The information contained in this pamphlet was provided by the County Elections Department at the January 26, 2018 FESP meeting along with some additional research by FESP.
REGISTERING TO VOTE

It is possible to register to vote in a number of ways:

1) **Online:** [http://registertovote.ca.gov](http://registertovote.ca.gov)

2) **Text:** Text "2vote" and put "Contra Costa" in the text line and you can register using your phone

3) **Submit a paper application** form in the mail. Paper applications may be picked up at the Martinez county elections office, libraries, U.S. post offices or Department of Motor Vehicle offices. Applications must be filled out completely and be postmarked or hand-delivered to the county elections office at least 15 days before the election. To request that a paper voter registration application be mailed to you, call (800) 345-VOTE(8683) or email Elections Division staff at [http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/contact/email-elections-division](http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/contact/email-elections-division)

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**LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT**

There are three levels of government for which we vote: local, state, and federal.

- **Local government** makes decisions for the local community including police, parks, fixing roads, and schools. Local government has city mayors and county Boards of Supervisors.

- **State government** makes laws about education, freeways, water and is made up of a Senate and an Assembly. The chief executive officer is the Governor. Contra Costa has three state Senators and four state Assembly members.

- **Federal government** is made up of the House of Representatives and the Senate (called Congress) and carries out the legislative authority granted to them by the Constitution including regulating interstate and foreign commerce; declaring war; and setting taxation, spending and other national policies. Each state has 2 Senators and a number of Representatives depending on the state’s population. The chief executive is the President. California has two Senators; Contra Costa has four congressional representatives.


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**Question:** “Why should I vote? My vote doesn’t matter!”

**A:** There are places where a race was determined by a single vote!

**ELECTIONS CAN BE CLOSE!**

- 2017 Virginia House of Representatives............Tie vote
- 2014 North Carolina District Court..................5 votes
- 2002 Washington House of Representatives......1 vote
MAKE VOTING EASY! PERMANENT VOTE-BY-MAIL VOTING

Any registered voter may become a permanent vote-by-mail voter. As a permanent vote-by-mail voter, you will automatically receive a vote-by-mail ballot for each election.

To become a permanent vote-by-mail voter, you may fill out a Vote-By-Mail application (available in multiple languages) online: http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voter-registration/vote-mail#perm or you may obtain an application from your county elections office.

Question: “There are too many issues so I don’t know what to vote on!”

A: Voters do not have to vote the entire ballot and may vote for only those issues that they want to.

RESOURCES FOR ELECTION DAY

Contra Costa’s Election Department provides information on local measures and candidates/offices up for election. https://www.contracostacore.us/

Voter’s Edge California, an online election guide from the League of Women Voters of California Education Fund and MapLight, provides information on the entire ballot, with national, state, and local contests. Find Voter’s Edge California online at https://votersedge.org/

Official Voter Information Guide from the California Secretary of State provides detailed information about the state ballot measures, statements from the candidates running for constitutional office, and voting resources. Find the Official Voter Information Guide online at: voterguide.sos.ca.gov

WHO CAN REGISTER TO VOTE IN CALIFORNIA?

- A United States citizen & resident of California
- 18 years or older on Election Day
- Not currently in state or federal prison or on parole for the conviction of a felony.
- Not currently found mentally incompetent to vote by a court
  For more information, see Secretary of State website: http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voting-resources/voting-california/who-can-vote-california/voting-rights-californians/
  For more information, see Secretary of State website: http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voting-info/conservatorship/
- Voters must register 15 days prior to an election. However, if they miss the deadline, they can go to the County Election Office and vote a provisional ballot.
ACCESSIBILITY OF VOTING

There are a number of ways to vote.

- A voter may request an absentee ballot which will be mailed to them 7 days before the election and can be returned by mail or dropped off at a polling site on Election Day.

- A voter may vote one week ahead of time at one of the county’s new “Regional Early Voting” program sites (Richmond, El Cerrito, Concord, Bay Point, Antioch, San Ramon, Lafayette). For a site list: [http://www.cocovote.us/registration-and-voting-options/vote-before-election-day/](http://www.cocovote.us/registration-and-voting-options/vote-before-election-day/)

- A voter may drop off their ballot starting 29 days before election day at one of 27 drop-off locations throughout the county. [https://www.cocovote.us/ballot-drop-off/](https://www.cocovote.us/ballot-drop-off/)

- If anyone ever has a problem not being able to vote at their polling site, they can cast a provisional ballot which will be later reviewed.

- Employers have to allow 2 unpaid hours for an employee to go and vote.


- Every county has a different federal mandate for the languages they must offer. Contra Costa ballots are available in English, Spanish and Chinese and they offer a ballot translation guide, available at polling sites and for vote-by-mail voters, in Vietnamese, Korean and Tagalog. For more assistance contact the county Elections Department at eo@vote.cccounty.us or call the office at: 925.335.7800.

- For voter assistance in a specific language, call one of the toll-free Voter Hotline numbers: [http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voting-resources/voting-california/voter-hotlines/](http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voting-resources/voting-california/voter-hotlines/)

Question: “Why should I vote? My vote doesn’t matter!”

A: Power resides in the people and the government is ruled by leaders elected by the people.