

VOTING IN THE PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY

Washington's Presidential Primary is a way for voters to help the major political parties choose presidential nominees.

This type of election has special conditions and is unlike regular elections. Voters who choose to participate in the nomination process will mark and sign party declarations on their ballot return envelopes. State law sets the date setting process, how candidates get on the ballot, and how parties use the results.

What is the Presidential Primary?

The Presidential Primary is a chance to participate in the nomination process for the office of U.S. President. Voters help the major political parties choose presidential nominees.

How do candidates get on Washington's ballot?

Each major political party decides which candidates appear on their side of the ballot. Each major party submits its final list of names to the Secretary of State's Office.

The order of political parties and candidates is determined by the number of votes cast for U.S. President at the last presidential election.

Candidates are listed on the ballot in alphabetical order within each party.

Minor party and independent candidates do not participate in the Presidential Primary and are selected through a convention process. They will appear on the ballot in November.

How does Washington define a "major political party?"

A major political party is "...a political party whose nominees for president and vice president received at least five percent of the total vote cast at the last presidential election." (RCW 29A.04.086)

Currently, only the Democratic and Republican parties qualify as major political parties.

How do I participate?

Voters in Washington do not declare a party when registering to vote, but to help the parties choose a presidential nominee, voters must select a party box and sign the declaration on the return envelope.

Vote for one candidate only. Both the Democratic and Republican ballots will appear on a single (consolidated) ballot. Unlike other elections, you may only vote for one candidate on the entire ballot.

Party declaration. Each major party writes its declaration and provides it to the Secretary of State's Office. For a vote to be counted, the candidate marked on the ballot must match the declaration box marked on the return envelope.

I am 17 years old, but I will be 18 by the November General Election. Can I vote in the Presidential Primary?

Yes. Ballots will be mailed to "Primary Only Voters".

By selecting a party, will I remain affiliated with that party?

No, your party selection will be removed from your voter record 60 days after certification of the Presidential Primary.

If I've already sent in my ballot but my candidate dropped out of the race, can I change my vote?

Once you return your ballot, you cannot change your vote. If you have filled out your ballot, but have not yet turned it in, you may correct your ballot (using the instructions printed on the ballot), print a replacement ballot from VoteWA.gov or obtain a replacement ballot from the Elections Office.

Why is a candidate who has dropped from the race still on my ballot?

State law requires each major political party to provide its final list of candidates to the Secretary of State's Office no later than January 9. Once each political party submits their list of candidates to the Secretary of State, changes cannot be made. (RCW 29A.56.031)

How will the political parties use the results?

The major political parties have adopted rules to decide how to use the Presidential Primary results to allocate delegates to the national nomination conventions. Both parties will be using the results of the Presidential Primary for delegate allocation (RCW 29A.56.050). For more information about how your party intends to allocate delegates, please contact that political party.

If I choose not to participate in the Presidential Primary, can I still vote in the General Election?

Yes. Your decision to participate, or not participate, in a primary has no bearing on your ability to vote in any other election.