

CHAPTER 2  
VOTER REGISTRATION FORMS, ACCEPTABILITY,  
REGISTRATION DATES, AND EFFECTIVE DATES

[Prior to 3/21/90, see Voter Registration Commission[845], Ch 2]

Chapter rescission date pursuant to Iowa Code section 17A.7: 1/1/28

**821—2.1(48A) Voter registration forms.**

**2.1(1) Content and completion.**

*a.* In addition to the spaces required by Iowa Code section 48A.11, every voter registration form shall include room for the county commissioner to make notations indicating such items as the date the form was received, the precinct and school district of the registrant, any other special district or note deemed necessary or appropriate by the commissioner, and the date the registration is effective. The notations may be on the reverse of the form.

*b.* The spaces on the paper voter registration form required by Iowa Code section 48A.11 and subrule 2.1(1) may be completed electronically. Voter registration forms completed electronically must be printed and, in the event adhesive labels are used, such labels must be firmly affixed to the form. The form must also be signed and dated by the voter.

**2.1(2) Definitions.**

*“Agency application”* means an application received at a voter registration agency pursuant to Iowa Code section 48A.19.

*“Application”* means a request to register to vote from a person who is not registered to vote in the county where the voter registration form is submitted. An application shall be made on a voter registration form prescribed by the voter registration commission.

*“By-mail application”* means an application received through the mail from an individual applicant. “By-mail application” also includes voter registration applications received from organizations that solicit voter registrations. “By-mail application” does not include registration forms sent through the mail by voter registration agencies.

*“In-person application”* means an application received in person from the applicant either by the registrar, the registrar’s designee, the commissioner, the commissioner’s designee or a precinct election official.

*“New voter registration application”* means a voter registration application received from an individual who is not already registered to vote in the county.

[ARC 7883B, IAB 7/1/09, effective 7/1/09]

**821—2.2(48A) Agency code.** In addition to the spaces and statements required to be included on registration forms by Iowa Code section 48A.11 and rule 821—2.1(48A), registration forms used by voter registration agencies shall contain a code, to be devised by the registrar, indicating the type of agency.

[ARC 7883B, IAB 7/1/09, effective 7/1/09]

**821—2.3(48A) Federal mail-in application.** Rules 821—2.1(48A) and 821—2.2(48A) do not apply to the mail voter registration form prescribed by the federal election commission, which shall be accepted in accordance with Iowa Code section 48A.12 and shall not be used by voter registration agencies.

**821—2.4(48A) Paperless (electronic) registration forms.** Any voter registration agency and the office of driver services, department of transportation, may devise a system of collecting registration applications without using paper forms, in accordance with the following restrictions:

**2.4(1)** All information required to be disclosed on a voter registration form shall be collected by the agency and captured electronically. The applicant shall also be asked to disclose the optional information solicited by the form if that information is not captured as a part of the agency’s own record-making process.

**2.4(2)** The applicant shall be shown a list of the eligibility requirements for registering to vote and the penalties for falsely registering, printed or displayed in large, easy-to-read type, and shall be advised to read them.

**2.4(3)** The application to register to vote and the signature of the applicant shall be recorded in digitized form in the agency's computer system and shall be kept permanently by the agency. The system shall ensure that neither the application information nor the signature, once captured, can be edited.

**2.4(4)** The agency shall develop procedures so that the digitized signature can be retrieved and reproduced on paper. Within three working days of receipt of an order from a state or federal court, the agency shall provide a reproduction of the requested application and signature.

**2.4(5)** The agency shall transmit electronic registration records to the registrar in accordance with 821—Chapter 8.

**2.4(6)** In the case of a voter registration applicant who registers to vote online through the website of the office of driver services, department of transportation, the applicant's signature for voter registration purposes shall be the last signature on file with the office of driver services, department of transportation. If there is no signature on file with the office of driver services, department of transportation, the applicant shall be offered the opportunity to print, complete, sign and return a paper copy of the Iowa voter registration application.

[ARC 2376C, IAB 2/3/16, effective 1/5/16]

**821—2.5(48A) Acquisition of registration forms.** To ensure that forms used by the various voter registration agencies contain no distinguishing characteristics that could be used to identify the agency from which the form came, all agency forms shall be ordered through the state registrar of voters. The registrar shall negotiate a contract for the procurement of the forms in accordance with all procurement laws and rules.

**821—2.6(48A) Production of forms.** Any person or organization, except voter registration agencies, may cause the printing and production of voter registration applications. Applications so produced shall be identical in size, shape, weight and similar in color of paper, type size, and color of ink to those available from the registrar, except that the independently produced applications may not contain an agency type code, may be preaddressed to a particular county commissioner on the reverse of the form, and may contain postage. This rule shall not apply to voter registration forms printed in newspapers or telephone books.

[ARC 7883B, IAB 7/1/09, effective 7/1/09]

**821—2.7(48A) Availability of forms.** Voter registration applications shall be available for purchase, at the cost of production, from the state registrar of voters. Application forms for an individual's personal use shall be available free of charge at the office of the registrar, all voter registration agencies, and the office of driver services, department of transportation.

[ARC 7883B, IAB 7/1/09, effective 7/1/09]

**821—2.8(48A) Incomplete applications.**

**2.8(1)** No commissioner shall refuse to register or accept an application from an applicant unable to specify the correct ward, precinct, or school district for the applicant's address. The commissioner shall make a determination of the correct political subdivisions from maps, legal descriptions, and other means at the commissioner's disposal.

**2.8(2)** The notice mailed to applicants who submit incomplete voter registration applications shall instruct the applicant that the applicant may provide the required information in writing by appearing in person at the commissioner's office to complete a new application or by mailing a new and complete application. If the incomplete registration application is received during the period in which registration is closed pursuant to Iowa Code section 48A.9 and by 5 p.m. on the Saturday before the election for general elections or by 5 p.m. on the Friday before the election for all other elections, the commissioner shall send a notice advising the applicant of election day and in-person absentee registration procedures under Iowa Code section 48A.7A.

**2.8(3)** If the application does not include the applicant's Iowa driver's license number, Iowa department of transportation-issued nonoperator's identification card number, or the last four digits of the applicant's social security number, and the applicant has not indicated that the applicant does not have any of these numbers, the notice described in subrule 2.8(2) shall also include the following statement:

"Your voter registration application cannot be accepted because it does not include an Iowa driver's license number, an Iowa nonoperator's identification number or the last four numbers of your social security number. You must submit a new voter registration form before you can be registered to vote in this county.

"If you have an Iowa driver's license, you must write that number on your voter registration form. If you do not have an Iowa driver's license, use the number from your Iowa nonoperator's identification card. If you do not have an identification card issued by the state of Iowa, write the last four numbers of your social security number on the form. If you don't have any of these identification numbers, please check the box next to 'NONE' on the form. Failure to provide any of the three forms of identification will require you to register to vote on election day. Please note it is a Class "D" felony to provide false information on a voter registration application."

**2.8(4)** If the applicant reports that the applicant has not been issued an Iowa driver's license, an Iowa department of transportation-issued nonoperator's identification card number, or a social security number, the commissioner shall assign a unique identifying number that shall serve to identify the registrant for voter registration purposes and code the registration status as "pending."

**2.8(5)** The commissioner shall keep an incomplete application for voter registration for 22 months after the date of the next general election after the application was received.

[ARC 7883B, IAB 7/1/09, effective 7/1/09; ARC 2376C, IAB 2/3/16, effective 1/5/16; ARC 3454C, IAB 11/8/17, effective 12/31/17]

**821—2.9(48A) Optional data not required.** No commissioner shall refuse to register or accept an application from an applicant who fails or declines to reveal the applicant's telephone number or political party affiliation.

**821—2.10(48A) Alternate (nonmailable) registration forms.** An alternate registration form is authorized for the use of voter registration agencies and nongovernmental organizations engaging in registration programs and registration drives. The form shall contain spaces for all of the required and optional information solicited by the standard form, a list of the qualifications to register to vote, a statement to be signed by the applicant that the applicant is eligible to register to vote, and a statement of the penalty for submission of a false voter registration form. The face of the form shall contain spaces for all the personal information asked of the applicant, along with the attestation and warning. The reverse of the form may contain the list of qualifications, and may contain space for the county commissioner's notations. The form may be printed as a detachable part of a larger piece or may be printed by itself. Because registration forms are frequently kept for many years, registration forms shall be printed on paper at least as thick as 20-pound xerographic paper.

The intent of this rule is to make available a mechanism for individuals, groups and organizations to conduct registration drives without requiring individuals, groups and organizations to purchase registration forms. To that end, the state registrar shall make available, without charge, a limited quantity of forms as determined by the voter registration commission, and PDF versions of a form meeting the requirements of this rule.

[ARC 7883B, IAB 7/1/09, effective 7/1/09]

**821—2.11(48A) Registration forms in languages other than English.** Rescinded IAB 7/1/09, effective 7/1/09.

**821—2.12(48A) County registration date.** For the purposes of determining timeliness of an application to register to vote, the county registration date shall be determined as follows:

**2.12(1)** The county registration date for an in-person applicant at least 18 years of age is the date the registration application is received by the commissioner or the commissioner's designee. However, when preregistration is closed in the applicant's precinct due to a pending election, the county registration date shall be the date of the day after the pending election unless the applicant registers pursuant to Iowa Code section 48A.7A.

**2.12(2)** The county registration date for a by-mail applicant at least 18 years of age is the date the registration application is received by the commissioner, unless the application is postmarked on or before the worry-free postmark date established pursuant to Iowa Code section 48A.9, subsection 3. However, when preregistration is closed in the applicant's precinct due to a pending election, the county registration date shall be the date of the day after the pending election unless the applicant registers pursuant to Iowa Code section 48A.7A.

**2.12(3)** The county registration date for an application received from a source other than in person or by mail is the date the application is received by the commissioner or submitted to the office of driver services, department of transportation, or to a voter registration agency pursuant to Iowa Code section 48A.19, whichever is earlier.

**2.12(4)** The county registration date for applicants aged 17 to 18 shall be the date of the applicant's eighteenth birthday, except the county commissioner shall indicate that the person is registered and qualifies to vote at the pending primary election if the applicant will be at least 18 years of age on the date of the respective general election or city election. However, if an application is submitted when preregistration is closed in the applicant's precinct and the applicant's eighteenth birthday is on or before election day, the county registration date shall be the date of the day after the pending election unless the applicant registers pursuant to Iowa Code section 48A.7A.

[ARC 7883B, IAB 7/1/09, effective 7/1/09; ARC 4493C, IAB 6/5/19, effective 7/10/19]

**821—2.13(48A) Effective date of registration.** Rescinded IAB 7/1/09, effective 7/1/09.

**821—2.14(48A) Voter registration status codes.** Voter registration records shall be coded to show the status of the record.

**2.14(1) Active.** The registration is in good standing. No action is required on the part of either the registrant or the commissioner.

**2.14(2) Inactive.** If either an acknowledgment mailed to the registrant pursuant to Iowa Code section 48A.26, a notice mailed to the registrant pursuant to Iowa Code section 48A.27, a notice mailed to the registrant pursuant to Iowa Code section 48A.28, an absentee ballot mailed to the registrant pursuant to Iowa Code section 53.8, or a voter identification card issued pursuant to 2017 Iowa Acts, House File 516, section 18, is returned to the commissioner by the United States Postal Service as undeliverable, the registrant's status shall be changed to "inactive" status. In addition, a voter registration record shall be made "inactive" pursuant to Iowa Code section 48A.27, subsection 4, paragraph "c," during the annual NCOA process. Inactive registrations will be deleted after two general elections unless the registrant responds to a confirmation mailing pursuant to Iowa Code section 48A.27, 48A.28, 48A.29 or 48A.30, requests an absentee ballot, votes in an election or submits a registration form updating the registration. Inactive registrants shall show identification when voting in person at the polling place, pursuant to Iowa Code section 49.77(3), or shall restore their voter registration to "active" status pursuant to 721—21.301(53) when voting by absentee ballot.

**2.14(3) Pending.**

*a.* No DL or SSN Provided. If an applicant indicates that the applicant does not have an Iowa driver's license number, Iowa department of transportation-issued nonoperator's identification card number, or a social security number, the applicant shall be assigned a status of "pending" with reason "No DL or SSN Provided."

*b.* DL or SSN Not Verified. If the applicant provides an Iowa driver's license number, Iowa department of transportation-issued nonoperator's identification card number, or the last four digits of the applicant's social security number and that information cannot be verified pursuant to 821—2.15(48A), the applicant shall be assigned a status of "pending" with reason "DL or SSN Not Verified."

c. An applicant assigned a status of “pending” shall not be activated until the applicant provides identification and proof of residence pursuant to Iowa Code section 48A.8.

[ARC 7883B, IAB 7/1/09, effective 7/1/09; ARC 3454C, IAB 11/8/17, effective 12/31/17]

**821—2.15(48A) Verification of voter registration information.** All new voter registration applications shall be verified. The registrar may arrange with the department of transportation for county commissioners of elections to verify voter registration records without submitting the registration information to the registrar.

**2.15(1)** When the application is received, the commissioner shall compare the Iowa driver’s license number, Iowa department of transportation-issued nonoperator’s identification card number, or the last four digits of the social security number of each mail application with the records of the department of transportation.

**2.15(2)** All of the following information on the application must match an existing record:

a. All digits and numerals in the Iowa driver’s license number, Iowa department of transportation-issued nonoperator’s identification card number, or the last four digits of the social security number.

b. Name.

c. Date of birth, including the month, day and year.

**2.15(3)** If all three required elements do not match, the applicant shall be assigned a status of “pending” with reason “DL or SSN Not Verified.” The applicant shall be notified that the applicant’s voter registration is in pending status and the applicant will be required to show identification and proof of residence pursuant to 721—21.3(49,48A) before voting in the county. The notice shall include the following statement:

“Your voter registration application is pending because the information you provided on your application could not be verified. Your name, date of birth and identification number were compared to the Iowa driver’s license records and your identification number cannot be verified.

“Any voter with a ‘pending’ registration status is required to present an acceptable photo identification and proof of residence pursuant to Iowa Code section 48A.8 in person before their ballot will be counted. You may submit identification either by showing your identification in person when you vote or by mailing a photocopy of your identification to the county commissioner’s office.”

**2.15(4)** If the application is verified, the registration record shall be made “active.” The registrar or commissioner shall keep records showing whether the information in the application was verified and the date of the verification. If the application cannot be verified, the record shall show what information on the application did not match an existing record. The verification record shall be kept for the period of time required in Iowa Code section 48A.32.

**2.15(5)** If the application is verified, but the registered voter’s name does not appear in the department of transportation-issued driver’s license and nonoperator’s identification card files, the commissioner shall issue a voter identification card to the registered voter’s address on file pursuant to 2017 Iowa Acts, House File 516, section 18.

[ARC 7883B, IAB 7/1/09, effective 7/1/09; ARC 3454C, IAB 11/8/17, effective 12/31/17]

**821—2.16(47,48A) Form of official Iowa voter registration application.** The official Iowa voter registration application pursuant to Iowa Code section 48A.11 shall be the State of Iowa Official Voter Registration Form Revised 4/9/2014.

[ARC 0807C, IAB 6/26/13, effective 8/1/13; ARC 1361C, IAB 3/5/14, effective 4/9/14]

**821—2.17(48A) Voter registration forms produced by electronic poll books.** “*Electronic poll book,*” or “*epollbook,*” or “*e-poll book,*” or “*electronic register*” means hardware and software components used to verify and process voting activity and changes in voter registration and to check in voters. This definition includes e-poll books in use in the commissioner’s office. However, this definition does not apply to the I-VOTERS statewide voter registration database.

**2.17(1)** At the discretion of the commissioner, an electronic poll book may be used to produce an alternate registration form. The alternate registration form may be completed by the voter, an election official, or an individual offering assistance at the direction and in the presence of the voter.

**2.17(2)** The electronic poll book shall print the alternate registration form, and the registrant shall sign the registration form produced by the electronic poll book. A signature or marking made in accordance with Iowa Code section 39.3(17) shall be accepted. The use of an electronic signature is not permitted.

**2.17(3)** Pursuant to Iowa Code section 48A.11, the form shall contain spaces for all the required and optional information solicited by the standard form, a list of the qualifications to register to vote, a statement to be signed by the applicant that the applicant is eligible to register to vote, and a statement of the penalty for submission of a false voter registration form.

**2.17(4)** If thermal receipt paper is used to print the alternate registration form, the commissioner shall endeavor to store the printed forms in a dark room with limited exposure to ultraviolet (UV) light, relative humidity between 45 percent and 65 percent, and temperature below 77 degrees Fahrenheit to assure preservation. The commissioner shall store an unaltered version of the completed registration application, including the applicant's signature, as an electronic document. The electronic version of the registration application shall be uploaded and attached to the voter's electronic record stored in the statewide voter registration database within 60 days of completion. The electronic document shall be kept for the retention period prescribed by Iowa Code section 48A.32. Once the alternate registration form is stored electronically, the original thermal paper document may be destroyed in accordance with Iowa Code section 48A.35.

**2.17(5)** If paper at least as thick as 20-pound xerographic paper is used to print the alternate registration form, the commissioner shall retain the form in accordance with Iowa Code sections 48A.32 and 48A.35.

**2.17(6)** All other types of paper shall require the approval of the commission prior to use.

[ARC 4519C, IAB 7/3/19, effective 6/11/19; ARC 4646C, IAB 8/28/19, effective 10/2/19]

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