



CALIFORNIA KNOW YOUR VOTE

VOTER RESOURCE

2024 California Primary Election

March 5, 2024

Key Election Dates

The last day to register to vote:
February 20, 2024

All California registered voters will receive a
vote-by-mail ballot from your county
elections office starting **February 5, 2024**

Returning your ballot

Return your vote-by-mail ballots by **mail**, at
a **drop-off location**, or your **county elections
office**:

- Ballot drop-off locations open on
February 6, 2024.
- Vote centers open for early in-person
voting in all Voter's Choice Act counties
beginning on February 24, 2024.
- Vote-by-mail ballots must be
postmarked on or before Election Day
and received by March 12, 2024.

To learn more and access our voter tools:
[CourageCaliforniaInstitute.org](https://www.CourageCaliforniaInstitute.org)



WHY YOUR VOTE MATTERS ON MARCH 5

Your vote matters every election because you have the opportunity to choose leaders to represent your community and to champion the issues you care most about. Some races have been won by one vote, and how close or not a race is can influence how an elected leader governs. For example, if someone is elected to office in a close race, they may be worried about not being re-elected and be less likely to live up to some of their campaign promises.

In a primary election, you have more choices because there are more candidates who are running in different races. You help determine which candidates – the top two who receive the most votes – will go through to the November 5, 2024 general election in each race.

In some cases, in the primary election you can elect who wins their seat in local races in March. If any one candidate in a local race secures more than 50% of the vote in the primary election, they win outright and there will not be a general election for the seat.

You can make sure the primary election results truly represent the diversity of California voters. Voter turnout tends to be lower for primary elections than general elections, and voters who turn out for primary elections tend to be older, whiter, wealthier, and have higher levels of educational attainment than the whole California electorate, so primary results don't represent all voters in the state.



WHAT WILL BE ON YOUR BALLOT

1. Federal/National Races

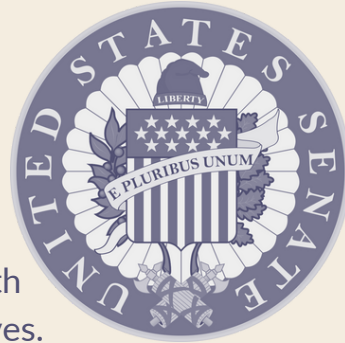
President and Vice President

The President of the United States is the head of the Executive branch of the federal government, and the Commander-in-Chief for all branches of the armed forces. A president has the power to make diplomatic, executive, and judicial appointments, and can sign into law or veto legislation. Presidential administrations are responsible for both foreign and domestic policy priorities. Presidents are limited to serving two four-year terms in office.

The Vice President is the second-highest office in the Executive branch of the federal government. The officeholder is the first in the line of succession to the presidency, and holds legislative authority as the president of the Senate. In this role, the Vice President presides over Senate deliberations, and can cast a tie-breaking vote in close decisions. A Vice Presidential candidate is selected directly by a Presidential nominee who has won the democratic primary process. Vice Presidential candidates are elected indirectly as a part of the Presidential ticket in the general election. A Vice President serves four year terms, and there is no term limit for this position.

U.S. Senate

Members of the Senate represent and advocate for the needs of their state constituency and share legislative responsibility with the House of Representatives.



They are responsible for creating, debating, and voting on legislation that addresses issues of national importance. Senators have the exclusive responsibility of providing advice and consent to the executive branch on treaties, and on the nomination and approval of cabinet secretaries, ambassadors, and federal judges. The Senate also has the sole authority to bring and try an impeachment of a high official, up to and including removal from office with a two-thirds majority vote.

Each state, regardless of population, is represented by two senators. Senate elections are statewide, and senators are elected to serve a six-year term. There is no term limit for this position. Democrats and Independents currently hold a 51-

person majority in the Senate, while Republicans hold 49 seats.

Congress

Congressmembers represent and advocate for the needs of their district constituents at the United States Capitol. They are responsible for creating, debating, and voting on legislation that addresses issues within their district.



The United States is divided into 435 congressional districts, each with a population of about 710,000 individuals. Each district elects a representative to the House of Representatives for a two-year term. California has 52 congressional representatives, the largest delegation in the country. There is no term limit for this position. Republicans currently hold a 219-member majority in the House, while Democrats hold 213 seats. One vacancy will be filled by a February 13 special election to replace former New York Republican Rep. Santos, who was expelled from Congress in December 2023. A March 19 special election will be held to replace former California Republican Rep. McCarthy, who resigned at the end of 2023.



2. State Races

State Assembly

State assemblymembers represent and advocate for the needs of their district constituents at the California State Capitol. They are responsible for creating, debating, and voting on legislation that addresses issues within their district.

The California State Assembly has 80 districts. Each represents a population of at least 465,000 Californians. Representatives are elected to the Assembly for a two-year term. Every two years, all 80 seats are subject to election. Members elected in or after 2012 are allowed to serve 12 years total across both the state Senate or Assembly. Democrats currently hold a three-quarters supermajority of 60 seats in the California State Assembly, while Republicans hold 19 seats and one seat is held by an Independent.

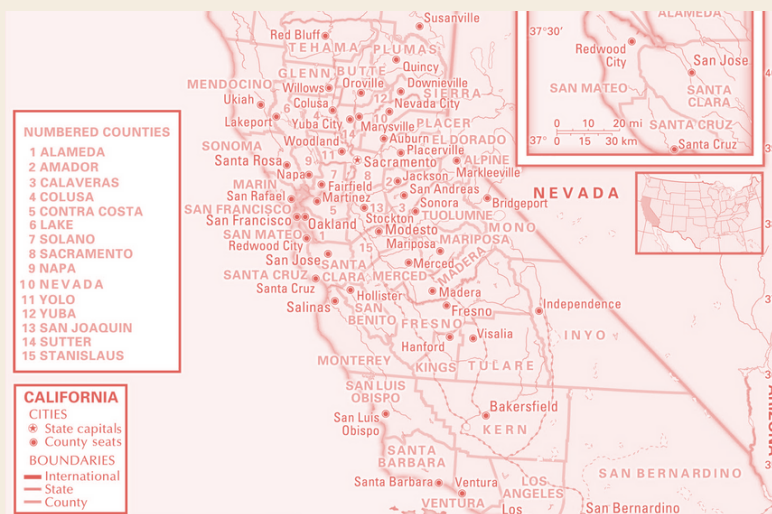
State Senate

State senators represent and advocate for the needs of their district constituents at the California State Capitol. They are responsible for creating, debating, and voting



on legislation that addresses issues within their district.

The California State Senate has 40 districts. Each represents a population of about 930,000 Californians. Representatives are elected to the Senate for a four-year term. Every two years, half of the Senate's 40 seats are subject to election. Members elected before 2012 are restricted to two four-year terms (eight years) in the Senate. Those elected in or after 2012 are allowed to serve 12 years total across both the state Senate or Assembly. Democrats currently hold a two-thirds supermajority of 31 seats in the California State Senate, while Republicans hold 9 seats.



3. County Races

Board of Supervisors

Each of the 58 counties in California is governed by a five-person board of supervisors. A board of supervisors has legislative and executive power to manage county services and resources, including courts, jails, public health, and public lands. They also have quasi-judicial powers, which gives them the right to hold hearings, conduct investigations, and make decisions in a manner similar to judicial courts. Laws passed by Boards of Supervisors are

generally called ordinances. Because counties include both incorporated cities which are administered by their own city councils and unincorporated areas which are directly administered by the county, ordinances may or may not apply in different areas of the county. Supervisors are typically limited to 3 terms, or 12 years in office total.

District Attorney

Each of the 58 counties in California elects a District Attorney to manage prosecution of criminal offenses related to the violation of state and county law. The District Attorney has investigative authority, manages the apprehension of individuals identified through the investigative process, and holds charging and prosecutorial power. The work of the District Attorney includes Municipal and Superior court operations, and serving as a legal liaison to the Grand Jury. The county Board of Supervisors provides financial oversight to the District Attorney's office, but holds no operational power over their work. District Attorneys are elected to four-year terms in office.



Superior Court Judge

Judges of the California Superior Courts are elected in nonpartisan, county-wide elections to six year terms. Once voted in, a judge can run for retention at the expiration of their term. A retention election is a process by which voters decide whether an incumbent judge should remain for another term. If the judge,



when not facing an opponent, does not obtain a certain percentage of voters (often 50%), they are removed from the position. Many judges join the court through a gubernatorial appointment. If a judge is appointed, they compete in the next general election following the appointment.

California has 58 trial, or superior courts, one in each county. In the more than 450 courthouses of the superior courts, a judge and sometimes a jury hears witness testimony and other evidence. These courts hear civil, criminal, family, probate, and juvenile cases. The judge decides cases through the application of relevant law to the relevant facts.

County Party Central Committee

California has six qualified political parties – American Independent, Democratic, Green, Libertarian, Peace and Freedom, and Republican. Central committees are the county governing bodies of the parties, and lead party efforts in the county, including on campaigns and local endorsements. Local members of a party are elected to the central committee, and the committees also include elected officials and nominees who serve as Ex Officio Officers (meaning they hold those roles because of their elected or nominated positions).





4. Local and City Races

City Council

Incorporated cities in California are generally governed by a five-person city council – larger cities have larger councils with more members. A city council is responsible for establishing policy, passing local laws (called ordinances), voting on budget appropriations, and developing an overall vision for the city. Many city council members are limited to 3 terms, or 12 years in office total.

Mayor

Some cities use a council-manager government structure, in which the mayor is elected at large and acts as chair of the city council and works in collaboration with an appointed city manager. The city council is responsible for recommending policy, local laws (called ordinances), and budget priorities to the city council for approval. The city manager then directs implementation. The mayor has veto and emergency powers and is responsible for managing dozens of departments and agencies.



Some cities use the mayor-council government structure, in which a mayor is elected at large and acts as chair of the city council and the city's chief executive officer. The mayor does not hold any special legislative power.

In some cities, the city council elects a mayor from the council. The mayor does not hold any special legislative power.

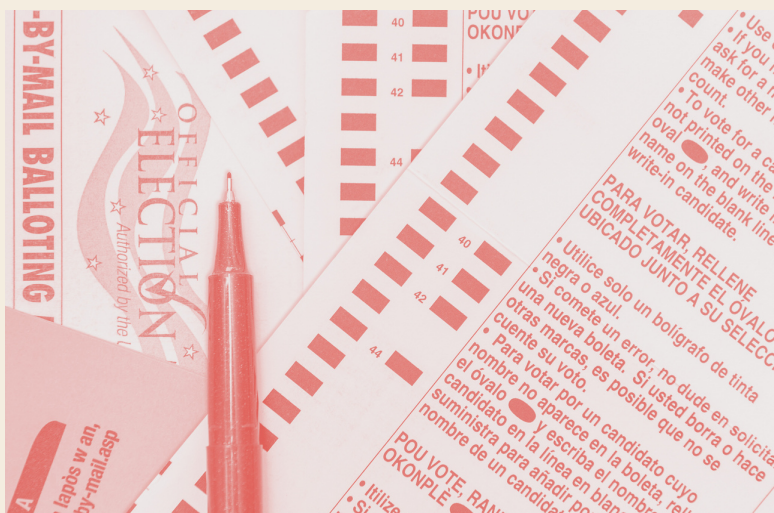
Mayors are elected to a four-year term, with a limit of two consecutive terms.

School Board

School districts have a board that provides administrative oversight and manages the district-wide budget.

Depending on the school district, members are elected by districts (an area within the school district in which a candidate must live) or at-large (district-wide where all candidates run against each other and the top voter-getters win). School board member terms and term limits vary by district.





5. Ballot Measures

Ballot Measures

Ballot measures – also called initiatives and propositions – are proposed changes in law that voters weigh in on directly on the ballot.

Statewide ballot measures can be approved with a majority (over 50%) of the vote, while some local ballot measures require approval of 55% or two-thirds of the vote.

Ballot measures can be placed on the ballot by governing bodies – the state legislature, boards of supervisors, and city councils. Ballot measures can also be placed on the ballot by any voter registered in the relevant district by a process that includes gathering a certain threshold of verified signatures of registered voters. Special interest groups – including wealthy donors and corporations – will often spend millions of dollars to qualify and pass ballot measures when they cannot get favorable policies from governing bodies.



WHO WE ARE

Our mission is to defend and extend economic justice, human rights, and corporate and political accountability through public education, strategic research, and innovative leadership-development training.

Courage California Institute empowers Californians by providing the resources needed to courageously participate in the democratic process and create change for the betterment of their families and communities.

Exercising your right to vote shouldn't be confusing, intimidating, or inaccessible for any eligible voter. We believe that in order for California to have a truly equitable and representative democracy — everyone must have access to trusted, reliable, and unbiased information and tools to help voters better understand the elections, the various roles of our local and state elected officials, and how to confidently vote their values at the ballot box.

Democracy in the U.S. can represent and serve all residents when ALL communities have the power to use their voice and be heard by leadership.

Voter Tools

To access our voter tools, visit couragecaliforniainstitute.org/voter-tools.

We provide voter tools that help you:

- Register to vote
- Check your Voter Registration
- Request an Absentee Ballot
- Get election reminders

To learn more and access our voter tools:
CourageCaliforniaInstitute.org