



STATE OF MICHIGAN
BUREAU OF ELECTIONS
LANSING

**Questions & Answers:
Michigan's March 10, 2020 Presidential Primary Election**

Do I have to be a registered Democrat or Republican to participate in Michigan's Presidential Primary?

No. Michigan's Presidential Primary has been designated a closed primary. There is no political party registration requirement in Michigan Election Law. Any Michigan registered voter can participate in the primary. By law, you must make your ballot selection in writing by completing the *Application to Vote/Ballot Selection Form* on Election Day; or on the *Absent Voter Ballot Application* form if voting absentee.

Why do I have to select a party ballot?

Michigan Election Law (MCL 168.615c) guides the conduct of the Presidential Primary. The law requires that voters indicate **in writing** which political party ballot they wish to vote. This requirement only applies to Presidential Primary elections, and voters will **not** be required to select a political party ballot type at other types of elections.

What is the difference between an Open Primary and a Closed Primary?

Voters in an open primary are given a ballot with a column listing each qualified party's candidates. Voters then decide which party primary they wish to participate in by voting only in the column of their party choice while in the privacy of the voting station. Voting for candidates in more than a single party's column will void the entire partisan ballot.

Voters in closed primaries must state the party primary they wish to participate in before being issued a ballot. The ballot given to voters only has candidates of the party that corresponds to the voter's choice.

Will Michigan's closed Presidential Primary procedures affect the August State Primary in any way?

No. The August primary is an open primary. Voters will **not** be asked to select a party before voting in the August primary. Voters will be issued ballots containing all political parties and their candidates, and will select one of the parties in the privacy of the voting station.

When I select a party ballot for the Presidential Primary, does that mean I have to vote in the same party primary in August?

No. The written selection made by a voter at the Presidential Primary has no bearing on how a person votes in the State Primary election.

Will my ballot selection be made public?

Yes. By law a public list must be made available that includes the Presidential Primary ballot type chosen by each voter in the Presidential Primary. This list must be made available within 71 days after the Presidential Primary election. This ballot selection information is subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act. The public list of voters' Presidential Primary ballot selections must be destroyed after the 22-month retention period expires.

To be clear, only the political party ballot selection will be made public; **the candidate you vote for will not be made public**. Closed primaries also have secret ballots so that the candidate you vote for is never disclosed.

If candidates have suspended their presidential campaign, will they still appear on the ballot?

Although some of the candidates may suspend their campaigns nationally, state law requires that the candidate listing be finalized in December 2019. To have their name removed from the ballot, candidates must submit in writing to the Bureau of Elections a formal request to withdraw their name by December 13, 2019.

Who is on the ballot?

Michigan election law includes detailed requirements related to which candidates are eligible and how names would be placed on Michigan's Presidential Primary ballot. By law, both Democratic and Republican Party candidates are listed, but on separate ballots.

The law required the Secretary of State to issue a list of individuals "generally advocated by the national news media to be potential presidential candidates". In addition, Michigan's Democratic and Republican parties had the ability to add candidates and others not on those lists have the opportunity to file petitions to be placed on the ballot which must be submitted by December 13, 2019. Both lists are available on the Department's website at www.Michigan.gov/Elections.

Voters will also have the option of voting "uncommitted" or voting a write-in candidate on either the Democratic or Republican ballot.

What does an "uncommitted" vote mean?

Each party ballot has a vote position for "uncommitted." When a voter selects "uncommitted," this indicates the voter is exercising a vote for that political party, but is not committed to any of the candidates listed on the ballot. If enough voters cast "uncommitted" votes, the party may send delegates to the national nominating convention who are not committed to a specific candidate.

Will there be other things on the Presidential Primary ballot?

Jurisdictions may hold special elections in conjunction with the Presidential Primary. Voters who do not wish to cast a vote in the Presidential Primary but want to vote in the local special election have the option of selecting a ballot containing only the local contests. When known, this information will be posted on our website.

I already voted and returned my absentee ballot; the candidate I voted for has since suspended his campaign. Can I change my vote?

You may request and vote a replacement ballot. You must submit your request in writing to your city or township clerk no later than 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, March 7, 2020 or appear in person at your local clerk's office prior to 4:00 p.m. on Monday, March 9, 2020. All ballots must be **received** by 8:00 p.m. on Election Day. In this situation, your city or township clerk will void your original ballot and issue you a new ballot. Contact (or visit) your local clerk immediately if you are interested in doing so. Your local clerk is also required to have office hours the weekend prior to the election. Use the Michigan Voter Information Center www.Michigan.gov/Vote to find contact and location information for your local clerk.

Where can I find more information?

For more information on your voter registration status, polling place, issues that will appear on your ballot, the absentee voting process and more, please visit the Michigan Voter Information Center at www.Michigan.gov/Vote. For a detailed history of Presidential Primaries in Michigan, please visit www.Michigan.gov/Elections. (See Presidential Primary Information)