

# 6 EASY STEPS for Understanding Elections

YOU MATTER. YOUR VOTE MATTERS. YOUR VOICE MATTERS.

Voting makes your voice heard in one way that affects real change--by resulting in the policies and laws that affect us all. One example is Local/Municipal Elections. When citizens vote in these elections, they choose the local, city, and county government officials who make the laws and policies, set the tax rate, and make the school board policies that affect them the most; the mayors (who hire chiefs of police), city councils, district attorneys, sheriffs, school boards, magistrates, and judges.

## HISTORY OF VOTING RIGHTS

1778- White Men with Property  
 1790-1856- All White Men  
 1870- African American Men  
 1920- All Women  
 1924- Native Americans  
 1965- Voting Rights Act  
 1971- Voting Age from 21 to 18

Contrary to these Constitutional Amendments, discrimination by poll taxes, literacy tests, states' right to ratify, and other more recent barriers to voting, like condensing polling places and certain voter ID laws have prevented citizens from their **RIGHT TO VOTE**.

**Naturalized Citizens and Returning Citizens (free after incarcerated for a felony) also have the right to vote.**

## WHY DO WE NEED GOVERNMENT?

Why would people WANT to work in government?

Think about all of the ways laws and regulations **HELP** citizens by securing the safety of:

- **Products**--safe make-up...
- **Food**--inspections...
- **Physical**--seat belts...
- **Workers**--at least 16 years old
- **Environmental**-- water/air...

**Our TAXES pay for teachers, fire fighters, police, social services, and elected government officials.**

## POLITICAL PARTIES

Members of a **POLITICAL PARTY** are citizens who have similar ideas and who choose candidates to represent their interests.

Only members of the **TWO MAJOR Parties, Democratic and Republican**, can vote in PA Closed Primaries--choose when you register to vote.

**NO Independent Party in PA. ALL REGISTERED VOTERS** may vote in any election if there is a ballot question, constitutional amendment, or special election.

**Register to Vote or Update Your Political Party Affiliation at [VotesPA.com](http://VotesPA.com).**

## TWO DIFFERENT ELECTIONS EACH YEAR

**PRIMARY** Election in the spring.  
**GENERAL** Election in the fall.

**CLOSED PRIMARY:** party members choose candidates for...  
**GENERAL ELECTION:** can be either a Local/Municipal or State/ Federal Election.

**CLOSED PRIMARY:** only Democrats or Republicans can vote.  
**GENERAL:** all registered can vote

**LOCAL and MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS on MAY 18 can be very CLOSE and may affect YOU the MOST!**

## TWO\* TYPES OF ELECTIONS

**MUNICIPAL: (Odd-years)**  
 Local, City and County Officials, Magistrates and Judges

**STATE and FEDERAL: (Even years)**  
 PA State Government, US Congressional and Presidential

\***SPECIAL ELECTIONS:** When an elected official can no longer serve. May be held during General or Primary Elections--everyone living in the district can vote.

**May 18, 2021 is a MUNICIPAL PRIMARY ELECTION. PUT DATE IN YOUR PHONE NOW!**

## HOW TO ELECT A PRESIDENT

Constitution mandated: **NOT** directly elected by citizens: all other elections by popular vote.  
**PRESIDENTS AND VICE PRES.** elected by **538 Electors** who are chosen by their political parties.  
**ELECTORS** equal the number of Members of Congress for each state + 3 for Washington, DC.  
**CANDIDATES** must win **270 electoral college votes** to win.  
**CANDIDATE** may win National Popular Vote and **LOSE** Electoral College vote.

**EVERY VOTE COUNTS**  
 --especially in "Swing States"!

**VOTE on MAY18, 2021! MAKE Your Voice HEARD**