

VOTER ELIGIBILITY and U.S. CITIZENSHIP

REQUIREMENTS TO VOTE IN EVERY STATE:

You must be:

- A U.S. citizen,
- Who meets your state's residency requirements, and
- Will be at least 18 years old on Election Day.

You must also meet state-specific requirements, such as no felony convictions or incapacity.

HOW THE STATES ENSURE VOTERS ARE U.S. CITIZENS:


Eligible citizens must provide personal information to register to vote and proof of identity or residency before voting. Safeguards are in place to uphold the integrity of the electoral process and ensure that only eligible voters participate in elections such as:


- Proof of citizenship requirements
- Voter list audits to ensure accuracy, and
- Polling place verification processes


Noncitizens are prohibited from voting in any federal or state election, and have been for nearly a century.

Nonetheless, so far this year, state legislators have introduced or taken action on 30 bills related to noncitizen voting.

– *Ballotpedia*

 **FACT:** All states require you to be a United States citizen by birth or naturalization to register to vote in federal and state elections.

 **FACT:** Federal law makes it illegal to falsely claim U.S. citizenship to register to vote in any federal, state or local election. False claims are punishable by prison time, a hefty fine and deportation.

 **FACT:** It is a federal crime for noncitizens to vote in federal elections, and it's a crime in every state for noncitizens to vote in state elections.

Attempts at noncitizen voting are extremely rare. States have multiple systems in place to deter noncitizen voting. Those who attempt it face prison time, deportation and derailing their path to naturalized citizenship.

Voter registration protections include:

- Voter registration systems designed to prevent anyone who is not a U.S. citizen from registering
- Signed citizen affidavit requirement
- Citizenship question when interacting with motor vehicles
- Social security or driver's license number requirement in some states
- Procedures for the immediate removal of ineligible voters from the voter registration list, if a mistake is made

Federal law requires election officials to keep voter lists accurate and updated. This includes identifying any potential mistakes and correcting them. Election officials routinely update voter lists using official data from sources, such as:

- U.S. Postal Service's National Change of Address database
- Electronic Registration Information Center reports identifying inaccurate or out-of-date voter registration records
- Online immigration status verification service run by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
- Court records, prison system data and jury lists
- Credit reporting agencies
- Social Security Death Index
- State vital record data
- Department of Motor Vehicles data

*Out of **23.5 million** votes, there were **30** incidents of suspected noncitizen voting referred for investigation.*

*That is **0.0001%** of votes cast.*

– 2016 election, [Brennan Center Study](#)

There is a final safety net in place to ensure voter eligibility. Most states permit eligible voters, elections officials or poll watchers to challenge the eligibility of another registered voter in their jurisdiction.

- Challengers must complete a form and sign an affidavit.
- Citizen participation is part of a functioning democracy, and evidence-based registration challenges help ensure that only eligible voters cast ballots.

ADDITIONAL READING: [You didn't always have to be a citizen to vote in America](#)
The Washington Post