

Primary Elections FAQs

Q1. What is the difference between a primary and a general election?

A1. The State of Colorado holds regularly scheduled state elections every two years; a state Primary Election in June and a General election in November.

The nominated candidates from each party's primary ballot will be placed on the November General Election ballot. The winner of the November General Election will hold office.

Q2. Who can vote in a Primary Election?

A2. On the Presidential or June Primary Election Day:

- **Voters affiliated with a major party:** may cast a ballot for candidates of the party they are affiliated with.
- **Voters affiliated with a minor party:** if there is a minor party contest those affiliated with that minor party may cast a ballot for those candidates.
- **Unaffiliated voters:** An unaffiliated voter may cast a ballot for any one political party. If an unaffiliated voter returns a ballot with more than one major political party, the ballot will be rejected and none of the votes will be counted.

Q3. Does Colorado hold a presidential Primary Election?

A3. Yes. Beginning in March 2020 Colorado will hold a presidential primary election. Like other primary elections, affiliated voters will be eligible to vote for candidates in their party while unaffiliated voters will be eligible to vote for a candidate in any one party's election.

Q4. Are parties required to allow unaffiliated voters to participate in their primary election?

A4. Major parties are required to allow unaffiliated voters to participate in a primary. Minor parties, on the other hand, may refuse to allow unaffiliated voters to participate in their primary.

Q5. I am an unaffiliated voter. Do I have to choose in advance which party's primary ballot to vote?

A5. No, but you can if you want to. You have several options:

1. You may choose which party's ballot you want to get in the mail for the next primary election by selecting a party preference at govotecolorado.com or on any paper voter registration form.
2. If you would rather receive a packet containing the ballots of all participating major parties, you can take no action or select this option when first registering to vote.
3. You can also appear in person at any Voter Service and Polling Center in your county and choose the party's ballot you want to vote.

Q6. Does selecting a ballot preference as an unaffiliated voter mean that I am joining that party?

A6. No. An unaffiliated voter who selects a ballot preference in advance of a primary election will remain unaffiliated.

Q7. I am unaffiliated and selected a preference to receive a minor party ballot. Why didn't I receive that party's ballot?

A7. This could happen for two reasons:

1. The minor party you selected is not conducting a primary election, or
2. The minor party you selected is not allowing unaffiliated voters to participate in their election.

In either of these situations, you should receive a ballot packet containing the ballots of all major political parties. You may vote on and return one of these ballots, or you may contact your County Clerk's office or visit a Voter Service and Polling Center to request a different minor party's ballot.

Q8. I selected a ballot preference last primary election and received that party's ballot. Why didn't I get that ballot again this primary election?

A8. A ballot preference selection is good for only one election. So, if you select a ballot preference before the June 2018 primary, that preference will be removed before the next primary in 2020. If you still prefer to receive one party's primary ballot, you may select your preference again at any time

by visiting www.govotecolorado.com or by making the selection on any paper voter registration form.

Q9. Does voting in a party's primary as an unaffiliated voter mean that I am joining that party?

A9. No. An unaffiliated voter who votes in a party's primary will remain unaffiliated. However, the primary that you vote in will be a public record (but not how you voted).

Q10. I am an unaffiliated voter. Why did I get two ballots sent to me during a primary?

A10. Most unaffiliated voters will receive the ballots of both major political parties during a primary election. This allows an unaffiliated voter to choose which party's primary they will vote in. **Unaffiliated voters may only return one party's ballot.** Returning two voted ballots will result in neither ballot counting.

Q11. How do I vote in a minor party's primary election if I am unaffiliated?

A11. You have two options:

1. You may select a ballot preference for the minor party's election that you would like to vote in at govotecolorado.com or on any paper voter registration form, or
2. You may contact your local County Clerk's office or visit any Voter Service and Polling Center in your county and request that minor party's ballot.

Keep in mind that the minor party you select may not hold an election or may not allow unaffiliated voters to participate in their election.

Q12. Where can I find information about caucus?

A12. Caucuses are held on the first Tuesday in March. In a presidential election year, a political party has the option to hold its precinct caucuses on the first Saturday following the presidential primary election. The persons receiving the highest number of votes at the precinct caucus are the delegates to the county assembly from the precinct. Contact your political party for additional information relating to caucus and party rules.

For more questions about caucuses, see our [caucus FAQs](#).

Q13. Can I participate in a party's caucus meeting if I am unaffiliated?

A13. No. To participate in a party caucus meeting you must join that party before the party's caucus. However, you are still eligible to vote in any participating party's primary election.

Q14. Besides caucus meetings, what other election activities are available only to members of a party?

A14. You must be a member of a political party to sign a petition for a candidate of that party. You also cannot run for office with a party without first being a member of that party.

Q15. What political parties are recognized in Colorado?

A15. A list of the current [Colorado political parties](#) is available online.