



**civic
alliance**

2024

ELECTIONS

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OBJECTIVE

The 2024 elections will undoubtedly stand as a pivotal moment in our nation's history. Every vote matters, and employers have a vital role to play in supporting democracy. This toolkit will help Civic Alliance member companies:

- **Promote** the significance and importance of participating in the 2024 elections.
- **Understand** the electoral process, including key dates and terminology.
- **Enhance** your audiences' understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the elected positions on their ballot.
- **Connect** employees and customers with valuable resources to encourage and boost civic engagement and participation.

DEMOCRACY IS ONLY AS STRONG AS OUR COMMITMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN IT.

When we reflect on the last few election cycles, our biggest takeaway is this: our democracy is only as strong as our commitment to participate in it. **As we make our way through the 2024 election season, ensuring your community has access to accurate, nonpartisan information about how to participate in our democracy is more important than ever.**

MAKING THE CASE

The factors most likely to inhibit voter participation this year include lack of information or misinformation on voting, not knowing how or where to register or vote, needing transportation to or assistance with voting, uncertainty about the impact of a vote, and conflicts over scheduling. This is where companies can come in.

Many people are already talking about this election cycle, which means your employees and audiences are exposed to information from a range of sources. As one of the most trusted institutions, according to the [2023 Edelman Trust Barometer](#), businesses have a unique opportunity – and responsibility – to amplify the importance of civic engagement. This includes providing audiences with accurate election information and messages that inspire engagement.

Companies can build on their momentum from the historic voter turnout in the last few election cycles, and scale efforts to further expand and encourage civic participation this election year and in the years ahead.

ELECTIONS LANDSCAPE

» 2024 ELECTIONS CALENDAR

This [elections calendar](#) details known or expected 2024 elections where voters will cast a ballot in presidential, federal, state executive, state legislative, or state judicial contests.

We recommend referencing this list to identify key dates and locations that may impact your employees or customers, and confirm [key election dates and deadlines](#) as you build your communications plan. Keep in mind, not all elections listed are confirmed yet, and some elections or dates may be subject to change.

The 2024 Elections Calendar is published by Civic Alliance founding partner, [Democracy Works](#).

BEST PRACTICE: Remember that in order to help voters take part, you'll want to share not just the election date, but deadlines for registering, voting by mail, and voting early. You can find this information at [TurboVote.org](#).

» ON THE BALLOT

Every voter in America will have the opportunity to cast a ballot on Election Day.

A presidential election takes place every four years and always in an even year. In 2024, **Election Day is Tuesday, November 5, 2024.**

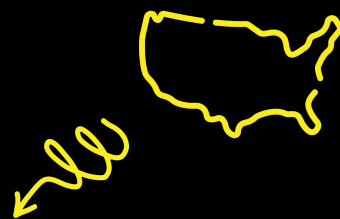
Presidential election years present an optimal opportunity to enroll voters in the democratic process and renew civic engagement so that Americans feel empowered to participate on Election Day and beyond.

It's important to remember that there is more on the line than just the presidential election. At the federal level, a total of 468 seats in the U.S. Congress will be on the ballot in 2024. This includes all 435 House of Representatives seats and 33 Senate seats. Two Senate seats and two House of Representative seats are also up for a special election

There's more at stake than a presidential election.

At the state level:

- 11 states will elect a governor.
- 9 states will vote for a lieutenant governor.
- 10 elections will be held for attorney general seats.
- 7 secretary of state seats are up for election.
- 163 state executive seats across 30 states will be elected.
- 85 out of the 99 legislative chambers in 44 states are holding regular legislative elections.
- 301 appellate court seats are up for election, which include:
 - 82 of the 344 seats on state supreme courts across 33 states.
 - 219 intermediate appellate court seats across 29 states.
- 55 statewide ballot measures will be on 25 state ballots.



» WHO ARE YOU VOTING FOR?

This year, voters will have the chance to elect representatives to the U.S. House of Representatives, the U.S. Senate, and many local and state positions. To learn what will be on the ballot in your state, visit Ballotpedia's [Sample Ballot Lookup Tool](#).

U.S. Representatives

Commonly known as a congressperson, each representative is elected by the constituents of their specific congressional district for two-year terms. Some of their key responsibilities include introducing bills and resolutions, proposing amendments, and serving on committees. The House of Representatives consists of 435 members who have full voting rights, and the number of representatives per state is proportional to each state's population.

All 435 seats in the United States House of Representatives will be voted on in 2024.

U.S. Senators

The Senate consists of 100 members, with each of the 50 states being represented by two senators. Senators serve six-year, overlapping terms, and their primary roles include proposing, drafting, and voting on federal legislation that encompasses all aspects of U.S. domestic and foreign policy issues. Additionally, senators provide advice and consent on executive nominations and treaties and conduct oversight of all branches of the federal government to help maintain our system of checks and balances.

33 seats in the 100-member Senate will be voted on in 2024. You can find the list of states hosting elections for the Senate [here](#).

Other State & Local Offices

State and local governments are responsible for policies that deeply impact citizens within their borders. This includes most education issues, such as school curriculum, statewide standardized tests, and school budget. States are also responsible for setting certain tax levels, and determining how revenue will be spread out across the state. In 2024, thousands of state and local elections will be taking place around the country. According to [Ballotpedia](#), 85 of the country's 99 state legislative chambers will hold regularly scheduled elections in 2024.

Don't forget: 11 states will host gubernatorial elections in 2024. These state-wide elections will likely garner a similar level of attention to the federal House and Senate races. You can find the list of states and territories hosting elections for Governor [here](#).

To learn which elections are taking place in your state, check your [secretary of state's website](#).

» NAVIGATING THE PRIMARIES

This year, registered voters will have the chance to cast their vote before Election Day (November 5) in primary elections. In a nutshell, primaries give voters the opportunity to select the candidates that will represent their parties. Despite its importance, voter turnout during primaries is historically lower than in the general election. By encouraging your employees to cast their vote in their primary election, you are helping your community more comprehensively select their representatives. The [format of primary elections](#) varies by state, which makes it that much more important to clearly communicate with stakeholders about how to participate.

Primary Elections

A primary election determines which candidates from each party will be on the general election ballot. Depending on your state, you may have to be registered with a political party to vote in the primary.

To learn more about primary elections, visit [Ballotpedia](#).

General Election on November 5

The general election determines which candidates get elected into office. You do not have to vote for [the party you're registered with](#) in a federal, state, or local general election.

To learn more about general elections, visit [Ballotpedia](#).

best practice

Because primary elections are often hosted by specific political parties, it can be challenging to discuss in a nonpartisan way. Despite this, participating in a primary election is the best way for voters to select who they believe will best represent their interests and who they want to appear on the ballot in the general election. Consider these three different approaches to engaging in primary elections while remaining nonpartisan:

1. Send a company-wide message that advocates for participation in upcoming primary elections nationwide and encourages employees to confirm their registration status and look up their election details.
2. Implement a communications plan to reach out to employees to remind them about upcoming elections nationally or state by state based on the geographic distribution of your employees
3. Send location-specific messaging to employees based on their location with an update of relevant information for every primary.

» Unsure of where to start?

Consider sending an email (see: [communications template](#)) to ALL US-based employees, encouraging them to sign up for [TurboVote](#) election reminders. Once they sign up, they'll receive customized email and text notifications about every election they are eligible to participate in. This is an effective first step as it equips employees with the essential information they need to participate.

» A Closer Look: Redistricting

What is redistricting? Every 10 years, states redraw district lines to reflect population shifts through a process called [redistricting](#). This means that as district lines change, residents' representation may also change. Using population numbers from the latest census in 2020, redistricting works to ensure that the evolving nature of our country is reflected in our democracy. Drawing representative districts strives to ensure that all communities are fairly represented, and it is a key part of the democratic process.

While the redistricting cycle typically wraps up at the end of the year that the data is released, some states have conducted additional redistricting after the 2022 elections to comply with specific legal or constitutional provisions. In other states, congressional maps drawn after the 2020 Census have been challenged under federal voting rights law and the U.S. Constitution, leading to drawn-out legal battles over the redistricting plans they initiated in 2021. As redistricting only takes place every 10 years, the lines drawn will have a long-lasting impact on the representation of Americans and the policies and decisions that will shape our lives.

Find out about the states that might implement or are in the process of enacting new congressional or state legislative district boundaries before the 2024 elections at [Ballotpedia](#).

GET INFORMED»» Consider taking the time to confirm who your representatives are. You can share these resources with employees and external audiences to ensure they have access to this important information as well.

- [Find your Congressional representatives.](#)
- [Find your state representatives.](#)

LEARN MORE»» You can learn more about redistricting and considerations for corporate engagement in the Civic Alliance's [Redistricting Toolkit](#).

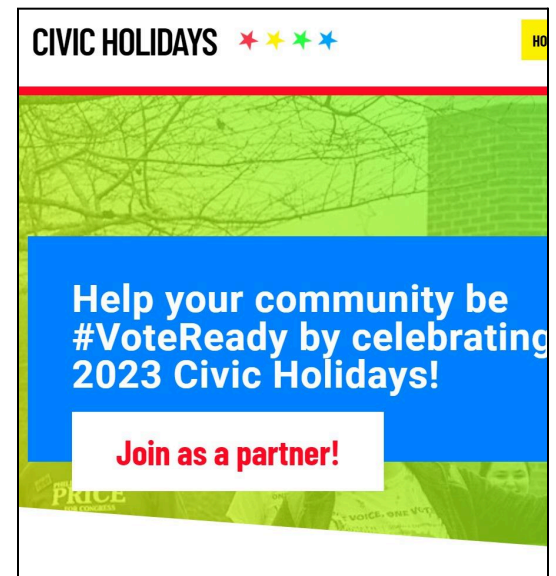
VOTER ENGAGEMENT TIMELINE

Timing	Topic	Tool
Ongoing	Registration Register to vote Confirm your registration	turbovote.org
Ongoing	Plan to Vote Find your polling place Preview your ballot Check your voter ID laws	turbovote.org ballotready.org , vote4it.org voteriders.org
November 5	Election Day	turbovote.org

» Civic Holidays

While you're mapping out your timeline of voter engagement, remember that companies can help employees, customers, and communities be **#VoteReady** by recognizing key civic dates and celebrating the **2024 Civic Holidays**. These dates can be incorporated into company communications calendars and integrated into key messaging to drive engagement.

The following dates represent opportunities to champion civic education and inspire participation among your audiences. We've also included details on two tentpole holidays below, and encourage you to check out CivicHolidays.org for more opportunities to celebrate.



August 1	National Poll Worker Recruitment Day
September 17	National Voter Registration Day (see below)
October TBA	National Voter Education Week
October 29	Vote Early Day (see below)
November 4	Election Hero Day (see below)
November 5	Election Day



[National Voter Registration Day](#) (NVRD) is a nonpartisan civic holiday that brings together a broad cross-section of corporate partners, media platforms, election officials, nonprofits, universities, and more to celebrate our democracy, raise awareness of registration opportunities, and help every eligible citizen get registered and ready to vote. This year, the holiday will take place on **Tuesday, September 17**. Reach out to chyann@nationalvoterregistrationday.org to learn more.



[Vote Early Day](#) is a nonpartisan movement of businesses, nonprofits, media companies, election administrators, and creatives working to ensure every American has the tools to vote early. This year on **Tuesday, October 29**, thousands of diverse partners will host celebrations across the country as part of a tentpole moment to engage with their communities and urge them to vote early.

The Vote Early Day team will support your company every step of the way with assistance, swag, and a [business-specific toolkit](#) (which contains sample social media graphics, press releases, CEO letters, and more). **Sign up to become a partner** [here](#) and reach out to info@voteearlyday.org with any questions.



[Election Hero Day](#) is a national day of recognition on Monday, November 4, 2024. One day before Election Day, nonprofits, business leaders, brands, public officials, and other entities will celebrate the tremendous contributions election administration teams, poll workers, and more across the nation are making to ensure a safe, secure, and accessible voting experience for all.

Companies can participate in this day of recognition by celebrating the people who support elections. Consider sending an employee-facing email or posting on social media channels, showing your support for these teams — which may include your own employees! Be sure to tag [@electionheroday](#) and use [#ThankYouElectionHeroes](#). See sample posts below:

- Elections are community-driven. Let's thank our friends, family, colleagues, and neighbors who have taken the time and effort to ensure that this election season runs smoothly. 🙌🙌🙌
[#ThankYouElectionHeroes](#)
- We are grateful for [#electionheroes](#) who have been steadfastly working to provide a safe, secure, and accessible election experience this year. Join us, business leaders, elected officials, nonprofits, and enthusiastic people across the US by celebrating [#ElectionHeroDay](#).
[#ThankYouElectionHeroes](#)
- The hundreds of thousands of polling places across the country could not have stayed open without dependable election clerks and eager volunteers willing to serve our democracy.
[#ThankYouElectionHeroes](#)

KEY MESSAGING + ACTION

» **ACTION: Election Day of Service**

Participating in elections goes beyond casting your ballot — there are many important activities needed to ensure that elections run smoothly and earn the confidence of voters. Companies can participate in the Civic Alliance’s [Election Day of Service](#), an initiative that runs all election season.



Recruit employees and customers to serve as poll workers

Companies can inspire their employees or customers to serve as poll workers through the Civic Alliance’s partnership with [Power the Polls](#), a one-stop platform to recruit poll workers nationwide. Poll worker requirements vary across states, but companies can direct nationwide audiences to Power the Polls for details about how to get involved.



Offer physical space as a polling place or ballot drop box

Companies often have lobbies, warehouses, or other facilities that could serve as a polling station or a ballot drop box location. Learn more about the basic requirements for hosting a physical voting location and guidance on how to offer that space to your local jurisdiction in the Civic Alliance resource, [How to Host a Polling Place](#).



Engage in-house attorneys to defend election officials

The Election Official Legal Defense Network (EOLDN) is a valuable platform that connects licensed, qualified, pro-bono attorneys with election administrators and workers who need legal advice or assistance. Election workers can contact EOLDN at any time to be connected to a lawyer at no cost. This service is available regardless of political affiliation, whether they work in a blue or red state, or county.

How do you participate in Election Day of Service?

If interested in recruiting poll workers through Power the Polls, donating space to vote, or inviting your attorneys to support election officials, learn more in the Civic Alliance’s [Election Day of Service Checklist](#) or email concierge@civicalliance.com for support.

» **MESSAGING:** Know your rights at the polls

Understanding your rights at the polls is crucial to making sure your voice is heard in our democracy. We encourage members to give their employees and community members the resources they need to familiarize themselves with their rights at the polls.

- To report any issues experienced while voting and to receive guidance on how to safely cast your ballot, call or text the [Election Protection Hotline](#):
 - English: 1-866-OUR-VOTE / 1-866-687-8683
 - Spanish: 1-888-VE-Y-VOTA / 1-888-839-8682
- Some states require voter ID at the polls. [VoteRiders](#) provides a state-by-state guide to voter ID requirements and is an important resource to share with your audiences to ensure they can vote once they arrive at the polls. They also offer support services to anyone who may need help acquiring a voter ID. Visit their [website](#) or text/call (844) 338-8743 for assistance. Be aware that it is a federal crime to pressure, threaten, coerce or otherwise intimidate voters at the polls! Check out [Advancement Project's Guide on handling voter intimidation situations](#).
- Voters with disabilities may encounter accessibility barriers when registering to vote or casting their ballot. The U.S. Department of Justice has a helpful [voting resource](#) around the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) has a [directory](#) of member agencies that provide support for voters with disabilities.

A good rule of thumb is to encourage people to ask their poll workers for assistance. If you make a mistake on your ballot or your name isn't listed in the poll book, don't hesitate to ask for help. Poll workers will likely provide you with a **provisional ballot**, which is a separate type of ballot for voters who face issues at the poll due to administrative errors. This safeguard ensures that no voter is excluded from the electoral process. You can learn more about provisional ballots in your state [here](#).

» Talking points

We invite members to use the information within this toolkit to help motivate employees and/or external audiences to participate this election season. You can use the following talking points across channels to help raise awareness, build understanding about the upcoming elections, and encourage your audiences to participate.

- Every voter will have the chance to make their voice heard in 2024. Stay informed about where, when, and how you can participate by signing up for election reminders at TurboVote.org.
- Primary elections are your chance to select who you want to represent your values on the ballot. Participating in primaries helps us create a more representative government.
- The last presidential election saw historic turnout — let's make participation a habit again in 2024.
- Our democracy is only as strong as our commitment to participate in it.
- The 2024 election season gives voters the chance to make their voices heard and elect representatives at every level and branch of government.
- The representatives who we elect on Election Day will have a significant impact on American life. Your vote has a direct influence on the policies that will shape our day-to-day lives.
- This fall, voters across the country will get to cast a ballot — whether by mail, through early voting, or on Election Day, Tuesday, November 5. Make your plan to vote by visiting TurboVote.org.

best practice

The goal of get-out-the-vote efforts is to inspire participation, encourage behavior change, and excite audiences to make a difference by voting. It is important to **deliver positive and empowering messages** and steer clear of negative or discouraging language. Focus on messaging that underscores why **every vote matters** and the importance of making their voice heard.

» Social Media and Messaging Toolkit

WHERE: Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram
(Consider sharing broadly across your corporate, brand, CEO, executive, and employee accounts.)

HASHTAGS: #fordemocracy
#elections2024
#voteprimaries
#voteready

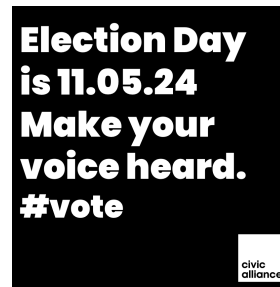
TAGS: Twitter: [@CivicAlliance](#)
LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/company/civicalliance](#)
Instagram: Only use #fordemocracy. Please do not tag @CivicAlliance.

Graphics

Download all social media graphics [here](#). Customized graphics that inspire participation and share registration deadlines, early vote dates, and election day reminders can be created with the following templates. Simply open these files and follow the instructions to customize your graphics for the following platforms:

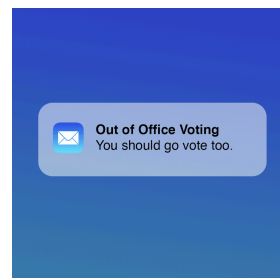
- [Instagram](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#)

Examples include:



Customized civic engagement-themed GIFs ranging from time off to vote to poll worker recruitment. Encourage your audiences to take civic action in a fun and lighthearted way.

- [GIFs Library](#), examples include



» Suggested Posts – 01

Elections Matter

Elections shape our future. The leaders we choose on Election Day will have a crucial role in defining our nation's path and a big influence on American life in the coming years. #elections2024 #fordemocracy

- Your vote will have a direct influence on the policies that affect our day-to-day lives. So engage, take action, and elect leaders who reflect your priorities. Find your upcoming elections at turbovote.org. #voteready #fordemocracy
- All 435 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives and 33 seats in the Senate will be up for election in 2024. Who do you want to be your voice in Congress? It's time to get #voteready #elections2024
- The power to shape our nation's laws is in your hands. Who will best represent you? Find your next primary election at turbovote.org. #voteready #fordemocracy

Registration

- Registering to vote is the first step to casting a ballot. Learn how to register at turbovote.org. #elections2024 #voteready
- Ensure you are #voteready this election season by registering to vote or confirming your registration status at turbovote.org. #elections2024 #fordemocracy
- The presidential election is right around the corner. Help friends and family get #voteready by directing them to register to vote or check their registration status at turbovote.org. #elections2024
- Have you moved since the last election? Update your registration details at turbovote.org. #VoteReady #elections2024

Primary Elections

- Voting in a primary election determines who will be on the ballot for Election Day. That's why [COMPANY] is a proud member of @CivicAlliance, championing participation this primary season. #elections2024 #fordemocracy #voteprimaries
- Primaries are more than just preliminary elections — it's where we begin to shape our future. Make your voice heard early by supporting your candidate of choice in their first race – the primary. #voteprimaries #elections2024
- In the primaries, voters select a candidate to be a political party's nominee in the general election. Make an impact by voting in the primaries. #voteprimaries #fordemocracy
- On [INSERT DATE], [INSERT LOCATION] starts its selection process through a primary election. Make sure your voice is heard. #elections2024 #voteprimaries
- Primary elections are the first round. [INSERT LOCATION] – Mark your calendar to vote on [INSERT DATE]! #voteready #elections2024 #voteprimaries

» Suggested Posts – 02

Upcoming Fall/General Elections

- TODAY is Election Day. Ensure your voice is heard and vote. You can easily find your polling place at turbovote.org. #voteready #elections2024 #fordemocracy
- What's on your ballot? Prepare to vote on November 5 by checking what's on your ballot at ballotready.org. #voteready #elections2024
- What are your voter ID laws? Know before you go — check voteriders.org. #voteready #elections2024
- [COMPANY] votes: employees are headed to the polls nationwide on November 5. Check out turbovote.org for a guide on everything you need to know to register and vote in your state. #fordemocracy #elections2024



Civic Holidays

- Are You #VoteReady? Make sure you are by registering to vote on #NationalVoterRegistrationDay on September 17! @natlvoterregday
- Help your community be #VoteReady this year by celebrating the 2024 Civic Holidays:

📋 @NatlVoterRegDay

📖 #NationalVoterEducationWeek

🗳️ @voteearlyday

🦸 @electionheroday

These fun, nonpartisan days of action strengthen our democracy! Learn more at civicholidays.org.

- Casting your ballot early can give you more flexibility, helps you to avoid Election Day lines, and reduces the burden on poll workers. Visit voteearlyday.org to learn more about how and when you can vote early. #voteready #fordemocracy
- #VoteEarlyDay is October 29. Find out where, when, and how to cast your ballot ahead of Election Day at voteearlyday.org and make sure you're #VoteReady

» Sample Email Copy

Below are two email templates for your company's leaders and managers to consider using to share with employees, tailored for both nationwide and state-specific audiences. Feel free to edit, add relevant details, or share why voting and civic participation are so important to you/your company. You may also want to consider including specific election details depending on your audience.

SUBJECT: 2024 Elections and [COMPANY]:
Your Voice Matters

Dear Colleagues,

This November, **all eligible Americans will have the opportunity to vote**. We at [COMPANY] believe in the power of civic participation, as it not only aligns with our values, but it encourages a representative and inclusive community and a healthy democracy. We want to ensure that those of you who are interested in voting this year can, and we are pleased to [launch/remind you of] our time off to vote policy. [INSERT DETAILS].

On November 5th, employees nationwide will have the opportunity to vote in the general election, which includes electing all 435 seats for the House of Representatives, 33 of the 100 seats in the Senate, governors in 11 states, legislators in 85 of the country's 99 state legislative chambers, and hundreds of other local races.

We encourage you to **visit TurboVote.org** to get help registering to vote or confirming your election's deadlines for registering, voting by mail, voting early, and information on your polling place.

For democracy,

[NAME]

SUBJECT: [STATE]'s Voter Registration Deadline is Coming Up!

Dear Colleagues,

As you may know, Election Day is Tuesday, November 5th — when ALL eligible Americans nationwide will have the opportunity to vote. We at [COMPANY] value civic participation and want to ensure everyone who is interested and eligible is able to cast their vote. That's why we are reaching out with a reminder about upcoming voter registration deadlines in [STATE].

The earliest deadline to register to vote in [STATE] is [INSERT DATE]. [IF APPLICABLE: [STATE] also offers same-day registration for voters.] To cast your vote in the upcoming election, check your registration status or register before this deadline.

Don't let your voice go unheard. Check your registration status at TurboVote.org, and learn about other ways to register and vote in [STATE] by visiting TurboVote.org. This centralized resource includes information on early voting, mail-in ballots, checking your registration status, your polling place location, voter ID requirements, and more for all 50 states and D.C.

Happy voting,

[NAME]

DIRECTORY OF CIVIC TOOLS

[TurboVote](#): TurboVote helps voters in all 50 states and D.C., access the voting guidance, alerts, and real-time help they need to vote in every election. TurboVote helps users register to vote, check their registration, pledge to register to vote if they're under 18, get reminders about their upcoming elections, and make a plan to vote.

[VOTE411](#): Launched by the League of Women Voters Education Fund, Vote411.org is a one-stop-shop for election-related information, focused on providing nonpartisan information and education on one's ballot. Share Vote411.org for an overview of ballots, including factual data on candidates in state and local races, ballot measure information, and more.

[BallotReady](#): Helping voters across the U.S. exercise their right to vote and vote informed on every race and measure on their ballot, BallotReady provides personalized nonpartisan information to voters in all 50 states. BallotReady will help voters make a plan to vote, and ensure they know when to vote and what is on their ballot with digital ballot guides.

[Ballotpedia](#): A digital encyclopedia of American politics and elections, Ballotpedia aims to inform people by providing accurate and objective information about politics at all levels of government. Whether your audiences want to run for office, make decisions about how they'll vote or need the latest political news and analysis, from a nonpartisan source, Ballotpedia is a good tool to share.

[Pizza to the Polls](#): Pizza to the Polls takes reports of long lines to vote from folks around the country and then delivers pizza from a local restaurant. Sending pizza to the polls not only fortifies voters, it cheers up poll workers and provides ways for people to give back.

[Power the Polls](#) **(Poll Working)**: Power the Polls is a clearinghouse of information on serving as a poll worker nationwide. Share a link to Power the Polls and your internal/external audiences can look up information on how to apply to be a poll worker in their local jurisdiction. Through our exclusive partnership with Power the Polls, you can help interested employees, customers, or other external audiences sign up to be poll workers, complete their mandatory training, and ensure the election runs smoothly.

[WorkElections.com](#) **(Poll Working)**: Providing access to accessible centralized information, [workelections.com](#) provides a solution to a main obstacle of poll worker recruitment. Encourage audiences to consider serving as poll workers by directing them to this portal, which collects information on requirements and applications for serving in nearly all 50 states.

[VoteRiders](#) **(Voter ID)**: Helping ensure employees and customers know what they need in order to vote is crucial in ensuring that votes can be cast. VoteRiders is a database on state-by-state voter ID laws and an easy reference for anyone with questions or concerns. They also offer a hotline to support voters with ID questions or issues that arise at the polls.

[The Civics Center](#) **(Youth)**: The Civics Center provides voter registration information focused on first-time and young voters. The nonpartisan organization also provides free online training for students and educators who want to organize voter registration drives in high schools and offers programming to adult supporters who want to learn about high school civic engagement and help young people register to vote.

GLOSSARY OF ELECTED OFFICES

» The ABCs of State and Local Government

Civic education lays the foundation for strong and confident civic participation. It's important your employees and audiences understand the different branches of government and the roles and responsibilities that elected officials hold so that they can confidently cast a ballot this election season.

Below is a breakdown of what happens at all levels of government, what elected offices at those levels are responsible for, and issues that voters can connect with to further drive home the need for their participation and understanding.

» Government 101

Throughout the United States, whether at the federal or state level, the government is operated by a complex system of checks and balances to ensure all people are represented and have a say in how our country is being run. The federal and all state governments follow the same model and consist of [three branches](#):



Executive: Headed by the President or a state governor (who is directly elected by the people; other leaders elected in this branch can include the lieutenant governor, attorney general, secretary of state, and auditors and commissioners).



Legislative: Made up of elected representatives who consider state matters brought forth by the governor or introduced by its members as legislation. This body also approves state budgets and tax legislation. All states (except Nebraska) have a bicameral legislature made up of two chambers, the smaller chamber is always called the Senate, and the larger chamber is often called the House of Representatives, Assembly, or House of Delegates.



Judicial: Usually led by the State Supreme Court, which hears appeals from state courts. The United States Supreme Court is the highest level of the judicial branch at the federal level.

» About Federal Government

The federal government handles matters that impact the entire country and oversees a range of responsibilities, including national defense, foreign affairs, currency and monetary policy, social programs (such as Medicare/Medicaid and Social Security), and more. The laws of the federal government apply to all people who are in the United States, and it works closely with state governments to represent all U.S. Citizens. If states feel that a certain federal law infringes upon their powers or if there are constitutional issues, states can challenge the law which can lead to legal battles, and in some instances, Supreme Court decisions that clarify the distribution of power. Recent examples of states challenging the federal government include medical marijuana laws and the Affordable Care Act (also known as Obamacare).

President

The [President](#) is the chief executive of the federal government, responsible for proposing the national budget, oversees the armed forces and makes decisions regarding national defense, has the ability to veto Congress, represents the United States in foreign affairs, implements national laws, and more. Similar to the Governor at the state level, the President holds veto power, can issue executive orders, and manages emergency responses, including mobilizing the National Guard.

Important if you care about:

- *national laws*
- *federal budget*
- *collaboration with state governments*
- *disaster response*
- *national infrastructure*

Vice President

The Vice President (VP) serves as the second-highest executive position at the federal level and assumes the role of the President in their absence. In addition, they may hold positions on various boards or agencies and play a supportive role in the administration. Citizens do not directly elect the VP, rather the President-elect chooses a person to be their VP or "running mate" during an election

****not an elected position***

Cabinet Leaders

Also known as Secretaries, Cabinet Leaders form a team of advisors chosen by the President to oversee various key departments and agencies, such as the Department of Defense and the Department of Agriculture. As the President's principal advisors, they play a key role in shaping and executing policies that impact the nation. They are responsible for implementing and managing policies, addressing national challenges, and providing valuable insights to ensure the smooth functioning of the government.

****not an elected position***

» About State Government

State governments control issues that only impact people within their borders. This includes most education issues, such as school curriculum), statewide standardized tests, and school budget. States are also responsible for setting certain tax levels, and determining how revenue will be spread out across the state. They set election policy, including things like voter ID laws, and the procedure for redrawing Congressional districts every 10 years. State governments also have a lot of power to determine what local governments can and cannot do.

Governor

[Governors](#) are responsible for implementing state laws and overseeing the operation of the state. The scope of gubernatorial power varies by state, but generally, they propose state budgets, enact legislation, and have the power to make appointments to state offices. They also hold veto power over legislation, have the authority to issue executive orders, and are responsible for responding to emergencies (including by calling in the National Guard). Think of this as a parallel role to the president but for just one state.

Important if you care about:

- state law
- state budget
- collaboration with the federal government
- disaster response
- infrastructure

Lieutenant Governor

The [lieutenant governor](#) is the second-highest executive position in a state. The main duty of the lieutenant governor is to act as governor should the governor be absent from the office. Think of this as a parallel role to the vice president. They may also have positions on the boards of public universities or state agencies

**not an elected position*

Secretary of State

In most states, the [secretary of state](#) oversees elections, including the distribution of ballots and counting of votes. The other duties of the secretary of state are generally administrative, and no two states have identical responsibilities. Many are tasked with keeping state records, from registering businesses to recording the official acts of the governor. The voters directly elect the secretary of state in 35 states. In the other 12, the secretary is appointed by either the governor or the state legislature.

Important if you care about:

- election administration
- voting rights

The secretary of state position does not exist in Alaska, Hawaii, or Utah. In Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, the office is called the Secretary of the Commonwealth and differs only in name.

Attorney General

The [attorney general](#) is an executive office holder in all 50 states and Washington, D.C., who serves as the chief legal advisor and chief law enforcement officer for the state government. The attorney general prosecutes violations of state law, represents the state in legal disputes, and issues legal advice to state agencies and the legislature. In most states, the attorney general has a substantial influence on a state's approach to law enforcement. Attorneys general often set particular law enforcement priorities (e.g. drug law, civil rights violations, or sexual crime) and focus or reduce resources on these issues.

Important if you care about:

- policing practices
- civil rights
- immigration
- government oversight
- accountability

» About Local Government

Local governments generally include two tiers: counties (also known as boroughs in Alaska and parishes in Louisiana) and municipalities, or cities/towns. In some states, counties are also divided into townships.

The structure of local government varies from state to state, however below are many common city and county elected positions.

Issues addressed at the local level include **policing practices**, changes to **public transit, access to clean water or green spaces, zoning laws**, and **city planning**.

Mayor or City Manager

The **mayor** is the leader of the city government, responsible for the city's operations. In large cities, the mayor is a parallel executive role to the governor: elected by the people, has the power to sign or veto legislation, and oversees city executive offices. In smaller cities with a city manager, the mayor is a city council member and is elevated to mayor for a designated period of time. In this instance, mayors do not have executive powers. Instead the **city manager** is the executive role.

Mayors appoint and dismiss key department heads, usually including the chief of police, and are often responsible for presenting a yearly budget to the city council for approval. Either the mayor or city council may introduce new laws. Together they address issues including land use and development, housing, job programs or incentives, transportation policies, investment in parks or libraries, and how to

Important if you care about:

- Job programs/incentives
- Education
- Housing
- Policing practices
- Land use
- City transportation
- Parks
- Libraries
- Collaboration with federal government

cooperate with the federal government on areas like immigration policy or drug issues.

City Council

The **city council** writes laws and approves a city budget. Members may develop their own initiatives, fund projects in their districts, and serve as a check-and-balance on the mayor. Some city charters give their council members the power to select department heads and even direct control over city departments, or allocations of funding in areas that elect them.

Comptroller

The **comptroller** acts as the account or city's chief financial officer. They audit city agencies, approve city contracts, and invest the municipal pension funds. In some jurisdictions, they also act as the external auditor for the government budget.

Important if you care about:

- City spending

County Executive and County Commissioner

A **county commission** is a common form of local government at the county level. The cornerstone of a county commission is an elected board of **commissioners**. The board of commissioners functions as the county's primary legislative and policy-making body. Most boards also control county land usage, oversee environmental issues, and possess executive powers, meaning they have the authority to appoint or remove departmental heads.

County executives and commissioners generally set rules for broad countywide programs, like transportation initiatives that connect multiple cities. They also often distribute state and federal funding. County governments also often serve areas of the country that are not incorporated into a municipal government, for instance with police and fire services.

Some municipalities combine city and county governments into one consolidated entity, having the powers of both a city and a county, for instance, San Francisco, Indianapolis, and Philadelphia.

Important if you care about:

- County policy
- Environmental issues
- Transportation
- Police/fire service outside of cities

District Attorney / City Attorney

The **district attorney (DA) or city attorney** is the chief law enforcer for your community. They have the authority to investigate and bring issues to trial, prosecute criminal offenses (including making certain offenses a lower priority for prosecution), and make sentencing recommendations. County governments have District Attorneys while cities have city attorneys. While either position may be elected or appointed, district attorneys are more likely to be elected. One other distinction: District attorneys also handle felonies, while city attorneys are often limited to misdemeanors.

Important if you care about:

- Criminal justice reform
- Sentencing and sentencing inequalities
- Policy behavior
- Bail practices

Because a DA deals with felonies, they have a particularly important impact on the handling of criminal cases, official corruption, and misconduct cases. They may work to reform the criminal justice system, and address inequities in sentencing, and advocate for changes to cash bail standards.

School Board

The **school board** is the link between the classroom and the community. They decide how and what students are learning by setting policies and approving curricula, and budgets for the school district. Many debates over diversity, equity, and inclusion in schools are taking place at the school board level. Voting for school board members affects traditional matters like funding for the arts, music, and sports, the school calendar, and what time school begins and ends. School board members hire or fire school principals and set guidelines for teachers.

Important if you care about:

- Curriculum
- School budgets
- Educational programs
– art, music, sports
- School calendar

County Clerk

A **county clerk** is a public official responsible for maintaining records for a county. Their responsibilities may include handling marriage licenses and deeds, collecting campaign finance information from local candidates, and administering elections. This position may also be called county **clerk-recorder** or **county recorder**, though county recorders typically do not handle elections. The National Association of Counties determined that 24 states required county clerks to be elected officials. Two other states allowed counties to determine whether these officials are elected or appointed, while other states with county clerks required them to be appointed.

Important if you care about:

- Election administration
- Record keeping
- Marriage licenses

County Assessor

A **county assessor** is a public official responsible for determining the value of properties for tax purposes. (It's known as a **county appraiser** in some states.) This official organizes regular evaluations of properties throughout the county used to calculate property tax obligations for residents and businesses. County assessors also maintain property records, deeds, and other documents related to county properties. The selection process for county assessor varies by state.

Important if you care about:

- Property tax
- Property value
- Property records

Sheriff

A **county sheriff** is the chief law enforcement officer for a county. This position is typically elected with some exceptions where sheriffs are appointed by county or state executives.

Important if you care about:

- Law enforcement



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