



VOTE

MAINE PRIMARY ELECTION

Vote on Tuesday, March 5

For the first time, Mainers will vote in a semi-open primary and use Ranked Choice Voting in a presidential primary. Here's our complete guide to the March election.

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THE POLITICAL PARTIES VS. “UNENROLLED”



What is a political party?

A political party is a group of people who share similar ideas about how the government should work. When you register to vote, you can join a political party if you want. It's free, of course!

But what about other parties?

There are also some smaller parties which voters may join. These smaller parties are not listed on the voter registration card and are not yet large enough to hold party primary elections. The lists of qualified parties and small parties sometimes change as parties get larger or smaller.

The political parties:

Currently, there are **five** qualified political parties in Maine:

1. Democratic
2. Green Independent
3. Libertarian
4. No Labels
5. Republican

You can enroll in one of these parties when you register to vote or when you need/want to update your voter registration.

Can you change parties?

If you're already registered to vote but want to switch your political party, you must re-register at least 15 days before election day.

Want to switch again? You can change your political party 3 months after your last registration date.

THE POLITICAL PARTIES VS. “UNENROLLED”

Qualified vs. Qualifying Political Parties

Qualified political parties have proven statewide support.

Candidates associated with **qualified political parties** participate in primary elections. That means if the party has two or more candidates running for the same office, the nomination will be decided in the primary.

There are five **qualified parties** in Maine: Democratic, Green Independent, Libertarian, No Labels, and Republican.

Some political parties are not yet large enough to be listed on the voter registration card or to have their own primaries.

Qualifying political parties may enroll voters and help their candidates get on the general election ballot.

Examples of **qualifying political parties** include the Alliance Party, the Yankee Party, and the Socialist Party.

Unenrolled voters

Voters don't have to join a political party. Maine has a large population of voters (33% of all registered voters) who don't choose a political party and register as “unenrolled.”

This unenrolled status used to exclude them from voting in presidential primary elections, when a voter must be enrolled in one of the qualified political parties in order to participate.

**Voters don't need to be enrolled in a party to vote in a general election, on any statewide ballot question, or in a municipal election.*

** Quick Note*

Independent voters may think of themselves as unenrolled, but “Green Independent” is a qualified political party in Maine.

Since presidential primaries are typically, if not always, Democratic and Republican, Green Independents, Libertarians, and No Labels will have to switch parties or unenroll in order to participate in the primary.

HOW DID WE GET SEMI-OPEN PRIMARIES?



The different types of primaries

An **open primary** allows a voter to choose whichever primary they want to vote in without having to change their political party enrollment. The “open” part just means a voter is able to choose their primary election, and their political party enrollment status is not a factor.

A **semi-open primary** is less...open. The big change is that unenrolled voters can choose which primary to vote in, whereas before they couldn't participate.

In a **closed primary** voters have to enroll in one of the political parties ahead of a primary election if they want to participate.

What we had before

Before we had semi-open primaries, Maine used **closed, partisan primaries**. Voters had to enroll in one of the political parties ahead of a primary election. Since primaries are almost always just Democrat and Republican, it meant that only Democrats and Republicans could participate, excluding unenrolled and independent voters completely.

HOW DID WE GET SEMI-OPEN PRIMARIES?

The bill to increase access to the ballot

The League of Women Voters of Maine supports policies that permit broad citizen participation in primary elections. All voters should have the opportunity to participate in the primary election of their choice.

Unenrolled voters should have a say in primary elections — just like any other registered voter.

A bill to establish **semi-open primaries** (LD 231) was introduced in 2021 during the 130th Legislature. The bill received support from Democrats, Independents, and Republicans. It was endorsed by the League of the Women Voters of Maine, too!

The bill was signed into law in 2022.

Reminder: Yes, you can change parties

If you're already registered to vote but want to switch your political party, you must re-register at least 15 days before election day if you want to participate in that election.

Want to switch again? You can change your political party 3 months after your last registration date.

Semi-open primaries will be implemented in time for the March 2024 presidential primary election. For the first time, unenrolled voters will be permitted to cast one ballot in the primary of their choice.

** Quick Note*

Republicans will not be able to vote in Democratic primaries, and Democrats will not be able to vote in Republican primaries.

GETTING READY FOR THE MARCH 2024 ELECTION



Election days in 2024

There are several statewide election days in Maine in 2024:

- March 5 — Presidential Primary
- June 11 — State Primary Election
- November 5 — Presidential General Election

This guide focuses on the March 5 election. Mainers will vote in either the Democratic or Republican primary.

New March 2024 voters

Anytime is a good time to register to vote in Maine.

You can register to vote right up to and on Election Day. There is no cut-off date for registering to vote in-person at your town office or city hall. You can also update your voter registration at your local BMV.

On Election Day, you can register right at your polling place! When you register to vote, you can either choose one of the qualified parties or register as unenrolled.

**This is different if you register to vote by mail which takes more time. Registrations mailed to the Secretary of State should be received thirty days before Election Day.*

GETTING READY FOR THE MARCH 2024 ELECTION

Voter Eligibility

You can vote in Maine if you are:

- A citizen of the United States
- An established resident in the town where you intend to register and vote
- At least 18 years of age

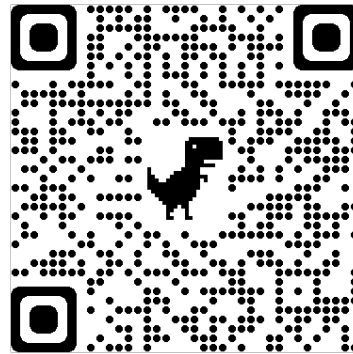
You cannot be turned away from your voting place if you meet the requirements listed above.

* *Quick Note*

Students attending college in Maine are eligible to register and vote here in Maine. First, they must establish a voting residence, such as their campus address (dorm or apartment). College students can visit www.mainestudentsvote.org/Vote for more information about voting.

Your rights

- Registered voters are not required to show ID in order to vote.
- You must be allowed to vote a challenged ballot even if you don't have ID or proof of where you live.
- You may pre-register when you are 16, but you must be 18 years old to vote.
- Registered voters who are 17 years old may vote in primary elections if they will be 18 by the general election.



Learn more about how to vote in Maine:
www.lwvme.org/VoteInMaine

GETTING READY FOR THE MARCH 2024 ELECTION

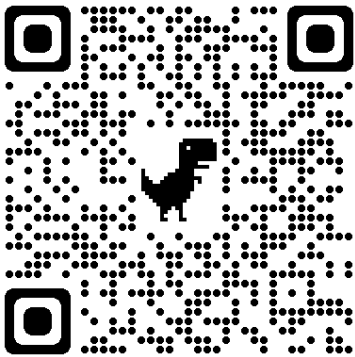
Picking your political party for the march election

Enrolled voters — If you want to change political parties, you have until February 15, 2024* to update your registration in time for the primary election.

**Town offices will be closed for President's Day on the normal cut-off date, February 19.*

Unenrolled voters — At the polls, or when you request your absentee ballot, you can choose which primary that you want to vote in. Although you will cast your ballot in a party primary, you will maintain your unenrolled status.

Oops, I forgot my political party



You can check your party enrollment status by contacting your town clerk.

Use the Maine Voter Lookup Service to find your clerk's contact information:
<https://bit.ly/MaineLookup>

GETTING READY FOR THE MARCH 2024 ELECTION

Voting with an absentee ballot

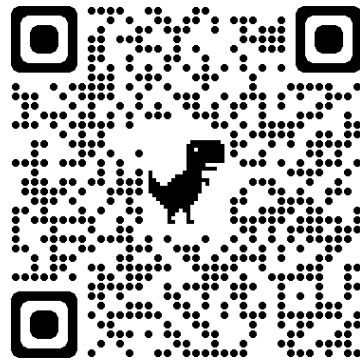
Absentee voting allows you to cast a ballot without going to a polling location on Election Day or to vote early. Any registered voter in Maine may cast an absentee ballot. Absentee voting is anonymous and convenient!

Don't procrastinate

You can now request your absentee ballot online, in-person, by mail, or over the phone for the March election.

Tip: Don't procrastinate. It's better to take care of your absentee ballot sooner rather than later.

There is a deadline to request your no-excuse absentee ballot, which is the Thursday before Election Day. That's Thursday, February 29 for the March 5 election. After this deadline, you will need to provide an excuse.



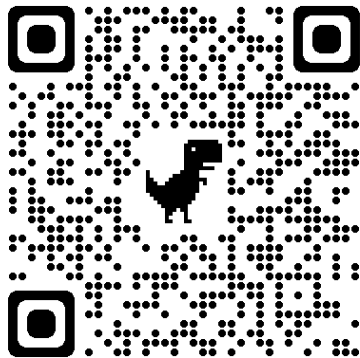
Learn more about voting with an absentee ballot:

www.lwvme.org/absentee

Accessible ballots

Voters can request an absentee paper ballot to vote via mail, or for voters with print disabilities (such as vision impairment or blindness, physical dexterity limitations, learning disabilities or cognitive impairment), you can request an electronic accessible ballot that will be sent to your email address.

Accessible ballots are available to voters at least 30 days before Election Day.



Learn more about accessible voting on the Secretary of State's website:

www.maine.gov/sos

GETTING READY FOR THE MARCH 2024 ELECTION

Steps for voting absentee

Step 1: Request your ballot in-person, over the phone, via mail, or online. If you're requesting by mail, make sure it will have time to arrive to your house and that you will have time to mail it back to your town clerk before the Election Day deadline.

Step 2: When your ballot arrives, likely in February, follow the instructions and fill out the ballot. Don't forget to sign the envelope!

Step 3: You can return your ballot in-person at convenient absentee ballot dropboxes, usually located at your town hall. If you return your ballot by mail, make sure it has time to get to your town clerk. One stamp should do the trick, but if you have multiple pages to stick in the envelope, add additional postage.

Step 4: You can track your ballot to make sure it's received by your town clerk. For state and federal elections, track your absentee ballot through the Secretary of State's website.

All ballots must be received by your town clerk by 8:00 PM on Election Day.

RANKED CHOICE VOTING



When does Maine use Ranked Choice Voting?



- ★ All Mainers use Ranked Choice Voting in **primary** and **general** elections for:

U.S. President
U.S. Senate
U.S. House

- ★ All Mainers also use Ranked Choice Voting in **primary** elections for:

Governor
Maine Legislature



- ★ Portland and Westbrook voters, additionally, use Ranked Choice Voting in **general** elections for:

Local offices
(Mayoral, City Council, and School Committee races)

For the first time, Mainers will use Ranked Choice Voting in a presidential primary on March 5.

Ranked Choice Voting lets voters rank the candidates in order of preference.

RANKED CHOICE VOTING

How does Ranked Choice Voting work?

- Voters rank candidates in the order of their preference: first choice, second choice, third choice, and so on.
- When all the ballots are counted, if one candidate gets more than 50% of the first choice votes, they win.
- If no candidate receives more than 50% of first choice votes, the candidate with fewest votes is considered defeated.
- Voters who ranked the defeated candidate as their first choice have their votes counted for their second choice.
- This is repeated until a candidate has received more than 50% of the vote.

Why should I rank my vote?

- If your first choice is defeated, your ballot will still count for your next highest choice.
- You can't hurt your favorite candidate by also ranking the other candidates. Those choices only count if your first choice is defeated.
- You can't help your favorite candidate by ranking only one candidate. Your first choice will always count if your favorite candidate has not been defeated.

How do I avoid mistakes on my ballot?

- Mark only one oval per row.
- Mark only one oval per column.
- Rank as many candidates as you like.
- You do not need to rank any candidate that you do not support.
- If you make a mistake, ask the clerk for a new ballot.
- Ask for help. You will not be the only one with questions.

RANKED CHOICE VOTING




How does Ranked Choice Voting work?

Here is an example of how to rank your preferred candidates:

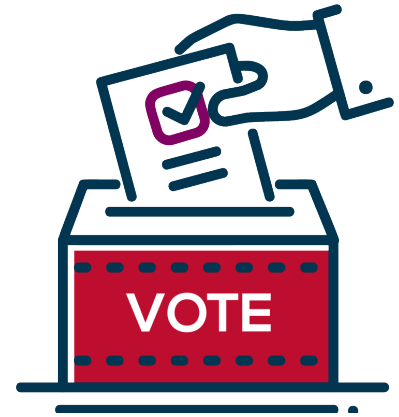
RIGHT: In this example, Candidate Two is the 1st choice, and the bubble next to this has been filled in. Candidate One is the 2nd Choice. Candidate Three is the 3rd Choice.

If you are certain of your top choice and only want to vote for Candidate Two, then you only have to fill in the "1st Choice" bubble. You may leave the rest blank.

If you only wanted to rank 2 out of the 3 candidates, then you would fill in the bubbles for "1st Choice" and "2nd Choice" but you may leave "3rd Choice" blank.

	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice
 Candidate One	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
 Candidate Two	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
 Candidate Three	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

SUMMARY OF EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW



March Election Timeline — at a glance

January

Secretary of State office completes the implementation of semi-open primaries.

Voters can request their absentee ballots online, in-person, over the phone, or by mail.

February

Clerks begin to mail out absentee ballots.

Important deadlines:

February 15* is the last day to change your party ahead of the March 5 election.

February 29 is the last day to request a no-excuse absentee ballot.

**Town offices will be closed for President's Day on the normal cut-off date, February 19.*

March

Election Day is March 5.

Absentee ballots must be received by 8:00 PM on election day in order to be processed and counted.

SUMMARY OF EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW

How to participate in the march election

Find your political party status:

- Democratic** —————> You will vote in the **Democratic Primary**. If you want to vote in the Republican Primary, you must switch parties or change your status to unenrolled.
- Green Independent** —————> If you want to participate in this election, you must switch parties or change your status to unenrolled.
- Libertarian** —————> If you want to participate in this election, you must switch parties or change your status to unenrolled.
- No Labels** —————> If you want to participate in this election, you must switch parties or change your status to unenrolled.
- Republican** —————> You will vote in the **Republican Primary**. If you want to vote in the Democratic Primary, you must switch parties or change your status to unenrolled.
- Unenrolled** —————> You will choose to either participate in the Democratic or Republican Primary.

SUMMARY OF EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW

- The presidential primary is on March 5, 2024. Mainers will vote in either the Democratic or Republican primary.
- For the first time, Maine will have semi-open primaries. Unenrolled voters can now vote in the primary of their choice.
- Voters will use Ranked Choice Voting to rank their candidates.
- Voters can now request their absentee ballots for the March 5 election. The last day to request a no-excuse absentee ballot is Thursday, February 29.
- Registered Democrats must vote in the Democratic primary.
- Registered Republicans must vote in the Republican primary.
- Green Independents, Libertarians, and the No Labels party will have to unenroll or switch parties in order to vote in the primary of their choice.
- If you want to change your political party or unenroll ahead of the March election, you have until Thursday, February 15.
- New voters can register to vote anytime, including Election Day!

SUMMARY OF EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW

The ultimate guide to voting

Our Make Your Vote Count guide is everything you need to know about voting in Maine, including voter eligibility, registering to vote, absentee ballots, and more. All in an easy-to-read format, available in 10 languages.



Learn more about how to vote in Maine:
www.lwvme.org/MakeYourVoteCount

Helpful links

How to vote in Maine: www.lwvme.org/VoteInMaine

Guide to semi-open primaries: www.lwvme.org/semiOpen

First time + student votes: www.lwvme.org/students

Ranked Choice Voting in Maine: www.lwvme.org/RCV

Voter hotline

Questions about voting or the election?

We can help! Text, call, or email us:

 (207) 558-3333  Vote@lwvme.org

About us

The League of Women Voters of Maine is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. We never support or oppose any political party or candidate.

The League is not just for women! Anyone who supports the League's mission is welcome as a member.

Join the League of Women Voters of Maine online at:
www.lwvme.org/Member

lwvme.org
info@lwvme.org

