Conducting a Voter Registration Drive in Tennessee

**Voter Registration Deadline**

**Applications must be received or postmarked 30 days before Election Day.**

A specific turnaround time applies to voter registration drives turning in applications they collect. See below.

**Voter registration drive rules in Tennessee are currently the subject of ongoing litigation. Please check back for any changes. This document is not intended to provide legal advice.**

**Getting Started**

**Training Requirement:** Tennessee has no currently effective law on the issue, however, effective October 1, 2019, Tennessee will require that a person or organization not designated by the county election commission under Tennessee law who conducts a supplemental voter registration drive in which the person or organization attempts to collect voter registration applications of 100 or more people must complete training administered by the coordinator of elections. The training will be required to be available online. The person or the agent of the organization must also ensure that individuals, whether volunteer or paid, who conduct over registration drives for an organization have complete the training administered by the coordinator of elections. Intentional or knowing violation of these rules is a criminal offense. These training requirements do not apply to individuals who are not paid to collect voter registration applications or to organizations that are not paid to collect voter registration applicants and that only use unpaid volunteers to collect voter registration applications.

**Notification and Registration Requirements:** Tennessee has no currently effective law on the issue, however, effective October 1, 2019 Tennessee will require that a person or organization not designated by the county election commission under Tennessee law who conducts a supplemental voter registration drive in which the person or organization attempts to collect voter registration applications of 100 or more people must comply with the following:

- Prior to conducting a registration drive, the person or agent of an organization must:
  - Provide the coordinator of elections with the name, address, and contact phone number of the person conducting the drive, or the names, addresses, and contact phone numbers of the offers of the organization conducting the drive;
  - Provide the names of the county or counties in which the voter registration drives will be held;
  - File a sworn statement stating that the person or organization shall obey all state laws and procedures regarding the registration of voters; and
  - Ensure that individuals receive election-official-sponsored training (see above).

Intentional or knowing violation of these rules is a criminal offense. These requirements do not apply to individuals who are not paid to collect voter registration applications or to organizations that are not paid to collect voter registration applicants and that only use unpaid volunteers to collect voter registration applications.
**Compensation Requirements:** Do not pay registration drive participants based on how many registrations they collect. In Tennessee a person can be paid on an hourly or salaried basis; however, effective October 1, 2019, it is illegal to employ or compensate any person, or for any person to receive wagers or compensation for registering voters based on the number of voters registered. It is also illegal to establish quotas, or establish a minimum number of completed voter registration forms to be collected by individuals conducting a voter registration drive. Intentional or knowing violation of these rules is a criminal offense. However, these prohibitions do not apply to individuals who are not paid to collect voter registration applications or to organizations that are not paid to collect voter registration applicants and that only use unpaid volunteers to collect voter registration applications.

**Disclosure/Disclaimer Requirements:** Under Tennessee law, effective October 1, 2019, a public communication regarding voter registration status made by a political committee or organization must display a disclaimer that such communication is not made in conjunction with or authorized by the Secretary of State. “Public communication” includes communications made using newspapers or magazines, phone bank or text messages, email systems, or websites. Additional requirements apply to websites for voter registration purposes as well as voter lookup websites. Intentional or knowing violation of these rules is a criminal offense.

**Obtaining Applications**

**State Form:** The state mail-in voter registration application can be downloaded at the [Department of State website](#).

**Federal Form:** Tennessee accepts the [federal voter registration form](#).

**Photocopying Blank Forms:** Tennessee law does not contain restrictions on copying blank forms.

**Handling Applications**

**Incomplete Applications:** Tennessee has no currently effective law on the issue, however, effective October 1, 2019, if any person or organization conducts voter registration drives under state statute, and within a calendar year, files 100 or more incomplete voter registration applications with 1 or more county election commissions, the person or organization is subject to a civil penalty. Under this law, “incomplete voter registration application” means any application that lacks the applicant’s name, residential address, date of birth, declaration of eligibility, or signature. A person or organization who collects an application that only contains a name or initial is not required to file the application with the election commission. However, these penalties do not apply to individuals who are not paid to collect voter registration applications or to organizations that are not paid to collect voter registration applicants and that only use unpaid volunteers to collect voter registration applications.

**Photocopying Completed Applications:** Tennessee has no current law on this issue, however, effective October 1, 2019, any person or organization conducting a voter registration drive is prohibited from copying, photographing, or in any way retaining the voter registration information and data collected on the voter registration application, unless the applicant consents. However, the social security number provided on the application is confidential and cannot be retained by any person other than election officials in their official capacity.

Intentional or knowing violation of these rules is a criminal offense. However, these prohibitions do not apply to individuals who are not paid to collect voter registration applications or to organizations that are not paid to collect voter registration applicants and that only use unpaid volunteers to collect voter registration applications. As a best practice, Fair Elections Center suggests that Social Security numbers not be retained.
Submitting Completed Applications:

Effective October 1, 2019, Tennessee will require that a person or organization not designated by the county election commission under Tennessee law who conducts a supplemental voter registration drive in which the person or organization attempts to collect voter registration applications of 100 or more people must deliver or mail completed voter registration forms within ten days of the date of the voter registration drive; provided that if the date of the voter registration drive is within ten days of the voter registration deadline, the completed forms must be delivered or mailed no later than the deadline. Intentional or knowing violation of these rules is a criminal offense.

However, this requirement does not apply to individuals who are not paid to collect voter registration applications or to organizations that are not paid to collect voter registration applicants and that only use unpaid volunteers to collect voter registration applications.

For more information, visit www.fairelectionscenter.org