



FVAP.gov
FEDERAL VOTING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Voting in Primaries What Are They?

FACT SHEET

Wherever U.S citizens go, FVAP ensures their voice is heard.

The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) works to ensure Service members, their eligible family members and overseas citizens are aware of their right to vote in and have the tools and resources to successfully do so — from anywhere in the world.



★ What Are Primaries?

Primaries are elections that political parties use to select candidates for a general election. Then each party's candidates run against each other in the general election.

Types of Primaries

Open Primaries:

In an open primary, a voter of any political affiliation may vote in the primary of any party. For example, a voter registered as a Democrat can choose to vote in the Republican primary. A voter may only vote in one party's primary and, in many States, voters are not required to choose a political affiliation when they register to vote. States vary in how they administer open primaries for absentee voters.

Closed Primaries:

In a closed primary, voters may only vote in the primary of the party they are registered with. For example, a voter registered as a Republican can only vote in a Republican primary. Absentee voters in States that conduct closed primaries are often required to choose a party affiliation on their voter registration form in order to participate in the State's primary elections.

Semi-closed Primaries:

In a semi-closed primary, Independent voters, or those without a party affiliation, may choose which party's primary they want to vote in; however, those registered with a party may only vote in that party's primary. For example, a voter registered as a Democrat may only vote in a Democratic primary, and a voter registered as an Independent may choose to vote in a Democratic or Republican primary.

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