

Opinion

Citizen Engagement Corner

You, the Brookline Street List and Voting



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Posted Jan 4, 2019 at 1:07 PM Updated Jan 4, 2019 at 1:38 PM

Why is answering the Brookline Street List important? This short form census questionnaire arrives in your mailbox every January or February, asking you to confirm your street address, residents in your household, and a few other things. It is used by Brookline's Board of Registrars of Voters to maintain Brookline's voter list.

While responding to this census questionnaire might seem like a nuisance, it is actually quite important. The Brookline Street List is the town's official list of residents, including all eligible registered voters. All residents who are not registered voters and who do not respond to this census are deleted from this list. All residents who are registered voters but who do not respond to this census are made inactive on, and may ultimately be removed from, Brookline's voter list. In order to protect your right to vote, or avoid delays on Election Day, you need to respond to the Brookline Street List every year.

All registered voters not responding to the Street List are automatically sent a second mailing -- a postage prepaid confirmation notice. This notice confirms that the Board of Registrars of Voters did not receive a response to the Street List questionnaire from the voter and asks the voter to confirm their current residence. Failure to respond may lead to removal of the voter from the voter list.

A common misconception about your voter registration is that it automatically follows you wherever you move. Not true. Anytime you move within the town of Brookline you need to register to vote from that new address, or at least notify the Town Clerk's Office in writing of the address change. This will keep you from being sent back to your old precinct to vote on Election Day, since state law requires that you must vote from the precinct where you appear on the voter list. And every time you move into a new community you must register to vote there; otherwise, you jeopardize your right to exercise your vote.

The voting process:

Checking in at the polls: The voters list is statutorily required to be arranged by street. At the polls, you are first asked your street, then the number of the residence, and finally your name. What if your name isn't on the list? The poll worker will direct you to the Warden's Table to check the inactive list. If you are not on this list, you must produce an ID and sign an affidavit that you still reside at the address in question or that you moved within the town, in order to vote. The Warden will also contact the Town Clerk's Office while you wait to determine if you are eligible to vote in the town of Brookline. (If you are registered in another precinct, you must go there to cast your ballot.)

If you are determined ineligible to vote, you may vote a provisional ballot by producing a current ID and signing an affidavit. Provisional ballots are reviewed by the Board of Registrars of Voters and are counted once the voter has been determined eligible to vote.

Your vote is your voice and you want to be able to use it!

Prepared and submitted by a member of the League of Women Voters of Brookline. The League is a nonpartisan organization that encourages informed and active participation in government and that works to influence public policy through education and advocacy.