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# ★ Elections

State  
Elections  
in Massachusetts

Related Publications  
Local Elections in Massachusetts  
Register and Vote  
Absentee Voting

Elections Division  
Department of the State Secretary  
Michael Joseph Connolly  
Secretary of State

## PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY March 4, 1980

In March of the years in which a U.S. President is to be elected, you may vote in your party's presidential primary. In this primary, you vote for the candidate you prefer as your party's candidate for president in the November election.

Each party's candidate is chosen during the summer by delegates at the national party convention.

Delegates from Massachusetts who attend the national convention are pledged to vote for each candidate in proportion to the number of votes the candidate received in the state presidential primary.

In the presidential primary, voters also elect the members of their political party's ward, town, and state committees.

## STATE PRIMARY September 16, 1980

The primary is a political party election held prior to the final election for the two officially recognized parties in Massachusetts. In the primary, you choose your party's candidate for each office that will be filled in the state election. Both the Democratic and Republican party primaries are held on the same day in September, seven weeks before the November election.

Several party candidates for each office may appear on the party primary ballot. Voters in each party primary choose one person for each elective position. The candidate receiving the most votes for each office will be listed on the November ballot as the party's nominee.

If, at primary election time, you are not enrolled in one of the political parties—Democratic or Republican—you are considered an independent or unenrolled voter. If you are unenrolled, you may choose to vote the ballot of either party, but you become enrolled in that party when you vote. If you want to become an independent again or change your party enrollment after the primary, you must fill out a card available at the polls or notify your city or town officials in writing.

## STATE ELECTION November 4, 1980

In November, at the state election, you choose the people who will actually fill each federal, state and county office.

Usually there are several candidates listed on the ballot who are running for each office; they are the party primary winners and perhaps some independent or minor party candidates who qualify for a place on the ballot by collecting signatures. You vote for one candidate for each office to be filled. The candidate receiving the most votes becomes your elected official.

In state elections, you also vote on questions which appear on the ballot. These questions are placed there by petition of the citizens or as a result of the legislative process. There are different kinds of questions: some questions when approved by a majority of the voters amend the state constitution; some become laws; and others reflect the public's opinion on an issue but do not change the law.

Prepared and Published by  
Michael Joseph Connolly  
Secretary of State  
Elections Division, Room 1705  
One Ashburton Place  
Boston, MA 02108

# STATE ELECTIONS IN MASSACHUSETTS

Voters in Massachusetts may participate in both state and local elections. In state elections, you vote to fill federal, state and county offices. In local elections, you vote for your city or town officials. In both elections, you may also vote on ballot questions. This pamphlet describes state elections and the party primaries which precede them. A comprehensive chart helps you determine which offices are to be filled at each election.

In addition to these elections, a special election may be held if an office becomes vacant during the term. These special elections are held in the same way as the regular election for that office would be held. Another pamphlet, **Local Elections in Massachusetts**, describes the different types of local elections and local caucuses held in Massachusetts.

## STATEWIDE ELECTIONS

There are three kinds of statewide elections. All of these—the presidential primary, the state primary, and the state election—take place in even-numbered years, 1980, '82, '84 and so on.

Terms of office vary in length; you do not vote to fill every office in every election. Consult the chart below to find out when you elect each federal, state and county official.

Offices	Term of Office (years)	Year on Ballot											
		'78	'80	'82	'84	'86	'88	'90	'92	'94	'96	'98	2000
President*	4		☆		☆		☆		☆		☆		☆
Vice President	4		☆		☆		☆		☆		☆		☆
U.S. Senator	6	elect one		elect one	elect one		elect one	elect one		elect one	elect one		elect one
U.S. Representative	2	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆
Governor	4	☆		☆		☆		☆		☆		☆	
Lt. Governor	4	☆		☆		☆		☆		☆		☆	
Secretary of State	4	☆		☆		☆		☆		☆		☆	
Attorney General	4	☆		☆		☆		☆		☆		☆	
Treasurer	4	☆		☆		☆		☆		☆		☆	
Auditor	4	☆		☆		☆		☆		☆		☆	
Governor's Councillor	2	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆
State Senator	2	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆
State Representative	2	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆
County Commissioner	4	elect one	elect two	elect one	elect two	elect one	elect two	elect one	elect two	elect one	elect two	elect one	elect two
District Attorney	4	☆		☆		☆		☆		☆		☆	
County Treasurer	6	☆			☆			☆			☆		
Register of Probate	6	☆			☆			☆			☆		
Register of Deeds	6			☆			☆			☆			☆
Clerk of Courts	6			☆			☆			☆			☆
Sheriff	6		☆			☆			☆			☆	
Town or ward party committees*	4		☆		☆		☆		☆		☆		☆
State party committees*	4		☆		☆		☆		☆		☆		☆

\* Political party town, ward, and state committee members are elected in the presidential primary held in March of presidential election years. Voters also indicate their preference for president in the presidential primary. Party candidates for all other offices on this chart are nominated in the September state primary.

## Dates of Elections

Presidential Primary—March 4, 1980  
 State Primary—September 16, 1980  
 State Election—November 4, 1980  
 Town Elections—February-May, 1980  
 City Elections—November, 1981