voter registration drive workers should be coordinated by the county board of elections.

The State Board of Elections has several brochures that may be used for voter registration drives. County boards are permitted to design and distribute their own materials as well.

On a form and at a time to be provided by the State Board of Elections, each county board of elections shall submit a report of their voter registration drive activity to the State Board.