

TIPS for REGISTERING VOTERS in NYS

1) **What to do with the registration forms.** The safest and simplest procedure is for the registrants to leave the completed forms with you, the Voter Registration Volunteer (VRV), and for you to deliver the forms to your County Board of Elections. Registrants may, if they choose, take the forms away with them to complete at their leisure and mail to the Board. But some will forget to do so: point out that you can save them a stamp by delivering them yourself.

Be sure to turn in the forms to the Board of Elections *promptly*, as soon as possible after you've wrapped up the registration session.

2) **Check over the completed forms carefully.** Errors and omissions will not only jeopardize the registration, but they make the VRVs look bad, and may even provoke allegations of fraud.

Note that for identification, *either* the New York DMV (driver's license) number *or* the last four digits of the Social Security Number will suffice. If the registrant has neither, *they may still register to vote*. They must, however, supply some proof of identity and residence (such as a bill with their name and address, or a listing in the telephone book) on the day of the election. Specific questions should be addressed to the Board of Elections in your county.

3) **Students.** Students may vote where they are enrolled in college. They need to supply, both a physical address (the so-called 911 address) and a mailing address, if different, so that the Board of Elections can confirm their registration and inform them of their polling place. The physical address, on Line 4, will usually be the dorm and room number. For example: St. Lawrence University students, the mailing address, to be entered on Line 5, would be: 23 Romoda Drive, SMC #####, Canton, NY 13617.

If students choose to vote in their home town, they need to be registered in their home county, and they must apply for an absentee ballot from their local county board. Since absentee voting is a cumbersome process, students who register where they study are more likely to actually vote.

However: the Presidential election will be decided by relatively few states, not including New York, which is securely Democratic in national elections. The key states will be **Florida and Ohio**, the largest of the current "toss-up states" (29 and 18 electoral votes respectively), followed by **Michigan** (16 electoral votes), **North Carolina** (15), **Virginia** (13), **Wisconsin** (10), **Colorado** (9), **Iowa** (6), **Nevada** (6), and **New Hampshire** (4).

Students from any of these states will have more influence on the outcome of the presidential election by voting at home via absentee ballot. These *must*, however, be applied for and filed *on time* and *properly*, since they will be closely scrutinized.

Information on absentee ballots for all electoral districts is available from **www.vote411.org**.

4) Answers to some frequent questions:

Voters need to be 18 years old *by the date of the election* (not at the time they register.) This year's General Election (state and federal) is on Tuesday, November 6.

Yes, even registered voters must file new forms if they have moved since they last voted.

Voters must enroll in a political party in order to vote in that party's *primary* elections. *No* party affiliation is required to vote in *general* elections. Note that the Independence Party is, in fact, a specific political party. Political independents should check the bottom box "I do not wish to enroll in a party." To change your party affiliation you must file a new registration form.

Contrary to widespread belief, convicted felons are *not* permanently disenfranchised. Only individuals currently incarcerated or on parole are barred from voting. Homeless individuals also have the right to vote, as do people with mental disabilities. See the leaflets on these subjects issued by the League of Women Voters.

4) **Deadlines:** Voter Registration forms must be delivered in person to the County Board of Elections by Friday, October 12, or postmarked by that date and received by October 17.

5) **Absentee Ballots:** To vote by absentee ballot, voters must apply for a ballot from the county Board of Elections. This may be done in person at the Board of Elections by November 5, or by mail, postmarked Tuesday, October 30. Application forms for absentee ballots are available from the Board of Elections, as well as at Voter Registration tables.

As noted above, students choosing to vote at home must apply to their local county boards for absentee ballots.

6) **Voter Education:** non-partisan information about the candidates and issues is available on-line from the League of Women Voters:

www.411.org.

Special thanks to Liam Hunt,
Voter Services Chair for the
St. Lawrence County Unit, LWV
for this information.