Chapter 3: Voter Registration and State IDs

Voter registration

You must be registered to vote to participate in local, state and federal elections. Eligible residents may register at any Secretary of State office. You also may register to vote by mail or at your city, township or county clerk’s office.

To register to vote you must be:

• A U.S. citizen.

• At least 18 years old on or before election day.

• A resident of Michigan and the city or township where you wish to register to vote.

When you register to vote in person, state law requires you to show picture ID or sign an affidavit attesting that you are not in possession of picture ID. You must register at least 30 days before the election.

If you are applying for, renewing or updating information on your driver’s license or state ID card, you will be provided with an opportunity to register to vote. To register, fill out the voter registration form and send it with your driver’s license or state ID renewal form.

Michigan’s mail-in voter registration form also may be printed from the Secretary of State website.

First-time voters who register by mail must vote in person in their first election, unless they hand-deliver the application to their local clerk, are 60 years old or older, are disabled or are eligible to vote under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act.

Registered voters: If you are already registered and your address has not changed, you do not need to mail in the voter registration form supplied with your driver’s license or state ID renewal notice.

If the address on your voter registration application does not match the residential address on file with the Secretary of State, your driver’s license or state ID card will be updated to match your voter registration.

Did you know that . . . ?

• In 1965, Michigan added the motorist’s photograph to the driver’s license.

• In 1975, Michigan became the first state in the nation to combine driver licensing and voter registration as part of the same service, known as “Motor Voter.”
register to vote in that jurisdiction to remain eligible to vote.

If you move out of state, please inform your city, township or county clerk in writing that you are moving and to cancel your voter registration.

State identification cards

Under Michigan law, a state identification card is as valid as a driver’s license for identification purposes. A state ID card can be issued to any eligible resident, regardless of age. You may not have both a state ID card and a Michigan driver’s license unless your license has been restricted, suspended or revoked.

You will need to provide proof of your citizenship or legal presence, identity, residency and Social Security number (or present a letter of ineligibility from the Social Security Administration. Letters more than 30 days old will not be accepted). More information about the documents required for obtaining a state ID card is available in Chapter 1 and on the Secretary of State website at www.michigan.gov/sos.

Your state ID card expires four years from your last birthday and may be renewed by mail. Applicants presenting temporary legal presence documents may be issued a state ID card that expires in less than four years.

Free ID cards are provided to those who are legally blind, drivers 65 or older who voluntarily relinquish their driver’s license, and drivers whose driving privilege is suspended, revoked or denied due to a physical or mental disability.

State ID cards and REAL ID

Beginning Oct. 1, 2020, Michigan residents boarding a plane for domestic travel in the United States or entering certain federal facilities, military bases and nuclear power plants must present a REAL ID-compliant document. Some examples include driver’s licenses and IDs issued by states that have met the federal REAL ID standards, valid U.S. passports and passport cards. The Transportation Security Administration has a list of acceptable documents on its website at www.tsa.gov.

Michigan issues state ID cards that are REAL ID compliant. These cards have a star in a gold circle printed in the upper right-hand corner. Enhanced state ID cards that do not have a star on them are REAL ID compliant and will be printed with a star when renewed or replaced.

Applying for a REAL ID-compliant ID card is optional. Not everyone will need one. For example, minors (children under age 18) do not need a REAL ID-compliant document when flying with a companion in the United States.

You also may decide not to apply for a REAL ID-compliant ID card if you:

- Do not fly and do not plan to enter certain federal facilities, military bases and nuclear power plants.
- Have an acceptable alternative to a state-issued REAL ID-compliant ID card, such as a valid U.S. passport.

If the convenience of having a REAL ID-compliant state ID card is appealing, you may apply for one at any time. If you choose not to get a REAL ID-compliant card, your standard state ID will have “Not for Federal Identification” printed on it, but it remains valid as identification for cashing checks, purchasing age-restricted items and entering casinos.