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Advisory Committee on Participatory Democracy (ACPD)
nvsos.gov

A Guide to Elections and Civic Participation in Nevada

**Everything you need to know about voting &
elections in Nevada**

Types of Elections

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Nevada holds both primary and general elections for all federal, state, and local offices, except for the office of U.S. president. For president, the major political parties, Democratic and Republican, hold selection caucuses.

*Please note: The Republican Party has opted to not hold a presidential caucus in Nevada in 2020.

Presidential nominating caucus

Both the Nevada Democratic and Republican Party use a closed party caucus to allocate delegates to the party's national presidential nominating convention. Each party sets a percentage of support needed by each candidate to be considered viable and thus have delegates selected.

Primary Elections

Primary elections are held to nominate candidates to run in the general election. Primaries are either (a) partisan; offices where a political party is required to be listed on the primary ballot and for holding office, or (b) non-partisan; offices where a political party is not listed on the ballot nor where the office being elected does not require political party as part of the job. The type of primary also determines which voters can cast ballots.

The Primary election for 2020 will be held on **June 9, 2020**.

Partisan primary

Currently, Nevada uses a closed partisan primary for primary elections for federal, state, and county partisan offices; Congress, Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, Secretary of State, Treasurer, Controller, State Legislators, County Commissioners. Not all political parties hold a primary election. Under [state law](#)¹ a political party must have at least 10 percent of registered voters identify as members of that party to be able to hold a nominating primary.

Qualifying parties are called “major political parties”. Currently, only the Democratic and Republican Party are major political parties. Other political parties, those with less than 10 percent of registered voters, are called [minor political parties](#).² Minor political parties may nominate a candidate to appear on the general election ballot, however, they must meet [certain requirements](#).³

The state pays for the partisan primary election for major political parties. Minor political parties pay for their nominating requirements. To vote in a partisan primary election, a voter must be registered to vote as a member of the major political party whose primary they wish to vote in.

The candidate who gets the most votes of party members voting in the primary advances to the general election. If only one major political party has candidates for a partisan closed primary and no minor party or independent candidate has filed to run in the general election (more on that below), the major political party candidate who

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won their primary will appear on the general election ballot unopposed— meaning they were essentially elected in the primary.

Non-Partisan primary

All voters may vote in the primary elections for non-partisan officers; judges, mayors, city council, school boards, and special districts. All candidates for non-partisan offices must file a [certificate of candidacy](#)⁴ to be placed on the primary election ballot.

The two candidates with the highest number of votes in the primary will advance to the general election unless one of the candidates receive more than 50 percent of the vote. If that happens, that candidate is considered elected and there is no general election for that office. There is an exception to this rule for certain judicial races.[NRS-293](#)

The partisan and non-partisan primaries are held on the same day. Voters participating in a partisan primary will also be given the non-partisan primary ballot. Voters eligible to vote only in the non-partisan primary (those registered to vote as non-partisan or in a minor political party) will only be given the non-partisan primary ballot. How primary elections are structured is up to each state. (More on that below).

Currently, only 14 states use the same closed primary process as Nevada. Because of this, voters from other states moving in to Nevada may assume Nevada is the same as their previous state. This can lead to voters showing up to vote in the primary election and being surprised when they are given a full ballot with all candidate names.

General election

The general election is open to all voters. Winners in the general election are elected to their office. Minor party candidates nominated by their party and [qualified independent candidates](#)⁵ appear on the general election ballot.

Ballot initiatives, referendum, and constitutional amendments that have qualified for the ballot are also voted on during the general election. Certain judicial positions are required by law to be elected at the general election, so it is not uncommon for these races to have only one candidate.

Nevada allows voters to select [“none of these candidates”](#)⁶ for all statewide offices; Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, Secretary of State, Treasurer, Controller and President / Vice-President of the United States. “none of these candidates” cannot win the election. If “none of these candidates” does receive the most votes, the actual candidate with the highest number of votes is elected.

The 2020 General election will be held on **November 3, 2020**.

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Special elections

Special elections may be held when a vacancy occurs in an elected office. The authority to call a special election rests with either the Governor, county commission, or city council, depending on the position, timing, and cost. Rather than hold an election, the deciding authority may appoint a person to fill the vacated position. [NRS-293](#)

If being filled by appointment, the person appointed must be from the same political party of the former office holder if the position is partisan. Whether elected by special election or appointed, the person's term of office ends at the next regularly scheduled election. Special elections are held according to Nevada law,⁷ usually a specified number of days from the day of the next election.

Recall elections

The Nevada Constitution allows for the recall of any elected official. The Nevada Constitution [does not specify](#)⁸ what can trigger a recall. A recall can be initiated for any reason. To initiate a recall, a person or group must file their Notice of Intent with the Secretary of State for statewide or state legislative recalls or with the county clerk/registrar of voters for county or city offices.

Once the notice is filed, the initiator(s) must submit the petition to the filing officer within 90 days of filing the Notice of Intent. There are specified milestones that must be met:

- If the required number of signatures are collected, a recall election is called and must be held within 30 days
- A recall election may be held the same day as a regularly scheduled primary or general election
- A recall election does not have to include an election of a replacement should the recall be successful. That is up to the initiator(s).
- If candidates to replace the recalled official are listed, voters will vote both on the question of recall and for a candidate.
- If a recall election does not include a replacement election and the recall is successful, the position becomes vacant and the vacancy is filled

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Voter Registration Toolkit for Businesses and Community Groups

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APPENDIX

- 1- NRS 293.128, Procedure for Qualification: <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/NRS/NRS-293.html#NRS293Sec128>
- 2- NRS 293.171, Procedure for organization: <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/NRS/NRS-293.html#NRS293Sec171>
- 3- NRS 293.1715, Procedure to place candidates' names on ballot; limitation on number of candidates to appear on ballot: <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/NRS/NRS-293.html#NRS293Sec1715>
- 4- NRS 293.177, Declaration or acceptance of candidacy: <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/NRS/NRS-293.html#NRS293Sec177>
- 5- NRS 293.200, Independent candidates: Qualification; petition of candidacy; time limit for challenge; declaration of candidacy: <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/NRS/NRS-293.html#NRS293Sec200>
- 6- NRS 293.269, Elections: <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/NRS/NRS-293.html#NRS293Sec269>
- 7- NRS 293.247, Regulations of Secretary of State for conduct of elections, interpretations, distribution of information to county and city clerks: <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/NRS/NRS-293.html#NRS293Sec247>
- 8- Recall of public officers, Procedure and Limitations: <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/Const/NvConst.html#Art2Sec9>