



Primary voter registration deadline April 20

BY VICTORIA COX
EDITOR

The last day to register to vote in the 2026 Primary Election is Monday, April 20. Registrations must be returned to The LaRue County Clerk's Office, located at 209 W. High St., Hodgenville, by 4 p.m., postmarked as April 20 or received online at govoteky.com by 4 p.m.

The online portal to request an absentee ballot can be found at vrsws.sos.ky.gov/abrweb/. It will open on April 4 and close on May 5. If you are unable to mark a paper ballot due to disability, contact the county clerk's office to request an accessible absentee ballot. All mail-in absentee ballots must be received at the county clerk's office by 6 p.m. on Election Day.

In-person excused absentee voting will be available May 6 through May 13. With the exception of Saturday and Sunday, residents can cast their vote from 8 a.m. to

4 p.m. at the clerk's office. Requirements to be eligible include a student who resides temporarily outside his or her county; voter or voter's spouse who has surgery or hospitalization scheduled during Early voting and Election Day; uniformed service member who finds out they will be confined to a military base during Early Voting and Election Day and is not eligible for a mail in ballot; in last trimester of pregnancy; voter who temporarily resides outside the state but still eligible to vote in KY; or a person who due to age, disability or illness will be unable to attend Early voting or Election Day vote centers; and voters who will be out of the county during Early voting or Election Day.

Early in-person voting will be held at the clerk's office from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on May 14 to May 16. Anyone registered LaRue County voter is eligible to cast their vote during this time.

No in-person voting will be available on Monday, May 18.

Election day voting will occur from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. on May 19. LaRue County voting centers include:

- Magnolia/Mt Sherman: LaRue County Fiscal Court Magnolia building, 432 Mill Street, Magnolia.
- Upton: West Point Bank, located at 114 N. Walnut Street
- Lyons: Rolling Fork Christian Church, located at 2630 Lyons Station Rd, New Haven.
- Vote Center: First Baptist Church, located at 730 Tonieville Rd, Hodgenville.

Please note that the Magnolia/Mt. Sherman and Upton locations have changed.

More information relating to the LaRue County primary election, including a sample ballot, will be published in the coming weeks. For questions or more information in the interim, contact LaRue County Clerk Rhonda Metcalf at 270-358-3544.

LaRue advocating for LaRue: CASA seeking local volunteers

BY VICTORIA COX
EDITOR

Thousands of children are placed under petition for dependency, neglect or abuse in the Commonwealth of Kentucky each year; in 2025, 64 of these petitions were filed for LaRue County children. To ensure the voice and best interest of these children are observed, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of the Heartland works diligently to advocate for the county's most vulnerable — but they need your help to continue this mission.

Organized in Hardin County nearly two decades ago, CASA accomplishes its mission by recruiting, training and supporting a network of volunteers who act as advocates for abused and neglected children under the protection of the LaRue County Family Court system. With their vision, every child in need is provided with a compassionate, caring and qualified volunteer advocate — and, ultimately, a safe, permanent, loving home where they can thrive.

"Volunteers are vital in making sure that those children have a support system, that they have someone advocating solely for their best interests," said Michelle Kail, Executive Director of CASA of the Heartland. "There are a lot of other moving parts in those court cases — we have social workers, we have attorneys — and everybody is focused on something different or a larger picture, whereas the CASA volunteer is solely focused on what is in the best interest for that child or the children involved in the case."

LaRue County District Court Judge Teresa McMahan-Miller — who has been an active proponent of the organization for many years and was involved in its expansion into LaRue in 2023 — said the county essentially only has two social workers, both of whom can only do so much. CASA volunteers, however, give her an extra set of eyes for the most critical cases.

"Your social workers are stretched so thin, and the family is going to tell you what they want you to hear, not what's really going on," she said. "[CASA volunteers] are really the unbiased party that's trying to help me figure out what's really happening."

To emphasize the value of CASA, Judge McMahan-Miller described a case where a volunteer ultimately kept a child from being placed back into an unsafe home.

"I can think of a situation where my CASA volunteer had been in a home and, because of certain observations they'd seen in the home, that brought to light, 'Okay, we're still having a substance abuse issue; we're still having some other issues,'" she said. "Sure enough, that thing came out after that, but it was my CASA that first brought that to our attention. They were getting ready to otherwise push for a full closure and return [of the child(ren)] when this was not ready for a return."

In 2025, CASA served 18 local children. They also had seven children whose cases were closed, meaning that the child was able to achieve permanency, whether that be through parent reunification, adoption or independent living. This was completed with nine total volunteers, two of which joined last year.

There are currently five children on LaRue County's waitlist; this means that the court has appointed a CASA volunteer to those cases, but there are not enough volunteers to serve them. Kail stressed the need for help from the local community to remedy this.

"We're relying very heavily right now on advocates from other counties — we have advocates from Nelson, Hardin, Green and Hart Counties right now advocating for children in LaRue," she said. "We want to get more LaRue



Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

CASA OF THE HEARTLAND

County individuals advocating for LaRue County children."

According to CASA, the benefits children reap from advocacy are priceless. Studies show that many foster children will change homes three or more times, and, on average, spends nearly two years in foster care. A child with a CASA volunteer, however, is more likely to find a safe, permanent home; is half as likely to re-enter the foster care system; and more likely to succeed in school and beyond. The organization also provides a financial benefit, as one year of CASA advocacy costs less than one month of foster care.

To be eligible to volunteer, individuals must be 21 or older, have at least a high school diploma or GED, have dependable personal transportation with state-mandated insurance coverage, and be able to pass an extensive background check. From there, volunteers complete a five-week training to learn how to be a CASA and how to advocate for children in need.

Responsibilities of a volunteer include contacting and visiting the child(ren) at least once a month; attending court hearings, foster care reviews, family, team and case planning meetings; submitting recommendations concerning the case; and reporting any new incidents of child abuse or neglect. Advocates spend roughly 2-5 hours per month volunteering and are offered mileage reimbursement if travel is required.

"We want to break down as many barriers as possible to our local community members being able to serve as a CASA volunteer," Kail said. "Every child deserves a happy, healthy childhood and a safe and permanent home."

For those who would like to support the cause but cannot volunteer, consider the Friends of CASA Program.

"If you are passionate about the mission but maybe don't have the capacity or the time or the family dynamic [to advocate], you can serve as a Friend," Kail said. "Here, you will do an interview with us and find your niche — do you like event planning? Do you like fundraising? Do you like clerical work? [We'll find] something that you feel good about doing and can dedicate a certain amount of time to."

Overall, the biggest way to help support CASA, Kail said, is keeping the cause in mind. Whether it's a stranger looking for volunteer opportunities or a friend who has extraordinary talents, spread the word of CASA and their mission.

CASA will host a Pinwheel Planting from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Tuesday, March 24 at Lincoln Square in Hodgenville. The event kicks off National Child Abuse Prevention Month, which is observed in April each year, and invites the public to help stake pinwheels in the ground to represent hope for a happy and healthy life for each child in the community.

For questions, to get involved or to submit your volunteer application, visit casaheartland.org or call 270-982-2274.



How to stay safe during a tornado

Tornadoes are powerful storms that feature rotating columns of air and violent thunderstorms that reach from sky to ground. People in the path of tornadoes must recognize that these storms can topple homes, flip cars and send debris flying into the air.

The National Weather Service indicates about 1,200 tornadoes occur in the United States each year. The United States and Canada account for the most tornadoes in the world each year, though Canada, which experiences roughly 100 tornadoes yearly, gets far fewer than the U.S. The Government of Canada's Get Prepared website says tornadoes can last from a few minutes to several hours, and are most likely to occur between 4 p.m. and 8 p.m.

Tornadoes can occur at any time of year, and also outside of areas that are typically associated with the storms. That means it is imperative for just about everyone to know how to act in the event of a tornado. These safety tips can help people get ready.

WATCH VS. WARNING

The American Red Cross says either a watch or a warning is issued for tornadoes. A tornado watch means tornadoes are possible in the area and everyone should be prepared to act quickly. A tornado warning means a tornado is near and there is danger. Everyone should move to a safe location immediately when a warning is issued.

EMERGENCY KIT

It is important to assemble an emergency kit that can facilitate riding out a tornado. The kit should contain:

- Water (enough for each person for several days)
- Food that won't spoil, such as canned goods
- Manual can opener
- Wind-up or battery-powered flash-

light and radio

- First aid kit
- Extra car and house keys
- Cash
- Important family documents
- Infant formula/diapers
- Extra prescription medication

Seek safe shelter

The emergency kit should be housed in a safe shelter. A safe shelter means a safe room, basement, storm cellar, or a small interior room on the lowest level of a sturdy building, according to Ready.gov, the official website of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Stay away from windows, doors and outside walls. As the tornado blows through, protect your head and neck with your arms and by putting materials such as blankets on top of you.

If you are caught outside in a vehicle during a tornado, you might be able to drive out of the tornado's path by moving at right angles to the tornado if it is far enough away; otherwise, park the car out of traffic lanes and stay in the car with the seat belt on. Put your head down below the windows, and cover your head with a cushion, coat, or blanket, if possible. If you can get noticeably lower than the level of the roadway, such as in a ditch or valley, leave the car and lie in that area, covering your head with your hands.

Practice an emergency plan

It's vital that households establish an emergency tornado plan and practice it often, especially for people who live in an area prone to tornadoes. Practice moving to the safe locations you've identified. If you live in a mobile home, practice going to a safe place.

Tornadoes can rip apart lives in an instant with strong winds that can reach upwards of 200 miles per hour. Rain, lightning and even hail can make tornadoes even more dangerous. Everyone should know what to do if a tornado is spotted in the area.

Last day to pay county property taxes is April 30

BY VICTORIA COX
EDITOR

The last day to pay 2025 LaRue County property tax bills is Thursday, April 30. After this date, all delinquent bills will be turned in to The LaRue County Clerk's Office.

Payments made before this deadline will see a 21% late penalty applied to the bill.

Tax bill payments can be made online, in person or by mail.

To pay online, visit laruecountyky.gov/departments/sheriff and select "Click here for tax bills." The link will redirect to Property Taxes. After agreeing to the

terms and conditions of using the website, individuals may then search for their tax bill by bill number, owner name, address or map number. Online payments will require a debit or credit card, which will incur a 2.5% convenience fee. Fire dues cannot be removed through the online portal.

Payments can also be made in-person from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday at the sheriff's office, located at 209 West High Street, Suite 6, Hodgenville. All forms of payment are accepted on site, including cash, check, card, money order or cashier's checks.

If paying by mail, include a copy of the tax bill or the tax bill number; to receive a paid receipt, include a self-addressed stamped envelope with the payment.

A property tax drop-off box that is available 24/7 can also be found inside the foyer of the LaRue County Courthouse. Individuals utilizing this method who would like a receipt are also asked to include a self-addressed stamped envelope with the payment.

For questions or issues with your county tax bill, contact the LaRue County Sheriff's Office at 270-358-3120.