

# **SOUTH CAROLINA**

## ELECTION COMMISSION

### **FAQs for the 2026 Statewide Primaries and Runoffs**

**Q. What is a primary?**

A. Primaries are elections that political parties use to select their candidates for a General Election..

**Q. When are the 2026 Statewide Primaries?**

A. June 9.

**Q. What candidates and/or offices are on the ballot?**

A. The candidates and offices on a particular ballot will differ depending on the county and districts in which you reside and the primary in which you're voting (Democratic or Republican). [Find your sample ballot at scVOTES.gov](#) to see the candidates that will appear on your ballot.

**Q. Do I have to be a registered member of a party to participate in the Statewide Primaries?**

A. No, S.C. does not have registration by party. The Statewide Primaries are open to all registered S.C. voters. Poll managers will ask voters, "In which party's primary do you wish to vote today?"

**Q. Can I vote in both primaries?**

A. No. State law prohibits voters from voting in more than one party's primary.

**Q. How is the winner determined in a primary?**

A. A candidate must receive a majority of votes cast for that office to win the primary. In offices with one seat to fill (most offices), majority is determined by dividing the total votes cast for the office by two. Any number of votes in excess of that number is a majority. If no candidate has a majority, then the two candidates remaining with the highest number of votes will appear in a runoff two weeks after the date of the primary (June 23).

**Q. How is the winner determined in a runoff?**

A. The candidate with the highest number of votes wins.

**Q. If I voted in one party's primary, can I vote in the other party's runoff?**

A. No. You cannot change parties between the Primary and the Runoff.

**Q. If I didn't vote in either primary, can I vote in a runoff?**

A. If you do not vote in the initial primary election, you may still vote in the runoff election.

**Q. When do I need to register to vote?**

A. The voter registration deadline for the Statewide Primaries is Sunday, May 10. By-mail applications will be accepted if postmarked by Monday, May 11.

Don't wait until the deadline, it only takes a couple of minutes to register to vote! [Register now.](#)

**Q. I've moved since the last time I voted and I haven't updated my voter registration. Can I still vote?**

A. If you moved to...

1. ... another residence within your precinct, you can update your address at your polling place and vote a regular ballot.
2. ... a different precinct within your county, you are eligible vote Failsafe (see below).
3. ...another residence in another county within 30 days of the election, you are eligible to vote Failsafe (see below).

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# **SOUTH CAROLINA**

## ELECTION COMMISSION

4. ...another residence in another county prior to the May 10 registration deadline, you are not eligible to vote. State law requires you to be registered prior to the deadline to be eligible to vote.
5. ...South Carolina after the May 10 registration deadline, you are not eligible to vote. State law requires you to be registered prior to the deadline to be eligible to vote.

### Two Options for Voting Failsafe:

1. Vote at the polling place in your previous precinct using a failsafe provisional ballot. A failsafe provisional ballot contains only federal, statewide, countywide, and municipality-wide offices.
2. Go to the voter registration office in the county in which you currently reside, change your address, and vote a regular ballot there.

### **Q. What do I need to take with me to vote?**

- A. At your polling place, you will be asked to show one of the following Photo IDs:
- S.C. Driver's license
  - Temporary Identification Certificate issued by the S.C. Department of Motor Vehicles
  - ID card issued by the S.C. Department of Motor Vehicles
  - S.C. Voter Registration Card with Photo
  - S.C. Concealed Weapons Permit
  - Federal Military ID
  - US Passport

### **Q. What if I don't have one of these Photo IDs?**

- A. If you do not have one of these photo IDs, you can make your voting experience as fast and easy as possible by getting one before Election Day. If you are already registered to vote, you can go to your county voter registration and elections office, provide your date of birth and the last four digits of your Social Security Number, and have your photo taken. You can do this even on Election Day. Free DMV ID Cards are also available from the Department of Motor Vehicles.

If you cannot get a photo ID, bring your non-photo voter registration card with you to the polling place. You can contact your county voter registration office if you need to replace your non-photo voter registration card. You may vote a provisional ballot after signing an affidavit stating you have a reasonable impediment to obtaining a photo ID. A reasonable impediment is any valid reason, beyond your control, which created an obstacle obtaining a photo ID. Some examples include: a disability or illness, a conflict with your work schedule, a lack of transportation, a lack of a birth certificate, family responsibilities, a religious objection to being photographed, and any other obstacle you find reasonable. This ballot will count unless someone proves to the county board of voter registration and elections that you are lying about your identity or having the listed impediment.

To vote under the reasonable impediment exception:

1. Inform the poll managers that you do not have a photo ID and could not get one.
2. Present your current, non-photo registration card.
3. Sign the affidavit provided by the poll managers stating why you could not obtain a photo ID.
4. Cast a provisional ballot that will be counted unless the county board of voter registration and elections has reason to believe your affidavit is false.

### **Q. What happens if I forget to bring my Photo ID when voting in person?**

- A. If you forget to bring your photo ID to your polling place, you may vote a provisional ballot that will count only if you show your photo ID to your county board of voter registration and elections office prior to certification of the election. Results are certified on the Thursday after each primary.

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# **SOUTH CAROLINA**

## ELECTION COMMISSION

**Q. I've lost my non-photo voter registration card. Can I still vote?**

A. Yes. Voters may also vote with their Driver's License, DMV issued ID card, Temporary Identification Certificate issued by DMV, Federal Military ID, Concealed Weapons Permit or U.S. passport. Voters may also get a replacement photo voter registration card from their county voter registration and elections office, even on Election Day.

**Q. How and where can I vote early in person?**

A. Visit an early voting center in your county during the early voting period and vote in person like you would at your polling place on Election Day. Remember to bring your photo ID when checking in to vote.

Early Voting Period for the Statewide Primaries

- Tuesday, May 26 – Friday, June 5. (*Closed weekends and state holidays.*)
- 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Early Voting Period for the Statewide Runoffs

- Wednesday, June 17 – Thursday, June 18. (*Per state law, closed on legal holidays.*)
- 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Visit the [early voting page on scVOTES.gov](#) to see a list of locations for early voting centers in your county.

**Q. Who can vote absentee?**

A. State law allows voters with qualifying reasons to vote absentee by mail:

- Persons with employment obligations which prevent them from voting during early voting hours for the duration of the early voting period, and during the hours the polls are open on Election Day.
- Persons attending a sick or physically disabled person which prevents them from voting during early voting hours for the duration of the early voting period, and during the hours the polls are open on Election Day.
- Persons confined to a jail or pretrial facility pending disposition of arrest or trial which prevents them from voting during early voting hours for the duration of the early voting period, and during the hours the polls are open on Election Day.
- Persons who will be absent from their county of residence during early voting hours for the duration of the early voting period, and during the hours the polls are open on Election Day.
- Persons with physical disabilities.
- Persons sixty-five years of age or older.
- Members of the Armed Forces and Merchant Marines of the United States, their spouses, and dependents residing with them.
- Persons admitted to a hospital as an emergency patient on Election Day or within a four-day period before the election.

**Q. How can I vote absentee?**

A. Voters must apply for an absentee ballot by completing and returning an absentee application to their county voter registration and elections office by 5:00 p.m. on May 29. Visit our [absentee voting page](#) to learn more.

**Q. It's almost Election Day and I still have my absentee ballot. What should I do?**

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# **SOUTH CAROLINA**

## ELECTION COMMISSION

- A. You can return your absentee ballot to your county voter registration and elections office by mail or personal delivery by 7:00 p.m. on Election Day (or an early voting center during the early voting period).
- Ballots returned by mail should be mailed no later than one week prior to election day to help ensure timely delivery.
  - If you still have your ballot within a week prior to election day, consider returning the ballot in person.
  - You may also vote a provisional ballot in person that will count as long as your absentee ballot is not returned before the polls close on election day.
  - Visit the [absentee voting page](#) to see photo ID requirements for returning a ballot in person and to learn how Immediate Family Members and Authorized Representatives can return another voter's ballot.

**Q. I'm not voting early. Where do I vote on Election Day?**

- A. At the polling place in your precinct.

Visit [scVOTES.gov](#) and select "[Find My Polling Place](#)" under [MySCVotes](#) or check with your county voter and elections registration office.

Your precinct and polling place are also listed on your voter registration card; however, it is possible your polling place may have changed since the card was issued. **Always check your polling place at [scVOTES.gov](#) before leaving to vote.**

**Q. What hours will the polls be open on Election Day?**

- A. Polling places are open 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Anyone in line at 7:00 p.m. will be allowed to vote.

**Q. When and where will results be reported?**

- A. Unofficial results will be reported by the SEC on election night at [scVOTES.gov](#). Results are reported in real time as we receive them from each county board of voter registration and elections. Results may also be reported locally by the county board.

On Thursday following each Primary, county election boards determine which provisional ballots to count, and those votes are added to the totals. The SEC meets later on Thursday to certify the results at which time the results become official.

**Q. I received my Runoff absentee ballot in the mail. Why are some offices and candidates marked out?**

- A. This is common practice and nothing to be alarmed about. Because of the short time frame between the Primary and Runoff and the time it takes for ballots to be delivered by mail, recreating and reprinting Runoff absentee ballots is not an option in most cases. Candidates that did not make the Runoff, as well as offices for which the nominees have been decided, are marked through. Any votes for offices or candidates that are marked through will not be counted.

**Q. Are there any laws about candidates posting their signs along the roadway?**

- A. Yes, there are several state laws addressing political signs on roadways, as well as county and municipal ordinances. See S.C. Code of Laws Sections 57-25-10, 57-25-140, and 7-25-210. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the entity that maintains the road (state, county, or municipality) to enforce applicable sign laws.

**Q. Can candidates or their representatives take people to the polls to vote?**

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# **SOUTH CAROLINA**

## ELECTION COMMISSION

- A. Yes. It is permissible for any person, even a candidate, to give a voter a ride as long as it is being done solely to help facilitate voting. However, no one can offer a voter anything of value in exchange for voting.
- Q. I saw a candidate/member of candidate's campaign at my polling place talking to voters. Can they do that?**
- A. Yes, but there are restrictions:  
Inside the polling place: No campaigning is allowed. Candidates may be inside the polling place and talk to voters as long as they are not campaigning, intimidating voters, or interfering with the election process.  
Within 500 feet of an entrance to a polling place: Candidates and campaign staff may campaign as long as they are not intimidating voters or interfering with the election process. However, no campaign literature, signs, or posters are allowed. Candidates are allowed to wear a badge no larger than 4.25" x 4.25" featuring only the candidate's name and office sought. Candidates must remove their badge upon entering a polling place.
- Q. A candidate is definitely campaigning while in the polling place, or there is campaign literature within 500 feet of the entrance. What can I do?**
- A. Inform the poll clerk immediately. If the issue is not resolved, contact the county board of voter registration and elections. The county board will address the complaint.
- Q. Can I take my child with me to vote?**
- A. Yes. Minor children (under age 18) of a voter may accompany the voter in the voting booth.
- Q. When I left the polls, I was asked to participate in an "exit poll." Is this legal?**
- A. Exit polls are legal and participation is voluntary. They are NOT conducted by the State Election Commission or the county boards of voter registration and election offices. Generally, polls may not be conducted inside the polling place, and we ask that voters not be approached before they have voted. If a voter feels threatened or intimidated by a pollster, it should be reported immediately to the precinct's poll clerk.
- Q. Where should I file a complaint about the election?**
- A. It's best to notify your county voter registration and elections office as soon as possible. To send a complaint to the SEC, visit the contact page on [scVOTES.gov](http://scVOTES.gov). Complaints regarding voting and elections should be addressed to your county board of voter registration and elections office.

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