U.S. Vote Foundation Calls on Department of War to Revert Emergency Changes to Military and Overseas Voting Forms. See the Press Release.



When Are the 2026 Midterm Elections? And What is Their Purpose?

What is a Midterm Election?

Let's start with the fact that U.S. Presidents hold office for 4-years at a stretch. This is referred to as a four year "term" in office.

See State-by-State Midterm Election Dates and Deadlines

A "midterm" election is therefore defined as an election that takes place halfway through the 4-year Presidential term, i.e. in the middle of the 4-year term. Hence what is referred to as a "midterm" election. You don't need to be a super math whiz to figure out that it is an election 2 years after the Presidential election. The midterm elections happen across all states, and they are for offices *other than* that of the President or Vice President.

Look Up Your Sample Ballot

Who Runs for Office in a Midterm Election?

In a midterm election, the composition of congress is decided. Congress is literally on the ballot. All 435 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, plus one-third of the 100 seats in the U.S. Senate are up for a vote. The partisan composition of congress can have a major influence on what the President can do during his or her term in office.

States will often add other races to the ballot. Your ballot might contain races for governor, state representatives, judicial and other local offices as well. In addition, important state-specific ballot measures could be on the ballot.



What is the purpose of midterm elections?

Midterm elections are used to determine the next course of our democracy. Voters are given the opportunity to re-balance power and choose Congresspersons more closely aligned with the President's agenda or ones positioned further from the President. Because these elections are so closely tied into the timing of the Presidential term, they are often seen as a barometer of the President's performance.

How Do Midterm Elections Affect the President?

Should the Congress gain seats in the same party as the President, it reflects well on the President. The reverse is also true. If congressional seats are lost from the President's party, it doesn't help him/her to enact his/her agenda. When the Congress and the President are of the same party, the President often can pass legislation more freely than when he faces the obstacles of an opposing party.

Let's Have a Little Talk… About Midterm Elections

The President, or executive branch, does not govern alone, rather in conjunction with the other two co-equal branches of government: legislative and judicial. It's vital to vote in midterm elections because you're choosing individuals who will populate the Legislative branch and represent your state's interests rather than having the entire country in mind. In 2022, the voter turnout was 52.2%, which was lower than the previous midterm election and much lower than acceptable for such an essential election.[1]

When are the 2026 midterm elections?

You will have two opportunities to vote in the 2026 midterms!

1. Midterm Primary Elections – different dates in every state

Early in 2026, the midterm "primary" elections will begin to be held across all states. These primary elections will determine which candidate is nominated to represent each political party for each

congressional race. Primary dates vary by state.

US Vote will post the state-specific dates and deadlines for the primaries online in our Election Dates and Deadlines calendar in plenty of time for you to take part. It's a good idea to bookmark your state election calendar page:

Go to the Election Dates and Deadlines Calendar

2. The midterm general election will be held on the same day across all states in November.

Maybe you remember from high school civics class, federal general elections are held on the first Tuesday that follows a Monday in November. This decision dates back to farming culture in the 19th century. November was chosen because harvest season was completed and cold, winter weather had not yet arrived. Tuesday proved to be the best day of the week because farmers could travel to polling places on Monday (after engaging in religious events on Sunday) and have time to return during the remaining weekdays.

The Election Act of 1845 put this schedule into effect across the country, and we still follow this today.

In 2026, the Midterm General Election will be held on Tuesday, November 3.

Everything You Need to Know to Vote in the Midterm Primaries

Don't Miss These Important 2026 Elections!

U.S. Vote Foundation is tracking all state midterm primary elections and the 2026 midterm general election.

Sign-up to Receive U.S. Vote Foundation's Voter Alerts

Voter Alert emails are state-specific. With Voter Alerts, not only will you be notified of upcoming elections in your state, but you will be informed and reminded in time to register to vote and request an absentee ballot if you need one.

How to Vote in the Midterms: Create Your Personal Voting Checklist with the Voter Journey Map Tool -



Time to write your own voting story!

The Voter Journey Map brings you an interactive experience of "how to vote". It takes you through a step-by-step guided tour to identify what you need to do to cast your ballot. You can create your own personalized map for how to vote in the next election.

So often, how to vote services just give you a long list of possibilities to work through. The Voter Journey Map is different: it is personalized and give you just the steps and links you need to vote in your state.