



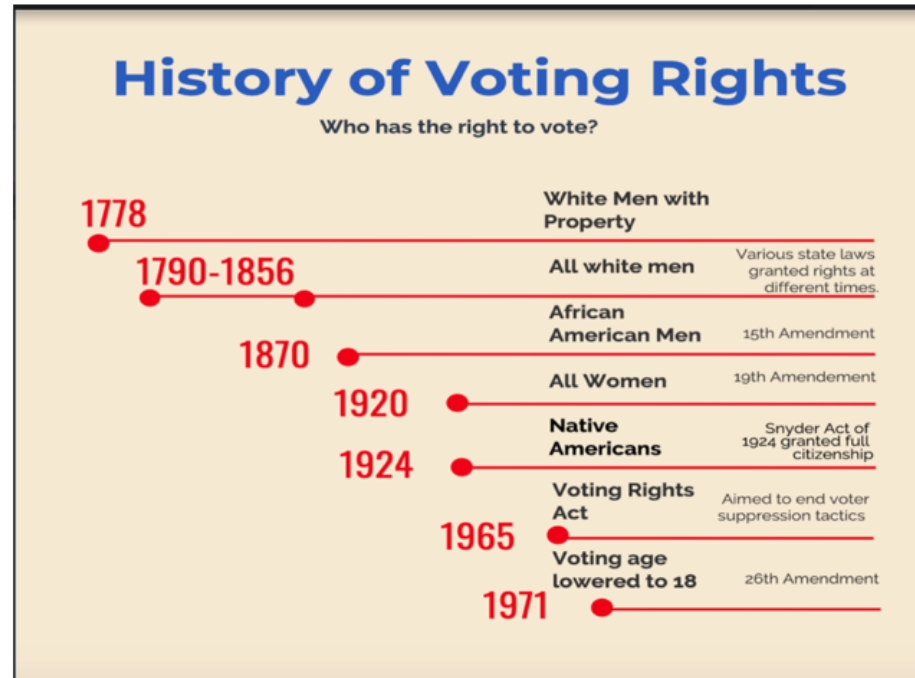
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This tutorial will provide information for eligible voters about:

1. Who has the **Right to Vote**
2. How citizens benefit from **government's role** in our democracy
3. How to understand the difference between;
  - **Municipal and**
  - **State and Federal Elections**
4. How to understand the difference between:
  - **Closed Primary and**
  - **General Elections**
5. How to understand **Presidential 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.*

# Who Has the RIGHT to VOTE?



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Who has gained the **right to vote** throughout our nation's history?

- **White men** with property in 1788
- **African-American men** after the Civil War (*15<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution, 1870*)
- **All women** not until 1920 (*19<sup>th</sup> Amendment*)
- **Native Americans** granted full citizenship (*Snyder Act of 1924*)
- **Contrary to these amendments, poll taxes, literacy tests, and states' right to ratify** in some states prevented people of color from their right to vote. **The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was passed to end racial discrimination in voting.**
- **18-year-olds (from 21 years old)** as a result of the Vietnam War (*26<sup>th</sup> Amendment in 1971*)

**All citizens 18 years and older who have registered to vote are eligible to vote.**

- **Naturalized citizens** may vote since they have fulfilled the requirements of US citizenship outlined in the *Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 and 1965*.
- **Returning Citizens** are individuals in Pennsylvania convicted of a felony, who lost the right to vote while incarcerated but have voting rights restored following release from prison. They need only **re-register** to be eligible to vote.

## Citizen Protests That Led to a Constitutional Amendment



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In the late 1960's, because of the Vietnam War, many people (especially young people) who were not eligible to vote and therefore had no say in the direction of the country, were being drafted (by a birthday lottery) and sent to war.

- *"Old enough for war, but not old enough to vote!"*

So many citizens (and especially young people) **protested** and in 1971 through the 26<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution,

- ***the voting age changed from 21 to 18 years old.***

**When you turn 18 years old, will you exercise your right to vote...  
or not?**

## Why Vote in EVERY Election?

### Why Voting is Important in a Democracy?

Our government affects many parts of our lives from schools and careers to health care to the environment

Voting is an important right in our society

By voting, **you make your voice heard** on how you think your government should operate



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## 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*.

One example is **Municipal Elections**. When citizens vote in these elections:

- They choose the local, city, and county government officials who make the laws and policies that affect them most; ***their mayors (who hire chiefs of police), city councils, district attorneys, sheriffs, school boards, magistrates, and judges.***
- ***Elected Officials are government workers—who work for us!***
- The officials elected in Municipal Elections, ***which will affect YOU the most,*** can be very close, where every single vote can make a difference.

***Choose to have the POWER to make a difference in 2020. VOTE!***

## Why Do We Need a Government?



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Why would people *want* to work in government?

- *(To make a change, to make a positive difference in citizens' lives.)*
- What other reasons can you think of?

**Do you agree that “government” gets a bad rap?**

- *(Why or why not?)*

**Stop and think about all the ways government--through laws and regulations--helps citizens:**

- PRODUCT SAFETY *(safe toys, safe make-up),*
- FOOD SAFETY *(inspections at restaurants, recalls of food that cause illness),*
- PHYSICAL SAFETY *(seat belts, car seats for kids, speed limits),*
- WORKERS SAFETY *(must be 16-years-old to work, hours of work limited),*
- ENVIRONMENTAL SAFETY *(laws for safe air and water).*

*Do You Know  
Anyone Who  
Works in  
Government?*



WordItOut

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- Think about people whose jobs **depend on taxes** paid by citizens—like teachers in public schools, fire fighters, police, city or county government officials, people who work for agencies like Social Security or the FBI.
- *Can you think of any others you know?*

**So, what does *voting* have to do with the *criminal justice system*?**

- Officials elected in Municipal Elections, like mayors (*who appoint chiefs of police*), city councils, district attorneys, sheriffs, school boards, magistrates, and judges, **make and interpret the laws and regulations** by which we citizens are governed.
- VOTING is one way to have a say in how “government” affects you.

***“Your Vote is Your Voice”.***

## Do I Choose a Political Party or NOT?

(In a CLOSED Primary State)



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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 Primary Elections**

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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 affiliation, but this is not required.
- *However, in PA Primary Elections, only voters enrolled in the **Republican Party** or the **Democratic Party** may vote to elect their nominees for the General Election.*
- Pennsylvania’s Primaries are **CLOSED** to registered voters who have not selected a major party affiliation *except if there is a ballot question, constitutional amendment, or special election.*
- Update voter registration by adding or changing party affiliation [here](#).

**To Register to Vote:**

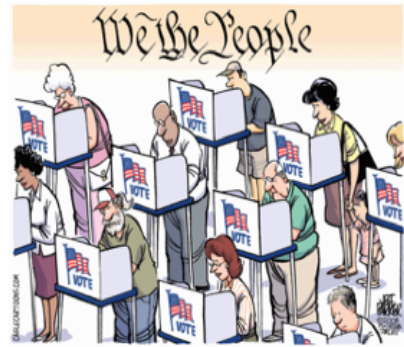
- **Go to [VotesPA.com](https://www.votespa.com) [here](#).**



## Two\* Different Elections Each Year

**Primary Election**  
(was June 2, 2020)

**General Presidential Election**  
(November 3, 2020)



- **Other parties**, besides the Republican and Democratic parties, like the Green and Libertarian *may* have candidates on the General Election ballot
- There is no "Independent" party in PA

***\*See Page 9 for Special Elections***

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There are ***two different elections every year:***

- The **Primary Election** in the spring where Democrats and Republicans choose their candidates *for*
- the **General Election** in the fall, which can be either a Municipal or a Federal and State Election.

### **In General Elections:**

- All eligible voters can vote for **ANY candidate**, regardless of their party affiliation, if any.
- If candidates from smaller parties win a place on the General Election Ballot, votes will be distributed *among all candidates, possibly lessening the votes for major party candidates.*
- Straight party voting has been eliminated; eligible voters must go through the entire ballot choosing a candidate for each race.



## Two\*\* Types of Elections

- **Municipal Elections**  
(Local, City, and County Officials, Magistrates, Judges)
- **Federal and State Elections**  
(PA State Government, US Congressional and Presidential)



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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) --**

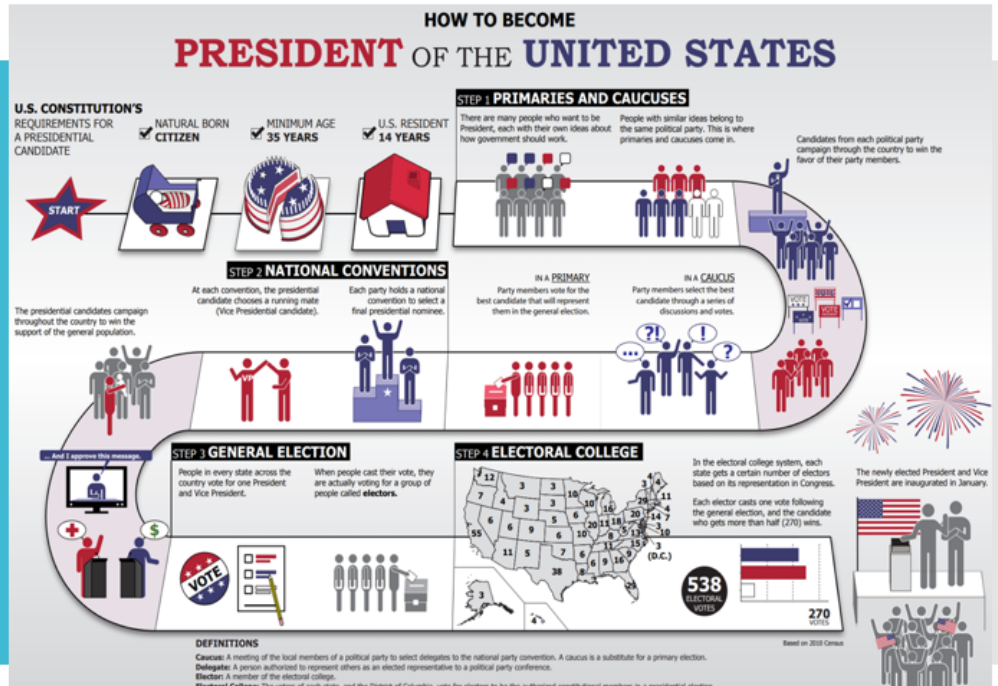
- *Congressional and Presidential* which include Senators and Representatives in Congress and Presidents
- *State* which includes State Senators and Representatives in PA government and other state officials, Governors and Lieutenant Governors

**\*\*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.

***The November 3, 2020 Presidential General Election is a Federal Election.  
Put this date in your phone calendar NOW!***

***Are YOU an engaged and informed voter?***

# How to Elect a President



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Did you know that the US President and Vice President are *not elected directly by citizens*, due to the Electoral College system created by the Constitution?

- **In every US election**, other than the Presidential Election, candidates are elected **directly** by the popular vote.
- Presidents and Vice Presidents are chosen by the **538 “electors”** who in turn have been chosen by their political parties.
- **Each state gets as many electors as it has Members of Congress (House and Senate), including three (3) for Washington DC.** (*The 2020 Census will determine how many US House of Representatives are assigned to each state, and guide how both congressional districts are drawn and how government dollars are distributed.*)
- **A presidential candidate must win 270 electoral college votes to win the presidency.**
- In 2016, candidate Hillary Clinton **won the popular vote by 2.1%** (2,868,686 votes) more than Donald Trump. **However, Trump won the Electoral College vote; 304 (Trump) to 227 (Clinton).**

*Beginning in 1970, the League of Women Voters’ position has been to support the direct election of the President by National Popular Vote (and to abolish the Electoral College system) as essential to representative government.*

## Need More Reliable Voter Information?



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VotesPA.com: [here](#)

- Where you can register to vote, change your address, your party affiliation, or find your registration status, 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.

**For Even More Voter Information via the LWVGP Website Homepage:**

- **See “Why Vote”** [here](#).
- **See “Voter Registration”** [here](#).
- **See “Mail-in and Absentee Voting”** [here](#).

**League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh:  
“Empowering Voters, Defending Democracy”**