

# EASY-TO-READ VOTER GUIDE

## Maine Referendum Election



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**LWV**<sup>®</sup> LEAGUE OF WOMEN  
VOTERS OF MAINE  
EDUCATION FUND

November 3, 2015



## About This Guide



The League of Women Voters of Maine Education Fund produced this voter guide about the 2015 Referendum Election.

Maine voters will see two kinds of questions on their ballot:

- Citizen Initiative
- Bond Issue

The Voter Guide provides information on both sides of an issue and does not endorse any ballot question or initiative.

No explanations of ballot and bond issues express the views of the League of Women Voters of Maine Education Fund or any of our distribution partners including any of the schools, nonprofit organizations, or agencies.



## Questions & Copies of this Guide

The text is online at [www.lwvme.org](http://www.lwvme.org)



If you have questions, call 1-888-207-1839 or email us at [voterguide@lwvme.org](mailto:voterguide@lwvme.org).



# Voting Is Important

## ★ When Is Election Day?

**Election Day is Tuesday, November 3, 2015.**

## ★ Why Vote?

You can help make important changes in the way your state and country are run. This year is a Referendum Election. This means that on Election Day, Maine voters will answer ballot and bond questions, including a citizen initiative (more on pages 11-14).

In some cities and towns, you may also be asked to vote on candidates for local offices or to vote on local issues.

## ★ Is My Vote Private?

Yes, your vote is private. No one will know how you vote unless you tell them.

## ★ Where Do I Go to Vote?

Call your city hall or town office to find out where you should vote.

## ★ What Time Can I Vote?

Voting places open between 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. on Election Day. The opening time is not the same for all cities and towns.

***All voting places close at 8:00 p.m.***



# Voting in Maine

## ★ Who Can Vote?

You must **first register to vote**.

***You can register to vote in Maine if:***

- You are age 17 or older. (You have to be 18 by Election Day!)
- You are a citizen of the United States.
- You live in Maine.

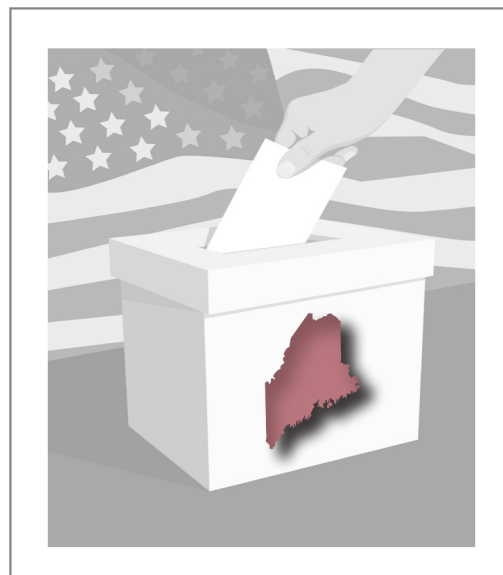
## ★ How Do I Register to Vote?

You are required to fill out a ***voter registration card***.

***You must*** complete the ***front and back of the card***

- Sign and date the card.
- For detailed instructions, go to :

<http://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/elec/voter-info/voterguide.html>





# Registering to Vote

## ★ When Can I Register to Vote?

You can register to vote anytime, even on Election Day.

## ★ Where Do I Register to Vote?

*You can register to vote:*

- By mail. It needs to be received by your City Clerk by Tuesday, October 13, 2015.
- In person at your city or town office during regular business hours.
- At any Bureau of Motor Vehicles by October 6, 2015.
- At your voting place on Election Day.

*To register to vote*, you need to prove who you are and where you live.

- Bring identification with your current home address (*not a P.O. Box*).
- If your ID does not have your current home address, bring an official document such as an electric bill or paycheck.

## ★ What is a Political Party?

- A political party is a group of people who share the same ideas about how the government should work.
- When you register to vote, you can join a political party if you want. It is free. You can also change your party registration.
- Examples of political parties include: Democratic, Green Independent, and Republican.
- You do not have to join a party to vote. Just check “Unenrolled” on the registration card.



# How Do I Vote?



## Where Do I Go to Vote?

Call your city hall or town office to find out where you should vote.



## What Time Can I Vote?

Each voting place opens sometime between 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. on Election Day. The opening time is *not the same* for all cities and towns.



***All voting places close at 8:00 p.m.***



## What Will I Do at the Voting Place?

- When you get to your voting place, you will need to tell the election clerk your name and maybe your address. Your name will be on a list if you are registered to vote.
- The election clerk will give you a ballot.
- You will go into a private voting booth and complete your ballot.
- You will put the ballot in the ballot box or a machine.



## Do I Need an ID (Identification Card)?

- If you are a first-time voter, or if you have moved, you should bring your ID and proof of your address (example: driver's license and electric bill).
- Don't worry. No eligible voter can be turned away.

## ★ How Do I Fill Out the Ballot?



- A ballot is the piece of paper where you mark your vote.
- Different towns and cities use different types of ballots.
- Each ballot tells you how to mark your choices.
- If you have a question, ask an election clerk.
- Review your ballot.
- You do not have to vote on everything. Only the parts you vote on will count.
- If you make a mistake, you can ask for a new ballot.

## ★ What if I Can't Read the Ballot?

- You can get help.
- A friend or a relative can help you. Your helper does not have to be a voter or be old enough to vote.
- You can use the **Accessible Voting System (AVS)** which is voting by phone.
- An election worker can help you with your ballot.
- Your employer or union official cannot help you vote.

## ★ How Do I Vote by AVS?

- Go to the voting place and tell the election clerk you want to use Accessible Voting System (AVS) or vote by phone.
- The election clerk will bring you to the AVS phone. The election clerk will make sure you are getting the correct ballot and hand you the phone.
- You will hear the voting questions. Vote yes or no by pressing keys on the phone or by pressing a large yellow button.
- A printed copy of your completed ballot will be faxed to you at the AVS phone.
- You put your ballot in the ballot box or machine.



## Voting: In-Person or Absentee



### Do I Have to Go to the Voting Place on Election Day to Vote?

No. If you are registered to vote, you can ask for an absentee ballot. You must do so **by October 29, 2015**.



If you ask for an absentee ballot **after October 29th**, you must complete a special application. You must give a reason you cannot go to your polling place on Election Day.

The *only* reasons you can choose are:

- You will be out of town unexpectedly all day on Election Day.
- You have a disability.
- You live on an island and cannot get transportation on Election Day.
- You have an illness and cannot leave home or treatment facility.



### What is Absentee Voting?

Absentee voting lets you vote at home and mail your absentee ballot to your city or town clerk, or you can complete an absentee ballot in person at your city or town clerk office.

The city or town clerk must **receive absentee ballots by 8:00 p.m. on Election Day** for your vote to count.



### How Do I Get an Absentee Ballot?

- Ask for an absentee ballot from your city or town clerk.
- Request an absentee ballot online from the Division of Elections at: [www.maine.gov/cgi-bin/online/AbsenteeBallot/index.pl](http://www.maine.gov/cgi-bin/online/AbsenteeBallot/index.pl)
- You can also ask for an absentee ballot for an immediate family member.
- The city or town clerk will tell you who is considered an immediate family member.





## Voting: In-Person or Absentee

### ★ What Do I Do with My Absentee Ballot?

- Fill out the ballot. Remember, you don't have to vote for every question. It is okay to leave questions blank.
- Mail or deliver your ballot to your town/city clerk's office.

*It must be received before 8:00 p.m. on Election Day.*

### ★ How Do I Find My City or Town Clerk?

You can find the address and phone number for your city or town clerk at: <http://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/elec/munic.html>

### ★ You Can Also Contact:

Office of the Secretary of State  
Division of Elections  
101 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333-0101

Phone: **207-624-7650**  
Email: [cec.elections@maine.gov](mailto:cec.elections@maine.gov)

Website: [www.maine.gov/sos/cec/elec/](http://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/elec/)



### ★ Is There a Way to See the Ballot Before the Election?

You can print it from the website:

[http://www.maine.gov/portal/government/edemocracy/voter\\_lookup.php](http://www.maine.gov/portal/government/edemocracy/voter_lookup.php)



## Things to Remember

### ★ What if My Name is not on the List at the Voting Place?

Bring an ID in case you need to register or are voting for the first time.

- You may need to register to vote.
- The election clerk will help you. You may be sent to a different voting place.
- You may need to vote a challenge ballot.

### ★ What If I Need Help at the Voting Place?

Ask an election clerk for help if you have any questions. Election clerks can help you fill out a ballot and give you a new one if you need it.

They can also help you use AVS, which is voting by phone. You will not be the only one with questions!

### ★ How Can I Avoid the Crowds?

- Go to the voting place when it tends to be less crowded:  
10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. or 1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.
- Or, you can vote at home with an absentee ballot. Just be sure your absentee ballot **is received by your city hall or town office before 8:00 p.m. on November 3, 2015.**



# Citizen Initiative

## ★ What Do I Vote On in a Referendum Election?

In this election, **you will vote YES or NO to questions** about whether Maine should create a new law and should borrow money.

## ★ What Is a Citizen Initiative?

- Any Maine registered voter can create a proposed law.
- The voter must submit an application. It has to include the full text of the proposed law.
- If the application is approved, a petition form is created by the Secretary of State. The petition needs to be signed by Maine voters.
- This year the petition must have 61,123 valid signatures to be put on the ballot (10% of the total votes for governor in the 2014 election).
- Before the referendum is placed on the ballot, the Maine legislature has the chance to pass the proposed law.
- If the legislature does not pass the law, the referendum is placed on the ballot. Then Maine voters will vote for or against the proposed law.

## 1

## BALLOT QUESTION 1: Citizen Initiative

*An Act To Strengthen the Maine Clean Election Act, Improve Disclosure and Make Other Changes to the Campaign Finance Laws.*

**“Do you want to change Maine law to allow publicly financed state candidates to qualify for additional funds under certain limits and rules in the Maine Clean Election Act, to improve the disclosure of who pays for political ads, and to increase penalties for violations of campaign finance law?”**

### What this question means:

Do you want political candidates who use the public funding system to have the opportunity to get more money to run for office? Do you want to learn more about who is paying for political advertisements? Do you want to increase the punishment for people who break the laws about the money politicians use to run for office?

#### Argument for **YES:**

- It will allow more people to run for office.
- Candidates could focus more time on the issues and not on raising money.
- It would let candidates refuse money from special interest groups.
- The people of Maine will know the names of the top three funders for political ads on television.
- People who break the law about how money is used in political races will receive greater punishment.

#### Argument for **NO:**

- Maine does not need to spend another \$1 million dollars a year to support candidates.
- It is not the role of government to fund campaigns.
- Candidates need to raise the money to run for office themselves.



# Bonds In Referendum Election

## ★ What Is A Bond?

- The State of Maine borrows money by issuing bonds.
- The State pays interest on the amount it borrows.
- The people must vote on the ballot to approve the bonds issued by the State of Maine.
- If the voters approve the bond, the treasurer sells the bonds to fund the projects. These projects might include roads, bridges, schools, clean water, and research.
- The State pays back the amount it borrows plus interest within a fixed time period (usually ten years).

## ★ How Does A Bond Work?

As a citizen, you get to choose what projects the state will fund by voting for or against a bond issue.

## ★ How Does Passing These Bonds Impact The State Of Maine?

- The state's total budget for next year is nearly \$3.6 billion.
- The total increase in Maine's debt if all the bond issues pass would be \$127.5 million.
- The state of Maine currently has \$495 million in outstanding debt.
- Maine's debt is 2.4% of personal income. The national average is about 2.6%.
- Maine's most recent bonds were given a national rating as "stable."

## ★ For More Maine Bond Details

Click on the Citizen's Guide at:

<http://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/elec/upcoming/index.html>

## 2

**BALLOT QUESTION 2: Bond Issue**

**“Do you favor a \$15,000,000 bond issue for the construction of new energy-efficient affordable homes for low-income seniors, the adaptive reuse of structures for homes for low-income seniors and the repair and weatherization of existing homes for low-income seniors, which will create jobs and will be matched by an estimated \$22,600,000 in private and other funds?”**

**What this question means:**

The state would borrow \$15 million to build new or repair homes for low income seniors. This would make the homes use less energy. Maine would pay \$15 million. An additional \$22.6 million would come from private and other funds.

**Argument for YES:**

- The bond will provide money to improve older homes and build new homes for low income seniors.
- It will build new homes that use less energy.
- It will repair older homes to use less energy.
- Interest rates are at an historic low, which means that borrowing now will cost less than it might in the future if we wait.
- Use of the bond funds could result in construction jobs right now.
- Maine’s share of the cost of these projects is \$15 million. Our share will be matched by \$22.6 million in private and other funds.

**Argument for NO:**

- Maine would add \$15 million to its debt.
- It will cost a total of \$19.1 million in principal and interest over ten years to repay the money.
- Other projects may be more worthy of the state’s money.

## 3

**BALLOT QUESTION 3: Bond Issue**

**“Do you favor an \$85,000,000 bond issue for construction, reconstruction and rehabilitation of highways and bridges and for facilities and equipment related to ports, harbors, marine transportation, freight and passenger railroads, aviation, transit and bicycle and pedestrian trails, to be used to match an estimated \$121,500,000 in federal and other funds?”**

**What this question means:**

The state would borrow \$85 million to improve and repair highways, bridges, harbors, ports, railroads, airports, and boat transportation. Maine would pay \$85 million. An additional \$121.5 million would come from the federal government and other sources.

**Argument for YES:**

- The bond will provide money to improve highways and bridges as well as facilities to support all existing modes of transportation in Maine.
- It will make our roads and bridges safer.
- Improvements in transportation systems support commerce and tourism for the future.
- Interest rates are at an historic low, which means that borrowing now will cost less than it might in the future if we wait.
- Use of the bond funds could result in construction jobs right now.
- Maine’s share of the cost of these projects is \$85 million. Our share will be matched by \$121.5 million in private and other funds.

**Argument for NO:**

- Maine would add \$85 million to its debt.
- It will cost a total of \$108.4 million in principal and interest over ten years to repay the money.
- Other projects may be more worthy of the state’s money.



# Thank You

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# League of Women Voters of Maine



## League of Women Voters of Maine

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Website: [www.lwvme.org](http://www.lwvme.org)

The League of Women Voters of Maine promotes and encourages informed and active participation in government through education and advocacy. We never support or oppose any political party or candidate.

**League of Women Voters of Maine Education Fund** is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, public-policy educational organization. It builds citizen participation in the democratic process, studies key community issues at all government levels in an unbiased manner, and enables people to seek positive solutions to public policy issues through education and conflict management.

Visit our Facebook page:  
[www.facebook.com/LWVME](http://www.facebook.com/LWVME)

And our Twitter feed: @LWVME



## ★ Join the League of Women Voters of Maine!

Since women gained the right to vote in 1920, we have educated voters to register and vote. We invite you to become a part of this organization, which is rich in history and accomplishments.

**The League of Women Voters of Maine** is one of the most respected groups directly involved in keeping citizens engaged in local, state, and national government.

**Join online at [www.lwvme.org/join.html](http://www.lwvme.org/join.html)** to pay by credit card or PayPal only. Or mail your contact information and a check to:

League of Women Voters of Maine  
PO Box 863  
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**Available membership categories:** \$55 one member, \$85 two members in the same household, \$25 for students and first-time members, and \$100 for mentors whose dues support discounted memberships for others. Dues are not tax deductible.