

Voting Matters: Voting Rights and Registration

October 11th , 2022



Urban League of
Metropolitan Seattle

Quick Background on the Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness

- Nonprofit, 501(c)3 organization (i.e., nonpartisan voter registration work)
- **Mission:** We mobilize our community to challenge systemic causes of homelessness and advocate for housing justice.
- **Voter registration work**
 - Key part of our racial equity work
 - Helps us build political power, which is required for systemic change
 - Ensures that people experiencing homelessness have their voice heard



Urban League

- **Mission:** The Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle empowers African Americans, as well as other diverse underserved communities, to thrive by securing educational and economic opportunities
- Nonprofit, 501(c)3 organization (i.e., nonpartisan voter registration work)
- 5 focus areas: Housing, Workforce Development, Education, Public Health, and Advocacy & Community Engagement.



Goals for this presentation

- Give you some background on the Coalition on Homelessness and the Urban League
- Discussion on the intersections of trauma, racism, homelessness, and voter suppression
- Discussion on what it means to be a voter and the importance of voting.
- Review of voter eligibility, how to register, and the election cycle
- Educate voters about where to find reliable information
- Answer questions and help people register to vote

*****Talking about trauma and racism can be hard and even triggering for some folks, so please take care of yourself*****

Voting Rights- Why it Matters*

When we talk about voting rights, we are talking about two things;

- First the constitutional definition of who is eligible to vote and
- Second, the ability of every voter to *exercise* their right to vote and cast a counted vote.

In both cases, voting rights have changed over time and continue to evolve! Voting rights are not just an issue settled in the past or in the courts, they are being fought for today, and by people like you.

* Thanks to the Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle for this slide*

Historical and Community Trauma

- The impact of powerful societal events, circumstances or oppression that includes lasting effects on one's world view, their emotions, and thinking (fear of authority, mistrust of policy) and carries from one generation to another.
- Is experienced by entire communities and can leave emotional and psychological wounds that are carried across generations. Examples include genocide, slavery, forced relocation, destruction of cultural practices

Thanks to Yoga Behind Bars

Intersections of trauma, racism, homelessness, and voter suppression

- Voter disenfranchisement and social disenfranchisement are intertwined.
 - As are homelessness and racism
 - Racism and trauma
 - Trauma and homelessness
 - We can't talk about any of these issues in isolation from each other
- BIPOC disproportionately experience homelessness in the U.S.
- Voter suppression targets BIPOC communities



Healing Through Connection

- Trauma can disrupt our connection with people.
- Yet we thrive when supported by nurturing people and we never outgrow our need for positive human contact.
- Everyone needs and wants to be seen, heard and understood.
- Trauma can leave a person with feeling a loss of control over their lives.
- Voting is a way to reconnect with our community, have some control, and engage in meaningful activity - all healing activities

To Vote or Not to Vote, that is the question?

- **Why does voting matter to YOU?**
- **What does it mean to be a VOTER?**
- **When you think about VOTING, what comes to mind?**

Why Your Vote Matters

- In 2000, Al Gore narrowly lost the Electoral College vote to George W. Bush. The election came down to a recount in Florida, where Bush had won the popular vote by such a small margin that it triggered an automatic recount and a Supreme Court case (*Bush v. Gore*).
- In the end, Bush won Florida by 0.009 percent of the votes cast in the state, or 537 votes. Had 600 more pro-Gore voters gone to the polls in Florida that November, there may have been an entirely different president from 2000–2008.

Why Your Vote Matters

- There are also local and state elections to consider. While presidential or other national elections usually get a significant voter turnout, local elections are typically decided by a much smaller group of voters.
 - A Portland State University study found that fewer than 15 percent of eligible voters were turning out to vote for mayors, council members, and other local offices. Low turnout means that important local issues are determined by a limited group of voters, making a single vote even more statistically meaningful.
- An NPR article from 2018 lists 20 elections in the past 20 years that were decided by a very small number of votes.
 - <https://www.npr.org/2018/11/03/663709392/why-every-vote-matters-the-elections-decided-by-a-single-vote-or-a-little-more>



Discussion: breaking down barriers

What are some barriers to getting registered to vote or for casting your ballot?

- Misinformation
- Lack of access to resources
- Lack of access to culturally-appropriate or in-language materials
 - Internalized ideas that their voice does not matter
 - Mistrust with institutions



Discussion: breaking down barriers

What would you need to make voting easier or more accessible to you?

Ways to register in Washington

- **Online:** <https://olvr.votewa.gov/>
 - Requires valid WA ID or Driver's License
 - Deadline: 8 days before election date
- **By mail:** Paper voter registration forms
 - Does not require valid WA ID or Driver's License; can use last 4 digits of SSN
 - Deadline: must be received 8 days before election date
- **In person:**
 - King County Elections Office – Opens 20 days before Election Day
 - Vote Centers – typically open the weekend before Election Day

WA State Eligibility Requirements

NOTE: If they cannot say yes to each of these questions, DO NOT proceed with the form.

- ✓ Be a U.S. Citizen – having a green card or permanent residency status is not citizenship.
- ✓ Have lived in WA for 30 days before the election
- ✓ At least 18 yrs. old by the day of election in which they first vote
 - If 16 yrs. old, a U.S. Citizen and WA resident they can complete registration form and will automatically be registered to vote on their 18th birthday.
 - New in 2022- a voter who turns 18 between the August Primary and the November General Election can vote in the primary.
- ✓ Not disqualified due to a court order declaring someone mentally incompetent to vote
 - Only a Superior Court judge can declare someone as mentally incompetent to vote, not just any court order
- ✓ Not under total confinement for a WA felony conviction.
 - A person's right to vote is restored once they are released from the Department of Corrections (DOC) and they are eligible to re-register to vote.

Address Confidentiality

- **Voter registration information that is public:**
 - Name
 - Address
 - Gender
 - Date of Birth
- If you are concerned about your safety, you can participate in the **Address Confidentiality Program (ACP)** by going to <https://www.sos.wa.gov/acp/>.
- Participants in the ACP should not register to vote online but can register to vote in person at their local election's office.
- If you are under 18 when you register to vote, your information will not be public until you are eligible to vote.

Alternate forms of ID

- **Valid photo ID, such as a passport or military ID.**
 - **Valid tribal ID of a federally recognized Indian tribe in Washington State**
 - **Copy of a current utility bill**
 - **Current bank statement**
 - **Copy of a current government check**
 - **Copy of a current paycheck**
 - **A government document that shows both your name and address**
-
- **Elections will mail them a letter explaining the steps you need to take to submit ID and contact you via the phone or email on your form.**

Filling Out A Voter Registration Form

Note & Tips

- Good Human System for voter verification
 - Really try to county your vote!
- King County Elections 206-296-VOTE (8683) has interpreters and direct voter support to answer all your questions
- If phone or email include for any questions
- Legibility is important
- You can complete the form for someone, but **they must sign it**

Remember
 • Voter ID card will come in the mail in 4-6 weeks, call 206-296-8683 if it doesn't
 • VOTER ID card is a government issued ID - can help folks.

Voting
 You will receive your ballot in the mail. Contact your county elections office for accessible voting options.

Public Information
 Your name, address, gender, and date of birth will be public information.

Notice
 Knowingly providing false information about yourself or your qualifications for voter registration is a class C felony punishable by imprisonment for up to 5 years, a fine of up to \$10,000, or both.

Public Benefits Offices
 If you received this form from a public benefits office, where you received the form will remain confidential and will be used for voter registration purposes only.

Registering or declining to register will not affect the assistance provided to you by any public benefits office. If you decline to register, your decision will remain confidential.

If you believe someone interfered with your right to register, or your right to privacy in deciding whether to register, you may file a complaint with the Washington State Elections Division.

Contact Information
 If you would like help with this form, contact the Washington State Elections Division.

web www.vote.wa.gov
call (800) 448-4881
email elections@sos.wa.gov
mail PO Box 40229
 Olympia, WA 98504-0229

KEEP AS NEAT AS POSSIBLE!
 Yes, you can help fill out form for people.

- Sample -

Washington State Voter Registration Form

Register online at www.myvote.wa.gov. **Required**

1 Personal Information

last first middle suffix
 date of birth (mm/dd/yyyy) (optional) gender
 residential address in Washington apt #
 address. Must be identifiable on map to city ZIP determine mailing address, if different → ask if someone gets mail @ listed precinct.
 city state and ZIP
 phone number (optional) email address (optional) not public info

2 Qualifications

If you answer no, do not complete this form. **MUST Fill OUT!**
 yes no I am a citizen of the United States of America.
 yes no I will be at least 18 years old by the next election.

3 Military / Overseas Status

yes no I am currently serving in the military. Includes National Guard and Reserves, and spouses or dependents away from home due to service. **Likely won't apply**
 yes no I live outside the United States.

4 Identification — Washington Driver License, Permit, or ID

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ **← OR**
 If you do not have a Washington driver license, permit, or ID, you may use the last four digits of your Social Security number to register. * * * * *

5 Change of Name or Address

This information will be used to update your current registration, if applicable. **Any old info is helpful; Doesn't have to be complete**
 former last name first middle
 former residential address city state and ZIP

6 Declaration

I declare that the facts on this voter registration form are true. I am a citizen of the United States, I will have lived at this address in Washington for at least thirty days immediately before the next election at which I vote, I will be at least 18 years old when I vote, I am not disqualified from voting due to a court order, and I am not under Department of Corrections supervision for a Washington felony conviction.

sign here **LEGAL SIGNATURE** date here Today's Date
 Sign the same way you would sign any other important document - If it is different elections staff may call/mail to verify.

* Form must be turned in to elections in 5 days

Key dates/activities

Key registration/voting info	August 3 Primary Election	November 2 General Election
Voter Pamphlets mailed	July 12	October 18
Ballots mailed	July 13	October 19
Online/Mail-in Registration deadline	July 25	October 31
In-Person Registration possible	July 13 - August 2	October 19 – November 8
Deadline to turn in ballot	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mail: postmarked by 5 p.m. on 8/2• Ballot drop box or vote center: 8 p.m. on 8/2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mail: postmarked by 5 p.m. on 11/8• Ballot drop box or vote center: 8 p.m. on 11/8

Other information to know

- **Updating voter registration if someone has moved, changed name, etc.:**
 - **Online:** <https://voter.votewa.gov/WhereToVote.aspx>. Requires current WA ID/License
 - **Phone:** Call King County Elections at 206-296-VOTE (8683)
 - **Mail:** Fill out a voter registration form & fill out the section with previous information
- **How do you know you have successfully registered to vote?**
 - Look out for your **VOTER ID card** at your mailing address!
 - Form of government ID
 - You do not need to bring your card to vote
 - Has your public voter registration information and voting districts
 - You can view and your personal voter information at VoteWA.gov

Vote by Mail in Washington State

- Voter registration is one step; **turning in your ballot on time is key!**
- Ballots are mailed out 20 days before Election Day;
 - If someone is registered but hasn't received it by 15 days before election, encourage people to **call King County Elections at 206-296-VOTE (8683)**
- People can also get replacement ballots at in-person Vote Centers or online.
- **Deadlines:**
 - **Mail in:** Ballots must be postmarked by 5 p.m. on date of election
 - **In person:** turned into a ballot drop box or vote center by 8 p.m. on date of election

Vote by Mail in Washington State

- Remove and recycle the stub at the top of the ballot.
- Sign the declaration on the back of the return envelope.
- Do not put multiple ballots in one envelope.
- You don't need a stamp to return your ballot
 - You can drop it in the mail or one the many ballot drop boxes across the county (<https://kingcounty.gov/depts/elections/how-to-vote/ballots/returning-my-ballot/ballot-drop-boxes.aspx>)



Questions?

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Sources

- WA Secretary of State website - <https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/>
- King County Office of Elections - <https://kingcounty.gov/depts/elections.aspx>
- Yoga Behind Bars - <https://www.yogabehindbars.org/>
- <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/why-voting-important>
- <https://www.npr.org/2018/11/03/663709392/why-every-vote-matters-the-elections-decided-by-a-single-vote-or-a-little-more>