

## How the Voting and Election Process Works

Topic	Summary
<b>A. Registration: Sign Up!</b>  Before you can vote, you must register as a state voter. Registration helps your local polling office track who can and did vote. This also helps them to make sure no one votes more than once or tries to vote under someone else's name. In Florida, voters must be registered 29 days before a primary or election. Voter registration is canceled when one registers in another state, dies or participates in no election contests, including primaries and special elections, for at least ten years.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<b>B. The Parties: Sizing up the Competition</b>  In the U.S., most candidates are from one of the two largest political parties: Democrats or Republicans. However, some candidates run for office that are not from either one of those parties. These other candidates come from what are called 'third parties' like the Green Party or Libertarian Party.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<b>C. The Primaries and Caucuses: Narrowing Down the Pack</b>  Only one candidate from each party can run in the final election. That's where primaries and caucuses come in. Between late January and early June, during the year of a general election, a few states hold caucuses, but most states choose their candidate using primary elections. Caucuses are small groups of people getting together to decide whom they want to support as their party's candidate. Primaries are elections where everyone in the party who is interested votes for the party candidate. In Florida, you must be a registered member of a party to participate in the primary. A runoff primary occurs if no candidate earns at least 50% of the vote.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<b>D. The Conventions: Party-Time, Politicians Style</b>  During a presidential election, after the primaries and caucuses, the major parties hold conventions to officially nominate their candidate for president. After the candidates are nominated, their names are formally submitted to each state's chief election official so that they will appear on the general election ballot.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

**E. The General Election: Today is the Day**

The general election process begins after each party has determined its candidate. Candidates spend weeks campaigning in an attempt to win the support of voters. Even though a voter may belong to a particular party, they may vote for candidates from any party. Finally, on Election Day, people exercise their right to vote.

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**F. Midterm Elections: No President on the Ballot**

Every two years, we have midterm elections for U.S. Congressional offices. Congressional elections determine state representation in the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate. Midterm elections take place halfway through a presidential term. In these elections, one-third of U.S. Senators (Senators serve six-year terms) and all members of the U.S. House of Representatives (House members serve two-year terms) are up for re-election. Midterm elections may also change which political party holds a majority in the House of Representatives and the Senate for the remaining two years of a presidential term, resulting in the implementation of their agenda becoming easier or more difficult to accomplish.

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**G. State and Local Elections: It's a Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood**

In Florida, registered voters select candidates for local, state, and national offices. The timing of state and local elections may vary. However, they often align with national election dates. These elections may be for the governor, state legislature, city mayor, judges, or school board members. Elections for state office also have a primary and general election, with some local elections appearing on a state primary ballot. In Florida, there are also ballot initiatives that may be brought to citizens for a vote, and any amendments or changes to the Florida Constitution, must get voter approval.

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