



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
RUTH JOHNSON, SECRETARY OF STATE  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
LANSING

**Questions and Answers: Michigan's Feb. 28, 2012  
Presidential Primary**

***Do I have to be a registered Republican or Democrat to participate in Michigan's Feb. 28, 2012 presidential primary?***

No. Michigan's presidential primary has been designated a "closed primary." However, there is no political party registration requirement in Michigan Election Law governing voter registration. Any Michigan registered voter can participate. By law, you must make your ballot selection in writing, and will do so on Election Day in the polls on the Application to Vote/Ballot Selection Form if voting in person. If voting absentee, your ballot application form will have a space for you to choose whether you want to vote a Republican or Democratic ballot.

***Why do I have to select a party ballot?***

In late 2011, the Michigan legislature passed a law (Public Act 163 of 2011) that guides the conduct of the Feb. 28, 2012 presidential primary. The law requires that voters indicate in writing which political party ballot he or she wishes to vote. This requirement only applies to presidential primary elections, and voters will not be required to select a political party ballot type in writing at other types of elections.

***What is the difference between an "open" primary and a "closed" primary?***

Voters in an "open" primary are given a ballot with a column listing each qualified party's candidates. Voters then decide which party primary they wish to participate in by voting only in the column of their party choice while in the privacy of the voting station. Voting for candidates in more than a single party's column will void the entire partisan ballot.

Voters in "closed" primaries must state the party primary they wish to participate in before being issued a ballot. The ballot given to voters only shows the party that corresponds to their choice.

***Will Michigan's "closed" presidential primary procedures affect the Aug. 7 primary in any way?***

No. The August primary is an "open" primary. Voters will not be asked to select a party before voting in the August primary. Voters will be issued ballots containing all political parties and their candidates, and will select one of the parties in the privacy of the voting station.

***When I select a party ballot for the presidential primary, does that mean I have to vote in the same party primary in August?***

No. The written selection made by a voter at the Feb. 28, 2012 presidential primary has no bearing on how a person votes in the Aug. 7, 2012 regular primary election.

***Will my ballot selection be made public?***

Yes. By law a public list must be made available that includes the presidential primary ballot type chosen by each voter in the Feb. 28, 2012 presidential primary. This list must be made available by May 9, 2012. County, city and township clerks must retain the forms indicating each voter's presidential primary ballot selection for 22 months. This ballot selection information is subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act. The public list of voters' presidential primary ballot selections and the documents containing this information held by local clerks must be destroyed after the 22-month retention period expires.

To be clear, only the political party ballot selection will be made public; **the candidate you vote for will not be made public**. Closed primaries also have secret ballots so that the candidate you vote for is never disclosed.

***Who is on the ballot?***

Public Act 163 of 2011 included detailed requirements related to which candidates would be eligible and how names would be placed on Michigan's presidential primary ballot. By law, both Republican and Democratic Party candidates are listed, but on separate ballots.

By November 11, 2011, the law required the Secretary of State to issue a list of individuals "generally advocated by the national news media to be potential presidential candidates". Republican candidates on the list issued included Michele Bachmann, Herman Cain, Newt Gingrich, Jon Huntsman, Gary Johnson, Fred Karger, Ron Paul, Rick Perry, Buddy Roemer, Mitt Romney and Rick Santorum. The Democratic list of candidates only included President Barack Obama.

The two political parties had the ability to add candidates in the following week. The Republican Party provided a list containing the same names as the Secretary of State's list. The Democratic Party did not add any names.

Candidates had until Dec. 9, 2011 to formally withdraw their names from Michigan's ballot. None of these candidates did so before the deadline. Although some of these candidates have since suspended their campaigns nationally, state law required that the candidate listing be finalized in December 2011.

Voters also will have the option of voting "uncommitted" on either the Republican or Democratic ballot.

***What does an "uncommitted" vote mean?***

If enough voters cast "uncommitted" votes, the party may send delegates to the national nominating convention who are not committed to a specific candidate.

***Will there be other things on the presidential primary ballot?***

A number of local jurisdictions are holding special elections in conjunction with the Feb. 28, 2012 presidential primary. Voters who do not wish to cast a vote in the presidential primary but want to vote in their local special election have the option of selecting a ballot containing only the local contests. A list of communities holding elections in conjunction with the presidential primary is available on our website at [www.Michigan.gov/elections](http://www.Michigan.gov/elections).

***Can voters be challenged based on foreclosure information?***

No. The compilation of home foreclosure information alone does not provide sufficient reason to challenge a person's voting status.

***Where can I find more information?***

For more information on your voter registration status, polling place, issues that will appear on your ballot, the absentee voting process and more, please visit the Michigan Voter Information Center at [www.Michigan.gov/vote](http://www.Michigan.gov/vote). For a detailed history of presidential primaries in Michigan, please visit [www.Michigan.gov/elections](http://www.Michigan.gov/elections). (See “February 28, 2012 Presidential Primary Information”.)