

Pennsylvania's Elections Process

A QUICK GUIDE FOR CITIZENS

UNDERSTANDING *ELECTION ADMINISTRATION, ELECTION SECURITY, POLL WORKERS, PRIMARY ELECTIONS, AND VOTING FOR THE FIRST TIME* IN PENNSYLVANIA

ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

THE LAW

- The Pennsylvania Election Code requires each of Pennsylvania's 67 COUNTY GOVERNMENTS to manage all aspects of elections at the local level.¹

THE ROLE OF COUNTY GOVERNMENTS

- COUNTY GOVERNMENTS ARE REQUIRED TO:²
 - Accept and verify new and changed voter registration applications.
 - Conduct elections.
 - Find and train poll workers.
 - Locate polling places and process absentee and mail-in ballots.
 - Verify and report election results.
 - Fund primary, general, and special elections.

THE ROLE OF PA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

- PENNSYLVANIA'S GENERAL ASSEMBLY (PA Legislature of House Representatives and the Senate) sets election policy and defines Pennsylvania's electoral process through law - including amendments to the law – as the Pennsylvania Election Code.³

THE ROLE OF PA DEPARTMENT OF STATE

- Pennsylvania's DEPARTMENT OF STATE further promotes the integrity and uniformity of the Commonwealth's election process by issuing guidance for COUNTY GOVERNMENTS.⁴

¹ <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/WU01/LI/LI/US/PDF/1937/0/0320..PDF>

² <https://www.pacounties.org/who-we-are/county-information>

³ <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/WU01/LI/LI/CT/HTM/00/00.007..HTM>

⁴ <https://www.dos.pa.gov/VotingElections/OtherServicesEvents/Pages/Election-Directive-and-Guidance.aspx>

ELECTION SECURITY

MULTI-LAYERED PROTECTIONS SECURE PENNSYLVANIA VOTERS AND ELECTIONS

- The Pennsylvania Department of State collaborates closely with county governments on uniform election security measures to protect your vote, including fortified voting system defenses, encryption over a closed-network, voter-verifiable paper ballots, post-election analyses, hand-delivery of results, and ongoing training - all coordinated at the local level.⁵

PENNSYLVANIA'S VOTING SYSTEMS ARE STRICTLY SECURED

- Voting machines are never connected to the internet.
- All voting equipment is inspected and sealed before elections.
- Election results are physically delivered, not submitted online.
- Voting systems are required to include verifiable paper ballots to strengthen election security and auditability.⁶

COUNTIES ARE REQUIRED TO CONDUCT A STATISTICAL RECOUNT

- Each county election board is required by law to automatically test the accuracy of vote tabulations post-election for a random sample of ballots cast.
- The random sample size of this required statistical recount is either 2,000 ballots or 2% of the total ballots, whichever is less.⁷

RISK-LIMITING AUDITS ARE MANDATORY

- The PA Department of State mandated counties to conduct statewide risk-limiting audits (RLAs) for every Primary and General Election starting November 8, 2022.
- RLAs use statistical methods to verify election outcomes and detect interference by comparing machine-reported totals to paper ballots.
- RLAs are conducted post-election before results are certified. RLAs confirm voting system accuracy and security without requiring a full hand-count.⁸

⁵ <https://www.vote.pa.gov/About-Elections/Pages/Election-Security.aspx>

⁶ <https://www.vote.pa.gov/About-Elections/Pages/Election-Security.aspx>

⁷ <https://www.vote.pa.gov/About-Elections/Pages/Post-Election-Audits.aspx>

⁸ <https://www.vote.pa.gov/About-Elections/Pages/Post-Election-Audits.aspx>

POLL WORKERS

POLL WORKERS PLAY A VITAL ROLE IN OUR ELECTIONS PROCESS

- Pennsylvania's elections depend on ordinary citizens - your friends and neighbors- to serve our democracy as dedicated poll workers. *These individuals work together to make sure that local elections are safe, secure, and run smoothly for voters.*

LOCAL ELECTION BOARD POSITIONS⁹

- Your Local Election Board consists of three workers who are ELECTED every four years by precinct voters: the Judge of Elections, a Majority Inspector, and a Minority Inspector.
- The Judge of Elections supervises the polling place and works with the Majority and Minority Inspectors to manage poll workers and the voting process on election day.
- They also ensure that precinct results are securely delivered to the county election office after the polls close.

CLERKS AND MACHINE INSPECTORS/OPERATORS¹⁰

- Clerks and Machine Inspectors/Operators are APPOINTED poll workers who support the Local Election Board to ensure the voting process runs smoothly.
- These workers have important responsibilities such as checking-in voters, managing lines at the polling place, and guiding voters through the process on election day.

HOW TO BECOME A POLL WORKER¹¹

- You must be a registered voter (some exceptions for High School students).
- Certain people are disqualified to serve such as government employees, officials, and candidates.
- Workers are trained by counties and compensated for their training time and election day service.
- Ready to apply? Complete a "Poll Worker Interest Form" at [VOTE.PA.GOV](https://www.vote.pa.gov) to be contacted by your county election office with the next steps!¹²

⁹ <https://www.vote.pa.gov/Resources/Pages/Be-a-Poll-Worker.aspx>

¹⁰ <https://www.vote.pa.gov/Resources/Pages/Be-a-Poll-Worker.aspx>

¹¹ <https://www.vote.pa.gov/Resources/Pages/Be-a-Poll-Worker.aspx>

¹² <https://paebrprod.powerappsportals.us/EBR/DOS/Votes-PA-County/>

PRIMARY ELECTIONS

WHAT IS A PRIMARY ELECTION?

The process by which political parties introduce a list of candidates to voters before a general election:

- Voters choose the candidates they believe are most qualified to represent the party in the general election.
- The candidates who receive the highest number of votes for a particular position proceed to the general election with the party's backing.

U.S. STATES HOLD PRIMARY ELECTIONS IN A VARIETY OF WAYS¹³

- Closed
- Partially Closed
- Partially Open
- Open to Unaffiliated Voters
- Open
- Two-tier
- Four-tier

PENNSYLVANIA HAS A “CLOSED” PRIMARY SYSTEM¹⁴

- Only voters affiliated with a specific party can vote for candidates in the primary election, and they must select candidates from that same party.
- In Pennsylvania, voters not affiliated with any party, like independent voters, are currently not allowed to participate in the party primaries. However, any voter can vote on other ballot measures.

7 OTHER U.S. STATES HAVE “CLOSED” PRIMARIES

- According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), Pennsylvania, Delaware, Florida, Kentucky, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, and Wyoming are states that have “Closed” Primary Systems.¹⁵

¹³ <https://www.ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/primaries-more-than-one-way-to-find-a-party-nominee>

¹⁴ <https://www.vote.pa.gov/About-Elections/Pages/Types%20of%20Elections.aspx>

¹⁵ <https://documents.ncsl.org/wwwncsl/Elections/Primary-Types-Table-2024.pdf>

VOTING FOR THE FIRST TIME

BRING IDENTIFICATION

New voters must present an approved photo ID or a non-photo ID at the polling place.

- Some examples of approved identification include driver's license, government issued ID, passport, school ID, employment ID, firearm permit, current utility bill, or current paycheck.¹⁶
- *VISIT VOTE.PA.GOV FOR A COMPLETE LIST OF APPROVED FORMS OF ID.*

DO SOME HOMEWORK IN ADVANCE

- Make sure you know where your polling place is located.
 - To find your polling place, visit WWW.PAVOTERSERVICES.PA.GOV.¹⁷
- Check out a sample ballot at your County Election Office or on their [website](#).¹⁸
- Stay informed by researching candidates and ballot measures before you go to vote.

MAKE A PLAN

- All polling places open at 7AM and close at 8PM.¹⁹
- Sometimes there are lines at the polls, so plan accordingly.
- As long as you are in line to vote by 8PM, you will still be permitted to cast a ballot - even if the polling place closes.²⁰

ASK FOR HELP IF YOU NEED IT

- Trained poll workers are available at every polling place to answer any questions you have.
- Accessibility options are available to support voters with temporary or permanent disabilities, as well as language barriers.^{21,22}

¹⁶ <https://www.vote.pa.gov/Register-to-Vote/Pages/Voter-ID-for-First-Time-Voters.aspx>

¹⁷ <https://www.pavoterservices.pa.gov/Pages/PollingPlaceInfo.aspx>

¹⁸ <https://www.vote.pa.gov/Resources/Pages/Contact-Your-Election-Officials.aspx>

¹⁹ <https://www.vote.pa.gov/Voting-in-PA/Pages/First-Time-Voters.aspx>

²⁰ <https://www.vote.pa.gov/Voting-in-PA/Pages/First-Time-Voters.aspx>

²¹ <https://www.vote.pa.gov/Voting-in-PA/Pages/Accessible-Voting.aspx>

²² <https://www.vote.pa.gov/Voting-in-PA/Pages/Language-Support.aspx>



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The County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP) is the voice of county government; a statewide nonprofit, nonpartisan association representing all 67 counties in Pennsylvania. CCAP members include county commissioners, council members, county executives, administrators, chief clerks, and solicitors.

County governments are responsible for a wide variety of critical services, including provision of human services (i.e., mental health, intellectual disabilities, juvenile justice, children and youth, long-term care, drug and alcohol services, housing) to people in need in our communities. In addition, counties are responsible for emergency management and 911 services, administration of the courts and corrections system, elections, maintenance of county bridges, and the county property assessment rolls, and are also involved in environmental and land use planning, protection of open space and community and economic development.

CCAP strengthens the counties' abilities to govern their own affairs and improve the well-being and quality of life for every Pennsylvania resident. It advocates for favorable state and federal legislation, programs, and policies on behalf of counties. CCAP is committed to service excellence through education, information, insurance, technology, and other programs that support effective county government. Founded in 1886, CCAP is an affiliate of the National Association of Counties. For more information about Pennsylvania counties and CCAP, log on to www.pacounties.org and visit CCAP's Twitter page [@PACountiesGR](https://twitter.com/PACountiesGR).

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