

UNDERSTANDING MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS in Pennsylvania TUTORIAL

your VOTE is your VOICE

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This tutorial will provide information for eligible voters about:

- 1. How to understand the difference between;
- Closed Primary and
- General Elections
- 2. How to understand the difference between:
- MUNICIPAL (Local) and
- State and Federal Elections

The League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh is a nonprofit 501 (C)(3) organization and is nonpartisan, neither supporting nor opposing candidates or political parties.



YOU MATTER. YOUR VOTE MATTERS. YOUR VOICE MATTERS.

Voting makes your voice heard in one way that affects **real change--**by resulting in the policies and laws that *affect us all*.

The next election is a Municipal or "Local" Election. Registered voters have the chance to vote on November 2, 2021, where many key officials will be on the ballot.

First, let's figure out the difference between Pennsylvania's Closed Primaries and General Elections.

In PA's CLOSED
Primaries



Do I Choose a Political Party or NOT? Two MAJOR parties in the US:

Democratic and Republican

Two smaller parties in PA:

- Green and Libertarian
- PA has no "Independent" party

IMPORTANT: By Pennsylvania state law, only voters registered in **one of the two major political parties may participate** in the **Closed Primaries**

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A **political party** is an organized group of people who have the same ideas, or who see things the same way and who find candidates for elections who will represent those ideas and positions in government.

- When registering to vote a citizen may choose a party to belong to, but this is not required.
- However, in PA PRIMARIES, only voters enrolled in the Republican or the Democratic Parties may vote in the spring to elect their nominees for the fall General Election. In other words, Pennsylvania's Primaries are CLOSED to registered voters who are members of other minor political bodies, like the Green and Libertarian parties, or who don't belong to a party at all (are unaffiliated), and these voters may not vote in a Primary unless...
- \checkmark there is a ballot question, constitutional amendment, or special election.
- Update your voter registration by adding or changing party affiliation <u>here</u>.

To Register to Vote:

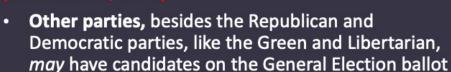
√ Go to vote.pa.gov

Two
DIFFERENT
Elections
Each Year

PRIMARY -spring (May 18, 2021)

GENERAL Election -fall

November 2, 2021)



There is no "Independent" party in PA



EACH YEAR, there are two DIFFERENT elections:

- The CLOSED PRIMARY in the spring where only members of the two major parties— Democratic and Republican—may vote, choosing their candidates for
- the **GENERAL Election in the fall**, which can be either a Municipal or a Federal and State Election.

In GENERAL Elections:

- ANY eligible voter can vote for ANY candidate in ANY party.
- Straight party voting has been eliminated; eligible voters must go through the entire ballot choosing a candidate for each race.

Two Different TYPES of Elections (Every OTHER Year)



- Municipal Elections

 Odd-numbered years
 (Local, City, and County Officials, Magistrates, Judges)

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Every OTHER year, there are different TYPES of elections:

Municipal Elections (Odd-numbered years)-

• Might include *local, city, and county officials,* like mayors, city council members, district attorneys, sheriffs, school boards, magistrates, and judges

Federal and State Elections (Even-numbered years) --

- Congressional and Presidential which include Senators and Representatives in Congress and Presidents and Vice Presidents
- State which includes State Senators and Representatives in PA government and other state officials, Governors and Lieutenant Governors

**Special Elections: Held when an elected official can no longer serve. May be held during General or Primary Elections, or on another designated day. Everyone living in that official's district can vote.

LET'S PUT IT ALL TOGETHER--MUNICIPAL or "LOCAL" Elections in 2021:

The May 18, 2021, election was the PRIMARY.

✓ The NOVEMBER 2, 2021, election will be the GENERAL Election.

Put NOVEMBER 2 in your phone calendar NOW!

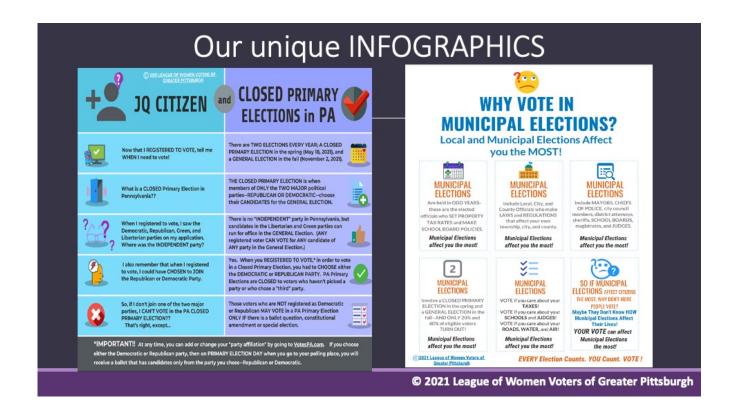


Historically, voter turnout is significantly LOWER in Municipal Elections-- as low as 20 - 35% of eligible voters—for these MOST important elections. Now you know that the officials who are elected in Municipal Elections have **the power to affect your lives;** local issues like housing, schools, roadways, parks, social and criminal justice are issues that may impact you daily!

Are YOU and YOUR issues being represented when turnout is that LOW? What can you do?

VOTE in the MUNICIPAL ELECTION on November 2!

- You will see all the candidates who won in the spring Primary on the Municipal Election ballot, (the same one for every eligible voter).
- ✓ Deadline to register to vote or update registration information is **October 18, 2021**. Update voter registration by adding name change, new address, or changing party affiliation here.
- ✓ <u>Make a Plan to Vote</u> on November 2nd. Learn more about in-person voting and approved ID with this infographic.
- ✓ BTW do you know your voting rights? Click here for more.



These two INFOGRAPHICS will help:

CLOSED PRIMARY ELECTIONS-- helps voters understand that the Pennsylvania Primaries are the first and most important and that they are "closed". They are closed to any voter who is NOT registered with one of the two major political parties—Democratic or Republican-- unless there are constitutional amendments, ballot questions, or if it is a special election.

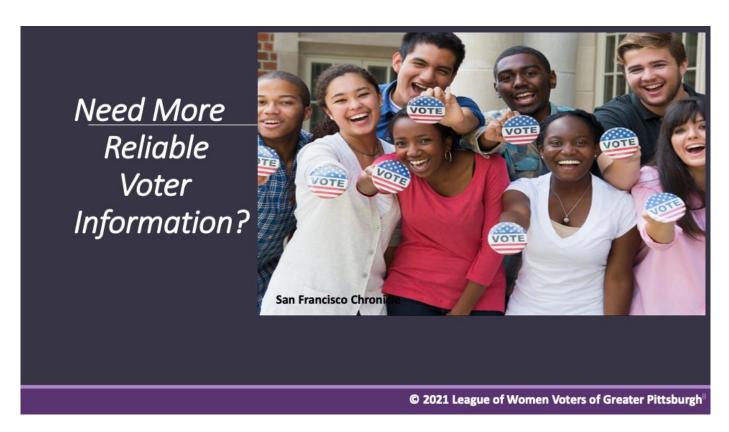
✓ CLICK <u>here</u> to view or download "Closed Primary Elections".

To SHARE, please COPY this direct link: <u>www.lwvpgh.org/docs.ashx?id=734142</u>

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS-- Explains **how important it is to vote** in these local elections as these are the elected officials who *set local tax rates, and school board policies, make the local laws, enforce and interpret them.*

✓ CLICK here to view or download "Municipal Elections".

To SHARE, please COPY this direct link: www.lwvpgh.org/docs.ashx?id=733743



vote.pa.gov: here

 Where you can register to vote, change your name or address, your party affiliation, find your registration status, find your polling place, and more.

Vote411.org: here

At this League of Women Voters website, a few weeks before every election, type in your address and view the candidates who will be on your ballot, and more. If candidates have answered three questions, you will be able to compare their answers side-by-side. You can also make a cheat sheet of your candidate choices by creating your customized ballot list, which will be emailed to you.

League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh: lwvpgh.org

- For the most current, nonpartisan election, voting, and government information.
- Find other Tutorials and other unique infographics in the <u>Voter Resource Library</u>.

Still have questions? Please contact us at: civic.education@lwvpgh.org.

"Democracy is NOT a spectator sport!"