

# Political Party FAQs

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## **Which political parties are recognized in West Virginia?**

A political party becomes recognized in West Virginia when its candidate for governor receives at least one percent of votes cast for governor in previous general election ([WV Code §3-1-8](#)). We now have four recognized political parties:

- Democratic - [www.wvdemocrats.com](http://www.wvdemocrats.com)
- Libertarian - [www.lpwv.org](http://www.lpwv.org)
- Mountain - [www.mountainparty.com](http://www.mountainparty.com)
- Republican - [www.wvgop.org](http://www.wvgop.org)

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## **What does it mean to become a recognized political party?**

Recognized political parties may nominate candidates for the general election in the primary election or by convention. Everyone else may only appear on the general election ballot by collecting signatures. Recognized political parties also elect people to form executive committees.

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## **What are primary elections and conventions?**

The primary election is an election for the recognized political parties to nominate candidates for offices on the general election ballot. We also elect judges, party executive committee members, board of education members, and soil conservation supervisors in the primary election. A party may also choose to hold a convention to nominate candidates instead of by the primary election. You should contact your [political party](#) to find out how they choose to nominate their candidates.

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## **Do I have to register with one of the recognized political parties?**

No, you may register as any political party or with no party. Just check “other” on your voter registration form and write in your party or check “unaffiliated” if you do not wish to register with a party.

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## **What are minor, independent, and third parties?**

People often call political parties that have not gained recognized status minor, independent, or third party.

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## **How do people not affiliated with a recognized political party run for office?**

A person may run for office as a political party that does not have recognized status or as no party by collecting signatures to appear on the general election ballot. [Learn more.](#)

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**How do I register in a political party?**

You may register in a political party when you register to vote. On the voter registration form, check the box beside the party you want or check “other” and write in your party. If you do not want to register with a party, check the box beside “unaffiliated.”

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**Does my political party matter in the primary election?**

As a voter, your political party makes a difference when you vote in the primary election because it determines which ballot you may receive. If you are registered with one of the four recognized political parties (Democratic, Libertarian, Mountain, or Republican), you may only vote that party’s ballot or the non-partisan ballot. If you are registered with any other party or with no party, you may ask the poll worker for one of the recognized party’s ballots, or they will give you the non-partisan ballot.

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**Will all of the recognized political parties have a ballot in the primary election?**

Not always. The recognized political parties may also nominate candidates for the general by convention. For example, in 2014 the Libertarian Party hosted their nominating convention on March 8 rather than participating in the primary election. For this reason, voters registered as Libertarian received a non-partisan ballot in the primary election.

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**Does my political party matter in the general election?**

No, every registered voter receives the same ballot in the general election. You will have the chance to vote for candidates from all of the political parties.

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**How do I change my political party?**

You may change your political party by completing a new [voter registration application](#).

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**Are there any deadlines for changing my political party?**

You may change your political party on your voter registration at anytime, but keep in mind that your political party matters at the primary election. For your new party to apply at the next primary election, you must make your change at least 21 days before the election. If you make the change later, it will apply at the next primary election.

There are more rules for candidates. If you want to file for nomination as a candidate in the Democratic, Libertarian, Mountain, or Republican parties, you must register as that party no less than 60 days before filing.