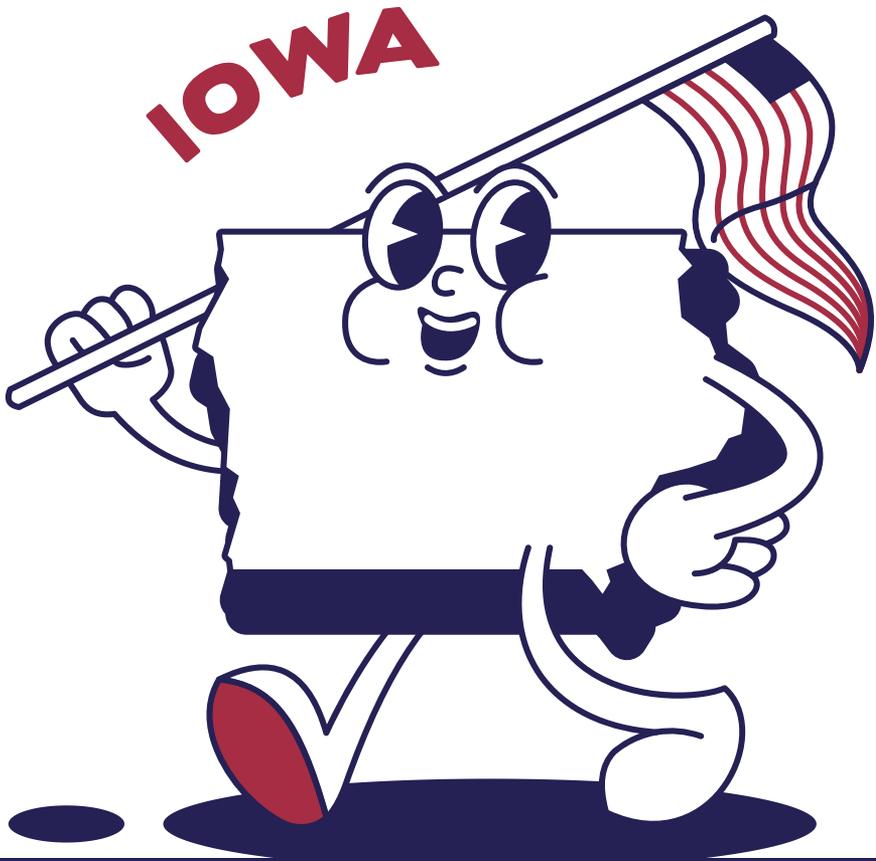




# READY, SET, VOTE 250! GUIDE

Prepared by  
The Iowa Secretary of State  
for Iowa America 250

AMERICA  IA



[VOTERREADY.IOWA.GOV](http://VOTERREADY.IOWA.GOV)



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# Ready, Set, Vote 250!

Welcome to the Iowa Secretary of State's America 250 Ready, Set, Vote 250 Guide, designed to assist you in conducting voter registration drives across Iowa. During the Iowa America 250 event, the goal is to have 250 or more voter registration drives across the state of Iowa, enhancing voter participation and creating history together.

This guide provides recommendations and best practices to facilitate the voter registration process effectively. Our office is committed to assisting you with any questions or concerns that arise along the way. Additionally, we encourage you to consult your local County Auditor for specific guidance for your community.

Together, we can shape history, make a difference, and celebrate the democratic process that our country was founded on. Join us in celebrating our nation's 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary!





# What is America 250?

America 250 is a national, nonpartisan program commemorating the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States, the adoption of the Declaration of Independence, and the efforts of the Revolutionary War. Across the country, states are planning events to mark this historic milestone, and Iowa is no different.

Iowa America 250 is a statewide committee that establishes programming throughout the celebration period for Iowans to honor the America 250 milestone. The committee includes state agencies, private businesses, non-profits, museums, and libraries. If you are interested in learning more about Iowa's other programming or what is happening on the national level, follow the QR codes below.



**IOWA AMERICA 250**



**AMERICA 250**





# How to Participate

- **Step 1: Getting Started**

- Interested groups, organizations, and communities must complete and submit a participation form to the Iowa Secretary of State's Office. Either follow the hyperlink: <https://forms.office.com/g/XcVTyUmEgv> or scan the QR code to register.



- **Step 2: Award Notification**

- The Secretary of State's Office will review submissions and confirm that the registration event has occurred.
- Participating organizations will receive a certificate of recognition.

By participating in Iowa's **Vote 250** registration drive initiative, your organization will play a critical role in building a better democracy! Together, we can increase voter education and engagement.



# Program Goals & Registration Eligibility

## PROGRAM GOALS

- Increasing voter registration: Partner with new and existing groups to reach new voters.
- Engage communities: Provide resources, guidance, and support to communities so they have the resources necessary to register to vote and participate in elections.
- Strengthen democracy: Support Iowa's democratic process and celebrate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of America's founding.

## REGISTRATION ELIGIBILITY

Registering to vote is a legal requirement to vote in elections in Iowa.

To qualify to register to vote in the state of Iowa, you must be:

- At least 17 years old.
- A United States citizen.
- An Iowa resident.

You cannot:

- Be a convicted felon (unless your voting rights have been restored by the Governor, including through Executive Order).
- Be adjudged mentally incompetent to vote by a court of law.
- Claim the right to vote in any other place.





# Event Planning

- **Create an Action Plan**
  - Will you have Wi-Fi? Where and when will you host your drive?
- **Set Goals**
  - What is your goal for this drive? (ex. *register x number of voters*)
- **Choose Location Wisely**
  - Focus on places with heavy foot traffic (e.g., *campuses, transit areas, local events*)
- **Compile your Materials**
  - Every voter registration drive will look a little different, but here are some materials you may want to include in your drive:
    - Online registration tool – phone, tablet, computer/charger
    - Online voter registration website at <https://devmymvd.iowadot.gov/Account/Login?ReturnUrl=%2fVoterRegistration>
    - Table and chairs, shade if outdoors (umbrella or tent), and a way to play music (**MAKE IT A PARTY!**)
    - Physical voter registration forms (physical forms can be printed off at <https://sos.iowa.gov/elections/pdf/voteapp.pdf>)
    - Stickers, pens, and Vote 250 swag
- **Publicize your Event**
  - Get the word out about your drive!
    - Utilize the tools and networks you use every day to help spread the word.
- **Train your Team**
  - Designate a training event before your drive and ensure your team is confident!
  - Utilize the voter registration checklist that was included in the Vote 250 kit.



# Event Staffer Training

Training is key to the success of your voter registration event. Here's how to prepare and ensure your volunteers are equipped to register voters effectively:

## Materials needed for Training

- Clipboards with:
  - A script to follow
  - Contact information for whom to call with questions
  - Blank voter registration forms
  - Pens
  - A "Register to Vote" sign taped to the back of each clipboard
- **Training should be fun, informative, quick, and engaging**
  - Keep it short
  - Allow time for questions
  - Ensure everyone has the opportunity to practice with role-play
  - Give compliments and encouraging comments
  - Be positive





# Training Topics

- **To qualify to register to vote, you must be**
  - A U.S. citizen
  - Be an Iowa resident
  - At least 17 years old **\*\*\***(A person may vote if they will be 18 years old on or before Election Day.\*\*\*)
- **A person cannot register to vote if they**
  - Are a convicted felon (unless their voting rights have been restored, see page 6 for further information)
  - Are adjudged mentally incompetent to vote by a court of law, or
  - Claim the right to vote in any other place.
- **How to fill out a voter registration form**
  - Explain the required fields on the form
  - Point out common mistakes (e.g., forgetting to sign the form or missing the check boxes at the top)
- **Remain nonpartisan**
  - Remind volunteers that their job is to help register people, not promote a candidate or political party
- **Where to submit the completed forms**
  - Make sure that volunteers know where to turn in completed registration forms (e.g., local county auditor's office)
- **Scripts and role-playing**
  - Provide a sample script for volunteers to practice with each other
  - Practice asking people to register in a friendly, approachable way
- **Q&A session**
  - Address questions and concerns volunteers may have before heading to the event



# During the Event

- **Set Up Your Spot**
  - Set up your voter registration station in a clear, accessible location.
- **Use Social Media**
  - Take photos and videos to promote your event (be sure to avoid taking photos containing sensitive information such as IDs and voter registration forms).
- **Be Proactive, Stand Up, and Engage with People**
- **Stay Nonpartisan**
  - An important best practice is to stay nonpartisan during your drive. Register anyone who wants to vote, regardless of their political standing. Train your event staffers not to discuss politics or endorse one particular candidate.
- **Handle All Voter Registration Forms with Care**
  - These forms contain sensitive material and should NOT be shared.
    - If you are not registering online, a best practice is to keep a secure lockbox where you can place all finished voter registration forms. Those receiving completed voter registration forms must deliver them to the County Auditor within seven days of receiving the form.
- **When In Doubt – Ask A Trusted Source**
  - If you have questions about registration, contact your local County Auditor or the Iowa Secretary of State’s Office.



# Event Components

- **Event Staffers:**

- Arrival Time: Have volunteers or staff arrive early to ensure enough time for training before the event starts. Factor in a buffer for late arrivals.
- Sign-in Sheet: Have a sign-in sheet to track volunteers.

- **How to ask someone to register to vote:**

- Avoid asking, "Are you registered to vote?" Instead, use more effective questions like:
  - "Did you know that you need to update your voter registration every time you move? Let's check your registration to make sure it is up to date."
  - "Our community needs more voters. Can you help out by updating your registration today?"
  - "The deadline for voter registration is coming soon. Do you have 2 minutes to make sure you're registered?"

These approaches are more engaging and highlight the importance of staying current with voter registration.





# After Your Event

- **Thank your event staffers**
  - Debrief and celebrate the work done, and end on a high note!
  - No matter how many new registrations your drive received, know that because of your hard work, new people can vote.
- **Turn in your forms**
  - It is encouraged to turn in all collected voter registration forms within 72 hours of your event to your local County Auditor for best practice. However, forms must be submitted within seven days. Make sure that the volunteers know where and when to submit completed registration forms as they need to be submitted in a timely manner to be counted in the next election.
- **Plan your next drive!**





# FAQs

- **Do I have to re-register to vote before each election?**
  - No, you do have to re-register before each election. However, if you have moved or changed your name since the last election, you will need to update your voter registration.
- **How do I determine my residence for voter registration purposes?**
  - A residence for voting purposes is where the voter's home is located. A business or any other non-residential property cannot be used for voter registration.
  - The voter can only declare residence for voter registration purposes. There is no restriction on how long a voter has to live somewhere before it can be considered a voter's residence for voting purposes. If you are unhoused, you can describe the location of where you most often sleep for the purposes of the voter registration form.
- **I regularly spend time at a vacation home or am attending college away from home. Can I still vote in Iowa?**
  - Yes! Iowans who are temporarily away from their homes do not lose residency for voting purposes. As long as a voter does not register in more than one place, the voter's registration status will remain as it is.
  - If you are a college student in Iowa, you may either register with your college address or your home address, but not both.



# FAQs

- **Do I have to vote according to the party affiliation on my voter registration?**
  - No. Ballots are secret, and voters have the right to vote for any candidate they want. The only time party affiliation is important in terms of voting is in the case of a political party caucus or primary election. Voters must be registered with the political party whose caucus or primary they wish to participate in. Voters can only participate in one party's caucus or primary election.
- **Who do I contact with questions about Ready, Set, Vote 250?**
  - Emails – [sos@sos.iowa.gov](mailto:sos@sos.iowa.gov)
  - Phone – (515) 281-5108
- **When will I receive recognition for hosting a drive?**
  - After completion of your drive, make sure to share photos and the total number registered, and any other important/fun information to the email address above. We will share the great news on our social channels.
  - Final certificates will go out to partners at the end of the program.
- **How long is the program period?**
  - Vote 250 will run from December 28, 2025, through August 23, 2026.
- **Why those dates?**
  - December 28 is the anniversary of Iowa becoming a state. Iowa gained statehood on December 28, 1846.
  - August 23 is the last day of the Iowa State Fair in 2026.



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