



Digest of Penalties for Improper Voter Registration Actions

Improperly registering people to vote can result in criminal prosecution! This digest highlights some of the criminal penalties for improperly registering people to vote in California. (This summary is meant for convenience only; it does not have the force of law and does not constitute legal advice.)

Some criminal penalties apply to voters who register themselves improperly:

1. If a registrant commits perjury (lies under oath) regarding their name or place of birth on a voter registration application, the registrant may be imprisoned for up to four years (California Penal Code, § 126).
2. If a registrant completes a voter registration application knowing they are not entitled to vote, they may be jailed for up to a year or imprisoned for up to three years (California Elections Code (CAEC), § 18100).
3. If a registrant who is not entitled to vote votes or attempts to vote, or if a registrant votes more than once, they may be jailed for up to a year or imprisoned for up to three years (CAEC, § 18560).

Other criminal penalties apply to those improperly registering other people:

1. If you knowingly register someone not entitled to vote, attempt to register a nonexistent person (e.g., a deceased person or an animal), try to register a fictitious (fake) person, or register someone who has not asked you to help them register to vote, you may be jailed for up to one year or imprisoned for up to three years (CAEC, §§ 18100, 18101).
2. If you help register a voter and collect their registration application, you must return it to the Department of Elections within three business days or before the close of registration, whichever is earlier. You must also allow the voter to return the application directly if that is the voter's preference. If you fail to do either, you may be fined up to one thousand dollars (\$1,000). (CAEC, § 18103.)
3. If you change the political party preference selection on someone else's voter registration application, you may be jailed for one year or imprisoned for up to three years (CAEC, § 18106).
4. If you mail a voter registration application to anyone, you must include a notice to the recipient instructing them to disregard (ignore) the form if they are already registered. If you fail to include this notice, you may be fined up to two hundred dollars (\$200) (CAEC, §§ 2158, 18107).
5. If you help someone register to vote and fail to give them the voter registration receipt, you may be fined up to two hundred dollars (\$200) (CAEC, §§ 2158, 18107).
6. If you are being paid to help collect voter registration applications and do not complete all of the fields in any form's circulator section (blue box), you may be guilty of a misdemeanor (CAEC, §§ 2150, 2159, 18108).
7. If someone requests a voter registration application, you must give them one. If you fail to do so, you may be fined up to two hundred dollars (\$200) (CAEC, § 18107).
8. If you offer food, prizes, discounts, or any other form of compensation to encourage people to vote in a federal election, you may be in violation of federal law (52 U.S.C. § 10307(c)).

9. If you suborn perjury (persuade someone to lie under oath) or knowingly help an ineligible person register to vote, both you and the perjurer may be charged with perjury (California Penal Code, § 127).
10. If you write any statement supporting or opposing a candidate or measure on another person's voter registration application, you may be guilty of a misdemeanor (CAEC, § 18105).
11. If you misrepresent yourself in the circulator section (blue box) of a voter registration application, you may be fined up to one thousand dollars (\$1,000) and/or jailed for up to six months for the first or second offense; for subsequent offenses of the same kind you may be fined up to ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) and/or jailed for up to one year (CAEC, §§ 2159, 18108.1).
12. If you disclose a registrant's signature or driver license, identification card, or social security number, to someone other than an elections official or the person in charge of a voter registration drive, you may be fined up to five hundred dollars (\$500) (CAEC, §§ 2138.5, 18111).

Note: Conviction for any voter registration-related crime resulting in jail or prison time may also result in a fine of up to one thousand dollars (\$1,000) in cases of misdemeanors or up to twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) in cases of felonies. This is in addition to the imprisonment prescribed. (CAEC, § 18001.)