

Chester County Voting in 2021: Frequently Asked Questions MASTER

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Q: How many elections are there this year?

A: There are 2 (two) elections EVERY year

1. The Spring **Primary** election: Democrats and Republicans pick their party's nominees for the General election
2. The November **General** election: All voters pick the winners for each office (SOMETIMES there are additional special elections; for example, if an elected official can't finish serving their term)

Q: When are the elections this year?

A: The Primary election is on Tuesday, May 18, 2021

The **General** election is on **Tuesday, November 2, 2021**

Q: How is the Primary election different than the General election?

A: In the Primary, ONLY Democrats and Republicans can vote for nominees. Each Party has its own ballot. But ALL voters can vote on constitutional amendments, ballot questions, and any special election contests. There are 3 ballot questions in this year's Primary.

Q: WHO can vote in Pennsylvania?

A: You can vote if you are:

1. A citizen of the United States for at least 30 days before election day
2. A resident of Pennsylvania for at least 30 days before election day
3. At least 18 years old on or before election day (you can register when you're 17)
4. Convicted of a misdemeanor, or are a convicted felon who has completed your sentence
5. Registered to vote by the deadline for each election

Q: What are the voter registration deadlines?

A: The DEADLINES to register for this year's elections are:

- By May 3, 2021 for the Primary
- By October 18, 2021 for the General

Q: How do I register to vote?

A: There are two ways to register:

1. Online at www.votespa.com
2. Call Chester County Voter Services 610-344-6410

Q: How do I check to see if I'm registered?

A: Go to www.votespa.com or call Chester County Voter Services 610-344-6410. Your registration may have been purged if you have not voted in the past 5 years. You can register again.

- Q: Can I register and vote if I'm experiencing homelessness?**
- A: Yes!** Use a shelter address where you can get mail as your address. You may also list a street corner or a park instead of a traditional address. The voter registration form has a space for this. Call Voter Services if you need help 610-344-6410
- Q: Will I be called for Jury Duty if I register to vote?**
- A: No.** They're not related in PA.
- Q: I am a College student in PA. Where do I register and vote?**
- A: You can register using the address where you live while at school.** Or you can vote by mail from home (if your home State has mail-in voting). You can only register and vote in one place.
- Q: Will voting endanger undocumented people in my household?**
- A: No.** When you register, you are not asked about anyone in your household. When you vote in person you sign only your name in the poll book, and you are not asked about anyone in your household. When you vote by mail, you only sign your name on the envelope.
- Q: Does voting make any difference in my life?**
- A: YES!!!** Local elections for positions like School Board Director and local and County Judges, make decisions about everyday issues in your life like school safety, special education, free school lunch, suicide prevention, election integrity, protection from abuse, DUIs, child custody, traffic violations, landlord/tenant disputes, and more.
- Q: How do I find out WHO is running for each position, and what their views are on the issues I care about, and which Party they represent?**
- A: First call Chester County Voter Services to see who is running on your ballot** 610-344-6410 Your ADDRESS determines which local Candidates will be running for office in your town. Then Google each Candidate's name to find their website and Facebook page.
- Q: What is Cross Filing?**
- A: When candidates from one Party appear on the ballot of the opposing Party in the Primary.** School Board Director, Common Pleas Judge and District Judge candidates can appear on both Parties' ballots, without their Party indicated. The Primary is when each Party picks their candidates who will appear on the ballot in the General election. Voters are given a ballot with only candidates from their Party, except those who are cross filing.
- Q: Where can I get general information about voting?**
- A: Go to www.votespa.com,** the official PA government website. The official Chester County Voter Services website is www.chesco.org/156/Voter-Services. For information in Spanish or other languages go to www.chesco.org/4735/Spanish
- Q: HOW do I vote?**
- A: You have a choice:** In person on Election day at your local polling place, OR From home, by mail
- Q: Is it safer to vote by mail or in person?**
- A: Both ways are safe and secure.** If personal health is a concern for you during the pandemic, you can use the mail-in ballot and vote from home.

VOTE FROM HOME, BY MAIL

Q: Who is eligible to vote by mail or absentee ballot – and what is the difference?

A: Any registered voter may apply for an absentee ballot or mail-in ballot. The absentee ballot is just for those who aren't physically able to vote in person. In 2020, no excuse MAIL-IN voting became available. Most PA voters now can request a mail-in ballot. The website will direct you to the right ballot.

Q: How do I get a mail-in ballot?

A: First you fill out an application for one. You can do this online at www.votespa.com. Or call Chester County Voter Services to ask for a paper application (available in Spanish and English) 610-344-6410. After you complete your application, a ballot will be mailed to you.

- Deadline to **apply** for a mail-in ballot for the Primary is May 11, 2021
- Deadline to **apply** for a mail in ballot for the General is Oct 26, 2021

Q: Will ballots be available in Spanish?

A: Spanish language applications for a mail-in ballot and the actual mail-in ballot are available. Go to: <https://www.votespa.com/Resources/espanol/Pages/default.aspx>

NOTE: At this time, Chester County does not have Spanish language ballots at the polls.

Q: How do I fill out the mail-in ballot once I receive it?

A: Follow the directions that will be included with your ballot:

- Use a black pen to fill in the oval next to your choices. See sample ballot here: www.chesco.org/2428/Sample-Ballots
- Put your ballot into the plain security envelope and seal it.
- Put the security envelope into the mailing envelope. Date and sign the envelope. Check to see if you need to add postage.
- MAIL IT BACK RIGHT AWAY. Your ballot must be received by 8:00 pm on election day or it won't be counted.
- OR You can also bring it to the Government Services Building at 601 Westtown Road, West Chester *by 8:00 pm on election day*.

Q: Can I get a mail-in ballot if I'm registered as an Independent?

A: Yes. The May Primary mail-in ballot for registered Independents will contain only ballot questions. In the November General election, all registered voters will receive the same ballot listing candidates and ballot questions.

Q: If I make a mistake when marking up my ballot, what do I do?

A: If you accidentally filled in the wrong bubble, or forgot to sign or date the outer envelope, or put the wrong date on the envelope, contact Voter Services for instructions 610-344-6410

Q: Can I change my mind and vote in person?

A: Yes. BUT you must bring your mail-in ballot to your polling place along with both envelopes. You'll turn it in and get a new regular ballot to use. If you threw out your mail-in ballot, you'll get a Provisional ballot to use at the polls, so Voter Services can check if you already voted by mail.

Q: Who can I call if I have questions or need help with my mail-in ballot?

A: Call Chester County Voter Services 610-344-6410

Q: I voted by mail last year. Will I get a mail-in ballot automatically from now on?

A: You should get a letter telling you how to request your mail-in ballot for this year. If you didn't get it yet call Chester County Voter Services 610-344-6410

Q: What if my mail-in ballot doesn't come until very close to Election Day?

A: You can hand in your mail-in ballot until 8:00 pm on Election day to the Government Services Building, 601 Westtown Road, West Chester. You must hand in your own ballot. If you can't, call Chester County Voter Services for instructions 610-344-6410

Q: What if my mail-in ballot doesn't come at all?

A: Go to your polling place on election day and vote in person. You will use a Provisional ballot. Voter Services will check that you didn't already vote by mail before your Provisional ballot is counted.

Q: How do I know my vote counts?

A: You can track your mail-in ballot on <https://www.votespa.com/Resources/Pages/Ballot-Tracker.aspx> **In-person voters** get a numbered receipt. All votes are electronically recorded. If you want reassurance, you can call Voter Services and ask them to confirm your receipt number.

VOTE IN PERSON

Q: Where do I go to vote?

A: Your polling place will be listed on your voter registration card. Or go to www.votespa.com and search "Where's my polling place?"

Q: What can I expect when I go to the polls? What's the procedure?

A: Google <https://www.dosomething.org/us/articles/4-things-to-expect-at-the-polls> Every place is a little different, but this is usually how it goes. Have fun! Be proud!

Q: Can I expect privacy when I vote at the polls?

A: YES. You will be in a large room with workers and other voters waiting to vote. But the actual voting "booth" is private, even from your spouse. No one sees who you voted for.

Q: May I bring my children?

A: Yes, many parents do.

Q: Do I need ID?

A: **ONLY if you are a first-time voter OR are voting in a new precinct.** YOU DO NOT NEED A PHOTO ID. Acceptable forms of ID if needed include a driver's license, US passport, voter registration card, military ID, student ID, employee ID, firearm permit, current utility bill or bank statement, paycheck or government check, or any ID issued by PA or the federal government.

Q: Can I get help completing my ballot at the polls?

A: Yes. You can bring a helper, and ask to speak with a poll worker.

Q: Can I get help at the polls if I don't speak English?

A: Currently, Chester County does not provide language assistance at the polling place, but you can bring someone with you who is not your employer or union representative. The Judge of Elections is not permitted to help with translation.

For more information (in Spanish): <https://www.chesco.org/4735/Spanish>

For Election day problem

1-888-839-8682 (Spanish)

1-888-274-8683 (English, Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Urdu, Hindi, and Bengali)

NOTE: Language translation is an issue everywhere. Perhaps consider working with the State Representative in your community to bring language translation to Chester County and PA.

Q: If I make a mistake when marking up my ballot can I receive a new one?

A: Yes, if you haven't put it into the scanner yet. Just ask for a new ballot.

Q: How can I get to the polling place if I need transportation help?

A: There is no official way, but you can try: Uber or Lyft (both may offer special rates), Rover (must be a subscriber), Voto Latino, local Urban League affiliates, the National Federation of the Blind, Faith in Action, League of Women Voters, the Student Vets of America, or your place of worship. You can also call your State Representative's office to ask about ride services