Chinese American Petroleum Association

Elections in America: National, State, and Local

Dr. Annie Johnson Benifield
President, League of Women Voters Houston
February 19, 2022
League of Women Voters!

100 plus years of empowering voters and defending democracy.
The League of Women Voters

• Established in 1920
• Actively fight for women’s right to vote
• Inform and educate women and the citizenry
• Advocate voter education to make informed decisions
• Enhance political participation in society
“Someone struggled for your right to vote. Use it.”

Susan B. Anthony

“The vote is a power, a weapon of offense and defense, a prayer.”

Carrie Chapman Catt
Empowering Voters.
Defending Democracy.

-LWV-US
National Elections
Qualifications to Vote

• 18 years of age
• U.S. citizen
• Resident of state for 30 or 50 days
• Resident of the county for 30 days
• Cannot be a current felon
• Must be mentally competent

http://www.866ourvote.org/issues/voter-registration
“The ballot is stronger than the bullet.”

Abraham Lincoln
Countdown...

0 Days to Register!
6 Days - Early Voting!
10 Days - Election Day!
Voting

Voting is an act of choice that individuals perform when they formally choose among alternative candidates, parties, and – depending on the election – alternative policies.

https://wrm.capitol.texas.gov/home
Elections

- Elections gives practical meaning to the notion of “consent.”
  - Choose personnel to occupy office—personnel.
  - Allow for the peaceful transfer of power.
  - Allow voters to choose b/w candidates or parties w/different policy priorities.
  - Allow us to trace the course of history.
How Voters Decide

• In making their decisions, voters balance a mix of cues and information including:

  • *Partisan loyalty*
  • *Issues, especially the economy and consumer confidence*
  • *Candidate characteristics*
Elections in America

• The Constitution gives states control over elections within their borders.
  • Localities typically administer elections
  • Elections are overseen by state regulators
Elections in America

Presidential elections: held every four years on the first Tuesday in November

January 23, 1845, the 28th US Congress

Congressional election: held every two years on the first Tuesday in November.

1872
Three Branches Government

Legislative

Executive

Judicial
Article I

House of Representatives
435 members
2-year term
U. S. Senate

- Article I
- 100 members
- 6-year term, 1/3 every 2-yr
2022 Midterm Elections

- 435 U. S. House of Representatives
  - 222 Democrats
  - 212 Republicans

- 34 U. S. Senate
  - 20 Republicans
  - 14 Democrats
2022 U.S. Senate elections

Hover over states for information on incumbents, open seats, recent Senate and presidential election margins of victory, and race ratings.

The above map depicts the U.S. Senate seats up for election in 2022, colored by the party of the sitting senator.
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

VOTE
Executive Article II

- Abraham Lincoln (16)
- George Washington (1)
- Franklin Delano Roosevelt (32)
Executive: Article II

• President
  • Four-year term
    • Two terms
    • Max 10 years

• Vice President
  • Four-year term
    • Two terms
    • Max 10 years
Electoral College

• Because the average citizen was not trusted to make the right decision in voting for president, the Founders created the Electoral College system.

• Even today, citizens do not vote for president, but rather for electors.
Electoral College

- Each state has a number of electors equal to its number of U.S. Representatives and Senators
- All states but Maine, Massachusetts and Nebraska allocate all electors to the popular vote winner
- Article II, Section I, Clause 2-3
- 12th Amendment
- https://www.archives.gov/electoral-college/key-dates
2022 Primary Election Dates

https://www.270towin.com/2022-election-calendar/
Elections in America

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Elections in America

• Types of Elections

• American politics makes frequent use of elections to:
  
  • Select representatives
  • Nominate party candidates
  • Make policy directly
  • [http://www.votesmart.org/](http://www.votesmart.org/)
2022 Primary Election Dates

https://www.270towin.com/2022-election-calendar/
U. S. Supreme Court Justices: Article III
States
50 States

- Republican Party
- Democrat Party
- https://www.ncsl.org/
- https://www.vote411.org/
Texas
The Role of a State Constitution

- State constitutions perform a number of important functions:
  - Establish political institutions and explain the source of their power and authority
  - Delegate powers to particular institutions and individuals and define how those powers are to be used
  - Responsible for the establishment of local governments
  - Protect against the concentration of political power in one institution or individual
  - Define the limits of political power
Branches of the State Government

Legislative

Plural Executive

Judicial
Texas U. S. Congressional Districts
Texas’ congressional delegation
- 23 Republicans
- 13 Democrats.
- In 2022, two new members, whose seats will be in Austin and Houston.
Texas State House of Representatives
Texas House of Representatives

150 Districts
2-year term
Texas State Senate

- 31 Districts
- 4 year term
SBOE

- 15 districts (1.9m residents)
- 9 Republicans, 6 Democrats
- 4-year staggered term (8, 7)
Partisan affiliation

Governors: Partisan affiliation
Texas Plural Executive

- Governor
- Lieutenant Governor
- Attorney General
- Land Commissioner
- Agricultural Commissioner
- Comptroller
Texas Plural Executive
Texas Political Hierarchy

- The Executive Branch
- The Legislative Branch
- The Judicial Branch
  - Texas Supreme Court
  - Texas Court of Criminal Appeals
  - Municipal Courts
  - District Courts
  - County Courts
Texas Supreme Court
March 1, 2022 is a Primary Election

Federal
- U.S. House Representative
- Governor
- Lieutenant Governor
- Attorney General
- Comptroller of Public Accounts
- Agriculture Commissioner
- Land Commissioner
- Railroad Commissioner
- State Board of Education
- State Senator
- State Representative
- Texas Supreme Court Justices
- Texas Court of Criminal Appeals Judges
- Various Court Appeals Justices

State
- County Clerk
- County Commissioners
- County District Clerk
- County Judge
- County Treasurer

Local

Down Ballot
How to find out what is on YOUR ballot?
Types of Elections

• Four types of elections:
  • Primary
  • General
  • Runoff
  • Special
Types of Elections

• Primaries
  • Parties choose the candidates who will run in the general elections
  • States can also hold caucuses, in which members meet and vote in the open
    • Open primaries
    • Closed primaries

• Runoff elections
  • If a candidate does not win a majority in the general election, some states hold a runoff between the two highest vote-getters
Types of Elections

- General elections
  - Determine who gets to hold office
  - Typically draws the most voters
Elections

- Special elections are held when a vacancy occurs and/or a constitutional or ballot initiatives needs approval.
Referendum & Recall

Twenty-six states have provisions that allow for citizens to vote directly, by *referendum*, on proposed laws or other government actions.

Eighteen states have provisions for *recall* elections which allow voters to remove governors and other state officials prior to the end of their term.

*Gray Davis –CA*

*Lynn Frazier ND*
Localities
ELECTION RESULTS

YOUR LOCAL ELECTION HEADQUARTERS
The County Commissioners’ Court

County Judge
Elected countywide
Has judicial-administrative functions and
presides over the commissioners’ court

Commissioner
Precinct 1
Elected from
one-quarter

Commissioner
Precinct 2
Elected from
one-quarter

Commissioner
Precinct 3
Elected from
one-quarter

Commissioner
Precinct 4
Elected from
one-quarter
Harris County Commissioners Court

- Jack Cagle
- Adrian Garcia
- Lina Hidalgo (County Judge)
- Steve Radack
- Rodney Ellis
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CITYWIDE OFFICIALS</th>
<th>PRECINCT-LEVEL OFFICIALS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>County judge</td>
<td>County commisioner</td>
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<tr>
<td>Possibly county court-at-law judges, possibly probate judges, and district judges</td>
<td>Justices of the peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County and district attorney or criminal district attorney</td>
<td>Constables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheriff</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>County and district clerk or district clerk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possibly county treasurer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessor-collector</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>County surveyor</td>
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Types of City Governments

Houston’s Mayor Sylvester Turner

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Population</th>
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<tr>
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<td>2,312,717</td>
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<td>NAME</td>
<td>2017 POPULATION ESTIMATES</td>
<td>FORM OF GOVERNMENT</td>
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League of Women Voters of Houston: Voters Guide

https://lwvhouston.org/voters-guide/

Vote411.org
“The ignorance of one voter in a democracy impairs the security of all.”
John F. Kennedy
WHAT IS THE HOUSTON VOTERS GUIDE?

Your resource for becoming an informed voter!

- Find what's on your ballot
- Compare candidates
- Build and print a sample ballot
- View critical election information
- And a lot more

lwvhouston.org/voters-guide

2. Limited copies were printed in English and made available to Houston and Harris County Public Libraries. Give one a call to arrange for curbside pick-up.

3. Visit vote411.org directly to build and print your own sample ballot.

*League does not support or oppose any candidates or parties.*
• Election protection 866-our-vote
• 866-OUR-VOTE (866-687-8683) English
• 888-Ve-Y-Vota (839-8682) Spanish
• 888-API-VOTE (888-274-8683) English, Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, Vietnamese, Bengali, Urdu, Hindi, and Tagalog
• 844-YALLA-US (844-925-5287) Arabic
• 301-818-VOTE (301-818-8683) American Sign Language (video call)
• 888-796-VOTE Disability Rights Texas
Source Materials

- https://redistricting.capitol.texas.gov/
- Vote411.org
- Lwvhoustont.org/voters-guide/
- Capitol.Texas.gov
- Redistricting.capitol.Texas.gov
- Harrisvotes.com/locations
PLEASE DO YOUR PART FOR DEMOCRACY: REGISTER AND VOTE

Questions or additional information, please visit lwvhouston.org