

## Achievement First Community Voting Guide

As an election year, 2024 has special significance! Our democracy is stronger when as many citizens as possible participate in our elections. On Tuesday, November 5th, there will be elections at all three levels of American government: national (federal), state, and local.

This guide is designed to help Achievement First families, staff, and students navigate the voting process. **Please note, this is a nonpartisan guide; Achievement First is not endorsing any specific candidates for public office.**

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### Voting Information

#### Why Vote?

Voting matters. The officials we elect make decisions that impact our housing, schools, environment, civil rights, and more. Voting is an important way to make sure our elected officials are meeting our communities' needs.

Unfortunately, far too few Americans vote. In 2016, nearly 109 million Americans did not vote at all. This means that their wishes were not reflected in government decisions. For our

Achievement First school communities — students, families, and staff — it is critical that we participate in the democratic process so that our voices can be heard.

## Voting in the United States

- According to the United States Constitution, you are allowed to vote if you are 18 years old and a citizen of the United States.
- State governments cannot prohibit you from voting based on your race or gender.
- Poll workers are stationed at voting sites to help you vote. They are not legally allowed to influence your vote.
- If you are a person with disabilities, polling places are legally required to offer you accommodations. When you go to vote, check in with the poll workers to request the accommodations that you need.

## Registering to Vote

To vote in federal, state, and/or local elections, you must be registered to vote in the state you reside in. Each state has different requirements to register to vote. When registering yourself or members of your school community, pay close attention to voter registration requirements and deadlines.

Here are the voter registration links in states where Achievement First has schools:

State	Registration Link	Online Registration Deadline	In-person, same day registration?
Connecticut	<a href="https://www.vote.gov">Vote.gov</a>	18 days before the election	Yes
Rhode Island	<a href="https://www.elections.state.ri.us">RI Board of Elections</a>	October 6, 2024	No same-day registration. You must register by the deadline.
New York	<a href="https://www.elections.state.ny.us">NY State Board of Elections</a>	October 26, 2024	No same-day registration. You must register by the deadline.

## Voting in Elections

### Casting Your Vote on Election Day

Voting on Election Day takes place at your polling location during specified hours. **You must vote at your assigned polling location.** You cannot vote at any polling location other than the one you've been assigned to.

Each state has different requirements for what you need to bring with you to the polls. For example, some states require you to show a government-issued ID. Check your state's requirements, and make sure to bring any necessary documentation with you.

It is important to know your rights when voting. For example, if you are waiting in line when the polling location closes, you legally cannot be turned away. The poll workers must still allow you to enter and cast your vote.

### Early Voting

To give registered voters more access and flexibility, most states have instituted a system of early voting. This means that you do not have to wait until election day to vote; instead, you can vote in advance at specifically designated early voting sites.

Early voting helps people vote based on their schedule and avoid long lines on election day. **Early voting locations are typically different from your regular polling place**, so be sure to check that you are going to the correct location.

### Requesting an Absentee Ballot

Most states offer absentee ballots for people who cannot or do not want to vote in person. You can mail in your ballot before election day, or drop it off at a designated location.

**Each state has different requirements for requesting and submitting an absentee ballot.** To find out your state's requirements and request an absentee ballot, visit <https://www.vote.org/absentee-ballot/>.

Voting Information by State	
State	Detail
Connecticut	<p><b>Voting on Election Day</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Polls are open in CT from 6:00 am to 8:00 pm.</li> <li>• CT does not require you to bring a photo ID to the polls to vote because they require a form of identification when you register.</li> <li>• Click <a href="#">here</a> to type in your address and find your polling location in Connecticut.</li> </ul> <p><b>Early Voting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10:00 am to 6:00 pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Monday, October 21 – Monday, October 28,</li> <li>○ Wednesday, October 30</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Friday, November 1 – Sunday, November 3</li> <li>● 8:00 am to 8:00 pm</li> <li>○ Tuesday, October 29 and Thursday, October 31</li> </ul> <p><b>Requesting an Absentee Ballot</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Click <a href="#">here</a> to request an absentee ballot.</li> </ul>
Rhode Island	<p><b>Voting on Election Day</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Polls are open in Rhode Island from 7:00 am to 8:00 pm</li> <li>● Rhode Island requires that you bring a valid photo ID to the polls when voting. Valid forms of ID include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ RI driver's license/permit</li> <li>○ US passport</li> <li>○ ID card issued by any federally recognized tribal government</li> <li>○ ID card issued by an educational institution in the United States</li> <li>○ US military identification card</li> <li>○ ID card issued by the US government or State of Rhode Island (RIPTA bus pass, etc.)</li> <li>○ Government-issued medical card, RI Voter ID card</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Click <a href="#">here</a> to type in your address and find your polling location in Rhode Island.</li> </ul> <p><b>Early Voting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 20 days before the election</li> </ul> <p><b>Requesting an Absentee Ballot</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Click <a href="#">here</a> to request an absentee ballot.</li> </ul>
New York	<p><b>Voting on Election Day</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Polls are open in New York from 6:00 am to 9:00 pm</li> <li>● New York does not require you to bring an ID to the polls because you include your identification information when you register.</li> <li>● Click <a href="#">here</a> to find your polling location in New York City.</li> </ul> <p><b>Early Voting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● October 26th - November 3rd</li> </ul> <p><b>Requesting an Absentee Ballot</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Click <a href="#">here</a> to request an absentee ballot.</li> </ul>

## Becoming an Informed Voter

### How the US Government Works

The American government is based on the principle of Federalism. Federalism divides power between the national (also called “federal”) government and the states.

There are three branches of government: Executive, Legislative, and Judicial. These three branches are designed to provide “checks and balances,” to keep one individual or group from claiming too much power.

At the federal level, the Executive branch includes the President and their Cabinet. The Cabinet manages key organizations such as the Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Defense, Department of State, and Department of Education. The Legislative branch is Congress, made up of the Senate and the House of Representatives. The Judicial branch is the federal courts, including the Supreme Court.

Each state also has its own Executive (Governor), Legislative (State Assemblies/Legislatures), and Judicial (Courts) branches. There are also local governments within states, which include bodies like City Council and School Board. In our elections, we are not only voting for a President, but for these other roles as well.

Learn more about checks and balances at <https://www.usa.gov/branches-of-government>  
 Learn more about what elected officials do at <https://powercoalition.org/electedofficials/>

### The 2024 Presidential Candidates

Under the US Constitution, a president’s term is four years long. Thus, America has presidential elections every four years. **The next presidential election will take place on Tuesday, November 5, 2024.**

There are two main political parties in the United States: the Democratic Party (Democrats) and the Republican Party (Republicans). Each party nominates one candidate to run for president in the national, or “general,” election. These two candidates are on the ballot in all 50 states.

There are other political parties, called “third parties.” Third-party presidential candidates can get on the ballot in individual states if they meet the requirements identified by that state.

As of September 2024, the election resource Ballotpedia has identified four noteworthy presidential candidates. Two of these candidates are from the main national parties (Democratic and Republican), and two are third-party candidates (Green and Libertarian).

Candidate	Party	Ballotpedia
<b>Democratic and Republican Party Candidates</b>		

<b>Kamala Harris</b>	Democratic Party	<a href="#">Ballotpedia: Kamala Harris</a>
<b>Donald Trump</b>	Republican Party	<a href="#">Ballotpedia: Donald Trump</a>
<b>Third-Party Candidates</b>		
<b>Jill Stein</b>	Green Party	<a href="#">Ballotpedia: Jill Stein</a>
<b>Chase Oliver</b>	Libertarian Party	<a href="#">Ballotpedia: Chase Oliver</a>

## State and Local Elections

State and local elections directly impact our daily lives. From governors at the state level to city council members who influence community services and public safety, state and local elected officials make decisions that affect our schools, neighborhoods, and overall quality of life.

Some statewide election ballots also include ballot measures. These are proposals to enact a new state law or policy, or modify an existing one, by asking voters to vote “Yes” or “No.”

**Research, Learn, and Vote:** Before voting, research the candidates and issues on your local ballot:

1. **Identify Key Issues:** Consider what matters most to you and your community, such as education, public safety, or housing.
2. **Learn About the Candidates:** Visit candidates’ websites, attend local forums, and read news articles to understand each candidate’s position on the issues that are important to you.
3. **Understand Ballot Measures:** Check which ballot measures are on the ballot in your state. If your state offers a voter guide, make sure to read the full summary of each ballot measure, and look at which organizations are for or against it.

**Make Your Voice Heard:** Voting in local elections is a powerful way to influence your community’s future. Every vote counts! Your participation helps ensure that the voices and values of our school community are represented in local decision-making. Make sure to cast your vote and encourage others to do the same.

## Identifying Misinformation

The internet is an extraordinary tool to help us access information. It can also serve as a source of misinformation. While there are many reputable sources for election information, it’s important to keep an eye out for false or misleading claims.

Everyone, from students to adults, needs knowledge and tools to spot misinformation in news articles, websites, and social media. Here are some resources and tips to assist you in identifying misinformation during the 2024 election cycle:

## Social Media

- When looking at a video on social media, Google the person or website who is sharing the content. Check what other organizations and ideas they're associated with. Ask yourself: are they a credible source on the topic? Are they biased?
- Remember that social media is designed to show you content that's similar to what you've previously engaged with. This limits what you see, and prevents you from automatically having access to a diverse range of opinions and viewpoints. When possible, seek out news and sources with different perspectives rather than just reading what's in your feed.
- Meta (the parent company of Facebook, Instagram, and Threads) has recently stopped showing users political content from accounts they don't already follow. If you would like to see more political content in your feed, adjust your settings on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Threads](#).

## Online News

- Major news outlets offer a few free articles per month during election times. You may decide to invest in a subscription to a credible news source for the next few months. Many major US news outlets offer discounted subscriptions for educators, some for as little as \$6/month.
- Remember that news outlets make money by getting people to click on headlines. It's important to read the entire article, not just the headline, in order to get the full story.
- The following sites can help you determine the partisan bias of the news sources you are reading, as well as their reliability in terms of sharing accurate information:
  - [Starting Point: 1. "The Chart" - News Media Across the Political Spectrum](#)
  - [How Reliable is Your News Source? Understanding Media Bias 2022](#)

We hope this guide has been helpful in understanding your voting rights and planning your 2024 vote! If you have any questions or would like additional information, please contact Jillian Gaeta, Director of History at Achievement First, at [jillian.gaeta@achievementfirst.org](mailto:jillian.gaeta@achievementfirst.org).