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Elect a President

Marjorie Brown
Iowa State College

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If your 21st birthday is before November, you’re lucky because this is the year we

ELECT A PRESIDENT

by Marjorie Brown
Science Freshman

Will he run, or won’t he? This is a big question in the mind of the general public, but to most of you who are really following the election previews, here is an even more pertinent one:

Will I vote or won’t I?

If you mentally shout YES to this query, you’ve taken the biggest step toward being a real citizen. But a few more important details must be attended to before you walk confidently into a polling place next November.

First and foremost qualification for voting is that you be a United States citizen at least 21 years old (unless your residence is in Georgia, where legal voting age is 18 years).

Where to vote

The next important step in determining voter eligibility is to settle the correct place of voting for those of you who live in Ames three-fourths of the year but maintain legal residence in your home town or state. According to voting laws now in effect, married students and their wives are considered residents of Ames, and they may follow Iowa voting procedures to cast their votes. On the other hand, you unmarried voters whose homes are outside of Ames may vote, in person or by absentee ballot, only in your home town.

You out-of-town or out-of-state students may be wondering how to file the application necessary to get an absentee’s ballot. Most states require a letter to the county clerk or county auditor in your county before the application for an absentee ballot may be sent to you. This form generally asks your name, address at home, address away from home, age, reason for being absent on election day, home precinct or ward, and any other information the particular state thinks necessary.

Registration, the next important step in becoming an eligible voter, may be permanent (as in Ames) or periodic. Under the permanent system, Ames residents may register any time after they become of voting age, and such registration continues in effect as long as they live in Ames. People whose state or county maintains a periodic registration system, however, must re-register at stated intervals in order to remain qualified voters.

In most states which permit absentee balloting, this application is considered to be registration and the applicant is placed on the poll books. For this reason, time is the greatest limitation on filing preliminary application for an absent voter’s ballot. State laws prescribe anywhere from one to ninety days, prior to the election day, during which the application must be filed, but if the application is also the voter’s registration, it must conform with registration time limits.

When to register

Most states require that registration be completed in the spring of the election year. Since your state may be one whose laws require early registration, you may wish to check on this important time limit by a post card to your local county auditor or clerk.

After you’ve filed a complete application with the county auditor or clerk in your home town, he’ll send you, within the time prescribed by law, a special ballot and affidavit to be filled out and mailed back before or on the election day. The affidavit, which must be signed by a notary public, usually states that you have marked the ballot in the notary’s presence, although he does not know how you voted. Here in Ames, free notary service for ballots is available in the business office of the Memorial Union.

“X” marks the spot

The greatest single point of confusion in actually putting marks on a ballot stems from the use of some ballots with nominees grouped according to their party and some ballots on which the nominees are grouped according to office. In addition, some of these ballots have the name of each party listed separately so that you may vote for all candidates of that party at the same time. This sounds confusing, but here are a few simple rules to help you:

1. If you want to vote for only one party and your ballot has a circle for that party, mark only that circle.
2. If you want to vote for only one party and your ballot doesn’t have a circle for that party, mark the circle in front of each nominee of that party.
3. If you want to vote for candidates from more than one party, ignore the party circles and mark the circle in front of each of your candidates.
4. Mark only the number of persons to be elected if you are told to vote for more than one.
5. Be sure to vote on all special “yes and no” measures.

ELECTING ELECTORS

You may also be confused if your ballot doesn’t give the name of any of the presidential candidates. Under the electoral college system of electing the president and vice-president, you are asked to vote for delegates to the electoral college (electors) and these delegates in turn vote for the actual candidates. A vote for the elector nominated by a certain party will be, in effect, a vote for that party’s presidential candidate.

Real voting, whether by marking x’s on a regular or absentee ballot or by pulling levers of a voting machine, involves more than following strict party lines or picking out “a nice looking man.” It’s your share in government: use your right and use it well.