



Numbered Memo 2023-02

TO: County Boards of Elections
FROM: Karen Brinson Bell, Executive Director
RE: Issuing Voter Photo ID Cards
DATE: August 29, 2023

This numbered memo provides guidance related to the issuance of voter photo identification cards (“Voter Photo ID Cards”) by county boards of elections pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 163-82.8A.

Voter Photo ID Cards

County boards of elections are required by statute to issue Voter Photo ID Cards for free upon request to any voter registered to vote in the county.¹ Even if a registered voter already has an acceptable photo ID for voting purposes, such as a North Carolina drivers license, the registered voter cannot be denied a Voter Photo ID Card and must be issued a card for free upon request.

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions About Voter Photo ID Cards

1. When is a county board of elections required to issue Voter Photo ID Cards?

Voter Photo ID Cards must be issued at any time the county board office is open, except during the time period between the end of early voting through the end of Election Day.² Pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 163-227.2(b), the end of early voting is 3:00 P.M. on the last Saturday before an election. A county board should still process Voter Photo ID Card requests for voters in the county board office prior to 3:00 P.M. who remain in line to have their request processed. The statutory prohibition on issuing Voter Photo ID Cards between the end of early voting through Election Day only applies when the county board of elections is conducting an election in that county.

¹ N.C.G.S. § 163-82.8A(a).

² N.C.G.S. § 163-82.8A(d)(2).

County boards of elections must therefore ensure, to the greatest extent possible, that they are able to issue Voter Photo ID Cards at the county board office during regular business hours. This means the county board must ensure that an adequate stock of supplies is on hand to issue the number of ID cards that are reasonably expected to be requested, and staff are available to create and issue the cards when the office is open for business.

2. Can a voter request a replacement or duplicate card?

In certain circumstances, yes. A voter is allowed to request a duplicate card if the voter loses or defaces their Voter Photo ID Card. A voter may also request a replacement card if the voter has changed their name and has updated their voter registration to reflect the new name.³ A change in appearance is not listed in the statute as a permitted reason for a voter to be issued a duplicate or replacement card.

Otherwise, when a county board issues a new Voter Photo ID Card to a voter, that voter can only request another *new* card from that county when their current card expires. A county may, however, issue a voter a new card if the original card was mistakenly printed with incorrect information or an incorrect photo, or if the county determines the photo on the newly printed card is unusable once the card is printed.

Regardless of whether an ID card is a newly issued card, a duplicate, or a replacement, no fee may be charged for the card.

3. Can a county board issue Voter Photo ID Cards at locations other than the county board office?

Yes, as long as the county board can process card requests during regular business hours at the county board office.

If a county has more than one operational ID printer, the additional printer(s) can be taken to other locations during regular business hours, including early voting sites, as long as staff can still process ID requests in the office. Even if the county board office has only one operational ID printer, that printer can always be taken to other locations to issue IDs outside of regular business hours, including on weekends. Finally, if the county board has only one operational ID printer, that printer can be taken to other locations during regular business hours, but *only if* staff can still process ID card requests at the board office, including taking the voter's photo, to later mail the ID card to the voter. This last option, however, should not be used during early voting—an ID

³ N.C.G.S. §§ 163-82.8A(d)(3) and (4).

printer should always be available at the board office during regular business hours during the early voting period.

4. Does a voter have to provide any documentation when requesting a Voter Photo ID Card?

No special documentation is needed. The voter only needs to “provide the registered voter’s name, the registered voter’s date of birth, and the last four digits of the voter’s social security number.”⁴ The voter provides this information by completing a Photo ID Request Form⁵ at the county board office when requesting a new card.

If a voter is requesting a duplicate or replacement card, the voter can also provide this information by mailing a completed Photo ID Request Form to the county board office, or by providing the information required by the Form over the phone. When a request is received over the phone, the county should complete the form with the information provided by the voter and write “Phone Request” on the signature line. Even when requesting a duplicate or replacement card, the voter must provide their name, date of birth, and last four digits of their social security number, for the county board to confirm that the requester is “the registered voter.”⁶

5. Can a voter request a card if they do not have a social security number listed in their voter registration record? What if a voter’s date of birth or social security number on the request form do not match their registration record?

The voter’s name, date of birth, and last four digits of the social security number are used to assist in confirming the requester is the voter located in the registration records. If the voter does not have a social security number listed in their registration record, a county board is still required by statute to issue the voter a Voter Photo ID Card if staff can use other details provided on the form to confirm that the requester is the registered voter. If staff can confirm the requester is the registered voter, then the card can be issued at that time. The voter should then be asked to update their registration record with any missing information by submitting a voter registration application; but they are not required to do so.

If either the date of birth or social security number on the ID request form does not match the voter’s date of birth or social security number in their registration record, but the county board is still able to confirm that the requester is the registered voter with either a date of birth or social

⁴ N.C.G.S. §§ 163-82.8A(d)(1) and (4).

⁵ Available to county boards via the State Board’s Secure FTP.

⁶ N.C.G.S. §§ 163-82.8A(d)(3) and (4).

security number that does match, the voter will need to update their voter registration record with the correct information before staff can process their ID request.⁷ The voter can do this by submitting a voter registration form with the corrected information, before the ID Request Form is processed. If both the date of birth and the social security number on the ID request form do not match a voter registration record, the ID request form cannot be processed without the requester first becoming a registered voter.

In the event the voter requesting the card has been notified they must show “HAVA ID” before voting pursuant to federal law and N.C.G.S. § 163-166.12, updating the voter’s registration record to include their social security number will, once the social security number is verified, satisfy the requirement that the voter show HAVA ID before voting. Requesting a Voter Photo ID Card on its own, however, will not satisfy the requirement to show HAVA ID.

6. Can a North Carolina registered voter obtain a Voter Photo ID Card from a board of elections in a county where they are not a registered voter?

No. Voters must be registered to vote in a county before they can be issued a Voter Photo ID Card by that county’s board of elections. Because voter registration is managed county-by-county in our state,⁸ a county board of elections cannot issue a Voter Photo ID Card to a voter registered in another county.

7. Can a person register to vote for the first time in a county and be issued a Voter Photo ID Card at the same time?

Yes, but only if registering at an early voting site using same-day registration. Otherwise, the person is not a “registered voter” until the address verification mailing process is complete.

If the voter is registering to vote as a same-day registrant under the operative language of N.C.G.S. § 163-82.6A,⁹ the Voter Photo ID Card can be issued by the county board to the voter after the voter’s voter registration application has been processed at the voting site, the voter is assigned an NCID, and the voter has provided proof of residence with a document listed in N.C.G.S. § 163-166.12(a)(2). Under the language of the same-day registration statute, a same-

⁷ As county boards are aware, data entry errors or pre-SEIMS legacy voter records could lead to this rare situation.

⁸ See N.C.G.S. §§ 163-82.1, -82.6, -82.7, -82.9.

⁹ See [Numbered Memo 2016-15](#).

day registrant is a “registered voter” upon complying with these requirements and is therefore eligible to receive a Voter Photo ID Card.

Otherwise, if a person is a new voter registration applicant, they may apply to register and request a Voter Photo ID Card at the same time, but that card cannot be issued to them immediately. Such a person may submit their registration application, complete a Voter Photo ID Request Form, and have their picture taken for an ID by county board staff at the same time. But the Voter Photo ID Card can only be printed and issued to the voter after the voter registration application has been processed and the voter has passed the mail verification procedures in N.C.G.S. § 163-82.7. When this occurs, the county board must promptly mail the Voter Photo ID Card to the voter or notify them that it is available to be picked up, whichever is the voter’s preference. If the person is applying to register after the registration deadline for a primary or election under N.C.G.S. § 163-82.6(d), then they cannot be registered until after the primary or election, at which point the ID card should be issued. **Note** that there is no automated process in SEIMS to prompt the issuance of a Voter Photo ID Card after a person’s registration is processed, so county boards will need to track such instances to be sure that card requests are being appropriately fulfilled once registration occurs.

8. Does a Voter Photo ID Card have any effect on a voter’s existing registration?

Completing the Voter Photo ID Card Request Form will not change the voter’s registration record. If the voter needs to make changes to the information in their voter registration record, the voter will need to complete a separate voter registration form. Furthermore, while Voter Photo ID Cards expire 10 years after the card is issued,¹⁰ the card’s expiration does not convert a voter’s registration to inactive. Similarly, a voter possessing a valid, unexpired Voter Photo ID Card can still become inactive through uniform list maintenance procedures or otherwise be removed from the voter rolls for a permissible reason.¹¹

Submission of a Voter Photo ID Request Form does not, on its own, count as a contact for list maintenance purposes, since there is no address confirmation involved. When the voter requests a card in person, though, staff can ask the voter if they would like to confirm the information in their voter record by submitting a voter registration form, which counts as a contact for list maintenance purposes.

¹⁰ N.C.G.S. §§ 163-82.8A(a), (d)(5).

¹¹ N.C.G.S. §§ 163-82.14.

9. Can a county board require a voter to make an appointment to be issued a Voter Photo ID Card?

No. County boards of elections are required to issue a Voter Photo ID Card, upon request, to any person registered to vote in the county. If a voter calls ahead about going to the county board office to request a Voter Photo ID Card, staff can encourage the voter to visit the county board office at certain times where an expected wait time will be shorter (e.g., non-peak hours or days with more staff in the office). Staff can also encourage large groups of voters seeking to request a Voter Photo ID Card at the same time in person to contact the office ahead of time so that the county can ensure adequate staff are available to timely assist the voters. But a county board cannot deny a voter's valid request for a card solely because the voter did not make an appointment.