

ID Requirements to Vote in Tennessee

Voting rights and voting security are prominent issues right now. The League's basic policy position is to protect the right of all citizens to vote and to encourage all citizens to vote. Does the photo ID Requirement impinge on the right of all citizens to vote?

You are registered to vote. You have located your official polling place. You show up on election day. You have attended candidates rallies and studied the ballot. What ID is required in order to vote? In Tennessee each voter must present a federal or Tennessee state issued ID containing the voter's name and photograph*.

The following IDs may be used, even if expired:

- Tennessee driver license with your photo
- United States Passport
- Photo ID issued by the Tennessee Dept. of Safety and Homeland Security
- Photo ID issued by the federal or Tennessee state government
- United States Military photo ID
- Tennessee handgun carry permit with your photo

What IDs are not acceptable?

- College student IDs
- IDs not issued by the federal or TN state governments, such as county or city IDs or library cards

If you are unsure about whether your ID is acceptable, contact the Division of Elections at 1-877-850-4959. Be aware that database errors, misspellings, and other issues may arise at the polling station.

If you do not bring a photo ID with you to vote, you must vote a provisional ballot. You then have (2) business days after Election Day to return to the election commission office and show a valid photo ID.

Continued on page 2

If you don't have a photo ID you can obtain a free photo ID for voting from the Department of Safety and Homeland Security at any *participating* driver service center. (See Department of Safety and Homeland Security's Driver Service Center Locations page on the web.) You may use the "express service" line to minimize wait time. You will need:

- Proof of citizenship such as a birth certificate**
- Two proofs of Tennessee residency such as a utility bill, vehicle registration or title, or bank statement.
- If your name differs from that on your primary proof, proof of the name change, such as a certificate of marriage or divorce, or court order.

The requirement for a government issued photo ID is not a problem for most middle class voters. It disproportionately affects the elderly, minority, and low-income groups who may

not, for example, have transportation to get to a driver service center or may not be able to pay for a birth certificate that can cost \$25 or more.

Proponents of the photo ID requirement say it protects against voter fraud. Opponents of the photo ID requirement point out that instances of in-person voter fraud, whereby someone deliberately uses an ID belonging to someone else when they show up at the polls to vote, are extremely rare. Research indicates that the rate of voter impersonation is about one in 32 million votes, and many of those are the result of error. Furthermore, they note that the ID requirements do eliminate or suppress groups of potential voters. Read more at "Here are Nine Investigations on Voter Fraud that Found Virtually Nothing" *The Washington Post*, January 25, 2017.

* Most of the information in this article was taken from the online page, "[What ID is required when voting: Tennessee Secretary of State.](#)"

** "A voter who is indigent and unable to obtain proof of identification without payment of a fee or who has a religious objection to being photographed shall be required to execute an affidavit of identity on a form provided by the county election commission and then shall be allowed to vote." §2-7-112(f)