

# Solutions Landscape

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## Introduction

Rising hyperpolarization, declining institutional and interpersonal trust, and increasing governmental dysfunction have spurred various reform efforts in recent years. But these ideas for addressing our challenges are so numerous and varied that societal leaders, advocates, academics, and concerned citizens may have limited understanding of (1) what reforms have been proposed, (2) arguments for and against them, (3) if they have already been implemented, or (4) what studies and research say about their effects in the places where they have already been adopted.

This “solutions landscape” is intended to help fill that knowledge gap by serving as a compilation of leading scholars’ and activists’ oft-proposed institutional reforms, their implementation status, and a synthesis of studies on their effectiveness. This “collaborative review” document will be updated periodically to include additional reforms and new studies on effectiveness, as well as changes in implementation status.

*Note: Inclusion of a reform proposal in this document does not constitute FixUS endorsement of the idea (or opposition).*

## Comments, Updates, and Revisions

This document is a work in progress and meant to serve as a general summary of the overall institutional reform space and of the reforms specifically contained below. It is not exhaustive and has been compiled from numerous different sources and edited by various outside commenters, and is therefore not immune from error or misinterpretation. If you are a researcher, analyst, journalist, etc., and would like to help improve this resource by offering other relevant studies of effectiveness, improved graphics, or policy developments, or by providing commentary or counterpoints concerning this document, please request commenting permissions for this Google Doc – or just send us your suggestions, links, and criticisms by contacting Andrew Henry at [henry@crfb.org](mailto:henry@crfb.org). This document will evolve and expand based on this feedback.

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## Independent Redistricting Commissions

### *What This Reform Is*

State legislatures generally have the power to design election districts within their state, but independent redistricting commissions (IRCs) take this authority out of legislators' hands and grant it to an "independent" body of civically engaged citizens (i.e., balanced by partisan affiliation). These commissions are expected to create districts in a transparent fashion that foster competition and encourage politicians to better represent all of their constituents.

### *Background*

[Article I, Section 4 of the United States Constitution](#) grants state legislatures the power to conduct elections within their borders, including the authority to shape and reshape state and federal election jurisdictions. This process, known as redistricting, occurs after every census and is meant to reflect population changes and relocations, grouping inhabitants into districts of roughly equal populations based on their living patterns.

However, critics point to numerous occasions since the beginning of the nineteenth century in which this nonpartisan administrative process has been manipulated to benefit incumbent parties and elected officials – this politicization has been nicknamed "[gerrymandering](#)." Rather than the people choosing their local representatives in government, gerrymandering enables politicians to choose their voters, reduce the risk of electoral losses for themselves and their party, and minimize opposing parties' input in government.

When combining the practice of gerrymandering with [geographic self-sorting](#) by Democrats and Republicans, it results in significantly less competitive election districts – for example, [only about 8% of congressional districts](#) were toss-ups in 2022, and less than 14% of state legislative races were decided by ten points or fewer between [2022](#) and [2023](#).

For these reasons, IRCs have been proposed to reform the states' redistricting processes. In addition to balancing commissioner partisan affiliation (e.g., by having an [equal number of Democrats and Republicans and chaired by an independent](#) or by appointing an [equal number of Democrats, Republicans, and independents](#)), IRC proposals often elevate other criteria, such as ensuring commissioners represent state geographic and demographic diversity (e.g., [race, ethnicity, and gender](#)) as closely as possible and are selected for analytical skill (e.g., considerable experience with demographic data analysis).

Especially when combined with other reforms, such as [eliminating closed partisan primaries](#), advocates in favor of IRCs promote them as a means to (1) allow voters to [break free from the electoral constraints placed upon them by partisan, self-interested state legislators](#) who use redistricting as a tool to keep themselves and their fellow incumbent party members in power and (2) incentivize legislators to appeal to a broader range of voters rather than their party's extremes, reducing polarization and the fear of political consequences for working with the other party.

Reform detractors argue against transferring redistricting power to IRCs because such commissioners are [not accountable to voters](#) in the same way that elected officials are, even as those commissioners remain susceptible to political gamesmanship. Others argue that states

should only implement IRCs universally – not in a piecemeal, state-by-state fashion – because partisan state legislatures that are slow to establish them give themselves greater ability to [control the outcome of elections in the US House](#).

### *Implementation in the States*

Currently, **nine states exclusively use IRCs** for their redistricting process. About **half of the remaining states (21) remove at least some redistricting authority from state legislators** but do not go so far as attempting to establish a wholly independent body; the degree to which these states limit their legislatures' redistricting capabilities varies significantly. The other twenty remaining states, meanwhile, continue to assign near-complete control over the redistricting process to their legislatures.

States by Independent Redistricting Commission (IRC) Implementation Level			
IRC States	Semi-IRC States	Supplementary Commission States	Legislative Control States
Alaska	Arkansas	Connecticut	Alabama
Arizona	Hawaii	Illinois	Delaware
California	Missouri	Indiana	Florida
Colorado	New Jersey	<i>Iowa*</i>	Georgia
Idaho	<i>Ohio*</i>	Maine	Kansas
Michigan	Pennsylvania	Maryland	Kentucky
Montana	Virginia	Mississippi	Louisiana
<i>New York*</i>		New Mexico	Massachusetts
<i>Washington*</i>		<i>Ohio*</i>	Minnesota
		Oklahoma	Nebraska
		Oregon	Nevada
		Rhode Island	New Hampshire
		Texas	North Carolina
		Utah	North Dakota
		Vermont	South Carolina
			South Dakota
			Tennessee
			West Virginia
			Wisconsin
			Wyoming

\* Indicates the state has unique redistricting process features that make it difficult to classify. See text below for greater details.

\*\* Note: Washington, DC, has legislative control over redistricting.

[States with IRCs](#) include Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Michigan, Montana, New York, and Washington – for both their federal and state legislative district maps. In addition to preventing legislators and other public officials from participating in the redistricting process, each of these states, save for Colorado and New York, also disallows commissioners from running for office in the state for several years after redistricting, reducing the risk of commissions being manipulated by the politically ambitious. Some of these states have taken further steps to limit any partisan influence on commission work. For example, Arizona has barred legislative staff from service, Idaho and Washington have barred lobbyists from service,

and California, Colorado, Michigan, and New York have barred both. However, the work of these commissions is not always impervious to political reworking. For example, New York and Washington allow legislative supermajorities to modify commission-produced maps, [as New York did for the 2022 election cycle](#) before its maps were redrawn by the courts.

[Seven states have semi-independent commissions](#) whereby elected officials may serve as members, including Arkansas, Hawaii, Missouri, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Virginia for state maps, though Hawaii, New Jersey, and Virginia also endow these separate bodies with authority over congressional redistricting. While elected officials may serve as members of these commissions, the mapmaking carried out by these bodies is separate from the typical legislative process, with a significant degree of variation between the states. For example, Arkansas designates commission seats for specific elected officials in shaping state legislative districts. Ohio does the same, though its commission also serves as a “backup” commission (see below) for crafting congressional maps. Most other states usually include a party-balanced slate of nominees from legislative or party leadership and potentially a role for the governor or the state supreme court’s chief justice to select or appoint members. Alternatively, Virginia’s commission consists of eight legislators and eight citizens and requires approval from six of each to finalize any state or congressional map proposal.

[Special advisory or “backup” commissions](#) are currently used in fifteen states, including Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Mississippi, New Mexico, Ohio (see above), Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, Texas, Utah, and Vermont – where state legislatures still predominate in creating both state and, if applicable, federal maps. Advisory commissions include non-legislators and assist in the mapmaking process before they are voted on by the legislature, whereas “backup” commissions are charged with redistricting duties if legislators do not decide on their maps before a set deadline. States modify the role and structure of these commissions in different ways.

For example, Connecticut and Illinois both use a backup commission selected by legislative leadership, with Connecticut delegating state and congressional mapmaking to its backup commission, while Illinois only delegates state districts. Indiana only delegates congressional districts to its backup commission. Oregon designates its secretary of state as the backup author of state legislative districts, Mississippi and Texas empower a backup commission of specific statewide elected officials (e.g., the state treasurer and attorney general) to draw state legislative lines, and Oklahoma’s backup commission for state legislative districts is comprised of specific statewide officials and selections from legislative leadership.

Advisory commissions have an even greater variety. For example, [New Mexico](#)’s state and congressional district maps are advised by a seven-member commission, including four appointees by legislative leadership, two nonpartisans appointed by the State Ethics Commission, and a chair who is a retired state Supreme or appellate court judge. [Rhode Island](#) uses an eighteen-member advisory commission for drafting its own state and federal maps. Maryland’s redistricting process incorporates a nine-member advisory commission that assists the governor in drafting proposals for state maps that are submitted to the legislature, but if it fails to approve a joint resolution on new state lines in time, the state districts revert to the governor’s proposal, effectively rendering the advisory commission a backup commission as well. Maine, Utah, and Vermont use advisory commissions for all their respective maps.

[Iowa’s unique system](#) allows for a pseudo-independent process, whereby state and congressional lines are drawn by the legislature and subject to gubernatorial veto, but with legislators heavily

informed by the nonpartisan Legislative Services Agency and a five-member bipartisan advisory commission which draft up to three maps for legislators to accept, reject, or modify.

[State legislatures retain complete control over redistricting](#) in twenty states including Alabama, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, North Dakota, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. In general, redistricting efforts in these states are indistinguishable from the typical legislative process, originating in committees chosen by legislative leadership which draft initial maps that, after revision and finalization, must pass with a majority vote in both state chambers and either avoid a gubernatorial veto or have one be overridden by the legislature. This general process includes some variation between the states. For example, veto override thresholds range from a simple to a 2/3 majority, and Florida and North Carolina state legislatures redistrict through joint resolutions immune to gubernatorial veto. (Note: Washington, DC, also maintains legislative control over redistricting, but since it [lacks \[voting\] congressional representation](#), the [DC Council only determines local election districts](#).)

### *Studies of Effectiveness*

#### Studies Indicating Benefits

Nelson, "[Independent Redistricting Commissions Are Associated with More Competitive Elections](#)" (2023)

- Analyzing congressional district data from 1982 to 2018, the author finds that IRCs are more than twice as likely to produce competitive elections and less than half as likely to produce incumbent party wins compared to the standard legislative redistricting process.

Warshaw, McGhee, and Migurski, "[Districts for a New Decade – Partisan Outcomes and Racial Representation in the 2021-22 Redistricting Cycle](#)" (2022)

- The authors' study of the most recent redistricting cycle finds IRCs generally produce less biased and more competitive maps than those produced by partisan legislatures and enable a consistent process across redistricting cycles.

Keena et al., [Gerrymandering the States: Partisanship, Race, and the Transformation of American Federalism](#) (2021)

- The authors [write](#): "We find systemically less [partisan] bias in districting when the maps are drawn by citizens and other independent bodies...This suggests that [IRC]s represent an effective solution against partisan gerrymandering."

Stephanopoulos, McGhee, and Rogers, "[The Realities of Electoral Reform](#)" (2015)

- The authors write: "The results support the hypothesis that independent commissions...improve representation at the chamber level. District plans drawn by commissions indeed feature higher levels of chamber-level alignment than plans drawn by the elected branches."

Lindgren and Southwell, "[The Effect of Redistricting Commissions on Electoral Competitiveness in U.S. House Elections, 2002-2010](#)" (2013)

- The authors find, after controlling for partisan and contextual factors, that IRCs resulted in significantly more competitive congressional districts from 2002 to 2010 by reducing the predicted margin of victory by an average of about ten points, though backup commissions had an even larger predicted reduction (11.66 points on average).



### Studies Indicating Mixed Results

Dobbs et al., "[An Optimization Case Study in Analyzing Missouri Redistricting](#)" (2023)

- The authors' analysis of Missouri's semi-IRC framework finds that the state's political geography and constitutional requirements – especially the [shifted efficiency gap requirement implemented in 2020](#) – preclude any substantial improvement in political fairness from the inherent advantage Republicans hold at the state legislative level. However, the authors did determine such improvements in political fairness are possible at the congressional level.

Drutman, "[What We Know About Redistricting and Redistricting Reform](#)" (2022)

- In a systemic analysis of redistricting and IRC literature, the author finds that IRC-drawn maps are fairer than those drawn by partisan state legislatures, but their level of improvement is substantially limited by larger, underlying phenomena (e.g., the single-member district system) that the elimination of gerrymandering cannot address.

McGhee and Paluch, "[Fair Representation and Partisan Leanings in California's Final Redistricting Maps](#)" (2022)

- The authors' review of the most recent district maps produced by California's IRC saw significantly increased representation for Latinos but no meaningful change for black or Asian Californians.

Edwards et al., "[Institutional Control of Redistricting and the Geography of Representation](#)" (2017)

- The authors write: "We examine a large sample of congressional and state legislative districts and find that, relative to legislatures, [IRCs] tend to draw more compact districts, split fewer political subdivisions, and may also do a better job of preserving the population cores of prior districts." However, they also note that the latter two metrics are inconsistent. The authors find that, for state legislative maps, IRCs split cities and counties less than and preserve the cores of prior districts better than state legislatures – but not for congressional maps.

Stephanopoulos, "[Arizona and Anti-Reform](#)" (2015)

- The author finds, after assessing the efficiency gap ([a measure of partisan gerrymandering](#)) for all state and congressional elections from 1972 to 2012, that IRCs cut the median efficiency gap for congressional maps (12%) in half, but were not as effective for state legislative maps, suggesting moderate but limited overall gains in partisan neutrality.

Cain, "[Redistricting Commissions: A Better Political Buffer?](#)" (2012)

- The author's analysis suggests that IRCs effectively eliminate the conflict of interest inherent in legislature-managed redistricting, but they fail to eliminate distrust in commissioners and the fear that they might influence the redistricting process in secretly partisan ways.

Kogan and McGhee, "[Redistricting California: An Evaluation of the Citizens Commission Final Plans](#)" (2012)

- After analyzing the results of California's first map produced by an IRC, the authors write, "The new process has produced important improvements in terms of both the criteria voters said they cared about and the representational implications of interest to academics and political observers. In many respects, however, the magnitude of these gains has fallen short of what many political reformers may have hoped for. Perhaps the most important lesson from the 2011 round of redistricting is that a fair process, no matter how nonpartisan and participatory, cannot avoid the reality that any redistricting scheme produces both political winners and losers." Expounding on these points, they indicate that IRCs are inherently limited in improving maps because "maximizing certain criteria, such as keeping communities intact and protecting the voting rights of



historically underrepresented groups, makes achieving other goals, such as increasing competitiveness, more difficult.”

#### Studies Indicating Harms (or No Benefits)

Henderson, Hamel, and Goldzimer, “[Gerrymandering Incumbency: Does Non-Partisan Redistricting Increase Electoral Competition?](#)” (2017)

- The authors write: “We find that the redistricting process, on the margin, helps sustain the electoral security of incumbents. Yet, counter to reformers’ expectations, we find that independent redistrictors produce virtually the same degree of insulation as plans devised in legislatures or by politician commissions. Overall, our results suggest caution in overhauling state redistricting institutions to increase electoral competition: independent commissions may not be as politically-neutral as theorized.”

Masket, Winburn, and Wright, “[The Gerrymanders are Coming! Legislative Redistricting Won’t Affect Competition or Polarization Much, No Matter Who Does It](#)” (2012)

- After assessing state legislative elections across the 2000s, the authors find that “the effects of partisan redistricting on competition and polarization are small, considerably more nuanced than reformers would suggest, and overwhelmed by other aspects of the political environment,” indicating that IRCs would ultimately have no meaningful impact. Additionally, however, the authors find that the states with nonpartisan redistricting methods became more polarized during the 2000s, while states without them experienced slight depolarization, on average.

Forgette, Garner, and Winkle, “[Do Redistricting Principles and Practices Affect U.S. State Legislative Electoral Competition?](#)” (2009)

- The authors, after examining district-level election data following the 1990 and 2000 redistricting cycles, determine that IRCs produce less competitive races, with margins of victory 10% higher than their modeling would suggest.

#### *Tentative Conclusions on Effectiveness*

Holistically, academic analyses of IRCs have generally found that they produce fairer maps than partisan state legislatures but inconsistently promote minority representation or preserve community compactness (i.e., there is a continued presence of bizarrely shaped election districts). Several other case studies and commentary from those with experience with the process suggest commissions have had an impact on the governing approach of those elected. However, multiple studies by political scientists, including a systemic analysis of existing literature [cited above](#), suggest redistricting’s effects on polarization and competition in American politics overall are minimal compared to the [geographic self-sorting](#) of Democrats and Republicans and the single-member district status quo; [another systemic analysis](#) indicates that IRC implementation often coincides with the adoption of new redistricting standards (e.g., reprioritizing partisan fairness, compactness, or minority representation), suggesting it may be nearly impossible to measure IRCs’ effects on their own.

## Primary Elections

### *What This Reform Is*

Primary elections, which determine who will appear as the parties' candidates in the general election, are often closed (i.e., only registered political party members are allowed to vote for their party's nominee). Proposals to change this vary significantly, but all concern opening closed partisan primaries to voters who are not party members and reducing party membership's role in deciding who appears on Americans' general election ballots.

### *Background*

While November general elections usually receive far more attention and higher voter turnout, primary elections are arguably more significant, especially in the great majority of districts that are uncompetitive and sure to be won by one party (see our [redistricting reform](#) summary to learn more). These partisan primaries are often closed – meaning independent voters are barred from participating ([~30% of registered voters](#)). To win in these environments, candidates are incentivized to cater to their partisan bases rather than a broader, more centrist electorate.

Reform advocates have put forward a wide swath of proposals to address this problem (see below). When primary reforms are combined with, for example, redistricting reform, advocates argue that candidates and elected officials will be incentivized to appeal to a broad general electorate in a competitive district rather than a hyperpartisan primary process in an uncompetitive district, thereby reducing voter dissatisfaction with and polarization in the nation's government(s) and elections.

Detractors argue that the primary system's design inherently benefits populists – no matter how “open” it is – and limits the capacity of [party leaders to serve as candidate-quality gatekeepers](#), and that the different primary reform proposals and designs often do not have their intended effect (see below).

### Open Primaries

In contrast to closed primaries, in which only registered Republicans can vote in Republican primaries, registered Democrats in Democratic primaries, and so on, open primaries allow participation from a wider range of voters. The extent of this increased range [falls into two categories](#). Semi-open primaries allow participation from independent voters but exclude registered members of other parties, while fully open primaries not only allow unaffiliated voters to vote for a party's candidates but members of other political parties as well. Regardless of the open primary format, however, voters are limited to voting in one primary per election cycle.

Supporters of open primaries promote them as a way to reduce the perceived degree of separation between candidates and average voters by allowing all citizens to participate in the elections [their tax dollars are paying for](#), in addition to forcing politicians to consider [moderating their stances and expanding their platforms](#) to cater to voters outside their partisan base.

Opponents of open primaries argue that (1) “crossover voting” (i.e., voters affiliated with Party A submitting a ballot in Party B's primary), when permitted, enables opposing partisans to game the system and vote for a weaker and/or more extreme candidate than their own party's

candidate might defeat more easily in the general election and (2) that this primary format may infringe on party members' [First Amendment rights to free association](#).

#### Nonpartisan Top Two Primaries

Like open primaries, nonpartisan primaries remove voter barriers to primary races. But instead of a series of separate party primary elections, [nonpartisan primaries operate with a single ballot featuring all candidates](#), regardless of party affiliation, made available to all voters. The most prevalent form of nonpartisan primaries is known as [Top Two](#), in which the two candidates who receive the most primary votes, regardless of party affiliation, advance to the general election.

Those in favor of Top Two primaries argue that they offer the candidate-moderating benefits of open primaries while also [avoiding the threat level posed by crossover voting in open primaries](#), in addition to offering an [alternative to an outdated primary system](#) that enables more ideologically homogeneous party bases to shape general election outcomes before they occur.

Those opposed to Top Two primaries criticize them because of the threat of “[vote splitting](#),” whereby voters from the dominant party break up their votes among multiple primary candidates in such a way that none of them receive enough votes to advance to the general election. Critics also condemn Top Two primaries because most elections still feature [one Democrat and one Republican](#) and major parties are still able to [target disfavored members of their own party](#) or [secretly promote extreme or weaker opposing party candidates](#) to produce an easier general election victory.

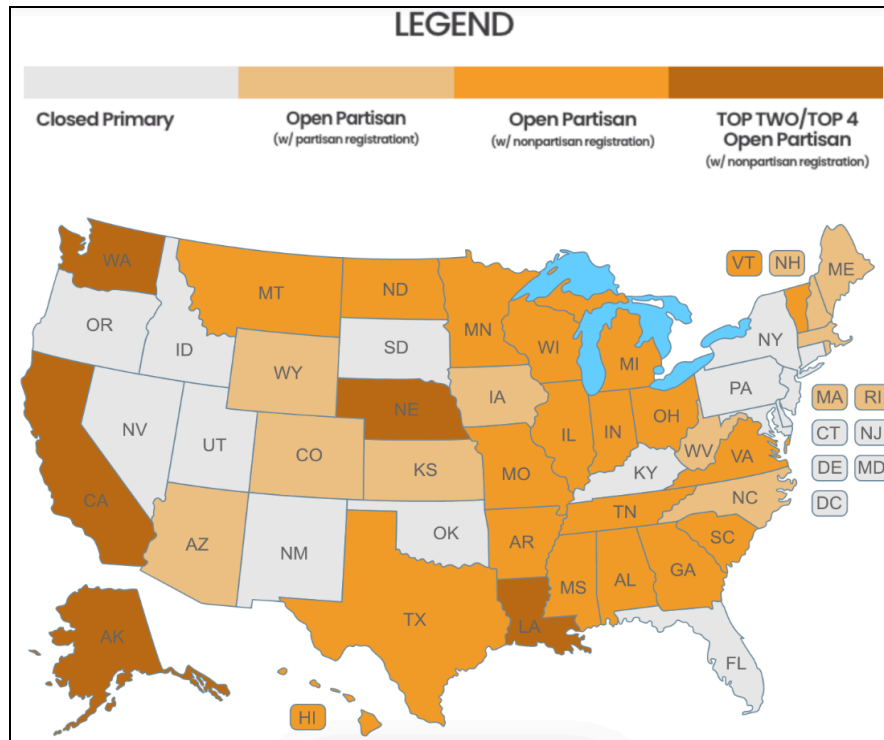
#### Nonpartisan Top Four/Final-Five Primaries

Top Four and Final-Five primaries, like Top Two, are nonpartisan primaries, under which all candidates appear on a single ballot made available to all registered voters. However, instead of advancing the two leading candidates, these formats send the four or five leading vote-getters to the general election. But the [most distinguishing aspect of Top Four and Final-Five primaries](#) is the implementation of [ranked-choice voting](#) (RCV) in the general election to decide the winning candidate from the four or five candidates who advanced.

Proponents of Top Four and Final-Five primaries argue that the combination of nonpartisan primaries and RCV ensures the general election victor is the one who has the greatest support from the greatest portion of the electorate possible while avoiding the drawbacks, like vote splitting, attributed to the Top Two format. Opponents, meanwhile, state that these are [confusing, intensive systems](#) for less-engaged voters that will only fuel frustration and disillusionment at ballot boxes.

#### *Implementation in the States*

Fifteen states conduct closed partisan primaries for their state and congressional elections (the states in gray in the figure below). The remaining **35 states**, meanwhile, **enable participation from nonpartisans (and other partisans) – 30 states** have **semi-open or fully open** primaries (**shown as open partisan in figure below**), **four** have some form of a **Top Two** system in place, and **Alaska** has the lone **Top Four** system in place.



(Source: [Open Primaries](#))

[Open primaries](#) are currently used in 30 states, including Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Ohio, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. However, the degree to which these primaries are “open” varies. While most of these states are fully open and neither require voters to affiliate with a party to vote in a primary nor prohibit members of other parties from voting in another party’s primary, eleven states – Arizona, Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Rhode Island, West Virginia, and Wyoming – are only semi-open and do not allow crossover voting.

A [Top Two primary](#) system has been adopted, at least to some extent, and in different formats, in four states: California, Louisiana, Nebraska, and Washington. California and Washington operate under a Top Two system for all state and congressional elections, and Nebraska conducts a Top Two election process for state legislative races in which candidates run [with no party affiliation](#). Louisiana, meanwhile, eliminated its primary system outright for state and congressional elections, opting instead for a single election, wherein all candidates vie for office on the same November ballot; though Louisiana does not officially follow the Top Two format, the two leading vote-getters in the general election face off in a December runoff election if no candidate wins a majority. (Note: Louisiana will switch to closed primaries for federal races in 2026 [per a 2024 law](#).)

The [Top Four primary](#) system is currently only used in Alaska, which became the first state in the country to adopt a Top Four system for state and congressional elections when it did so in 2020 and implemented it for the first time in 2022.

[Closed partisan primaries](#) for state and congressional elections are in place for the remaining fifteen states, including Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Idaho, Kentucky, Maryland, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, and Utah. Primaries in these states are not universally restricted to party members, however, as the Democratic Party in four of them – Idaho, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Utah – allow independents to vote for their state and congressional candidates. (*Note: Washington, DC, also currently utilizes closed partisan primaries, but it will switch to semi-open primaries in 2026 after citizens [adopted a 2024 ballot measure](#).*)

## *Studies of Effectiveness*

### Studies Indicating Benefits

Anderson et al., “[Top-Four Primaries Help Moderate Candidates via Crossover Voting: The Case of the 2022 Alaska Election Reforms](#)” (2023)

- After analyzing the 2022 Alaskan elections, the first executed under its new Top Four format, the authors find that the reform aids moderate candidates in the primary stage through crossover voting (by the statewide or district-wide minority party) and provides increased chances for a moderate victor in the general election.

Barton, “[California's Top-Two Primary: The Effects on Electoral Politics and Governance](#)” (2023)

- The author, after analyzing California according to seven different criteria for measuring a reform’s impacts on electoral politics and governance, finds that Top Two primaries have decreased polarization, increased voter participation and turnout, and increased electoral competitiveness since their implementation in 2012.

Leven and Fisher, “[Alaska's Election Model: How the top-four nonpartisan primary system improves participation, competition, and representation](#)” (2023)

- The authors, in their review of Alaska’s first Top Four statewide election in 2022, find that the new system greatly increased electoral competition and witnessed improved ideological and demographic representation.

McKinley Research Group, “[Alaska's Elections Reforms: Voter Perceptions & Experiences](#)” (2023)

- In a survey of Alaskans after their first Top Four elections in 2022, (1) evidence did not suggest voters felt disenfranchised or that the system was too complex to understand, (2) voters felt they had more choice, and (3) voters believed their vote made more of an impact than in previous elections.

Reilly, Lublin, and Wright, “[Countering Polarization or ‘Crooked as Hell’? Alaska’s New Electoral System](#)” (2023)

- Assessing the results of the 2022 midterm elections in Alaska, the first full-scale usage of the state’s new Top Four primary system since its adoption in 2020, the authors find that the reform “was both consequential and largely beneficial, promoting greater choice for voters, more accommodative campaigning, and generally more moderate outcomes than likely under the old rules.”

Barton, “[Louisiana's Long-Term Election Experiment: How Eliminating Partisan Primaries Improved Governance and Reduced Polarization](#)” (2022)

- In a holistic analysis of Louisiana’s governance and electoral system, which eliminated partisan primaries in 1975, the author finds the state’s unique runoff (i.e., Top Two) system fosters high turnout in competitive races (and, therefore, meaningfully impacts campaign conduct and policymaking), contributes to Louisiana’s position as one of the least-polarized state governments in the country, and also enables innovation and effective governance overall.

Grose, "[Reducing Legislative Polarization: Top-Two and Open Primaries Are Associated with More Moderate Legislators](#)" (2020)

- Assessing US House members from 2003 to 2018, the author finds that both incumbent and newly elected legislators show evidence of reduced ideological extremity and reduced prevalence of successful extremist candidates when states use open or Top Two primaries compared to closed partisan primaries.

Sparks, "[Polarization and the Top-Two Primary: Moderating Candidate Rhetoric in One-Party Contests](#)" (2019)

- After analyzing state legislative candidate websites during the 2016 election, the author finds that candidates in races with Top Two primaries in place "use more moderate, bipartisan, and vague messaging when [facing same-party opponents] compared to those facing candidates of the opposite party."

Armstrong, "[Reflections on the Impact of a Decade of Political Reforms in California](#)" (2018)

- In a survey of California legislators, association leaders, and political consultants, most respondents felt the imposition of a Top Two system "has empowered more independent-minded, moderate, mainstream, and centrist candidates" and shifts decision-making power away from the political extremes.

Olson and Ali, "[A Quiet Revolution: The Early Successes of California's Top Two Nonpartisan Primary](#)" (2015)

- In this early report following California's Top Two system going into effect in 2012, the authors indicate that legislative dysfunction decreased as elected officials became more incentivized to appeal to diverse voter coalitions rather than continue observing the party line.

#### Studies Indicating Mixed Results

Crosson, "[Extreme Districts, Moderate Winners: Same-Party Challenges and Deterrence in Top-Two Primaries](#)" (2020)

- After analyzing election returns data from 2008 through 2014, the author finds that the Top Two primary states of Washington and California elect more moderate legislators than states that do not require a similar level of primary competition, though this effect is only observed when the final two candidates are of the same party. The author also finds that elite political actors may still be able to use reforms such as Top Two primaries to their benefit, as they "appear able to strategically avoid [same-party] competition."

McGhee and Shor, "[Has the Top Two Primary Elected More Moderates?](#)" (2017)

- After studying the Top Two primary states of California and Washington, the authors find an inconsistent effect across the two states and suggest that the stronger candidate depolarization effect observed in California may primarily stem from other recently implemented reforms (e.g., independent redistricting commissions and/or term limits) rather than a Top Two primary.

Grose, "[The Adoption of Electoral Reforms and Ideological Change in the California State Legislature](#)" (2014)

- In this in-depth assessment of the first legislative session after California's Top Two system took effect in 2012, the author finds that political polarization receded in both houses of the California State Legislature from 2011 to 2013, though the reduction was more pronounced in the Assembly than the State Senate, and several other reforms and political developments (e.g., establishing an independent redistricting commission and demographic and partisan changes among registered voters) may have had a greater impact than the implementation of a Top Two primary.



### Studies Indicating Harms (or No Benefits)

Masket and Noel, "[How Did We Get Here: Primaries, Polarization, and Party Control](#)" (2023)

- The authors, in their systemic analysis of primary election research, determine that there is no strong correlation between a state's level of openness in its primaries and its degree of legislative polarization.

Drutman, "[What We Know about Congressional Primaries and Congressional Primary Reform](#)" (2021)

- In a systemic analysis of research on primary reform and its relationship with legislative compromise and moderation, the author writes, "the overwhelming conclusion across multiple studies is that the differences across primary types do not have much of an impact on who votes, who runs, or who wins."

Ahler, Citrin, and Lenz, "[Do Open Primaries Improve Representation? An Experimental Test of California's 2012 Top-Two Primary](#)" (2016)

- The authors, through a statewide experiment conducted just before California's first Top Two primary election in 2012, find that voters elected more ideologically extreme congressional and state senate candidates than moderates under the new ballot model due to a failure to distinguish between them.

Nielson and Visalvanich, "[Primaries and Candidates: Examining the Influence of Primary Electorates on Candidate Ideology](#)" (2015)

- In an assessment of congressional district electorates and candidates, the authors find that open primaries produce more extreme congressional candidates than their closed counterparts.

McGhee et al., "[A Primary Cause of Partisanship? Nomination Systems and Legislator Ideology](#)" (2014)

- The authors find that "the openness of a primary election has little, if any, effect on the extremism of the politicians it produces."

### *Tentative Conclusions on Effectiveness*

Overall, scholarly studies of primary systems have found that the level of openness alone has neither definitive nor consistent positive impacts on candidate or policymaking polarization or extremism, though [some recent studies have shown more promise](#) and newer formats such as Top Two, and especially Top Four, still have a small enough sample size at the state and congressional level that some of [their effects may yet to be seen](#). Instead, these analyses, including a systemic analysis of existing literature [cited above](#) tend to suggest that larger political phenomena (e.g., existing hyperpolarization and animosity between party leaders and their base) and deeper underlying institutional norms (e.g., the predominance of single-winner plurality elections) are more significant factors for discouraging moderation in (potential) legislators than the primary election format in place.



## Ranked-Choice Voting

### *What This Reform Is*

Under America's standard general election process (i.e., plurality and winner-take-all), voters cast a single vote for a single person, and whichever candidate receives the most votes is declared the winner. Under a ranked-choice voting (RCV) system, voters rank all the candidates (or as many or as few candidates as they want) according to their preferences. After the initial vote counts are tallied, the candidate with the fewest first-place votes is eliminated, and their supporters' votes are distributed to the other candidates according to the voters' ranked preferences (i.e., their votes would instead go to their second-favorite candidate). This process is repeated until a candidate obtains a majority of the vote, assuming this does not occur after first-place votes are tallied.

### *Background*

In America's current political climate, both major parties have low favorability ratings (under 40%) – with [28% of Americans](#) having an unfavorable opinion of both outright – and [63% of US adults](#) believe the major parties represent the American people so poorly that a major third party is necessary. Critics often point to America's pluralistic, first-past-the-post election process as a cause for popular dissatisfaction with elected officials, as it does not require candidates to obtain a majority of the popular vote to win public office ([save for Georgia and Louisiana](#), which conduct runoff elections between the two leading general election candidates so that a majority is obtained). Many of these critics propose adopting RCV as an alternative.

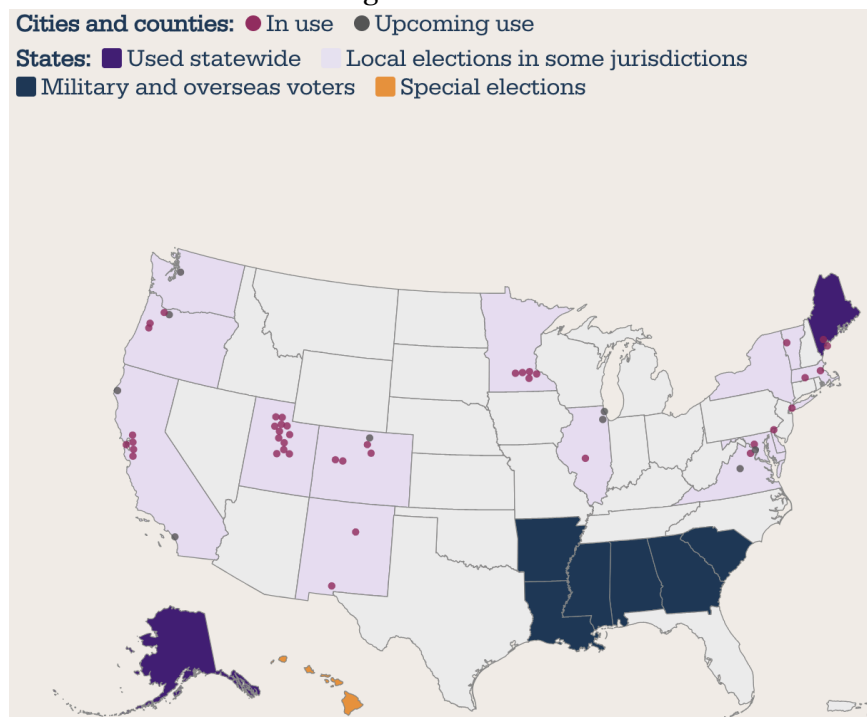
Supporters promote RCV as a means to prevent plurality winners and argue, when the reform is combined with, for example, [primary election reform](#), that RCV [encourages more civil campaigning](#), [produces more electable candidates from primaries](#), and offers voters who feel unrepresented by either major party – and who often feel that they must choose between the lesser of two evils – an opportunity to [more accurately express their policy preferences](#) at the ballot box. Furthermore, supporters say RCV allows for the existence of third parties in ways in which existing electoral and political processes do not, because RCV eliminates the “spoiler effect” – voters can vote for third-party candidates without fearing that their least favorite candidate will win due to the third-party candidate “taking votes away from” a more aligned major-party candidate.

RCV's opponents argue that its [candidate elimination format disfavors moderates](#) who would be [preferred by a majority of voters](#) over more ideologically extreme or partisan candidates. Critics also hold that it is [confusing](#) and [strikes at the heart of democracy](#) when defined as “a majority of the people choosing between two different competing visions of governance” and incentivizes candidates to be the least objectionable rather than make their principles and ideologies apparent.

### *Implementation in the States*

Currently, **only two states** – Alaska and Maine – **use RCV** to a significant degree for their state and/or congressional elections, with some differences in their processes. In the remaining 48 states (and Washington, DC), the standard pluralistic, first-past-the-post election process

continues to determine who emerges victorious from statewide and congressional general election ballots, though numerous cities and counties in these states use them broadly and several states use them in specific circumstances (e.g., special elections). In total, **62 American jurisdictions** conduct elections according to an **RCV format**.



(Source: [FairVote](#))

[The Top Four primary](#) system is currently only used in Alaska, which became the first state in the country to incorporate primary reform *and* general-election RCV into state and congressional elections when it did so in 2020 and implemented it for the first time in 2022.

[The first state to enact RCV](#) for state-level primaries and congressional primary and general elections – Maine – did so in 2016 and implemented it for the first time in 2018. RCV was also introduced to presidential general elections in 2020 and was expanded to presidential primaries in 2024.

[Major cities that use RCV](#), at least to some extent, include Minneapolis-St. Paul, New York City, Oakland, and San Francisco. This list is slated to expand as, for example, Washington, DC, [adopted RCV in 2024](#).

### *Studies of Effectiveness*

#### **Studies Indicating Benefits**

Dowling et al., “[Does Ranked Choice Voting Increase Voter Turnout and Mobilization?](#)” (2024)

- The authors, after analyzing administrative voter turnout data, find significantly greater turnout probabilities in jurisdictions with RCV than in jurisdictions without. They also suggest that direct campaign-to-voter outreach occurs more often in RCV than non-RCV jurisdictions.

Tomlinson, Ugander, and Kleinberg, [“The Moderating Effect of Instant Runoff Voting”](#) (2024)

- After developing a voter preference model, the authors find that RCV cannot elect an extreme candidate over a moderate so long as voters are not highly concentrated at the political extremes, while the plurality standard still can.

Center for Campaign Innovation, [“Measuring the Effects of Ranked Choice Voting in Republican Primaries”](#) (2022)

- In a survey of Republican primary voters in Virginia’s 7th and 10th congressional districts, the latter of which used RCV for nominee selection, (1) RCV voters and plurality voters each preferred the system they used, (2) more RCV voters than plurality voters said that campaigns were run positively, and (3) the runners-up under RCV were viewed more favorably than the victor under the plurality system.

Kropf, [“Using Campaign Communications to Analyze Civility in Ranked Choice Voting Elections”](#) (2021)

- The author, after using text analysis software to review candidate tweets and articles describing campaigns, determines cities with RCV tend to have candidates more likely to engage with one another and articles using much more positive than negative terms compared to cities using the plurality standard. The author also suggests that citizens observe a higher degree of civility in RCV-based campaigns than those under the plurality standard.

Donovan, Tolbert, and Gracey, [“Campaign civility under preferential and plurality voting”](#) (2016)

- The authors, in a survey of residents of American cities with RCV and cities utilizing the standard plurality method, find that residents of RCV cities are much more satisfied with local campaign conduct, less likely to describe campaigns as negative, and less likely to say that candidates frequently criticized each other while campaigning than their plurality-city counterparts.

### Studies Indicating Mixed Results

Acharya et al., [“Ranked Choice Voting, the Primaries System, and Political Extremism: Theory and Simulations”](#) (2024)

- After modeling and simulating large numbers of RCV and standard partisan-primary-and-plurality elections, with varying voter and candidate ideologies, the authors find RCV tends to produce less extreme winners, but this moderating effect becomes less reliable (relative to the standard process) as candidate pools grow.

Buisseret and Prato, [“Politics Transformed? Electoral Competition under Ranked Choice Voting”](#) (2024)

- The authors find that RCV incentivizes appealing to all voters when group identities (i.e., partisan, ethnic, geographic, or cultural) are not highly salient, but when they are, RCV incentivizes candidates to campaign to narrow segments of (potential) supporters instead of broadly.

Colner, [“Running Towards Rankings: Ranked Choice Voting’s Impact on Candidate Entry and Descriptive Representation”](#) (2023)

- The author, after studying candidate pools in cities that have implemented RCV, finds that RCV does produce larger, higher-quality, and more diverse candidate pools, but that these benefits are temporary, disappearing after several election cycles.

Donovan and Tolbert, [“Civility in Ranked-Choice Voting Elections: Does Evidence Fit the Normative Narrative?”](#) (2023)

- In a test of RCV’s influence on campaign civility, the authors find that candidates are more likely to moderate attacks on their election opponents and appeal for second-place votes, but that this increased civility (in comparison to the plurality election standard) is limited in scope.

Hutchinson and Reilly, "[Does Ranked Choice Voting Promote Legislative Bipartisanship? Using Maine as a Policy Laboratory](#)" (2023)

- Assessing the frequency of bipartisan co-sponsorship following Maine's adoption of RCV in 2016, the authors indicate that RCV will boost bipartisanship in competitive legislative races but not safe seats.

Cerrone and McClintock, "[Ranked-Choice Voting, Runoff, and Democracy: Insights from Maine and Other U.S. States](#)" (2021)

- After assessing a dataset of a dozen competitive 2020 federal elections, the authors write that Maine's implementation of RCV enabled new parties and candidates to have greater electoral participation and somewhat alleviated ideological polarization. However, in an accompanying survey of registered voters across the US, the authors also found that participants were more favorable towards a plurality system than RCV.

Drutman and Strano, "[What We Know About Ranked-Choice Voting](#)" (2021)

- In a systemic analysis of RCV literature, the authors find that RCV correlates to more civil and positive campaigns and that voters exposed to it like it and find it easy to use. However, they also find that younger voters are much more receptive to it than older ones, and find no conclusive evidence that RCV has a positive impact on candidate diversity, voter turnout, party viability, or policy creation.

Fischer, Lee, and Lelkes, "[Electoral Systems and Political Attitudes: Experimental Evidence](#)" (2021)

- After simulating different electoral systems for randomized groups of study participants, the authors find that RCV reduces the difference in winners' and losers' perceptions of election fairness compared to plurality systems and that this difference is further reduced with the introduction of more parties (which does not have an impact under plurality systems). Additionally, the authors find that interparty bias does not exist in RCV systems with several parties. However, the authors also find that the use of RCV does not increase perceived election legitimacy.

Kimball and Anthony, "[Public Perceptions of Alternative Voting Systems: Results from a National Survey Experiment](#)" (2021)

- After surveying American voters, the authors find that respondents prefer a plurality system and believe it is a fairer system than RCV. The authors also find younger, more educated, and Democratic or third-party voters are more favorable to RCV implementation than older, less educated, and Republican voters.

McCarthy and Santucci, "[Ranked Choice Voting as a Generational Issue in Modern American Politics](#)" (2021)

- After analyzing several surveys, the authors find that RCV has the potential to constitute a major generational divide between younger voters who, out of dissatisfaction with "the way that democracy works in America," support the reform, and older Americans, who do not. The authors also suggest that racial and partisan divides may worsen demographic contention over RCV, as black and Republican Americans are less supportive of the reform as well (though both subgroups were also subject to the same generational divide).

### Studies Indicating Harms (or No Benefits)

Buisseret and Prato, "[Electoral Competition, Turnout, and Ranked Choice Voting](#)" (2023)

- Comparing the plurality standard to RCV in multi-candidate elections, the authors determine that RCV can (1) incentivize candidates to prioritize core supporters over the broader electorate and (2) increase the likelihood of a candidate winning a multi-candidate election despite losing any hypothetical head-to-head race.

Cerrone and McClintock, [“Come-from-behind victories under ranked-choice voting and runoff: The impact on voter satisfaction”](#) (2023)

- After conducting a survey of US voters, the authors find that, in the absence of education on how RCV works, voter dissatisfaction increases significantly in the presence of “come-from-behind victories” under RCV (i.e., situations in which a candidate without the most first-place votes ends up winning the election).

Vishwanath, [“Electoral Institutions and Substantive Representation in Local Politics: The Effects of Ranked Choice Voting”](#) (2022)

- The author, following an analysis of municipalities that have enacted RCV in the last decade or so, finds that RCV’s implementation did not result in increased representativeness of local legislatures or candidates, whether by the ideology of candidates or winners or by policies enacted.

Baker, [“Voters Evaluate Ideologically Extreme Candidates as Similarly Electable under Ranked Choice Voting and Plurality Voting”](#) (2021)

- After conducting a survey experiment, the author argues that voters have a more difficult time under RCV than a plurality system in evaluating candidates and forming preferences between them and finds that “extreme and moderate candidates are viewed equally as electable under RCV and plurality voting.”

Blais, Plescia, and Sevi, [“Do people want smarter ballots?”](#) (2021)

- After surveying Americans on ballot formats, the authors found that participants preferred a plurality system to RCV, preference for a plurality system increased with age (but was unrelated to education), and those with personal experience with RCV viewed RCV more favorably (suggesting a status quo bias).

Clark, [“Rank Deficiency? Analyzing the Costs and Benefits of Single-Winner Ranked-Choice Voting”](#) (2020)

- After conducting a survey experiment and data analysis following Maine’s 2018 elections – the first under the state’s new RCV system – the author finds that RCV reduces voter confidence and satisfaction, lengthens the time required to vote, and is more difficult to use than the standard plurality system.

Nielson, [“Ranked Choice Voting and Attitudes toward Democracy in the United States: Results from a Survey Experiment”](#) (2017)

- After conducting a survey experiment, the author indicates that RCV does not increase voter confidence in elections or the democratic process, and most voters do not prefer RCV over a plurality system.

### *Tentative Conclusions on Effectiveness*

In general, [surveys and academic studies of RCV](#) have found that (1) it is viewed with some hesitancy by those who have not used it but preferred by voters after testing it, with young Americans more supportive of changing the status quo than older citizens, and (2) it produces more civil and positive campaigns than the dominant plurality system, though any impact on polarization is inconclusive. However, an important caveat to these findings is that the adoption of RCV at the state and congressional level is so new and unusual nationwide that the small sample size may be hiding or overemphasizing any potential effects at these larger scales over time.

## “Sore Loser Laws”

### *What This Reform Is*

“Sore loser laws” prohibit candidates who lose in a partisan primary from running in the general election as an independent or as another party’s nominee. Adopting this reform would entail removing those restrictions.

### *Background*

As reforming our [primary election system](#)'s role in selecting general election candidates has been a focus of many reformers hoping to address the drivers of hyperpartisanship, some have focused on the legal infrastructure buttressing our election processes, including the various laws and regulations dictating which political candidates are and are not eligible to appear on a general election ballot. Critics complain that these laws often favor and reinforce the power of the existing major parties by limiting the ability of alternative candidates to appear on the ballot.

“Sore loser laws” are one of these measures; they exist in many states and take several forms, including express prohibitions and effective bans through insurmountable filing requirements (e.g., being prohibited from running in a party primary and as an independent in the same race without filing for both circumstances before the primary occurs). Regardless of their particular design, they all ultimately restrict general elections to party primary winners.

Reformers argue that eliminating sore loser laws could have a significant depolarizing effect on candidates and elected officials by enabling party primary losers – who were likely not partisan enough to win their primary but might [better represent the broader electorate](#) – to run as independents or third-party candidates in the general election and offer the people a more agreeable representative in government. Opponents argue that eliminating these laws without [also implementing ranked-choice voting](#) would simply render the primary loser a general election spoiler.

### *Implementation in the States*

**All but two states** – [Connecticut and New York](#) – **currently have sore loser laws** in place and efforts to eradicate them are presently minimal. (Note: in 2021, following publication of the preceding cited resource, Iowa [enacted an election reform law](#) with a [sore loser provision](#).)

### *Tentative Conclusions on Effectiveness*

Scholarly studies of sore loser laws in the US are extremely rare, but the [preeminent 2014 study of these laws and their \(possible\) relationship with political polarization](#) finds that sore loser laws have a significant polarizing effect on congressional candidates and elected officials and suggests that eliminating them might reduce as much as 10% of the ideological divide between the major parties in Congress.



## Multimember Districts with Proportional Ranked-Choice Voting

### *What This Reform Is*

Instead of voters choosing a single individual to represent them in a legislative body, in multimember districts (MMDs), citizens vote for at least two representatives for each electoral district they reside in. And instead of America's standard general election process (i.e., plurality and winner-take-all) – in which voters cast a single vote for a single person, and whichever candidate receives the most votes is declared the winner – under this reform, voters would elect those several representatives through a system of proportional ranked-choice voting (proportional RCV).

### *Background*

The United States is dominated by [single-member election districts](#), with seats filled by candidates who obtain the greatest number of votes – even if they fail to obtain a majority. But in general, under this reform proposal (not to be confused with [\[list\] proportional representation](#)), existing districts are either combined into larger ones to maintain legislature size or preserved to increase legislature size, and a vote threshold is set based on the number of seats available (ex., *25% for three seats*). Like the more typical [RCV](#) process, voters rank all the candidates (or as many or as few as they want) according to their preferences between them. Candidates who exceed the established vote threshold after the first round of ballot counting are guaranteed a seat and then have their excess votes passed to their voters' second-favorite candidate (ex., in a race for three seats with a 25% threshold, a candidate who receives 33% of first-place votes is given a seat, then the 8% of “excess” votes are instead given to those voters' second-favorite candidate).

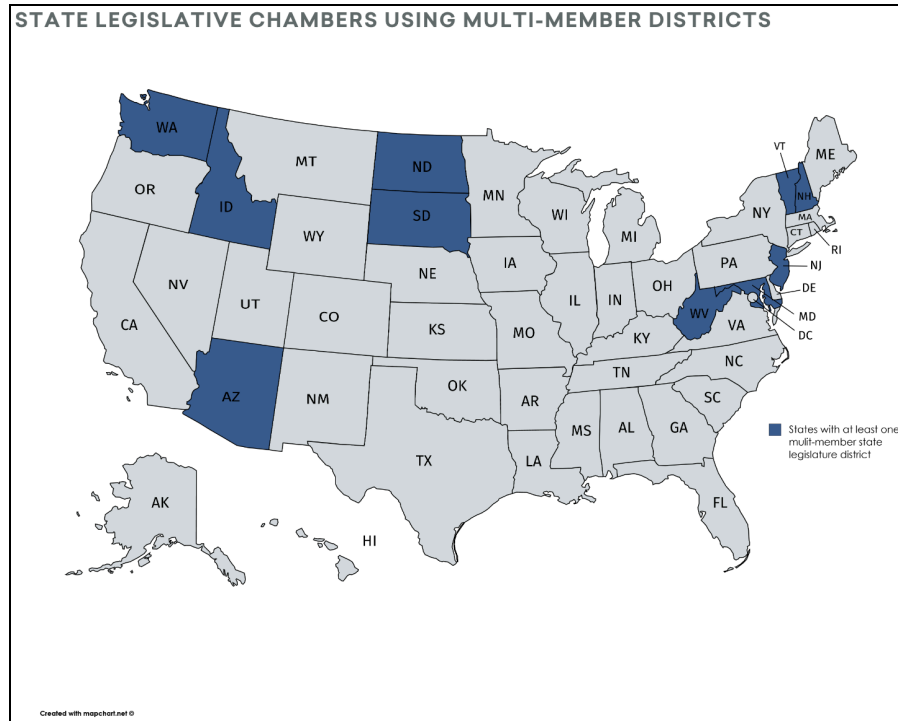
Assuming all seats are not filled after first-place votes are tallied or excess votes reassigned, the last-place candidate is eliminated, and their voters' ballots are reassigned to their next-favorite candidate. [This process](#) is repeated until the appropriate number of candidates exceeds the percentage threshold and each seat is filled.

Proponents of this reform argue that MMDs and proportional RCV would [empower political and demographic minority voters and legislators](#) by giving them legislative decision-making power they are typically excluded from by the US single-member district and plurality election standard, [encourage collaboration](#) between policymakers, and [prevent gerrymandering](#) by devaluing the incentives to do so. Opponents argue this dual reform would [confuse voters](#) unnecessarily and [dilute the accountability of individual legislators](#) to the people.

### *Implementation in the States*

Currently, only **ten states** – Arizona, Idaho, Maryland, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont, Washington, and West Virginia – [use MMDs to any extent in their state legislative elections](#). Federal law has mandated single-member congressional districts [since 1967](#), and **proportional RCV** is only in place (or will soon be implemented) in **seven American locales** – [Albany, California; Arden, Delaware; Portland, Maine; Amherst and Cambridge, Massachusetts; Minneapolis, Minnesota; and Portland, Oregon](#). Therefore, proportional RCV elections do not yet exist anywhere in the US at the state level or higher.





(Source: [Ballotpedia](#), by means of the [American Academy of Arts & Sciences](#))

### *Studies of Effectiveness*

#### Studies Indicating Benefits

Benade et al., “[Ranked Choice Voting and Proportional Representation](#)” (2021)

- The authors, after devising an experiment for testing proportional RCV ballots conducted in polarized elections across the US, find that proportional RCV generally produces proportional representation in government for minority groups, while the single-member plurality standard varies significantly with local circumstances.

Garg et al., “[Combating Gerrymandering with Social Choice: the Design of Multi-member Districts](#)” (2021)

- After algorithmically generating several congressional maps under MMDs and different electoral processes (e.g., plurality and RCV) and assessing map proportionality, the authors find that districts represented by three members elected by proportional RCV could result in proportional representation in every state, significantly limited gerrymandering capabilities, and preserved geographic cohesion, especially when redistricting is managed by IRCs.

Santucci, “[Evidence of a winning-cohesion tradeoff under multi-winner ranked-choice voting](#)” (2018)

- The author, after reviewing electoral and legislative data drawn from American cities that have previously experimented with proportional RCV, suggests that the reform produces an environment in which parties and candidates solicit support from beyond their typical voting bases.

Farrell and McAllister, “[Voter satisfaction and electoral systems: Does preferential voting in candidate-centred systems make a difference?](#)” (2006)

- After devising a study of 29 countries with varying election infrastructure according to voter satisfaction with their country’s system, the authors find that preferential voting

systems like proportional RCV “promote a greater sense of fairness about election outcomes among citizens, which in turn is a major component of the public’s satisfaction with the democratic system.”

Bowler, Farrell, and Pettit, “[Expert Opinion on Electoral Systems: So Which Electoral System Is ‘Best’?](#)” (2005)

- In a survey of 169 election system experts, the authors find that proportional RCV is second only to mixed-member proportional systems ([an election process for parliamentary systems](#) that shares some similarities with proportional RCV) as experts’ preferred election system, well ahead of both RCV and especially the single-member plurality standard in the US.

#### Studies Indicating Mixed Results

Santucci, [More Parties or No Parties: The Politics of Electoral Reform in America](#) (2022)

- In a historical analysis of two dozen American cities that implemented proportional RCV on the heels of the Progressive movement a century ago, the author finds that the reform produced bipartisan coalitions that lasted some time. However, the author also notes that 23 of those cities repealed the reform in the coming decades and in polarizing ways, [suggesting that](#) the reform failed to permanently promote nonpartisan cooperation among the major parties or break from the two-party system.

Fischer, Lee, and Lelkes, “[Electoral Systems and Political Attitudes: Experimental Evidence](#)” (2021)

- After simulating different electoral systems for randomized groups of study participants, the authors find that proportional systems reduce the difference in winners’ and losers’ satisfaction with democracy compared to plurality systems and that this difference is further reduced with the introduction of more parties (which does not have an impact under plurality systems). Additionally, the authors find that interparty bias does not exist in proportional systems with several parties. However, the authors also find that proportional RCV systems produce more intergroup animosity than plurality systems.

#### *Tentative Conclusions on Effectiveness*

Overall, election system scholars have found proportional RCV is effective at increasing representation in government for underrepresented groups compared to the single-winner plurality standard, that it can [motivate candidates and legislators to distinguish themselves](#) from the party line with their campaigns and votes, and that it can more accurately represent voters’ proportional levels of support for different parties. However, scholars also found that proportionality does not guarantee political depolarization or increased voter satisfaction; voter satisfaction with election integrity has also been noted as an issue [due to the system’s vote-counting complexity](#). Additionally, because proportional RCV only exists on a large scale in other countries, results may vary (somewhat) in the US, and to obtain more reliable analyses, both further adoption and research in the US would be required.

## Money-in-Politics Reforms

### *What This Reform Is*

Money-in-politics reform proposals vary significantly, but all concern illuminating and/or limiting the role of private, secretive money in politics and governance (i.e., by increasing transparency and/or public funding for campaigns).

### *Background*

Donors and elected officials, particularly in Congress, have long faced controversy over the amount of money involved in the political machinery that helps put individuals in office and how it might impact their decision-making once in office. For example, members of Congress [spend substantially more time fundraising](#) than meeting with constituents, drafting legislation, or attending hearings, with each election cycle becoming increasingly more expensive. When adjusted for inflation, the 2000 congressional and presidential contests cost totals of [\\$2.5 billion](#) and [\\$2.1 billion](#), respectively, whereas their 2020 contests cost totals of [\\$8.7 billion](#) and [\\$5.7 billion](#).

In addition to increased costs, the federal level has seen significant volatility in campaign finance policy over the last two decades, as the last significant federal campaign finance reform law, the [Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002](#) (i.e., McCain-Feingold) – which banned “soft money” (political donations not meant to directly benefit a particular candidate) and limited advertisements not sourced from a candidate or their campaign – has seen provisions struck down by the Supreme Court, most notably in [Citizens United v. FEC](#) (2010). [Polling suggests longstanding popular disillusionment](#) with the nation’s political financing system.

For [well over a century](#), reform advocates have put forward numerous state, local, and other federal-level proposals to increase transparency around funds used to influence elections and decision-makers and/or buttress small-dollar funding from the public at large. Proponents hold that doing so would significantly reduce opportunities for wealthy actors to influence candidates and policymakers to benefit themselves – while avoiding any public scrutiny – and increase the public’s trust in elected officials to seek the betterment of everyday Americans over special interests.

Opponents argue that reforms aimed at boosting small-dollar donors have [disproportionately benefited extreme candidates](#) and would only worsen polarization if implemented further – and that attempts to limit individuals’ (and groups thereof) ability to affect political change based on their income would [violate their First Amendment rights](#) to petition their government.

### Requiring Transparency from “Super PACs” by Illuminating “Dark Money”

“[Super PACs](#)” are politically active organizations that must disclose their donors and expenditures but may receive and spend unlimited amounts of money so long as their activities are executed “[independent](#)” of campaigns. “[Dark money](#)” refers to political donations and expenditures that cannot be used to target specific candidates (often by “issue advocacy” organizations) but come from entirely undisclosed sources. When combined (i.e., when dark money groups donate to Super PACs), America’s campaign finance system allows individuals, businesses, and organizations to discreetly spend unrestricted funds to influence election outcomes.

Reformers argue for increased transparency by requiring that all money that could be classified as dark money be publicly reported, just as contributions to political campaigns and parties [normally are](#). This change could be implemented through [legislative action](#), regulatory changes by the [Federal Election Commission](#), the [Securities and Exchange Commission](#), or the [Internal Revenue Service](#), or any combination thereof.

Those who advocate for increasing transparency argue that observation of the “independence” requirement, whereby funders are [forbidden](#) from supporting or producing material while communicating with candidates or parties – or any of their affiliates – is [often dubious at best](#) due to the close relationships campaigns and donors maintain with each other. They also argue that donors may be driven to direct their contributions to less controversial causes – or candidates less ambivalent about or welcoming of governmental dysfunction – if their activities were subject to public scrutiny.

Opponents of such reform argue that [disclosure requirements could be used to silence disfavored speech](#) and [violate donors’ First Amendment rights](#) of free speech and association. They also argue that only the most informed voters will take the results of increased disclosure into account because [people rely on shortcuts](#) to understand who is on their ballot, therefore limiting its impact.

### Increasing Public Financing of Campaigns

Public financing of campaigns refers to [voluntary programs](#) funded by local, state, or federal governments that [provide limited funds to candidates for campaign expenses on the condition that they accept certain campaign terms](#) (e.g., only accepting small-dollar donations and limiting expenditures). While there are [numerous proposed avenues](#) for increasing public financing of campaigns, the two most popular involve (1) matching individual small-dollar donations with equivalent or proportional amounts from government budgets or (2) operating with full public financing (aka conducting “clean elections”) by restricting campaigns to a certain amount of money appropriated from the government’s budget.

Advocates for greater public financing of campaigns argue it would allow a [greater and more diverse array of individuals to run for office](#) than would normally be able to due to formidable campaign costs, ameliorate the [disproportionate fundraising capacity](#) of extremist candidates, reduce the influence of special interest groups, and allow elected officials to spend [more time engaging with constituents than appealing to \(wealthy\) donors](#).

Opponents of this reform, in addition to aforementioned concerns about benefiting populists, hold that the voluntary nature of these programs incentivizes candidates to decline participation and raise as much money as they can on their own and that [governments should not be involved in raising funds](#) (e.g., increasing taxes or redirecting existing spending) for political campaigns at all and should instead focus their appropriations on other issues.

### Implementation in the States

**Money-in-politics reforms** can be found across the country, with **21 states having implemented them** to some degree.

States by Money-in-Politics Reform Implementation		
State	Limiting Dark Money/Super PACs?	Increasing Public Campaign Financing?
Alaska	x	
Arizona	x	x
Connecticut		x
Delaware	x	
Florida		x
Hawaii		x
Idaho	x	
Maine	x	x
Maryland	x	x
Massachusetts	x	x
Michigan		x
Minnesota		x
Montana	x	
New Jersey	x	x
New Mexico		x
New York	x	x
North Dakota	x	
Oregon	x	
Rhode Island	x	x
Texas	x	
Vermont	x	x

\* *Note: Washington, DC, has also increased public campaign financing.*

[Fifteen states](#) – Alaska, Arizona, Delaware, Idaho, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Montana, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, Oregon, Rhode Island, Texas, and Vermont – have taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs in state elections, though the exact parameters vary significantly between each state.

For example, Alaska approved a [ballot initiative](#) requiring the disclosure of any donor who provides more than \$2,000 to a Super PAC engaged in a state political campaign in 2020, with the state implementing it for the first time in 2022. [Arizona](#) approved a ballot initiative requiring any organization that spends at least \$50,000 in an election to disclose its donors of \$5,000 or more in 2022. Delaware requires Super PACs that spend \$500 or more on electioneering communications and any entity that contributes over \$1,200 in an election cycle to a party or political action committee to disclose the source of those funds. Idaho requires any individual or organization that spends over \$100 on electioneering communications to disclose all donors of \$50 or more and bans indirect contributions given through third-party entities. [Maine](#) has instituted a \$5,000 annual limit for individuals and entities to give to Super PACs under a [2024 ballot measure](#). Maryland requires political nonprofits and Super PACs to report their election spending and their five largest donors if they spend over \$6,000. Massachusetts requires advertisements from Super PACs to list the names of the organization's five largest donors in the ad so long as they spend \$5,000 or more.

Additionally, Montana requires all political groups to disclose their funders if they spend money on electioneering communications mentioning a candidate or using their image. [New Jersey](#) obligates politically active groups to disclose any electioneering expenditures and any donation larger than \$7,500. New York requires limited liability corporations to disclose all their direct and indirect owners and limits them to contributing \$5,000 in aggregate to a campaign, like other corporations. [North Dakota](#) approved a constitutional amendment ordering the state legislature to enact legislation to require online and consumable disclosure of donors who provide over \$200 for electioneering communications in a 2018 ballot initiative. Oregon approved a constitutional amendment enabling state and local governments to implement campaign contribution limits and force dark money disclosure in a 2020 ballot initiative. Rhode Island requires Super PACs that spend over \$1,000 on electioneering communications to disclose their primary donors. Texas requires politically active organizations engaged in electioneering communications to disclose their donors. And finally, Vermont requires entities engaged in electioneering communications to disclose donors who give \$2,000 or more in their advertisements.

Meanwhile, [fourteen states](#) – Arizona, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont – plus Washington, DC, have implemented “clean elections” and/or matching public funds for certain (or all) state or DC races. Five of these – [Arizona, Connecticut, Maine, New Mexico](#), and [Vermont](#) – operate with clean elections for some or all races, while the remaining states use matching funds. For states with clean elections, [eligible candidates](#) (statewide and state legislative candidates in Arizona and Connecticut; gubernatorial and state legislative candidates in Maine; elected judges in New Mexico; and candidates for governor and lieutenant governor in Vermont) must collect a large enough number of small donations (e.g., [\\$5 from at least 200 people for Arizona legislative candidates](#)) to qualify for the program; after accepting, they are allocated with an amount of public money depending on their position (e.g., [about \\$26,000 for Arizona legislative candidates](#)) that they are restricted to for the duration of their campaign.

States with matching funds, meanwhile, will contribute to participating candidates public funds equivalent to the amount received from small donors, up to a certain amount (e.g., in 2024, Hawaiian candidates face a general election spending limit of about \$2.2 million and [could receive up to 10% of that amount in public funds](#) if they were able to raise an equivalent amount themselves). However, Michigan and Washington, DC, combine grants and matching funds into their hybrid systems, [offering both lump sums and small-donation matching rates](#) (i.e., 2:1 and 5:1, respectively) for participating candidates.

## *Studies of Effectiveness*

### Studies Indicating Benefits

Heerwig and McCabe, “[Broadening Donor Participation in Local Elections: Results from the Seattle Democracy Voucher Program in 2021](#)” (2022)

- In an analysis of Seattle’s 2021 elections, the third under the city’s new “voucher” public campaign financing program in which voters receive four \$25 vouchers to allocate to local candidates, the authors find participation in the program increased across all demographic groups (with some of the largest relative gains found among residents of color and younger and lower-income residents) and that voucher users were generally representative of Seattle voters.



Mancinelli, "[Does Public Financing Motivate Electoral Challengers?](#)" (2022)

- The author, after assessing all state legislature races from 1976 to 2018, finds that the number of candidates generally increases when public funding is available and is accentuated when larger amounts of public funds are available and with a greater length of time since the implementation of public funding.

Malbin, "[A Neo-Madisonian Perspective on Campaign Finance Reform, Institutions, Pluralism, and Small Donors](#)" (2021)

- Using empirical analysis and predictive modeling of a New York state matching funds program, the author finds that small-dollar donors do not foster partisan extremism. Furthermore, the author argues that using public money to empower small-dollar constituents "can help correct pluralism's flaws" and "simultaneously serve institutional goals for the common good."

Oklobdzija, "[Public positions, private giving: Dark money and political donors in the Digital Age](#)" (2019)

- After comparing the ideological scores of donors to a dark money group supporting a pair of California ballot initiatives with the scores of other donors supporting those initiatives, the author finds evidence that social pressures do encourage concealing donations through dark money groups and that disclosure laws affect individuals' decisions to donate to political causes.

Wood, "[Show Me the Money: 'Dark Money' and the Informational Benefit of Campaign Finance Disclosure](#)" (2017)

- After designing a survey and experiment concerning voter considerations of campaign finance matters, the author finds that "voters value disclosure of campaign finance information and will reward voluntary disclosure while punishing candidates supported by dark money groups."

Malhotra, "[The Impact of Public Financing on Electoral Competition: Evidence from Arizona and Maine](#)" (2008)

- After assessing state legislative races in the "clean election" states of Arizona and Maine, the author finds that public financing programs significantly increase electoral competition in districts where competitors participate in such programs.

### Studies Indicating Mixed Results

Moore, "[Public Campaign Financing: Evidence and Opportunities for Hawai'i](#)" (2023)

- In this policy brief assessing public campaign finance reform effectiveness research, the author writes that the reform is generally found to increase competitiveness, candidate and donor diversity, and communications between candidates and voters. However, the author also writes that scholarship does not support public campaign financing increasing trust in government, stemming corrupt behavior, having a significant impact on policy, or reducing polarization.

Rhodes et al., "[The Role of Dark Money Disclosure on Candidate Evaluations and Viability](#)" (2019)

- After designing an experiment testing how groups of individuals, when viewing political advertisements, incorporate partisanship and dark money usage in their political decision-making, the authors find that support for a candidate is usually reduced when their acceptance of dark money is disclosed. However, when their partisan alignment is also revealed, individuals generally demonize the candidate's opponent from the opposing party, as the advertisement intends.

Hall, "[How the Public Funding of Elections Increases Candidate Polarization](#)" (2014)

- The author's analysis indicates that public campaign financing significantly decreases incumbents' financial and electoral advantages but also increases polarization and candidate divergence. A contributing factor, the author finds, is that access-oriented



interest groups, in general, overwhelmingly support moderate incumbents, but this practice is undone by public campaign financing.

### Studies Indicating Harms (or No Benefits)

Cox, "[Dark Money in Congressional House Elections](#)" (2022)

- After analyzing advertising data and designing a model of voter choice influenced by spending, the author finds that dark money spending "do[es] not have significant effects on candidate vote share when accounting for the spending of candidates, parties, PACs, and Super PACs."

Kilborn, "[Public Campaign Financing, Candidate Socioeconomic Diversity, and Representational Inequality at the U.S. State Level: Evidence from Connecticut](#)" (2021)

- The author, after comparing Connecticut state legislative candidates with candidates in two states without public campaign financing, finds that fewer individuals of lower socioeconomic statuses run for state legislative office when public financing is available, and those who do run are less likely to participate in the public financing program and no more likely to win.

Kilborn and Vishwanath, "[Public Money Talks Too: How Public Campaign Financing Degrades Representation](#)" (2021)

- After analyzing Arizona's, Connecticut's, and Maine's public financing programs, the authors find that candidates who solely rely on public campaign financing are more politically extreme and less representative of their districts than candidates who do not participate in the state's public financing program.

Masket and Miller, "[Does Public Election Funding Create More Extreme Legislators? Evidence from Arizona and Maine](#)" (2021)

- After assessing state legislative candidates in the "clean election" states of Arizona and Maine, the authors find no significant difference in ideological extremity between candidates who are publicly or privately funded.

Keena and Knight-Finley, "[Are Small Donors Polarizing? A Longitudinal Study of the Senate](#)" (2019)

- The study finds that small dollar donors do not necessarily lead to more polarization among legislators. However, legislators who take extremist floor positions during reelection tend to raise more money from small donors, which implies that the implementation of a small donor matching program might incentivize strategic polarization by political candidates.

Pildes, "[Small-Donor-Based Campaign-Finance Reform and Political Polarization](#)" (2019)

- The author's analysis suggests that small-donor matching programs for political campaigns worsen polarization because the most successful fundraisers under these programs are those who generate national media coverage, usually due to their ideological extremity and/or propensity for generating virality.

Barber, "[Ideological Donors, Contribution Limits, and the Polarization of American Legislatures](#)" (2015)

- After analyzing state campaign contribution data, the author writes: "Individual donors prefer to support ideologically extreme candidates while...PACs tend to support more moderate candidates."

Klumpp, Mialon, and Williams, "[Leveling the Playing Field? The Role of Public Campaign Funding in Elections](#)" (2015)

- The authors, after developing a comparative election model, find that public funding programs do not have a consistently positive effect on increasing the political speech capabilities of all candidates.

La Raja and Schaffner, "[Campaign Finance and Political Polarization: When Purists Prevail](#)" (2015)

- After analyzing two decades of state and congressional campaign finance data, the authors find that efforts to limit the effects and presence of large political contributions have failed and have increased polarization, as campaign funding is now dominated by direct donations to candidates from wealthy ideological "purists." Instead, the authors propose loosening regulations on political parties to mitigate the influence of wealthy "purist" donors and the likelihood that extremist candidates run for office or that moderate candidates adopt more extreme views to obtain adequate funding.

### *Tentative Conclusions on Effectiveness*

Generally, scholarly studies of campaign finance have found that the acceptance of dark money harms images of candidates when revealed, and the prevalence of disclosure laws gives donors pause when considering contributing to a particular candidate, party, or cause. However, they also suggest that other factors, such as partisan cues and the substantial level of political spending, are more significant factors for influencing voter perception of candidates and trust in the elected officials' integrity and government more broadly. Regarding public financing, meanwhile, [holistic assessments of such reforms](#) have found that they do increase campaign competitiveness by reducing incumbent financial advantages but have no significant effect on incumbents' reelection rates. Additionally, studies have found inconsistent impacts on candidate political extremeness and district representativeness (political and socioeconomic).

## Term Limits

### *What This Reform Is*

Term limits proposals vary significantly from state to state and office to office, but all prohibit elected officials from holding their positions indefinitely.

### *Background*

Although constitutional regulations abound concerning election to federal office (e.g., age and residential eligibility, aiding insurrection, etc.), the [22nd Amendment](#) is – barring impeachment and removal – the only constitutional provision limiting the ability to continue service *once in federal office*. The 22nd Amendment holds that no one can be elected to the office of the presidency more than twice, while the only inhibitor on members of Congress's length of public service is reelection.

At the state and local level, term limits are far more common, both for executives and legislators. The specific limitations can take several different forms and hinge on multiple criteria, such as the length of time officials are permitted to serve and whether such limits apply to consecutive time spent in office or to an official's lifetime.

Term-limit advocates argue that instituting such limits on elected officials would break up entrenched power, incentivize [good policymaking over getting reelected](#), and force out elected officials who are [unable to govern effectively](#). Reform opponents argue that [effective policymakers would also be forced out](#), policymaking expertise would be greatly reduced, and the reform is antidemocratic for [limiting voters' ability to choose](#) who represents them.

### *Implementation in the States*

Currently, **37 states feature gubernatorial term limits, sixteen of which also have legislative term limits** in place. The thirteen remaining states, meanwhile, have no term limits in place for their elected officials.

States by Term Limit Implementation		
Gubernatorial and Legislative	Gubernatorial Only	Unlimited Terms
Arizona	Alabama	Connecticut
Arkansas**	Alaska	Idaho
California*	Delaware*	Illinois
Colorado	Georgia	Iowa
Florida	Hawaii	Massachusetts
Louisiana	Indiana	Minnesota
Maine	Kansas	New Hampshire
Michigan*	Kentucky	New York
Missouri*	Maryland	Texas
Montana	Mississippi*	Utah
Nebraska	New Jersey	Vermont
Nevada*	New Mexico	Washington
North Dakota*	North Carolina	Wisconsin
Ohio	Oregon	
Oklahoma*	Pennsylvania	
South Dakota	Rhode Island	
	South Carolina	
	Tennessee	
	Virginia	
	West Virginia	
	Wyoming	

\* Indicates the state has lifetime term limits in place.

\*\* Indicates the state has a unique combination of consecutive and lifetime term limits in place based on the office specified. See text below for greater details.

\*\*\* Note: Washington, DC, has [no conciliar or mayoral term limits](#) in effect.

[Legislative term limits](#), in their most common form, restrict elected officials to eight consecutive years in a chamber. This is the case in seven states – Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Maine, Montana, Ohio, and South Dakota. Louisiana has a similar system in place, increasing the consecutive time in a chamber to twelve years, while [Nebraska](#) also has an eight-year limitation, but since its legislature is unicameral, those elected to it must leave the legislature after their second consecutive term is completed. Arkansas, meanwhile, does not allow an elected official to serve more than twelve consecutive years in its legislature in total, forcing them to leave the legislature rather than simply move to the other chamber (unlike the aforementioned states, save for Nebraska).

The most significant difference between legislative term limit structures, however, is whether the restriction applies to consecutive time spent in office or to the individual's lifetime. For example, Missouri and North Dakota do not permit an elected official to serve more than eight years in a chamber, whether that time is spent consecutively or piecemeal; in Nevada, the limit

is twelve years. Meanwhile, California, Michigan, and Oklahoma legislators may not serve more than twelve years in the legislature in total, regardless of chamber.

[Gubernatorial term limits](#) generally confine the state's chief executive to two consecutive terms in office. This standard is found in 23 states – Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, and West Virginia. A few states, however, deviate from this norm with different time restrictions; Indiana and Oregon do not permit an individual to serve more than eight years as governor in any twelve-year span, while Montana and Wyoming do not allow more than eight years in any sixteen-year span. Meanwhile, [Virginia](#) is unique in that it does not allow governors to serve consecutive terms.

Akin to legislative term limits, however, the most significant distinction between gubernatorial term limit methods is between consecutive and lifetime restrictions. The most common format outside of the two-consecutive-term standard mirrors the 22nd Amendment and is in force in nine states – Arkansas, California, Delaware, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, North Dakota, and Oklahoma do not allow individuals to be elected to the governorship more than twice.

### *Studies of Effectiveness*

#### Studies Indicating Benefits

Kuhlmann and Lewis, "[Legislative Term Limits and Voter Turnout](#)" (2017)

- After analyzing aggregate and district-level voter turnout data from states with and without legislative term limits, the authors find the reform significantly increases turnout in state legislative elections.

Smart and Sturm, "[Term Limits and Electoral Accountability](#)" (2013)

- The authors, after devising a model of political agency in a representative democracy, find term limits can increase government efficiency and voters' perceived value of elections by decreasing the value of holding office (and thereby encouraging officeholders to craft more "truthful" policy closer to their private preferences) and enabling voters to decide in a better-informed manner if they are deserving of another term.

#### Studies Indicating Mixed Results

Carey et al., "[The Effects of Term Limits on State Legislatures: A New Survey of the 50 States](#)" (2006)

- After surveying state legislators impacted and unimpacted by term limits, the authors find that term limits have no demographic or ideological impact on those elected to legislative office, but they do produce a "[Burkean shift](#)" in legislators about to conclude their terms (i.e., decisions are influenced more by the legislator's personal beliefs than what would encourage their constituents to reelect them).

Kousser, "[The Limited Impact of Term Limits: Contingent Effects on the Complexity and Breadth of Laws](#)" (2006)

- The author, after assessing the legislative functionality of states before and after term limit implementation, finds that the effects of legislative term limits are accentuated by institutional strength and individual experience. If legislatures are filled with officials who have at least some state and/or local governing experience and are funded enough that new legislators are supported by quality staff, legislative productivity can increase,

while legislatures without such resources will see reduced productivity, the author writes.

### Studies Indicating Harms (or No Benefits)

Myers, "[Why Do Term Limits Polarize State Legislatures?](#)" (2023)

- In this paper, the author finds that legislative term limits decrease the value of legislative office and increase polarization throughout the election cycle, from the primary pool to the eventual general election victor. Furthermore, the author writes, news coverage decreases due to the reduced office value, candidates face a lower cost of extremism, moderate candidate value is erased, and voters know less about the candidates and officeholders and face a diminished capacity to hold them accountable.

Fourinaies and Hall, "[How Do Electoral Incentives Affect Legislator Behavior? Evidence from U.S. State Legislatures](#)" (2021)

- The authors, after analyzing a large dataset of bill sponsorships, committee activities, roll-call votes, and interest-group lawmaker grades, find that term-limited state legislators are (1) less productive than their counterparts eligible for reelection and (2) do not significantly change their voting patterns when no longer facing party primaries.

Olson and Rogowski, "[Legislative Term Limits and Polarization](#)" (2020)

- After analyzing roll call voting patterns from 1993 to 2016, the authors find that legislative term limits increase ideological polarization in the legislature to a substantial degree.

Masket and Shor, "[Polarization without Parties: Term Limits and Legislative Partisanship in Nebraska's Unicameral Legislature](#)" (2015)

- The authors, after assessing campaign finance records and conducting interviews surrounding Nebraska's adoption of legislative term limits, find the reform enables parties to recruit and finance candidates in an increasingly partisan fashion.

Swift and VanderMolen, "[Term Limits and Collaboration Across the Aisle: An Analysis of Bipartisan Cosponsorship in Term Limited and Non-Term Limited State Legislatures](#)" (2015)

- After collecting state bill cosponsorship data, the authors find that legislative term limits reduce bipartisan cosponsorship as a result of changed governing incentives, especially in more professionalized legislatures.

Wallace, "[Legislative Term Limits: Friend or Foe](#)" (2015)

- In this legal article, the author finds that legislative term limits are detrimental to the legislative process and should not be implemented further to avoid increasing dysfunction.

Hall, "[Partisan Effects of Legislative Term Limits](#)" (2014)

- The author, after analyzing contributions from access-oriented interest groups, finds that legislative term limits have not had an electoral partisan benefit but have significantly reallocated institutional power from Democrats to Republicans, largely due to forcing out more senior Democrats than Republicans.

Greenbaum, "[The History and Impact of Legislative Term Limit Initiatives](#)" (2012)

- In this report, the author finds that legislative term limits decrease legislative functionality by diminishing expertise gained from years of complex policymaking and failing to eliminate outside influences.

Alt, Bueno de Mesquita, and Rose, "[Disentangling Accountability and Competence in Elections: Evidence from U.S. Term Limits](#)" (2011)

- After utilizing variations in gubernatorial term limits across the US, the authors find that term limits produce lower incentives to exert effort on the voters' behalf and decrease office competency.

Farmer et al., [\*Legislating Without Experience: Case Studies in State Legislative Term Limits\*](#) (2007)

- Analyzing several case studies of state legislatures impacted by term limits, the editors argue that, despite establishing natural turnover in office and witnessing some increases in nonpartisan staff, the reform ultimately weakens state legislatures by reducing the value of leadership and experience and worsening partisanship and civility, creating a more volatile policymaking environment.

Kurtz, Cain, and Niemi, [\*Institutional Change in American Politics: The Case of Term Limits\*](#) (2007)

- In their analysis of a collection of studies of term limits' effects on state legislatures, the editors argue that the reform weakens state legislatures, though this effect is determined by the levels of professionalization in the legislature and the restrictiveness of the reform.

Masket and Lewis, [\*"A Return to Normalcy? Revisiting the Effects of Term Limits on Competitiveness and Spending in California Assembly Elections"\*](#) (2007)

- The authors, in an analysis of California's 1990 adoption of legislative term limits, find that term limits have no lasting effect on campaign expenses or meaningful impact on electoral competitiveness. Instead, the authors write, political careerism merely adapts to term limits rather than alleviates.

Nalder, [\*"The Effect of State Legislative Term Limits on Voter Turnout"\*](#) (2007)

- In an assessment of state legislative races in the fourteen years before and after California's 1990 adoption of legislative term limits, the author finds that term limits decrease voter turnout, fail to produce more competitive races, and fail to increase trust in government.

Wright, [\*"Do Term Limits Affect Legislative Roll Call Voting? Representation, Polarization, and Participation"\*](#) (2007)

- After analyzing state legislative roll call and constituency preference data, the author finds that legislative term limits have no effect on polarization or on the level to which officials represent their constituents. However, the author does find that term limits reduce legislative productivity.

Schraufnagel and Halperin, [\*"Term Limits, Electoral Competition, and Representational Diversity: The Case of Florida"\*](#) (2006)

- In an analysis of the early impacts of Florida's implementation of term limits in its state legislature, the authors find no effect on race competitiveness or significant increase in racial or sexual representativeness among legislators.

### *Tentative Conclusions on Effectiveness*

Although some academic pieces have found term limits can increase voter engagement and satisfaction and maintain or increase government productivity and functionality if certain conditions are met, the scholarly consensus on term limits holds that term limits do not have a positive effect on partisanship, competency, or public trust, and those impacts often appear negative outright.



## Fusion Voting

### *What This Reform Is*

While states almost universally require each party that qualifies for the ballot to put forth its own candidate, fusion voting allows candidates to be nominated by more than one party, thereby enabling third parties to endorse whichever candidate they choose for a particular race.

### *Background*

There are several barriers (e.g., “[sore loser laws](#),”) to third parties earning a spot on ballots and having a chance at significantly impacting American politics and governance. With the prohibition of fusion voting, for instance, qualified third parties are required to name a candidate that has not already been nominated by another party.

When permitted, there are two formats in which fusion voting is carried out; the first, known as “[aggregated fusion](#)” or “dual labeling,” is organized by candidate and lists all nominating party labels next to the candidate’s name, while the second, known as “[disaggregated fusion](#),” is organized by party and lists every party’s nominee. In the latter, if a candidate is nominated by more than one party, their name [will appear multiple times](#), but they can only receive one vote, and that vote will be of equal value regardless of the line (i.e., party affiliation) the voter used to cast their ballot for that individual.

Those in favor of fusion voting argue that the reform would allow third parties to have legitimate roles in elections by nominating candidates without serving as spoilers – [especially if combined](#) with [ranked-choice voting](#) – and force major party candidates to [moderate or expand their coalitions](#) to obtain third-party support. Opponents of fusion voting warn that the reform would give more centrist third parties [inordinate nominating power](#) to decide particularly close races between Democratic and Republican candidates and that, in the absence of ranked-choice voting, third parties would be forced to serve as major-party rubber stamps for their preferred candidate to win, thereby affecting no change.

### *Implementation in the States*

**All but six states** – [Connecticut, Idaho, Mississippi, New York, Oregon, and Vermont](#) – **currently ban cross-nominating** [in all general elections](#). Although fusion voting is not prohibited in Idaho or Mississippi, it does not occur in practice in either state. Instead, dual labeling is legal and in effect in [Oregon and Vermont alone](#), while Connecticut and New York are the only states in which disaggregated fusion voting takes place.

### *Tentative Conclusions on Effectiveness*

Academic research on the quantifiable impacts of fusion voting in the US is very uncommon, but the [leading 2022 study of the reform's \(possible\) effect on voters](#) finds that fusion voting “has little impact on feelings of democratic efficacy and voting behavior,” although it can revise individuals’ perceptions of third parties if certain conditions are met. Meanwhile, [holistic assessments of in-practice observations and theoretical analyses](#) of the reform suggest that fusion voting can be more informative than standard ballots for both candidates and the electorate – as well as inhibit pernicious polarization. However, due to the predominance of single-member districts, any positive effects would be at least somewhat dampened, and because of fusion voting’s limited usage across the states, the theoretical benefits are largely unverifiable for the time being.

## Approval Voting

### *What This Reform Is*

Under America's standard general election process (i.e., plurality and winner-take-all), voters cast a single vote for a single person, and whichever candidate receives the most votes is declared the winner. Under approval voting, voters mark their ballot for as many or as few candidates as they approve of, and whichever candidate receives the highest number of approving votes from the people is declared the winner.

### *Background*

Instead of voters marking their ballot for a single candidate, per the American standard, or ranking and reallocating votes as candidates are eliminated, per [ranked-choice voting](#) (RCV), approval votes are tallied and the winner is declared to be whoever received the greatest show of approval from the people.

Approval voting proponents believe it offers a [more accurate picture of candidates' public support](#) and incentivizes candidates to moderate and broaden their base as much as possible – and that it is, therefore, a more useful method of conducting primary and general elections than our nation's prevailing system. They also believe it to be superior to RCV, arguing that it is an [easier reform to understand and adopt](#) for voters and election officials alike, creating less room for ballot errors by confused voters and enabling faster and less convoluted calculations for administrators to announce a victor.

Those who [prefer RCV to approval voting](#), however, argue the latter is less favorable because it does not require winners to obtain a majority, and because all votes indicating approval have the same value, citizens are incentivized to vote strategically for only one candidate – as voting for alternatives can harm their first choice – potentially affecting no real change. These critics also hold that “approval” is a subjective term that could invite varying interpretations between voters and, consequently, swing election outcomes. Opponents of RCV *and* approval voting, meanwhile, believe that [both stray from the principle of “one person, one vote.”](#) and that neither should be adopted.

### *Implementation in the States*

[Fargo, North Dakota, and St. Louis, Missouri](#), are the **only American locales to have adopted approval voting for their elections** – in 2018 and 2020, respectively.

### *Tentative Conclusions on Effectiveness*

Academic analyses of approval voting in the US are extremely rare, but the [preeminent 2022 report on the 2021 St. Louis mayoral primary](#), the first after the city's adoption of the reform, found that approval voting would not have produced a different outcome than RCV or the plurality standard, though the authors hypothesize the reform will enable more competitive general elections in the future by more accurately reflecting the popularity of each candidate, particularly during the primary process.

## Judicial Elections

### *What This Reform Is*

Though there are myriad differences between the states and how they conduct them, popular elections are the most prevalent means of selecting state court judges – not executive appointments and legislative confirmations.

### *Background*

The president has the sole authority to appoint judges to the federal district, appellate, and Supreme courts – pending Senate confirmation – as prescribed by [Article II, Section 2 of the United States Constitution](#) (and expounded upon in [Article III](#)). Furthermore, these federal judicial appointments are [for life](#), barring impeachment and removal from office or resignation.

At the state level, the judicial selection process is far from universal. For one, indefinite terms in office are exceedingly uncommon (e.g., [only four state supreme courts](#) do not limit a term to a certain number of years, and one of those states – [Rhode Island](#) – also lacks a mandatory retirement age). But the greatest source of variability from the federal judicial selection standard is the manner in which state judges and justices are chosen, as popular elections predominate, while nominations by the executive and confirmation by the legislature only make up a portion of state supreme court, appellate court, and trial court appointments (and reappointments).

There are two key elements shaping how judicial elections are executed in a given state. First, some elections are overtly partisan (i.e., judicial candidates are listed on a primary or general election ballot as a political party member), while others are “[nonpartisan](#)” (i.e., candidates have no party label on the general election ballot, though they might have won a party primary and/or have their campaign funded or otherwise aided by a party). And second, some judicial elections follow the standard format of voters choosing between two or more partisan or independent candidates to fill an impending vacancy, while others are “[retention elections](#)” (i.e., a single judge appears on the ballot after a set amount of time on the bench, and a majority of voters must decide whether their term in office should continue or not).

Advocates for judicial elections argue that judges are [active policymakers more than they are impartial examiners](#) of the law, and, therefore, elections are the only mechanisms through which to [keep judges accountable to the people](#) or [enable judges to voice their support for democratic ideals and liberties](#) in a meaningful way instead of hiding behind vague commitments to impartiality.

However, in this [timeless judicial debate](#), opponents argue that judges are independent, impartial observers, and that elections (1) [compel them to violate judicial ethics](#) by appealing to public opinion instead of the law in their decision-making or for campaign donations from lawyers or others likely to have matters before the court, (2) [inhibit a quality and diverse judiciary from taking shape](#) due to the high costs associated with campaigning, and (3) [force the lay public to decide](#) who is best qualified to assess legal minutiae. Instead, these opponents propose that the judiciary be removed from state ballots in favor of a rigorous, accountable appointment process.

### Implementation in the States

**20 states conduct popular elections to shape the judiciary;** these elections tend to be – but are not always – nonpartisan. Meanwhile, eleven states utilize appointments to select their judges; governors tend to – but do not exclusively – lead the appointment processes across these states. The remaining nineteen states use a hybrid system of appointments and elections or mix appointments and elections inconsistently across supreme, appellate, and trial court levels.

States by Judicial Selection Process		
Popular Election States	Hybrid/Mixed States	Appointment States
Alabama	Alaska	Connecticut
Arkansas	Arizona	Delaware
Georgia	California	Hawaii
Idaho	Colorado	Maine
Illinois	Florida	Massachusetts
Kentucky	Indiana	New Hampshire
Louisiana	Iowa	New Jersey
Michigan	Kansas	Rhode Island
Minnesota	Maryland	South Carolina
Mississippi	Missouri	Vermont
Montana	Nebraska	Virginia
Nevada	New Mexico	
North Carolina	New York	
Ohio	North Dakota	
Oregon	Oklahoma	
Pennsylvania	South Dakota	
Texas	Tennessee	
Washington	Utah	
West Virginia	Wyoming	
Wisconsin		

\* Note: This table and its accompanying paragraphs only pertain to standard judicial selection proceedings (i.e., first and additional full terms) to the exclusion of interim vacancies, which are [almost exclusively filled through gubernatorial appointments](#).

\*\* Note: Washington, DC, is an appointment-based jurisdiction.

(Source: [Brennan Center](#))

Of the 20 states in which judges are exclusively selected through popular election, thirteen do so in a nonpartisan fashion. However, four states – Alabama, Louisiana, North Carolina, and Texas – conduct universal partisan judicial elections. Meanwhile, [Illinois and Pennsylvania](#) host partisan initial elections and nonpartisan retention elections, and Ohio reserves [partisan elections for its Supreme Court justices and appellate judges](#) but not for its trial judges.

Of the [eleven states in which judges are exclusively appointed](#), the governor has the leading role in the appointment process in six – Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island. And in these six states, the governor’s nominee must be approved by a legislative majority, save for Massachusetts and New Hampshire, which utilize a separate [Governor’s](#) and [Executive Council](#) for confirmation, respectively. The remaining five states, meanwhile, break from this pattern in at least one notable way. New Jersey, for example, features gubernatorial nominations and legislative confirmations for Supreme and trial court

judges, but appellate judges are directly appointed by the chief justice of the state Supreme Court. Hawaii also utilizes gubernatorial nominations and legislative confirmations, but its unique [Judicial Selection Commission](#) has the sole power to reappoint judges after their first term. Vermont employs gubernatorial nominations and legislative confirmations as well, but instead of a commission, the [legislature has the sole power to retain judges](#) beyond their first term. Alternately, South Carolina and Virginia take Vermont's method a step further, granting their legislatures appointment power for first and subsequent terms.

A hallmark of appointment-based states is the [judicial nominating commission](#) (JNC), a separate government body that provides the nominating individual (or entity) with a list of vetted candidates for a judicial position. Though their exact sizes and compositions can vary widely between the states (e.g., the numbers of attorneys and non-attorneys), their members are generally appointed by a mix of the state's executive and legislative leaders and bar association. Of the eleven appointment-based states, Virginia is the only one that does not have a separate JNC, while Maine, Massachusetts, and New Jersey are the only states with JNCs that do not require the nominating authority to choose from the candidate list it provides (New Jersey also only utilizes its JNC at the trial court level).

*(Note: [Washington, DC](#), also features executive appointments obtained from a binding JNC list and confirmed by the legislature, though because of its [limited home rule](#), the federal government generally holds authority over DC's judicial selection process. As such, the president appoints judges to DC courts from a list provided by DC's JNC [a [mix of local and federal appointees](#)] and then approved by the US Senate. After their first term, judges undergo a performance review by the DC [Commission on Judicial Disabilities and Tenure](#) [another mix of local and federal appointees] and, depending on that commission's determination, they may be deemed "[well qualified](#)" and automatically reappointed to a new term, qualified enough for renomination and reconfirmation [should the respective authorities do so], or unqualified and barred from further service as a DC judge.)*

For the nineteen remaining states with either a hybrid system that blends judicial appointments and elections or an inconsistent system of appointments and elections across court levels, the standard selection process is known as the [Missouri Plan](#). According to this method, the governor must nominate someone from a list provided by a JNC to serve an initial term, and then that judge must be voted on in a retention election to determine if they should remain in office beyond that initial term. Though only six states – Alaska, Colorado, Iowa, Nebraska, Utah, and Wyoming – utilize the Missouri Plan at each applicable court level (i.e., supreme, appellate, and trial), ten more either apply it to at least one level or execute a modified version thereof. For example, Florida, Indiana, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Tennessee elect their trial court judges but have adopted the Missouri Plan at their higher court levels. [Arizona](#) and [Missouri](#) follow a similar pattern, but their trial judges are selected by appointment or election according to the jurisdiction at play. [Kansas](#) also observes this trial court variant, though it further distinguishes itself through gubernatorial nominations and legislative confirmations for first-term appellate judges (plus retention elections) and use of the Missouri Plan for Supreme Court justices alone. Finally, Maryland and [New Mexico](#)'s models generally evoke the Missouri Plan, but the former's trial judges compete in nonpartisan elections after their initial term rather than retention elections, and the latter conducts partisan elections in the first general election after the judge's appointment but conducts nonpartisan retention elections for each full term thereafter.

Meanwhile, three states – California, New York, and North Dakota – have unique judicial selection systems that differentiate themselves from the Missouri Plan standard and from one another. The first has its own [Commission on Judicial Appointments](#) (comprised of the chief



justice of the Supreme Court of California, the attorney general, and the senior presiding appellate court justice), which confirms gubernatorial nominations for the Supreme and appellate courts before they undergo uncontested retention elections; California trial judges are instead selected through nonpartisan elections. In [New York](#), supreme court justices are nominated by the governor (from a list provided by its [JNC](#)) and receive legislative confirmation, appellate judges are appointed by the governor from amongst sitting trial judges, and trial judges are selected through partisan elections. And in North Dakota, the Supreme and trial courts are filled out through nonpartisan elections, but appellate judges are appointed by the chief justice of the state Supreme Court, who [serves as the administrative head of the state's judiciary](#) (and is the only appointer in the nineteen hybrid/mixed states that does so without any nominating or confirmatory commission).

### *Studies of Effectiveness*

#### Studies Indicating Benefits

Choi, Gulati, and Posner, "[Professionals or Politicians: The Uncertain Empirical Case for an Elected Rather than Appointed Judiciary](#)" (2008)

- Assessing state high court opinion data, the authors find that elected judges perform better than appointees, writing that (1) elected judges' much higher quantity of opinions issued supersedes the slightly higher quality of opinion appointees produce, (2) elected judges are devoted to serving voters whereas appointees focus on creating precedent, and (3) there is no difference between them in terms of judicial independence.

#### Studies Indicating Mixed Results

Canes-Wrone, Clark, and Kelly, "[Judicial Selection and Death Penalty Decisions](#)" (2014)

- After analyzing data from more than 12,000 decisions on over 2,000 death penalty cases decided between 1980 and 2006 – in reappointment and reelection-based judicial systems – the authors determine that judges are pressured to uphold capital sentences regardless of the system involved (though the observed effect is greatest in nonpartisan elections), and that public opinion's effect on judicial behavior surrounding this topic is a product of interest groups beginning to target state supreme court justices for their decisions, not of the system involved.

Lim, "[Preferences and Incentives of Appointed and Elected Public Officials: Evidence from State Trial Court Judges](#)" (2013)

- The author compares appointed and elected trial judges based on their sentencing decisions and how congruent they are with voter policy preferences, finding (1) elected judges are strongly incentivized to follow public opinion (though appointed judges also issue opinions aligned with the public when they are appointed based on their preferences), and (2) political incentives appear to be a barrier for the most knowledgeable and experienced legal arbiters from serving as judges. However, the author also found that the lucrateness of an elected judge's position in a particular jurisdiction significantly impacts the likelihood of their rulings mirroring public opinion.

#### Studies Indicating Harms (or No Benefits)

Boston and Silveira, "[The Electoral Connection in Court: How Sentencing Responds to Voter Preferences](#)" (2023)

- Analyzing sentencing data from North Carolina trial courts, the authors find that judges elected from generally liberal and conservative districts issue lighter and heavier sentences (respectively), in line with their voters' preferences, while judges in districts with morphing ideological leanings who do not adapt their sentences to match their

districts' changing views are reelected at lower rates. Furthermore, they suggest that elected judges either shape their rulings according to public opinion or lose their office. Gordon and Yntiso, "[Incentive Effects of Recall Elections: Evidence from Criminal Sentencing in California Courts](#)" (2022)

- The authors, following a targeted recall election effort in California, reviewed data from six California counties, finding a large but irregular increase in punitive sentencing (that also continued preexisting racial disparity trends) accompanying the announcement of the recall campaign. They suggest that the threat of a recall election on one judge has an observable political effect on judges at large.

Park, "[The Impact of Judicial Elections in the Sentencing of Black Crime](#)" (2017)

- After assessing race and sentencing data and finding that black – but not white – Americans convicted of felonies are sentenced to incarceration by elected judges at a 2.4% higher rate in the final six months of their election cycle, the author suggests that elected judges preempt political allegations of leniency by sentencing discriminately.

Berdej6 and Yuchtman, "[Crime, Punishment, and Politics: An Analysis of Political Cycles in Criminal Sentencing](#)" (2013)

- Analyzing sentencing data from Washington State, the authors find judges issue longer sentences than guidelines suggest 50% more often toward the end of a given term than at the beginning, driving the roughly 10% increase in sentence length observable during that time. The authors suggest that this is a result of judges elected in nonpartisan elections – such as the ones Washington conducts – targeting those convicted of serious crimes to mitigate potential political pressure.

Brace and Boyea, "[State Public Opinion, the Death Penalty, and the Practice of Electing Judges](#)" (2008)

- The authors, in their analysis of the direct and indirect effects of public opinion on capital punishment in state supreme courts (i.e., specific case rulings and overall court composition, respectively), find public opinion both directly and indirectly impacts elected state supreme courts, while it has no significant effect on appointed justices.

Gordon and Huber, "[The Effect of Electoral Competitiveness on Incumbent Behavior](#)" (2007)

- Under the Kansas trial court system, seventeen districts select judges through JNC-bound gubernatorial appointments followed by nonpartisan retention elections, while the fourteen remaining districts conduct partisan elections. In their analysis of this system, the authors find that judges chosen by partisan election issue more punitive sentences than their appointed-and-retained counterparts, and that they are incentivized to do so by political competition.

### *Tentative Conclusions on Effectiveness*

In general, [judicial election research summaries](#) have found that (1) elected judges respond heavily to public opinion – rather than the law alone – in deciding cases, (2) this effect is accentuated during election cycles, and (3) it is most easily observed through the issuance of harsher sentences, especially against minority defendants. However, many of these same effects have also been observed in jurisdictions with (re)appointed judges, indicating that judicial independence and impartiality cannot be achieved simply by eliminating elected judges in favor of appointed ones. Regardless, experts point out that the paramount issue underlying the debate between appointed and elected judges is the aforementioned debate between an impartial judiciary and a judiciary accountable to the people as the nation's ideal. And as that is a subjective rather than an objective question, research cannot definitively state whether an elected judiciary is more conducive to reducing politicization of the law, maintaining public trust, or reducing dysfunction or other American societal problems.

# State-by-State Reform Landscape

To supplement the reform summaries in this document, the following provides a **state-by-state breakdown** of the reform proposals featured in this resource. The following pages report the **implementation status of each featured reform in each state** (and Washington, DC) as well as an explanation of the means by which that state **allows the citizenry to implement reforms** relative to the state legislature (e.g., whether a state permits citizen-initiated laws or constitutional amendments).

*Note: Inclusion of a reform proposal in this document does not constitute FixUS endorsement of the idea (or opposition).*

## Alabama

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Alabama's state legislature retains complete control over redistricting](#) for state and congressional maps.

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Alabama uses fully open primaries](#). It neither requires voters to affiliate with a party to vote in a primary nor prohibits crossover voting (i.e., members of other parties voting in another party's primary).

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Alabama does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional general elections, though military and overseas voters use it in federal primary runoffs. Otherwise, it operates under the standard pluralistic, first-past-the-post election process.

**"Sore Loser Laws"** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Alabama has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1977.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Alabama does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections, and [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Alabama has neither taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections, [nor has it implemented "clean elections" or matching public funds](#) for any state races.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Alabama has no legislative term limits](#) in place. However, [Alabama's gubernatorial term limits](#) follow the standard format, confining the state's chief executive to two consecutive terms in office.

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Alabama bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Alabama has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Alabama judges are exclusively selected through partisan popular elections](#) for their first and subsequent full terms.

**Means of Reform:** [Legislative referrals for constitutional amendments](#) are Alabama's most democratic means of reform. The state legislature must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution, but citizens cannot [initiate laws or amendments themselves nor demand a referendum](#) on a legislature-approved law.

## Alaska

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Alaska has an IRC](#) with authority over state and federal legislative district maps (though it only has [one federal district under current apportionment](#)). In addition to preventing legislators and other public officials from participating in the redistricting process, Alaska also disallows commissioners from running for office in the state for several years after redistricting, reducing the risk of commissions being manipulated by the politically ambitious.

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Alaska's unique Top Four primary](#) system incorporates primary reform *and* general-election RCV. It became the first state in the country to adopt a Top Four system for state and congressional elections in 2020 and implemented it for the first time in 2022. Although the [president is exempted from this system](#) by a distinct primary process, the office will be determined through RCV for the first time in 2024.

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Alaska's unique Top Four primary](#) system incorporates primary reform *and* general-election RCV. It became the first state in the country to adopt a Top Four system for state and congressional elections in 2020 and implemented it for the first time in 2022. Although the [president is exempted from this system](#) by a distinct primary process, the office will be determined through RCV for the first time in 2024.

**"Sore Loser Laws"** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Alaska has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1980, but since the implementation of its [unique Top Four primary](#) system in 2022, it is effectively moot for state and congressional elections.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Alaska does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections, and [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

### **Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Alaska has taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections by approving a [ballot initiative](#) requiring the disclosure of any donor who provides more than \$2,000 to a Super PAC engaged in a state political campaign in 2020, with the state implementing it for the first time in 2022. However, [Alaska has not implemented “clean elections” or matching public funds](#) for any state races.

### **Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Alaska has no legislative term limits](#) in place. However, [Alaska’s gubernatorial term limits](#) follow the standard format, confining the state’s chief executive to two consecutive terms in office.

### **Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Alaska bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

### **Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Alaska has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

### **Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Alaska’s judicial selection model](#) adopts the [Missouri Plan](#), a hybrid system that blends judicial appointments and elections. According to this method, the governor must nominate someone from a list provided by a [judicial nominating commission](#) (JNC), a separate government body that provides the nominator with a list of vetted candidates for a judicial position to serve an initial term. Then, that judge must be voted on in a retention election to determine if they should remain in office beyond that initial term.

**Means of Reform:** [Citizen initiatives and referenda](#) are Alaska’s most democratic means of reform. The state legislature [must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution](#), but citizens can also initiate laws themselves and demand a referendum on a legislature-approved law. However, citizens cannot initiate amendments.

## **Arizona**

### **Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Arizona has an IRC](#) with authority over federal and state legislative district maps. In addition to preventing legislative staff, legislators, and other public officials from participating in the redistricting process, Arizona also disallows commissioners from running for office in the state for several years after redistricting, reducing the risk of commissions being manipulated by the politically ambitious.

### **Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Arizona uses semi-open primaries](#). Independent voters may participate in a party primary but crossover voting is prohibited (i.e., party members cannot vote in another party’s primary).

### **Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Arizona does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, and no cities or counties consistently use it for local offices. Instead, it operates under the standard pluralistic, first-past-the-post election process.

### **“Sore Loser Laws”** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Arizona has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1970.

### **Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Arizona’s state legislature uses MMDs](#), as each state legislative district elects one senator and two representatives. However, [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

### **Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Arizona has taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections by requiring any organization that spends at least \$50,000 in an election to disclose its donors of \$5,000 or more through a 2022 ballot initiative. [Arizona has also implemented a “clean elections” system for statewide and state legislative candidates](#); candidates must collect a large enough number of small donations (e.g., [\\$5 from at least 200 people for legislative candidates](#)) to qualify for the program and, after accepting, they are allocated with an amount of public money depending on their position (e.g., about \$26,000 for legislative candidates) that they are restricted to for the duration of their campaign.

### **Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Arizona’s legislative term limits](#) observe the most common form, restricting elected officials to eight consecutive years in a chamber. [Arizona’s gubernatorial term limits](#) also follow the standard format, confining the state’s chief executive to two consecutive terms in office.

### **Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Arizona bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

### **Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Arizona has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

### **Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Arizona’s judicial selection model](#) generally evokes the [Missouri Plan](#), a hybrid system that blends judicial appointments and elections. According to this method, the governor must nominate someone from a list provided by a [judicial nominating commission](#) (JNC), a separate government body that provides the nominator with a list of vetted candidates for a judicial position to serve an initial term. Then, that judge must be voted on in a retention election to determine if they should remain in office beyond that initial term. While Arizona’s Supreme Court justices and appellate judges are chosen according to the Missouri Plan, its trial judges are selected by appointment or election according to the jurisdiction involved.

**Means of Reform:** [Citizen initiatives and referenda](#) are Arizona’s most democratic means of reform. The state legislature [must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution](#), but citizens can also initiate laws and amendments themselves and demand a referendum on a legislature-approved law.



## Arkansas

### **Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

Arkansas's legislature predominates in creating federal maps, but its state redistricting process is led by a [semi-independent commission](#) of specific elected officials (i.e., [the governor, the secretary of state, and the attorney general](#)).

### **Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Arkansas uses fully open primaries](#). It neither requires voters to affiliate with a party to vote in a primary nor prohibits crossover voting (i.e., members of other parties voting in another party's primary).

### **Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Arkansas does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional general elections, though military and overseas voters use it in runoffs. Otherwise, it operates under the standard pluralistic, first-past-the-post election process.

### **"Sore Loser Laws"** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Arkansas has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1955.

### **Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Arkansas does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections, and [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

### **Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Arkansas has neither taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections, [nor has it implemented "clean elections" or matching public funds](#) for any state races.

### **Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Arkansas's legislative term limits](#) do not allow an elected official to serve more than twelve consecutive years in its legislature in total, forcing them to leave the legislature rather than simply move to the other chamber. [Arkansas's gubernatorial term limits](#) do not allow individuals to be elected to the governorship more than twice, mirroring the [22nd Amendment](#).

### **Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Arkansas bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

### **Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Arkansas has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

### **Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Arkansas judges are exclusively selected through nonpartisan popular elections](#) for their first and subsequent full terms.

**Means of Reform:** [Citizen initiatives and referenda](#) are Arkansas's most democratic means of reform. The state legislature [must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution](#), but citizens can also initiate laws and amendments themselves and demand a referendum on a legislature-approved law.

## California

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[California has an IRC](#) with authority over federal and state legislative district maps. In addition to preventing legislative staff, lobbyists, legislators, and other public officials from participating in the redistricting process, California also disallows commissioners from running for office in the state for several years after redistricting, reducing the risk of commissions being manipulated by the politically ambitious.

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[California uses a Top Two primary](#) system for all statewide, state legislative, and congressional elections.

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[California does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, but Albany, Berkeley, Eureka, Oakland, Redondo Beach, San Francisco, and San Leandro have adopted it for certain or all city offices. (Note: Albany uses [proportional RCV](#).)

**"Sore Loser Laws"** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[California has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1917, but since the implementation of its [Top Two primary](#) system in 2011, it is effectively moot for state and congressional elections.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[California does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections. [Proportional RCV has been used in Albany](#) for city council and school board elections since 2022 but is not in use statewide.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[California has neither taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections, [nor has it implemented "clean elections" or matching public funds](#) for any state races.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[California's legislative term limits](#) do not allow an elected official to serve more than twelve years in its legislature in total, regardless of chamber. [California's gubernatorial term limits](#) do not allow individuals to be elected to the governorship more than twice, mirroring the [22nd Amendment](#).

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[California bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[California has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
 Under [California's unique judicial selection system](#), its [Commission on Judicial Appointments](#) (comprised of the chief justice of the Supreme Court of California, the attorney general, and the senior presiding appellate court justice) confirms gubernatorial nominations for the Supreme and appellate courts before they undergo uncontested retention elections, while California trial judges are instead selected through nonpartisan elections.

**Means of Reform:** [Citizen initiatives and referenda](#) are California's most democratic means of reform. The state legislature [must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution](#), but citizens can also initiate laws and amendments themselves and demand a referendum on a legislature-approved law.

## Colorado

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Colorado has an IRC](#) with authority over federal and state legislative district maps. Colorado has taken some additional steps to limit partisan influence on commission work, such as preventing legislative staff, lobbyists, legislators, and other public officials from serving as commissioners.

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Colorado uses semi-open primaries](#). Independent voters may participate in a party primary but crossover voting is prohibited (i.e., party members cannot vote in another party's primary).

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Colorado does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, but Basalt, Boulder, Broomfield, Carbondale, and Fort Collins have adopted it for certain or all city offices.

**"Sore Loser Laws"** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Colorado has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1963.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Colorado does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections, and [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Colorado has neither taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections, [nor has it implemented "clean elections" or matching public funds](#) for any state races.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Colorado's legislative term limits](#) observe the most common form, restricting elected officials to eight consecutive years in a chamber. [Colorado's gubernatorial term limits](#) also follow the standard format, confining the state's chief executive to two consecutive terms in office.

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Colorado bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Colorado has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Colorado's judicial selection model](#) adopts the [Missouri Plan](#), a hybrid system that blends judicial appointments and elections. According to this method, the governor must nominate someone from a list provided by a [judicial nominating commission](#) (JNC), a separate government body that provides the nominator with a list of vetted candidates for a judicial position to serve an initial term. Then, that judge must be voted on in a retention election to determine if they should remain in office beyond that initial term.

**Means of Reform:** [Citizen initiatives and referenda](#) are Colorado's most democratic means of reform. The state legislature [must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution](#), but citizens can also initiate laws and amendments themselves and demand a referendum on a legislature-approved law.

## Connecticut

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

Connecticut's legislature predominates in both state and federal mapmaking, but its redistricting process incorporates a [special "backup" commission](#) selected by legislative leadership and charged with redistricting duties if legislators do not decide on their maps before a set deadline.

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Connecticut uses closed partisan primaries](#) for state and congressional elections.

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Connecticut does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, and no cities or counties consistently use it for local offices. Instead, it operates under the standard pluralistic, first-past-the-post election process.

**"Sore Loser Laws"** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Connecticut does not have a sore loser law](#) in place.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Connecticut does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections, and [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Connecticut has not taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections. However, [Connecticut has implemented a “clean elections” system for statewide and state legislative candidates](#); candidates must collect a large enough number of small donations (e.g., at least [\\$5 from at least 150 people for legislative candidates](#)) to qualify for the program and, after accepting, they are allocated with an amount of public money depending on their position (e.g., from about \$15,000 to about \$124,000 for legislative candidates depending on their level of opposition and how early they agreed to participate in the program) that they are restricted to for the duration of their campaign.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Connecticut has no term limits in place](#) for its elected officials.

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Connecticut enables disaggregated fusion voting](#) in its general elections.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Connecticut has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Connecticut judges are nominated by the governor](#) from a list provided by the state’s [judicial nominating commission](#) (JNC), a separate government body that provides the nominator with a list of vetted candidates for a judicial position, and are then approved by a legislative majority.

**Means of Reform:** [Legislative referrals for constitutional amendments](#) are Connecticut’s most democratic means of reform. The state legislature must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution, but citizens cannot [initiate laws or amendments themselves nor demand a referendum](#) on a legislature-approved law.

## Delaware

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Delaware’s state legislature retains complete control over redistricting](#) for state and federal maps (though it only has [one federal district under current apportionment](#)).

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Delaware uses closed partisan primaries](#) for state and congressional elections.

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Delaware does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, but Arden has used [proportional RCV](#) for town council elections since the early twentieth century.

**“Sore Loser Laws”** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Delaware has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1978.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Delaware does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections. [Proportional RCV has been used in Arden](#) for town council elections since the early twentieth century but is not in use statewide.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Delaware has taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections by requiring Super PACs that spend \$500 or more on electioneering communications and any entity that contributes over \$1,200 in an election cycle to a party or political action committee to disclose the source of those funds. However, [Delaware has not implemented “clean elections” or matching public funds](#) for any state races.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Delaware has no legislative term limits](#) in place. However, [Delaware’s gubernatorial term limits](#) do not allow individuals to be elected to the governorship more than twice, mirroring the [22nd Amendment](#).

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Delaware bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Delaware has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Delaware judges are nominated by the governor](#) from a list provided by the state’s [judicial nominating commission](#) (JNC), a separate government body that provides the nominator with a list of vetted candidates for a judicial position, and are then approved by a legislative majority. (Note: Delaware has [no dedicated intermediate appellate court](#).)

**Means of Reform:** [Legislative referrals for constitutional amendments](#) are Delaware’s most democratic means of reform, but they are optional. Delaware is the only state that does not require its legislature to obtain popular approval to change its constitution. Also, citizens cannot [initiate laws or amendments themselves nor demand a referendum](#) on a legislature-approved law.

## Florida

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Florida’s state legislature retains complete control over redistricting](#) for state and congressional maps through joint resolutions immune to gubernatorial veto.



**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Florida uses closed partisan primaries](#) for state and congressional elections.

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Florida does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, and no cities or counties consistently use it for local offices. Instead, it operates under the standard pluralistic, first-past-the-post election process.

**“Sore Loser Laws”** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Florida has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1970.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Florida does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections, and [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Florida has not taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections. However, [Florida has implemented a matching public funds](#) system (i.e., a 1:1 to 2:1 matching rate) for small-dollar donations to statewide candidates.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Florida’s legislative term limits](#) observe the most common form, restricting elected officials to eight consecutive years in a chamber. [Florida’s gubernatorial term limits](#) also follow the standard format, confining the state’s chief executive to two consecutive terms in office.

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Florida bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Florida has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Florida’s judicial selection model](#) generally evokes the [Missouri Plan](#), a hybrid system that blends judicial appointments and elections. According to this method, the governor must nominate someone from a list provided by a [judicial nominating commission](#) (JNC), a separate government body that provides the nominator with a list of vetted candidates for a judicial position to serve an initial term. Then, that judge must be voted on in a retention election to determine if they should remain in office beyond that initial term. While Florida’s Supreme Court justices and appellate judges are chosen according to the Missouri Plan, its trial judges compete in nonpartisan popular elections.

**Means of Reform:** [Citizen-initiated constitutional amendments](#) are Florida’s most democratic means of reform. The state legislature [must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution](#), but citizens can also initiate amendments themselves. However, citizens cannot initiate laws nor demand a referendum on a legislature-approved law.

## Georgia

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Georgia's state legislature retains complete control over redistricting](#) for state and congressional maps.

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Georgia uses fully open primaries](#). It neither requires voters to affiliate with a party to vote in a primary nor prohibits crossover voting (i.e., members of other parties voting in another party's primary).

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Georgia does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional general elections, though military and overseas voters use it in runoffs. Additionally, it distinguishes itself from the standard pluralistic, first-past-the-post election process by conducting [runoff elections](#) between the two leading general election candidates if majorities are not obtained.

**"Sore Loser Laws"** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Georgia has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1983.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Georgia does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections, and [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Georgia has neither taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections, [nor has it implemented "clean elections" or matching public funds](#) for any state races.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Georgia has no legislative term limits](#) in place. However, [Georgia's gubernatorial term limits](#) follow the standard format, confining the state's chief executive to two consecutive terms in office.

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Georgia bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Georgia has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Georgia judges are exclusively selected through nonpartisan popular elections](#) for their first and subsequent full terms.

**Means of Reform:** [Legislative referrals for constitutional amendments](#) are Georgia's most democratic means of reform. The state legislature must obtain popular approval to change the

state constitution, but citizens cannot [initiate laws or amendments themselves nor demand a referendum](#) on a legislature-approved law.

## Hawaii

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Hawaii has a semi-independent commission](#) with authority over state and congressional redistricting. Hawaii's [nine-member commission](#) consists of eight individuals nominated by legislative leadership and a chair elected by six of those eight members.

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Hawaii uses fully open primaries](#). It neither requires voters to affiliate with a party to vote in a primary nor prohibits crossover voting (i.e., members of other parties voting in another party's primary).

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Hawaii does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, and no cities or counties consistently use it for local offices. Instead, it operates under the standard pluralistic, first-past-the-post election process.

**"Sore Loser Laws"** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Hawaii has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1967.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Hawaii does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections, and [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Hawaii has not taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections. However, [Hawaii has implemented a 1:1 matching public funds](#) system for small-dollar donations to statewide, legislative, and some local candidates; in 2024, Hawaiian candidates face a general election spending limit of about \$2.2 million and [could receive up to 10% of that amount in public funds](#) if they were able to raise an equivalent amount themselves.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Hawaii has no legislative term limits](#) in place. However, [Hawaii's gubernatorial term limits](#) follow the standard format, confining the state's chief executive to two consecutive terms in office.

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Hawaii bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Hawaii has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

### **Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

Under [Hawaii's unique judicial selection system](#), its [Judicial Selection Commission](#) provides the governor with a list of vetted candidates for a judicial position; the governor must nominate someone from this list, and they must then be confirmed by a legislative majority to begin their first term. The Commission also has the sole power to reappoint judges after their first term.

**Means of Reform:** [Legislative referrals for constitutional amendments](#) are Hawaii's most democratic means of reform. The state legislature must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution, but citizens cannot [initiate laws or amendments themselves nor demand a referendum](#) on a legislature-approved law.

## Idaho

### **Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Idaho has an IRC](#) with authority over federal and state legislative district maps. In addition to preventing lobbyists, legislators, and other public officials from participating in the redistricting process, Idaho also disallows commissioners from running for office in the state for several years after redistricting, reducing the risk of commissions being manipulated by the politically ambitious.

### **Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Idaho generally uses closed partisan primaries](#) for state and congressional elections, though the Democratic Party allows independents to vote for its candidates.

### **Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Idaho does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, and no cities or counties consistently use it for local offices. Instead, it operates under the standard pluralistic, first-past-the-post election process.

### **"Sore Loser Laws"** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Idaho has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1976.

### **Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Idaho's state legislature uses MMDs](#), as each state legislative district elects one senator and two representatives. However, [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

### **Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Idaho has taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections by requiring any individual or organization that spends over \$100 on electioneering communications to disclose all donors of \$50 or more and banning indirect contributions given through third-party entities. However, [Idaho has not implemented "clean elections" or matching public funds](#) for any state races.

### **Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Idaho has no term limits in place](#) for its elected officials.

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Idaho allows cross-nominating in all general elections](#), though it does not occur in practice.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Idaho has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Idaho judges are exclusively selected through nonpartisan popular elections](#) for their first and subsequent full terms.

**Means of Reform:** [Citizen initiatives and referenda](#) are Idaho's most democratic means of reform. The state legislature [must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution](#), but citizens can also initiate laws themselves and demand a referendum on a legislature-approved law. However, citizens cannot initiate amendments.

## Illinois

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

Illinois's legislature predominates in creating federal maps, but its state redistricting process incorporates a [special "backup" commission](#) selected by legislative leadership and charged with redistricting duties if legislators do not decide on their state map before a set deadline.

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Illinois uses fully open primaries](#). It neither requires voters to affiliate with a party to vote in a primary nor prohibits crossover voting (i.e., members of other parties voting in another party's primary).

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Illinois does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional general elections, though Evanston has adopted it for city offices and Springfield has adopted it for overseas voters to use in runoffs. Otherwise, Illinois operates under the standard pluralistic, first-past-the-post election process.

**"Sore Loser Laws"** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Illinois has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1989.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Illinois does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections, and [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Illinois has neither taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections, [nor has it implemented "clean elections" or matching public funds](#) for any state races.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Illinois has no term limits in place](#) for its elected officials.

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Illinois bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Illinois has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Illinois judges are exclusively selected through partisan popular elections](#) for their first full term and nonpartisan retention elections for any subsequent terms.

**Means of Reform:** [Citizen-initiated constitutional amendments](#) are Illinois's most democratic means of reform. The state legislature [must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution](#), but citizens can also initiate amendments themselves. However, citizens cannot initiate laws nor demand a referendum on a legislature-approved law.

## Indiana

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

Indiana's legislature predominates in creating state maps, but its congressional redistricting process incorporates a [special "backup" commission](#) selected by legislative leadership and charged with redistricting duties if legislators do not decide on their congressional map before a set deadline.

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Indiana uses fully open primaries](#). It neither requires voters to affiliate with a party to vote in a primary nor prohibits crossover voting (i.e., members of other parties voting in another party's primary).

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Indiana does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, and no cities or counties consistently use it for local offices. Instead, it operates under the standard pluralistic, first-past-the-post election process.

**"Sore Loser Laws"** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Indiana has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1967.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Indiana does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections, and [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Indiana has neither taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections, [nor has it implemented "clean elections" or matching public funds](#) for any state races.



**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Indiana has no legislative term limits](#) in place. However, [Indiana's gubernatorial term limits](#) do not permit an individual to serve more than eight years as governor in any twelve-year span.

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Indiana bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Indiana has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Indiana's judicial selection model](#) generally evokes the [Missouri Plan](#), a hybrid system that blends judicial appointments and elections. According to this method, the governor must nominate someone from a list provided by a [judicial nominating commission](#) (JNC), a separate government body that provides the nominator with a list of vetted candidates for a judicial position to serve an initial term. Then, that judge must be voted on in a retention election to determine if they should remain in office beyond that initial term. While Indiana's Supreme Court justices and appellate judges are chosen according to the Missouri Plan, its trial judges compete in nonpartisan popular elections.

**Means of Reform:** [Legislative referrals for constitutional amendments](#) are Indiana's most democratic means of reform. The state legislature must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution, but citizens cannot [initiate laws or amendments themselves nor demand a referendum](#) on a legislature-approved law.

## Iowa

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Iowa's unique redistricting system](#) allows for a pseudo-independent process, whereby state and congressional lines are drawn by the legislature and subject to gubernatorial veto, but with legislators heavily informed by the nonpartisan Legislative Services Agency and a five-member bipartisan [advisory commission](#) which draft up to three maps for legislators to accept, reject, or modify.

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Iowa uses semi-open primaries](#). Independent voters may participate in a party primary but crossover voting is prohibited (i.e., party members cannot vote in another party's primary).

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Iowa does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, and no cities or counties consistently use it for local offices. Instead, it operates under the standard pluralistic, first-past-the-post election process.

**"Sore Loser Laws"** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

Iowa [enacted an election reform law](#) with a [sore loser provision](#) in 2021.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Iowa does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections, and [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Iowa has neither taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections, [nor has it implemented “clean elections” or matching public funds](#) for any state races.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Iowa has no term limits in place](#) for its elected officials.

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Iowa bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Iowa has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Iowa’s judicial selection model](#) adopts the [Missouri Plan](#), a hybrid system that blends judicial appointments and elections. According to this method, the governor must nominate someone from a list provided by a [judicial nominating commission](#) (JNC), a separate government body that provides the nominator with a list of vetted candidates for a judicial position to serve an initial term. Then, that judge must be voted on in a retention election to determine if they should remain in office beyond that initial term.

**Means of Reform:** [Legislative referrals for constitutional amendments](#) are Iowa’s most democratic means of reform. The state legislature must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution, but citizens cannot [initiate laws or amendments themselves nor demand a referendum](#) on a legislature-approved law.

## Kansas

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Kansas’s state legislature retains complete control over redistricting](#) for state and congressional maps.

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Kansas uses semi-open primaries](#). Independent voters may participate in a party primary but crossover voting is prohibited (i.e., party members cannot vote in another party’s primary).

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Kansas does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, and no cities or counties consistently use it for local offices. Instead, it operates under the standard pluralistic, first-past-the-post election process.

**“Sore Loser Laws”** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Kansas has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1989.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Kansas does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections, and [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Kansas has neither taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections, [nor has it implemented “clean elections” or matching public funds](#) for any state races.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Kansas has no legislative term limits](#) in place. However, [Kansas’s gubernatorial term limits](#) follow the standard format, confining the state’s chief executive to two consecutive terms in office.

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Kansas bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Kansas has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Kansas’s judicial selection model](#) generally evokes the [Missouri Plan](#), a hybrid system that blends judicial appointments and elections. According to this method, the governor must nominate someone from a list provided by a [judicial nominating commission](#) (JNC), a separate government body that provides the nominator with a list of vetted candidates for a judicial position to serve an initial term. Then, that judge must be voted on in a retention election to determine if they should remain in office beyond that initial term. While Kansas’s Supreme Court justices are chosen according to the Missouri Plan, and its appellate judges receive first-term gubernatorial nominations and legislative confirmations (plus retention elections for any subsequent terms), its trial judges are selected by appointment or election according to the jurisdiction involved.

**Means of Reform:** [Legislative referrals for constitutional amendments](#) are Kansas’s most democratic means of reform. The state legislature must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution, but citizens cannot [initiate laws or amendments themselves nor demand a referendum](#) on a legislature-approved law.

## Kentucky

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Kentucky’s state legislature retains complete control over redistricting](#) for state and congressional maps.

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Kentucky uses closed partisan primaries](#) for state and congressional elections.

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Kentucky does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, and no cities or counties consistently use it for local offices. Instead, it operates under the standard pluralistic, first-past-the-post election process.

**“Sore Loser Laws”** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Kentucky has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1920.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Kentucky does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections, and [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Kentucky has neither taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections, [nor has it implemented “clean elections” or matching public funds](#) for any state races.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Kentucky has no legislative term limits](#) in place. However, [Kentucky’s gubernatorial term limits](#) follow the standard format, confining the state’s chief executive to two consecutive terms in office.

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Kentucky bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Kentucky has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Kentucky judges are exclusively selected through nonpartisan popular elections](#) for their first and subsequent full terms.

**Means of Reform:** [Legislative referrals for constitutional amendments](#) are Kentucky’s most democratic means of reform. The state legislature must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution, but citizens cannot [initiate laws or amendments themselves nor demand a referendum](#) on a legislature-approved law.

## Louisiana

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Louisiana’s state legislature retains complete control over redistricting](#) for state and congressional maps.

### **Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

Louisiana eliminated its primary system outright for state and congressional elections, opting instead for a single election, wherein all candidates vie for office on the same November ballot. Though Louisiana does not officially follow the [Top Two primary](#) format, the two leading vote-getters in the general election face off in a December [runoff election](#) if no candidate wins a majority. However, Louisiana will switch to closed primaries for federal races in 2026 [per a 2024 law](#).

### **Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Louisiana does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional general elections in general, though it is available for out-of-state military voters. Additionally, it distinguishes itself from the standard pluralistic, first-past-the-post election process by conducting [runoff elections](#) between the two leading general election candidates if majorities are not obtained.

### **“Sore Loser Laws”** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

Due to [Louisiana’s elimination of its primary system](#) for state and congressional elections, opting instead for a single general election in which all candidates vie for office on the same November ballot, [sore loser laws](#) are effectively a moot issue. However, Louisiana will switch to closed primaries for federal races in 2026 [per a 2024 law](#).

### **Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Louisiana does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections, and [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

### **Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Louisiana has neither taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections, [nor has it implemented “clean elections” or matching public funds](#) for any state races.

### **Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Louisiana’s legislative term limits](#) restrict elected officials to twelve consecutive years in a chamber. [Louisiana’s gubernatorial term limits](#) observe the most common form, confining the state’s chief executive to two consecutive terms in office.

### **Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Louisiana bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

### **Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Louisiana has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

### **Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Louisiana judges are exclusively selected through partisan popular elections](#) for their first and subsequent full terms.

**Means of Reform:** [Legislative referrals for constitutional amendments](#) are Louisiana’s most democratic means of reform. The state legislature must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution, but citizens cannot [initiate laws or amendments themselves nor demand a referendum](#) on a legislature-approved law.

## Maine

### **Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

Maine's legislature predominates in both state and federal mapmaking, but its redistricting process incorporates a [special advisory commission](#) with non-legislators that assists in the creation of state and federal maps before they are voted on.

### **Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Maine uses semi-open primaries](#). Independent voters may participate in a party primary but crossover voting is prohibited (i.e., party members cannot vote in another party's primary).

### **Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Maine became the first state to enact RCV](#) for state-level primaries and congressional primary and general elections in 2016 and implemented it for the first time in 2018. RCV was also introduced to presidential general elections in 2020 and was expanded to presidential primaries in 2024.

### **"Sore Loser Laws"** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Maine has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1973.

### **Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Maine does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections. [Proportional RCV was adopted in Portland](#) in a 2022 ballot measure for multi-winner elections but it is not in use statewide.

### **Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

Maine has taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs in state elections by instituting a \$5,000 annual limit for individuals and entities to give to Super PACs under a [2024 ballot measure](#). [Maine has also implemented a "clean elections" system](#) for gubernatorial and state legislative candidates; candidates must collect a large enough number of small donations (e.g., [\\$5 from at least 60 people for legislative candidates](#)) to qualify for the program and, after accepting, they are allocated with an amount of public money depending on their position (e.g., [from about \\$2,500 to about \\$87,000 for legislative candidates](#) depending on their level of opposition and their level of public financial support) that they are restricted to for the duration of their campaign.

### **Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Maine's legislative term limits](#) observe the most common form, restricting elected officials to eight consecutive years in a chamber. [Maine's gubernatorial term limits](#) also follow the standard format, confining the state's chief executive to two consecutive terms in office.

### **Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Maine bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

### **Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Maine has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.



### **Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Maine judges are nominated by the governor](#) from a list provided by the state's [judicial nominating commission](#) (JNC), a separate government body that provides the nominator with a list of vetted candidates for a judicial position, and are then approved by a legislative majority. Nominating authorities are normally required to choose from the candidate list the JNC provides, though Maine's governor is not obligated to do so. (Note: Maine has [no dedicated intermediate appellate court](#).)

**Means of Reform:** [Citizen initiatives and referenda](#) are Maine's most democratic means of reform. The state legislature [must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution](#), but citizens can also initiate laws themselves and demand a referendum on a legislature-approved law. However, citizens cannot initiate amendments.

## Maryland

### **Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

Maryland's legislature predominates in creating federal maps, but its state redistricting process incorporates a [special nine-member advisory commission](#) with non-legislators that assists the governor in drafting proposals for state maps that are submitted to the legislature. If legislators fail to approve a joint resolution on new state lines in time, the state districts revert to the governor's proposal, effectively rendering the advisory commission a "backup" commission as well (i.e., one charged with redistricting duties if legislators do not decide on their maps before a set deadline).

### **Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Maryland uses closed partisan primaries](#) for state and congressional elections.

### **Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Maryland does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, but Takoma Park uses it for mayoral and city council elections.

### **"Sore Loser Laws"** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Maryland has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1957.

### **Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Maryland's state legislature uses MMDs](#), as each state legislative district elects one senator and three delegates. However, [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

### **Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Maryland has taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections by requiring political nonprofits and Super PACs to report their election spending and their five largest donors if they spend over \$6,000. [Maryland has also implemented a progressive matching public funds](#) system (i.e., a 2:1 to 8:1 matching rate) for small-dollar donations to gubernatorial candidates.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Maryland has no legislative term limits](#) in place. However, [Maryland's gubernatorial term limits](#) follow the standard format, confining the state's chief executive to two consecutive terms in office.

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Maryland bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Maryland has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Maryland's judicial selection model](#) generally evokes the [Missouri Plan](#), a hybrid system that blends judicial appointments and elections. According to this method, the governor must nominate someone from a list provided by a [judicial nominating commission](#) (JNC), a separate government body that provides the nominator with a list of vetted candidates for a judicial position to serve an initial term. Then, that judge must be voted on in a retention election to determine if they should remain in office beyond that initial term. While Maryland's Supreme Court justices and appellate judges are chosen according to the Missouri Plan, its trial judges compete in nonpartisan elections after their initial term rather than retention elections.

**Means of Reform:** [Popular referenda](#) are Maryland's most democratic means of reform. The state legislature [must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution](#), but citizens can also demand a referendum on a legislature-approved law. However, citizens cannot initiate laws or amendments themselves.

## Massachusetts

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Massachusetts's state legislature retains complete control over redistricting](#) for state and congressional maps.

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Massachusetts uses semi-open primaries](#). Independent voters may participate in a party primary but crossover voting is prohibited (i.e., party members cannot vote in another party's primary).

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Massachusetts does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, but Amherst, Cambridge, and Easthampton have adopted it for certain or all city offices. (Note: Amherst and Cambridge have adopted [proportional RCV](#).)

**"Sore Loser Laws"** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Massachusetts has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1976.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Massachusetts does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections. [Proportional RCV was adopted in Amherst and Cambridge](#); the former's projected first use is in 2025, while the latter adopted the reform in 1941 and uses it for city council and school committee elections.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Massachusetts has taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections by requiring advertisements from Super PACs to list the names of the organization's five largest donors in the ad so long as they spend \$5,000 or more. [Massachusetts has also implemented a 1:1 matching public funds](#) system for small-dollar donations to statewide candidates.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Massachusetts has no term limits in place](#) for its elected officials.

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Massachusetts bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Massachusetts has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Massachusetts judges are nominated by the governor](#). The governor first receives a list of vetted candidates for a judicial position provided by the state's [judicial nominating commission](#) (JNC), a separate government body, though the governor is not obligated to choose from the candidate list the JNC provides – as is normally the case for nominating authorities in states with JNCs. The governor's nominee must then be approved by a separate [Governor's Council](#) – instead of a legislative majority, as is the standard. Barring impeachment and removal from office or resignation, [Massachusetts judges serve a single term](#) until facing mandatory retirement at age 70.

**Means of Reform:** [Citizen initiatives and referenda](#) are Massachusetts's most democratic means of reform. The state legislature [must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution](#), but citizens can also initiate laws and amendments themselves and demand a referendum on a legislature-approved law.

## Michigan

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Michigan has an IRC](#) with authority over federal and state legislative district maps. In addition to preventing legislative staff, lobbyists, legislators, and other public officials from participating in the redistricting process, Michigan also disallows commissioners from running for office in the state for several years after redistricting, reducing the risk of commissions being manipulated by the politically ambitious.

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Michigan uses fully open primaries](#). It neither requires voters to affiliate with a party to vote in a primary nor prohibits crossover voting (i.e., members of other parties voting in another party's primary).

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Michigan does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, and no cities or counties consistently use it for local offices. Instead, it operates under the standard pluralistic, first-past-the-post election process.

**"Sore Loser Laws"** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Michigan has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1988.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Michigan does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections, and [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Michigan has not taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections. However, [Michigan has implemented a hybrid partial grant and 2:1 matching public funds](#) system for small-dollar donations to gubernatorial candidates.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Michigan's legislative term limits](#) do not allow an elected official to serve more than twelve years in its legislature in total, regardless of chamber. [Michigan's gubernatorial term limits](#) do not allow individuals to be elected to the governorship more than twice, mirroring the [22nd Amendment](#).

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Michigan bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Michigan has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Michigan judges are exclusively selected through nonpartisan popular elections](#) for their first and subsequent full terms.

**Means of Reform:** [Citizen initiatives and referenda](#) are Michigan's most democratic means of reform. The state legislature [must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution](#), but citizens can also initiate laws and amendments themselves and demand a referendum on a legislature-approved law.

## Minnesota

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Minnesota's state legislature retains complete control over redistricting](#) for state and congressional maps.

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Minnesota uses fully open primaries](#). It neither requires voters to affiliate with a party to vote in a primary nor prohibits crossover voting (i.e., members of other parties voting in another party's primary).

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Minnesota does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, but Bloomington, Minneapolis, Minnetonka, St. Louis Park, and St. Paul use it for certain or all city offices. (Note: Minneapolis uses [proportional RCV](#).)

**"Sore Loser Laws"** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Minnesota has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1981.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Minnesota does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections. [Proportional RCV has been used in Minneapolis](#) for municipal board elections since 2009 but is not in use statewide.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Minnesota has not taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections. However, [Minnesota has implemented a public campaign funding](#) system that offers partial grants for statewide and legislative candidates and refunds for Minnesota donors to participating campaigns.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Minnesota has no term limits in place](#) for its elected officials.

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Minnesota bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Minnesota has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Minnesota judges are exclusively selected through nonpartisan popular elections](#) for their first and subsequent full terms.

**Means of Reform:** [Legislative referrals for constitutional amendments](#) are Minnesota's most democratic means of reform. The state legislature must obtain popular approval to

change the state constitution, but citizens cannot [initiate laws or amendments themselves nor demand a referendum](#) on a legislature-approved law.

## Mississippi

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

Mississippi's legislature predominates in creating congressional maps, but its state redistricting process empowers a [special "backup" commission](#) of five specific statewide elected officials (i.e., [the chief justice of the Mississippi Supreme Court, the attorney general, the secretary of state, and the leader of each state legislative chamber](#)) with redistricting duties if legislators do not decide on their state map before a set deadline.

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Mississippi uses fully open primaries](#). It neither requires voters to affiliate with a party to vote in a primary nor prohibits crossover voting (i.e., members of other parties voting in another party's primary).

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Mississippi does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional general elections, though military and overseas voters use it in federal runoffs. Otherwise, it operates under the standard pluralistic, first-past-the-post election process.

**"Sore Loser Laws"** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Mississippi has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1906.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Mississippi does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections, and [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Mississippi has neither taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections, [nor has it implemented "clean elections" or matching public funds](#) for any state races.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Mississippi has no legislative term limits](#) in place. However, [Mississippi's gubernatorial term limits](#) do not allow individuals to be elected to the governorship more than twice, mirroring the [22nd Amendment](#).

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Mississippi allows cross-nominating in all general elections](#), though it does not occur in practice.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Mississippi has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.



**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Mississippi judges are exclusively selected through nonpartisan popular elections](#) for their first and subsequent full terms.

**Means of Reform:** [Legislative referrals for constitutional amendments](#) are currently Mississippi's most democratic means of reform. The state legislature must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution, but citizens cannot currently [initiate amendments themselves](#) following a 2021 Mississippi Supreme Court ruling that invalidated the process – the state constitution requires initiative signatures from five congressional districts, but Mississippi has had only four since 2000. Independent of the decision, citizens also cannot initiate laws nor demand a referendum on a legislature-approved law.

## Missouri

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

Missouri's legislature predominates in creating federal maps, but its state redistricting process is led by two [semi-independent commissions](#) (with members [nominated by political party committees and appointed by the governor](#)); each commission determines [one state legislative chamber's map](#).

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Missouri uses fully open primaries](#). It neither requires voters to affiliate with a party to vote in a primary nor prohibits crossover voting (i.e., members of other parties voting in another party's primary).

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Missouri does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, and no cities or counties consistently use it for local offices. Instead, it operates under the standard pluralistic, first-past-the-post election process.

**"Sore Loser Laws"** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Missouri has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1977.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Missouri does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections, and [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Missouri has neither taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections, [nor has it implemented "clean elections" or matching public funds](#) for any state races.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Missouri's legislative term limits](#) do not permit an elected official to serve more than eight years in a chamber, whether that time is spent consecutively or piecemeal. [Missouri's gubernatorial](#)

[term limits](#) do not allow individuals to be elected to the governorship more than twice, mirroring the [22nd Amendment](#).

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Missouri bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Missouri has not adopted approval voting](#) statewide, but [St. Louis](#) implemented it for local elections in 2021.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Missouri's innovative judicial selection model](#), better known as the [Missouri Plan](#), is a hybrid system that blends judicial appointments and elections. According to this method, the governor must nominate someone from a list provided by a [judicial nominating commission](#) (JNC), a separate government body that provides the nominator with a list of vetted candidates for a judicial position to serve an initial term. Then, that judge must be voted on in a retention election to determine if they should remain in office beyond that initial term. However, Missouri does not observe its namesake pattern universally; while Missouri's Supreme Court justices and appellate judges are chosen according to the Missouri Plan, its trial judges are selected by appointment or election according to the jurisdiction involved.

**Means of Reform:** [Citizen initiatives and referenda](#) are Missouri's most democratic means of reform. The state legislature [must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution](#), but citizens can also initiate laws and amendments themselves and demand a referendum on a legislature-approved law.

## Montana

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Montana has an IRC](#) with authority over state and federal legislative district maps. In addition to preventing legislators and other public officials from participating in the redistricting process, Montana also disallows commissioners from running for office in the state for several years after redistricting, reducing the risk of commissions being manipulated by the politically ambitious.

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Montana uses fully open primaries](#). It neither requires voters to affiliate with a party to vote in a primary nor prohibits crossover voting (i.e., members of other parties voting in another party's primary).

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Montana does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, and no cities or counties consistently use it for local offices. Instead, it operates under the standard pluralistic, first-past-the-post election process.

**"Sore Loser Laws"** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Montana has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1991.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Montana does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections, and [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Montana has taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections by requiring all political groups to disclose their funders if they spend money on electioneering communications mentioning a candidate or using their image. However, [Montana has not implemented “clean elections” or matching public funds](#) for any state races.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Montana’s legislative term limits](#) observe the most common form, restricting elected officials to eight consecutive years in a chamber. [Montana’s gubernatorial term limits](#) do not permit an individual to serve more than eight years as governor in any sixteen-year span.

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Montana bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Montana has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Montana judges are exclusively selected through nonpartisan popular elections](#) for their first and subsequent full terms. (Note: Montana has [no dedicated intermediate appellate court](#).)

**Means of Reform:** [Citizen initiatives and referenda](#) are Montana’s most democratic means of reform. The state legislature [must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution](#), but citizens can also initiate laws and amendments themselves and demand a referendum on a legislature-approved law.

## Nebraska

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Nebraska’s state legislature retains complete control over redistricting](#) for state and congressional maps.

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Nebraska effectively conducts a Top Two election](#) process for state legislative races in which candidates run [with no party affiliation](#). For the remaining partisan offices, however, Nebraska’s primary system can best be described as [semi-open](#). In a semi-open primary, independent voters may participate in a party primary but crossover voting is prohibited (i.e., party members cannot vote in another party’s primary). And [in Nebraska](#), congressional primaries are available to independents, though statewide primaries are only available to independents if a party decides to make them available in a given year.

### **Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Nebraska does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, and no cities or counties consistently use it for local offices. Instead, it operates under the standard pluralistic, first-past-the-post election process.

### **“Sore Loser Laws”** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Nebraska has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1994, but because its state legislature effectively operates with a nonpartisan **Top Two primary** system, it is effectively moot for state legislative elections.

### **Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Nebraska does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections, and [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

### **Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Nebraska has neither taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections, [nor has it implemented “clean elections” or matching public funds](#) for any state races.

### **Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Nebraska’s legislative term limits](#) observe the most common form, restricting elected officials to eight consecutive years in a chamber, but since [its legislature is unicameral](#), those elected to it must leave the legislature after their second consecutive term is completed. [Nebraska’s gubernatorial term limits](#) follow the standard format, confining the state’s chief executive to two consecutive terms in office.

### **Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Nebraska bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

### **Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Nebraska has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

### **Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Nebraska’s judicial selection model](#) adopts the [Missouri Plan](#), a hybrid system that blends judicial appointments and elections. According to this method, the governor must nominate someone from a list provided by a [judicial nominating commission](#) (JNC), a separate government body that provides the nominator with a list of vetted candidates for a judicial position to serve an initial term. Then, that judge must be voted on in a retention election to determine if they should remain in office beyond that initial term.

**Means of Reform:** [Citizen initiatives and referenda](#) are Nebraska’s most democratic means of reform. The state legislature [must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution](#), but citizens can also initiate laws and amendments themselves and demand a referendum on a legislature-approved law.

## Nevada

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Nevada's state legislature retains complete control over redistricting](#) for state and congressional maps.

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Nevada uses closed partisan primaries](#) for state and congressional elections.

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Nevada does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, and no cities or counties consistently use it for local offices. Instead, it operates under the standard pluralistic, first-past-the-post election process.

**"Sore Loser Laws"** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Nevada has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1963.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Nevada does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections, and [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Nevada has neither taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections, [nor has it implemented "clean elections" or matching public funds](#) for any state races.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Nevada's legislative term limits](#) do not permit an elected official to serve more than twelve years in a chamber, whether that time is spent consecutively or piecemeal. [Nevada's gubernatorial term limits](#) do not allow individuals to be elected to the governorship more than twice, mirroring the [22nd Amendment](#).

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Nevada bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Nevada has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Nevada judges are exclusively selected through nonpartisan popular elections](#) for their first and subsequent full terms.

**Means of Reform:** [Citizen initiatives and referenda](#) are Nevada's most democratic means of reform. The state legislature [must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution](#), but citizens can also initiate laws and amendments themselves and demand a referendum on a legislature-approved law.

## New Hampshire

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[New Hampshire's state legislature retains complete control over redistricting](#) for state and congressional maps.

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[New Hampshire uses semi-open primaries](#). Independent voters may participate in a party primary but crossover voting is prohibited (i.e., party members cannot vote in another party's primary).

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[New Hampshire does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, and no cities or counties consistently use it for local offices. Instead, it operates under the standard pluralistic, first-past-the-post election process.

**"Sore Loser Laws"** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[New Hampshire has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1981.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[New Hampshire's state legislature uses MMDs](#), as the state house is composed of [400 members from 204 legislative districts](#), averaging about two per district, though the exact number of representatives varies widely (i.e., as many as ten in one district). However, [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[New Hampshire has neither taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections, [nor has it implemented "clean elections" or matching public funds](#) for any state races.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[New Hampshire has no term limits in place](#) for its elected officials.

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[New Hampshire bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[New Hampshire has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[New Hampshire judges are nominated by the governor](#) from a list provided by the state's [judicial nominating commission](#) (JNC), a separate government body that provides the nominator with a list of vetted candidates for a judicial position, and are then approved by a separate [Executive Council](#) – instead of a legislative majority, as is the standard. Barring impeachment and removal from office or resignation, [New Hampshire judges serve a single term](#) until facing mandatory retirement at age 70. (Note: New Hampshire has [no dedicated intermediate appellate court](#).)



**Means of Reform:** [Legislative referrals for constitutional amendments](#) are New Hampshire's most democratic means of reform. The state legislature must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution, but citizens cannot [initiate laws or amendments themselves nor demand a referendum](#) on a legislature-approved law.

## New Jersey

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[New Jersey has a semi-independent commission](#) with authority over state and congressional redistricting. New Jersey's [thirteen-member commission](#) consists of twelve individuals nominated by legislative leadership and a chair elected by a majority of those twelve members.

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[New Jersey uses closed partisan primaries](#) for state and congressional elections.

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[New Jersey does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, and no cities or counties consistently use it for local offices. Instead, it operates under the standard pluralistic, first-past-the-post election process.

**"Sore Loser Laws"** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[New Jersey has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1915.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[New Jersey's state legislature uses MMDs](#), as each state legislative district elects [one senator and two representatives](#). However, [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[New Jersey has taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections by requiring politically active groups to disclose any electioneering expenditures and any donation larger than \$7,500. [New Jersey has also implemented a 2:1 matching public funds](#) system for donations to gubernatorial candidates.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[New Jersey has no legislative term limits](#) in place. However, [New Jersey's gubernatorial term limits](#) follow the standard format, confining the state's chief executive to two consecutive terms in office.

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[New Jersey bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[New Jersey has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

### **Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[New Jersey judges are exclusively appointed](#), though the appointment process varies with each court level. For example, Supreme Court justices are nominated by the governor and must be confirmed by a legislative majority, but appellate judges are directly appointed by the chief justice of the state Supreme Court. Meanwhile, trial judges, like Supreme Court justices, receive gubernatorial nominations and legislative confirmations, though their appointment process is aided by the state's [judicial nominating commission](#) (JNC), a separate government body that provides the nominator with a list of vetted candidates for a judicial position. However, the governor is not obligated to choose from the candidate list the JNC provides – as is normally the case for nominating authorities in states with JNCs.

**Means of Reform:** [Legislative referrals for constitutional amendments](#) are New Jersey's most democratic means of reform. The state legislature must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution, but citizens cannot [initiate laws or amendments themselves nor demand a referendum](#) on a legislature-approved law.

## **New Mexico**

### **Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

New Mexico's legislature predominates in both state and federal mapmaking, but its redistricting process is aided by a [special seven-member advisory commission](#), including four appointees by legislative leadership, two nonpartisans appointed by the State Ethics Commission, and a chair who is a retired state Supreme or appellate court judge.

### **Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[New Mexico uses closed partisan primaries](#) for state and congressional elections.

### **Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[New Mexico does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, but Las Cruces and Santa Fe use it for certain or all city offices.

### **"Sore Loser Laws"** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[New Mexico has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1939.

### **Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[New Mexico does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections, and [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

### **Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[New Mexico has not taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections. However, [New Mexico has implemented a "clean elections" system](#) for their [elected judges](#); candidates must collect a large enough number of small donations (e.g., [\\$5 from at least 100 people](#)) to qualify for the program and, after accepting, they are allocated with an amount of public money proportionate to the number of registered voters eligible to vote for them (i.e., a district court judgeship or a statewide Supreme or appellate court judgeship) and

depending on their campaign situation (i.e., their level of opposition and how early they agreed to participate in the program).

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[New Mexico has no legislative term limits](#) in place. However, [New Mexico's gubernatorial term limits](#) follow the standard format, confining the state's chief executive to two consecutive terms in office.

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[New Mexico bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[New Mexico has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[New Mexico's judicial selection model](#) generally evokes the [Missouri Plan](#), a hybrid system that blends judicial appointments and elections. According to this method, the governor must nominate someone from a list provided by a [judicial nominating commission](#) (JNC), a separate government body that provides the nominator with a list of vetted candidates for a judicial position to serve an initial term. Then, that judge must be voted on in a retention election to determine if they should remain in office beyond that initial term. While New Mexico's judges are initially appointed according to the Missouri Plan, the state holds partisan elections in the first general election after the judge's appointment before conducting nonpartisan retention elections for each full term thereafter.

**Means of Reform:** [Popular referenda](#) are New Mexico's most democratic means of reform. The state legislature [must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution](#), but citizens can also demand a referendum on a legislature-approved law. However, citizens cannot initiate laws or amendments themselves.

## New York

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[New York has an IRC](#) with authority over federal and state legislative district maps. New York has taken some additional steps to limit partisan influence on commission work, such as preventing legislative staff, lobbyists, legislators, and other public officials from serving as commissioners. However, it is not always impervious to political reworking, for legislative supermajorities are allowed to modify IRC-produced maps ([as New York did for the 2022 election cycle](#) before its maps were redrawn by the courts).

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[New York uses closed partisan primaries](#) for state and congressional elections.

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[New York does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, but New York City uses it for primary and special elections for mayor, borough presidents, city council, and other city offices.

**“Sore Loser Laws”** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[New York does not have a sore loser law](#) in place.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[New York does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections, and [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[New York has taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections by requiring limited liability corporations to disclose all their direct and indirect owners and limiting them to \$5,000 in aggregate contributions to a campaign, like other corporations. [New York has also implemented a progressive matching public funds](#) system (i.e., a 6:1 to 12:1 matching rate) for small-dollar donations to statewide and legislative candidates.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[New York has no term limits in place](#) for its elected officials.

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[New York enables disaggregated fusion voting](#) in its general elections.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[New York has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
 Under [New York’s unique judicial selection system](#), supreme court justices are nominated by the governor (from a list provided by its [judicial nominating commission](#) [JNC], a [separate government body](#) that provides the nominator with a list of vetted candidates for a judicial position) and receive legislative confirmation, appellate judges are appointed by the governor from amongst sitting trial judges, and trial judges are selected through partisan elections.

**Means of Reform:** [Legislative referrals for constitutional amendments](#) are New York’s most democratic means of reform. The state legislature must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution, but citizens cannot [initiate laws or amendments themselves nor demand a referendum](#) on a legislature-approved law.

## North Carolina

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[North Carolina’s state legislature retains complete control over redistricting](#) for state and congressional maps through joint resolutions immune to gubernatorial veto.

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[North Carolina uses semi-open primaries](#). Independent voters may participate in a party primary but crossover voting is prohibited (i.e., party members cannot vote in another party’s primary).

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[North Carolina does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, and no cities or counties consistently use it for local offices. Instead, it operates under the standard pluralistic, first-past-the-post election process.

**“Sore Loser Laws”** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[North Carolina has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1967.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[North Carolina does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections, and [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[North Carolina has neither taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections, [nor has it implemented “clean elections” or matching public funds](#) for any state races.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[North Carolina has no legislative term limits](#) in place. However, [North Carolina’s gubernatorial term limits](#) follow the standard format, confining the state’s chief executive to two consecutive terms in office.

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[North Carolina bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[North Carolina has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[North Carolina judges are exclusively selected through partisan popular elections](#) for their first and subsequent full terms.

**Means of Reform:** [Legislative referrals for constitutional amendments](#) are North Carolina’s most democratic means of reform. The state legislature must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution, but citizens cannot [initiate laws or amendments themselves nor demand a referendum](#) on a legislature-approved law.

## North Dakota

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[North Dakota’s state legislature retains complete control over redistricting](#) for state and federal maps (though it only has [one federal district under current apportionment](#)).

### **Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[North Dakota uses fully open primaries](#). It neither requires voters to affiliate with a party to vote in a primary nor prohibits crossover voting (i.e., members of other parties voting in another party's primary).

### **Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[North Dakota does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, and no cities or counties consistently use it for local offices. Instead, it operates under the standard pluralistic, first-past-the-post election process.

### **"Sore Loser Laws"** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[North Dakota has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1975.

### **Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[North Dakota's state legislature uses MMDs](#), as each state legislative district elects one senator and two representatives. However, [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

### **Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[North Dakota has taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections by requiring online and consumable disclosure of donors who provide over \$200 for electioneering communications in a [2018 ballot initiative](#). However, [North Dakota has not implemented "clean elections" or matching public funds](#) for any state races.

### **Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[North Dakota's legislative term limits](#) do not permit an elected official to serve more than eight years in a chamber, whether that time is spent consecutively or piecemeal. [North Dakota's gubernatorial term limits](#) do not allow individuals to be elected to the governorship more than twice, mirroring the [22nd Amendment](#).

### **Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[North Dakota bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

### **Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[North Dakota has not adopted approval voting](#) statewide, but [Fargo](#) became the first city to implement it for local elections in 2020.

### **Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

Under [North Dakota's unique judicial selection system](#), the state Supreme and trial courts are filled out through nonpartisan elections, but appellate judges are appointed by the chief justice of the state Supreme Court, who [serves as the administrative head of the state's judiciary](#) (and appoints without assistance or direction from a [nominating or confirmatory commission](#), which is atypical for states featuring judicial appointments).

**Means of Reform:** [Citizen initiatives and referenda](#) are North Dakota's most democratic means of reform. The state legislature [must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution](#), but citizens can also initiate laws and amendments themselves and demand a referendum on a legislature-approved law.



## Ohio

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Ohio's unique redistricting system](#) features a [semi-independent commission](#) with at least some authority over both state and federal redistricting. The [seven-member commission](#) (consisting of the governor, the secretary of state, the state auditor, and four appointees from legislative leadership) leads the state mapmaking process. And while Ohio's legislature predominates in creating federal maps, the commission is charged with full redistricting duties if legislators do not decide on their federal maps before a set deadline (i.e., it serves as a [special "backup" commission](#)).

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Ohio uses fully open primaries](#). It neither requires voters to affiliate with a party to vote in a primary nor prohibits crossover voting (i.e., members of other parties voting in another party's primary).

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Ohio does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, and no cities or counties consistently use it for local offices. Instead, it operates under the standard pluralistic, first-past-the-post election process.

**"Sore Loser Laws"** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Ohio has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1929.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Ohio does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections, and [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Ohio has neither taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections, [nor has it implemented "clean elections" or matching public funds](#) for any state races.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Ohio's legislative term limits](#) observe the most common form, restricting elected officials to eight consecutive years in a chamber. [Ohio's gubernatorial term limits](#) also follow the standard format, confining the state's chief executive to two consecutive terms in office.

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Ohio bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Ohio has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Ohio judges are exclusively selected through popular elections](#) for their first and subsequent full terms. The state's [Supreme Court justices and appellate judges are chosen in partisan elections](#), while its [trial judges run in partisan primaries and nonpartisan general elections](#).

**Means of Reform:** [Citizen initiatives and referenda](#) are Ohio's most democratic means of reform. The state legislature [must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution](#), but citizens can also initiate laws and amendments themselves and demand a referendum on a legislature-approved law.

## Oklahoma

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

Oklahoma's legislature predominates in creating congressional maps, but its state redistricting process empowers a [special "backup" commission](#) of seven (i.e., [the lieutenant governor, two gubernatorial appointments, and two appointments from the leader of each state legislative chamber](#)) with redistricting duties if legislators do not decide on their state map before a set deadline.

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Oklahoma generally uses closed partisan primaries](#) for state and congressional elections, though the Democratic Party allows independents to vote for its candidates.

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Oklahoma does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, and no cities or counties consistently use it for local offices. Instead, it operates under the standard pluralistic, first-past-the-post election process.

**"Sore Loser Laws"** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Oklahoma has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1987.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Oklahoma does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections, and [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Oklahoma has neither taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections, [nor has it implemented "clean elections" or matching public funds](#) for any state races.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Oklahoma's legislative term limits](#) do not allow an elected official to serve more than twelve years in its legislature in total, regardless of chamber. [Oklahoma's gubernatorial term limits](#) do not allow individuals to be elected to the governorship more than twice, mirroring the [22nd Amendment](#).

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Oklahoma bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Oklahoma has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Oklahoma's judicial selection model](#) generally evokes the [Missouri Plan](#), a hybrid system that blends judicial appointments and elections. According to this method, the governor must nominate someone from a list provided by a [judicial nominating commission](#) (JNC), a separate government body that provides the nominator with a list of vetted candidates for a judicial position to serve an initial term. Then, that judge must be voted on in a retention election to determine if they should remain in office beyond that initial term. While Oklahoma's Supreme Court justices and appellate judges are chosen according to the Missouri Plan, its trial judges compete in nonpartisan popular elections.

**Means of Reform:** [Citizen initiatives and referenda](#) are Oklahoma's most democratic means of reform. The state legislature [must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution](#), but citizens can also initiate laws and amendments themselves and demand a referendum on a legislature-approved law.

## Oregon

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
 Oregon's legislature predominates in creating federal maps, but if legislators do not decide on their state map before a set deadline, Oregon's secretary of state is charged with state legislative redistricting duties, distinguishing Oregon from the more common [special "backup" commission](#) approach.

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Oregon uses closed partisan primaries](#) for state and congressional elections.

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Oregon does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, but Benton County, Multnomah County, Corvallis, and Portland have adopted it for certain or all local offices. (Note: Portland now uses [proportional RCV](#).)

**"Sore Loser Laws"** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Oregon has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1939.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Oregon does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections. [Proportional RCV was adopted in Portland](#) for city council elections in 2022 and will be used for the first time in 2024.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Oregon has taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections by approving a constitutional amendment enabling state and local governments to implement campaign contribution limits and force dark money disclosure in a 2020 ballot

initiative. However, [Oregon has not implemented “clean elections” or matching public funds](#) for any state races.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Oregon has no legislative term limits](#) in place. However, [Oregon’s gubernatorial term limits](#) do not permit an individual to serve more than eight years as governor in any twelve-year span.

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Oregon enables dual labeling](#) in its general elections.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Oregon has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Oregon judges are exclusively selected through nonpartisan popular elections](#) for their first and subsequent full terms.

**Means of Reform:** [Citizen initiatives and referenda](#) are Oregon’s most democratic means of reform. The state legislature [must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution](#), but citizens can also initiate laws and amendments themselves and demand a referendum on a legislature-approved law.

## Pennsylvania

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

Pennsylvania’s legislature predominates in creating federal maps, but its state redistricting process is led by a [semi-independent commission](#) of five (i.e., [four members of state legislative leadership and a chair elected by those members](#)).

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Pennsylvania uses closed partisan primaries](#) for state and congressional elections.

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Pennsylvania does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, and no cities or counties consistently use it for local offices. Instead, it operates under the standard pluralistic, first-past-the-post election process.

**“Sore Loser Laws”** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Pennsylvania has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1937.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Pennsylvania does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections, and [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Pennsylvania has neither taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs in state elections, nor has it implemented “clean elections” or matching public funds](#) for any state races.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Pennsylvania has no legislative term limits](#) in place. However, [Pennsylvania’s gubernatorial term limits](#) follow the standard format, confining the state’s chief executive to two consecutive terms in office.

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Pennsylvania bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Pennsylvania has not adopted approval voting](#) statewide, but [St. Louis](#) implemented it for local elections in 2021.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Pennsylvania judges are exclusively selected through partisan popular elections](#) for their first full term and nonpartisan retention elections for any subsequent terms.

**Means of Reform:** [Legislative referrals for constitutional amendments](#) are Pennsylvania’s most democratic means of reform. The state legislature must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution, but citizens cannot [initiate laws or amendments themselves nor demand a referendum](#) on a legislature-approved law.

## Rhode Island

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

Rhode Island’s legislature predominates in both state and federal mapmaking, but its redistricting process is aided by a [special eighteen-member advisory commission](#) of legislators and citizens.

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Rhode Island uses semi-open primaries](#). Independent voters may participate in a party primary but crossover voting is prohibited (i.e., party members cannot vote in another party’s primary).

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Rhode Island does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, and no cities or counties consistently use it for local offices. Instead, it operates under the standard pluralistic, first-past-the-post election process.

**“Sore Loser Laws”** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Rhode Island has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1981.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Rhode Island does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections, and [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Rhode Island has taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections by requiring Super PACs that spend over \$1,000 on electioneering communications to disclose their primary donors. [Rhode Island has also implemented a matching public funds](#) system (i.e., a 1:1 to 2:1 matching rate) for donations to statewide candidates.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Rhode Island has no legislative term limits](#) in place. However, [Rhode Island's gubernatorial term limits](#) follow the standard format, confining the state's chief executive to two consecutive terms in office.

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Rhode Island bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Rhode Island has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[Rhode Island judges are nominated by the governor](#) from a list provided by the state's [judicial nominating commission](#) (JNC), a separate government body that provides the nominator with a list of vetted candidates for a judicial position, and are then approved by a legislative majority. Rhode Island, which neither limits a judicial term to a certain number of years nor includes a mandatory retirement age, is the [only state](#) that observes the federal judicial appointment standard – that is, a [lifetime position](#), barring impeachment and removal from office or resignation. (Note: Rhode Island has [no dedicated intermediate appellate court](#).)

**Means of Reform:** [Legislative referrals for constitutional amendments](#) are Rhode Island's most democratic means of reform. The state legislature must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution, but citizens cannot [initiate laws or amendments themselves nor demand a referendum](#) on a legislature-approved law.

## South Carolina

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[South Carolina's state legislature retains complete control over redistricting](#) for state and congressional maps.

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))  
[South Carolina uses fully open primaries](#). It neither requires voters to affiliate with a party to vote in a primary nor prohibits crossover voting (i.e., members of other parties voting in another party's primary).



**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[South Carolina does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional general elections, though military and overseas voters use it in runoffs. Otherwise, it operates under the standard pluralistic, first-past-the-post election process.

**“Sore Loser Laws”** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[South Carolina has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1950.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[South Carolina does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections, and [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[South Carolina has neither taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections, [nor has it implemented “clean elections” or matching public funds](#) for any state races.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[South Carolina has no legislative term limits](#) in place. However, [South Carolina’s gubernatorial term limits](#) follow the standard format, confining the state’s chief executive to two consecutive terms in office.

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[South Carolina bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[South Carolina has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[South Carolina judges are exclusively appointed by the state legislature](#) for their first and subsequent full terms. After receiving a list of vetted candidates for a judicial position provided by the state’s [judicial nominating commission](#) (JNC), a separate government body, the legislature votes on a candidate to fill that position.

**Means of Reform:** [Legislative referrals for constitutional amendments](#) are South Carolina’s most democratic means of reform. The state legislature must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution, but citizens cannot [initiate laws or amendments themselves nor demand a referendum](#) on a legislature-approved law.

## South Dakota

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[South Dakota’s state legislature retains complete control over redistricting](#) for state and federal maps (though it only has [one federal district under current apportionment](#)).

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[South Dakota generally uses closed partisan primaries](#) for state and congressional elections, though the Democratic Party allows independents to vote for its candidates.

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[South Dakota does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, and no cities or counties consistently use it for local offices. Instead, it operates under the standard pluralistic, first-past-the-post election process.

**“Sore Loser Laws”** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[South Dakota has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1977.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[South Dakota’s state legislature uses MMDs](#), as each state legislative district elects one senator and two representatives – though [two senate districts have been divided into two single-member house districts](#) to help preserve voting power for minority groups. Meanwhile, [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[South Dakota has neither taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections, [nor has it implemented “clean elections” or matching public funds](#) for any state races.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[South Dakota’s legislative term limits](#) observe the most common form, restricting elected officials to eight consecutive years in a chamber. [South Dakota’s gubernatorial term limits](#) also follow the standard format, confining the state’s chief executive to two consecutive terms in office.

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[South Dakota bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[South Dakota has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[South Dakota’s judicial selection model](#) generally evokes the [Missouri Plan](#), a hybrid system that blends judicial appointments and elections. According to this method, the governor must nominate someone from a list provided by a [judicial nominating commission](#) (JNC), a separate government body that provides the nominator with a list of vetted candidates for a judicial position to serve an initial term. Then, that judge must be voted on in a retention election to determine if they should remain in office beyond that initial term. While South Dakota’s Supreme Court justices are chosen according to the Missouri Plan, its trial judges compete in nonpartisan popular elections. (Note: South Dakota has [no dedicated intermediate appellate court](#).)

**Means of Reform:** [Citizen initiatives and referenda](#) are South Dakota’s most democratic means of reform. The state legislature [must obtain popular approval to change the state](#)

*constitution*, but citizens can also initiate laws and amendments themselves and demand a referendum on a legislature-approved law.

## Tennessee

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Tennessee's state legislature retains complete control over redistricting](#) for state and congressional maps.

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Tennessee uses fully open primaries](#). It neither requires voters to affiliate with a party to vote in a primary nor prohibits crossover voting (i.e., members of other parties voting in another party's primary).

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Tennessee does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, and no cities or counties consistently use it for local offices. Instead, it operates under the standard pluralistic, first-past-the-post election process.

**"Sore Loser Laws"** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Tennessee has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1975.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Tennessee does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections, and [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Tennessee has neither taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections, [nor has it implemented "clean elections" or matching public funds](#) for any state races.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Tennessee has no legislative term limits](#) in place. However, [Tennessee's gubernatorial term limits](#) follow the standard format, confining the state's chief executive to two consecutive terms in office.

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Tennessee bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Tennessee has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Tennessee's judicial selection model](#) generally evokes the [Missouri Plan](#), a hybrid system that blends judicial appointments and elections. According to this method, the governor must

nominate someone from a list provided by a [judicial nominating commission](#) (JNC), a separate government body that provides the nominator with a list of vetted candidates for a judicial position to serve an initial term. Then, that judge must be voted on in a retention election to determine if they should remain in office beyond that initial term. While Tennessee's Supreme Court justices and appellate judges are chosen according to the Missouri Plan, its trial judges compete in nonpartisan popular elections.

**Means of Reform:** [Legislative referrals for constitutional amendments](#) are Tennessee's most democratic means of reform. The state legislature must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution, but citizens cannot [initiate laws or amendments themselves nor demand a referendum](#) on a legislature-approved law.

## Texas

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

Texas's legislature predominates in creating congressional maps, but its state redistricting process empowers a [special "backup" commission](#) of five specific statewide elected officials (i.e., [the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house, the attorney general, the comptroller of public accounts, and the commissioner of the general land office](#)) with redistricting duties if legislators do not decide on their state map before a set deadline.

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Texas uses fully open primaries](#). It neither requires voters to affiliate with a party to vote in a primary nor prohibits crossover voting (i.e., members of other parties voting in another party's primary).

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Texas does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, and no cities or counties consistently use it for local offices. Instead, it operates under the standard pluralistic, first-past-the-post election process.

**"Sore Loser Laws"** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Texas has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1985.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Texas does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections, and [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Texas has taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections by requiring politically active organizations engaged in electioneering communications to disclose their donors. However, [Texas has not implemented "clean elections" or matching public funds](#) for any state races.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Texas has no term limits in place](#) for its elected officials.

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Texas bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Texas has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Texas judges are exclusively selected through partisan popular elections](#) for their first and subsequent full terms.

**Means of Reform:** [Legislative referrals for constitutional amendments](#) are Texas's most democratic means of reform. The state legislature must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution, but citizens cannot [initiate laws or amendments themselves nor demand a referendum](#) on a legislature-approved law.

## Utah

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

Utah's legislature predominates in both state and federal mapmaking, but its redistricting process incorporates a [special advisory commission](#) with non-legislators that assists in the creation of state and federal maps before they are voted on.

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Utah generally uses closed partisan primaries](#) for state and congressional elections, though the Democratic Party allows independents to vote for its candidates.

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Utah does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, but Genola, Heber, Kearns, Lehi, Magna Township, Midvale, Millcreek, Payson, Salt Lake City, South Salt Lake, Vineyard, and Woodland Hills have adopted it for certain or all city offices.

**"Sore Loser Laws"** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Utah has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1994.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Utah does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections, and [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Utah has neither taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections, [nor has it implemented "clean elections" or matching public funds](#) for any state races.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Utah has no term limits in place](#) for its elected officials.

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Utah bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Utah has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Utah's judicial selection model](#) adopts the [Missouri Plan](#), a hybrid system that blends judicial appointments and elections. According to this method, the governor must nominate someone from a list provided by a [judicial nominating commission](#) (JNC), a separate government body that provides the nominator with a list of vetted candidates for a judicial position to serve an initial term. Then, that judge must be voted on in a retention election to determine if they should remain in office beyond that initial term.

**Means of Reform:** [Citizen initiatives and referenda](#) are Utah's most democratic means of reform. The state legislature [must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution](#), but citizens can also initiate laws themselves and demand a referendum on a legislature-approved law. However, citizens cannot initiate amendments.

## Vermont

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

Vermont's legislature predominates in both state and federal mapmaking (though it only has [one federal district under current apportionment](#)). However, Vermont's redistricting process incorporates a [special advisory commission](#) with non-legislators that assists in the creation of state and federal maps before they are voted on.

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Vermont uses fully open primaries](#). It neither requires voters to affiliate with a party to vote in a primary nor prohibits crossover voting (i.e., members of other parties voting in another party's primary).

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Vermont does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, but Burlington adopted it for all city offices in 2023.

**"Sore Loser Laws"** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Vermont has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 2010.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Vermont's state legislature uses MMDs](#), as each voter is represented by one or two representatives and one to three senators. Meanwhile, [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.



### **Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Vermont has taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections by requiring entities engaged in electioneering communications to disclose donors who give \$2,000 or more in their advertisements. [Vermont has also implemented a “clean elections” system](#) for candidates for governor and lieutenant governor; candidates must collect a large enough number of small donations (e.g., [\\$50 or less from at least 1,500 people for gubernatorial candidates](#)) to qualify for the program and, after accepting, they are allocated with an amount of public money depending on their position (e.g., \$600,000 for gubernatorial candidates) that they are restricted to for the duration of their campaign.

### **Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Vermont has no term limits in place](#) for its elected officials.

### **Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Vermont enables dual labeling](#) in its general elections.

### **Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Vermont has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

### **Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Vermont judges are nominated by the governor](#) from a list provided by the state’s [judicial nominating commission](#) (JNC), a separate government body that provides the nominator with a list of vetted candidates for a judicial position, and are then approved by a legislative majority, as is the standard. However, the [legislature has the sole power to retain judges](#) beyond their first term. (Note: Vermont has [no dedicated intermediate appellate court](#).)

**Means of Reform:** [Legislative referrals for constitutional amendments](#) are Vermont’s most democratic means of reform. The state legislature must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution, but citizens cannot [initiate laws or amendments themselves nor demand a referendum](#) on a legislature-approved law.

## Virginia

### **Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Virginia has a semi-independent commission](#) with authority over state and congressional redistricting. Virginia’s commission consists of eight legislators and eight citizens and requires approval from six of each to finalize any map proposal.

### **Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Virginia uses fully open primaries](#). It neither requires voters to affiliate with a party to vote in a primary nor prohibits crossover voting (i.e., members of other parties voting in another party’s primary).

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Virginia does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, and no cities or counties consistently use it for local offices. Instead, it operates under the standard pluralistic, first-past-the-post election process.

**“Sore Loser Laws”** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Virginia has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1932.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Virginia does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections, and [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Virginia has neither taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections, [nor has it implemented “clean elections” or matching public funds](#) for any state races.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Virginia has no legislative term limits](#) in place. However, [Virginia’s unique gubernatorial term limits](#) bar governors from [serving consecutive terms](#).

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Virginia bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Virginia has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Virginia judges are exclusively appointed by the state legislature](#) for their first and subsequent full terms. It is the only appointment-based state that does not have a [judicial nominating commission](#) (JNC), a separate government body that provides the nominating individual (or entity) with a list of vetted candidates for a judicial position.

**Means of Reform:** [Legislative referrals for constitutional amendments](#) are Virginia’s most democratic means of reform. The state legislature must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution, but citizens cannot [initiate laws or amendments themselves nor demand a referendum](#) on a legislature-approved law.

## Washington

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Washington has an IRC](#) with authority over federal and state legislative district maps. In addition to preventing lobbyists, legislators, and other public officials from participating in the redistricting process, Washington also disallows commissioners from running for office in the state for several years after redistricting, reducing the risk of commissions being manipulated by

the politically ambitious. However, it is not always impervious to political reworking, for legislative supermajorities are allowed to modify IRC-produced maps.

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Washington uses a Top Two primary](#) system for all partisan state and congressional elections.

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Washington does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, but Seattle adopted it for primary elections for city offices in 2022.

**“Sore Loser Laws”** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

Due to [Washington’s implementation of its Top Two primary system](#) for state and congressional elections in 2008, [sore loser laws](#) are effectively a moot issue.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Washington’s state legislature uses MMDs](#), as each state house district elects two representatives. However, [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Washington has neither taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs in state elections, nor has it implemented “clean elections” or matching public funds](#) for any state races.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Washington has no term limits in place](#) for its elected officials.

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Washington bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Washington has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Washington judges are exclusively selected through nonpartisan popular elections](#) for their first and subsequent full terms.

**Means of Reform:** [Citizen initiatives and referenda](#) are Washington’s most democratic means of reform. The state legislature [must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution](#), but citizens can also initiate laws themselves and demand a referendum on a legislature-approved law. However, citizens cannot initiate amendments.

## West Virginia

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[West Virginia's state legislature retains complete control over redistricting](#) for state and congressional maps.

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[West Virginia uses semi-open primaries](#). Independent voters may participate in a party primary but crossover voting is prohibited (i.e., party members cannot vote in another party's primary).

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[West Virginia does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, and no cities or counties consistently use it for local offices. Instead, it operates under the standard pluralistic, first-past-the-post election process.

**"Sore Loser Laws"** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[West Virginia has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1919.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[West Virginia's state legislature uses MMDs](#), as each state senatorial district elects two senators. However, [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[West Virginia has neither taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections, [nor has it implemented "clean elections" or matching public funds](#) for any state races.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[West Virginia has no legislative term limits](#) in place. However, [West Virginia's gubernatorial term limits](#) follow the standard format, confining the state's chief executive to two consecutive terms in office.

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[West Virginia bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[West Virginia has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[West Virginia judges are exclusively selected through nonpartisan popular elections](#) for their first and subsequent full terms.

**Means of Reform:** [Legislative referrals for constitutional amendments](#) are West Virginia's most democratic means of reform. The state legislature must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution, but citizens cannot [initiate laws or amendments themselves nor demand a referendum](#) on a legislature-approved law.

## Wisconsin

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Wisconsin's state legislature retains complete control over redistricting](#) for state and congressional maps.

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Wisconsin uses fully open primaries](#). It neither requires voters to affiliate with a party to vote in a primary nor prohibits crossover voting (i.e., members of other parties voting in another party's primary).

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Wisconsin does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, and no cities or counties consistently use it for local offices. Instead, it operates under the standard pluralistic, first-past-the-post election process.

**"Sore Loser Laws"** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Wisconsin has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1977.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Wisconsin does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections, and [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Wisconsin has neither taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections, [nor has it implemented "clean elections" or matching public funds](#) for any state races.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Wisconsin has no term limits in place](#) for its elected officials.

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Wisconsin bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Wisconsin has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Wisconsin judges are exclusively selected through nonpartisan popular elections](#) for their first and subsequent full terms.

**Means of Reform:** [Legislative referrals for constitutional amendments](#) are Wisconsin's most democratic means of reform. The state legislature must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution, but citizens cannot [initiate laws or amendments themselves nor demand a referendum](#) on a legislature-approved law.

## Wyoming

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Wyoming's state legislature retains complete control over redistricting](#) for state and federal maps (though it only has [one federal district under current apportionment](#)).

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Wyoming uses semi-open primaries](#). Independent voters may participate in a party primary but crossover voting is prohibited (i.e., party members cannot vote in another party's primary).

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Wyoming does not use RCV](#) for its state or congressional elections, and no cities or counties consistently use it for local offices. Instead, it operates under the standard pluralistic, first-past-the-post election process.

**"Sore Loser Laws"** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Wyoming has had a sore loser law](#) in place since 1973.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Wyoming does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its state legislative elections, and [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the state.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Wyoming has neither taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections, [nor has it implemented "clean elections" or matching public funds](#) for any state races.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Wyoming has no legislative term limits](#) in place. However, [Wyoming's gubernatorial term limits](#) do not permit an individual to serve more than eight years as governor in any sixteen-year span.

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Wyoming bans cross-nominating in all general elections](#), prohibiting fusion voting.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Wyoming has not adopted approval voting](#) for statewide or local elections.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Wyoming's judicial selection model](#) adopts the [Missouri Plan](#), a hybrid system that blends judicial appointments and elections. According to this method, the governor must nominate someone from a list provided by a [judicial nominating commission](#) (JNC), a separate government body that provides the nominator with a list of vetted candidates for a judicial position to serve an initial term. Then, that judge must be voted on in a retention election to determine if they should remain in office beyond that initial term. (Note: Wyoming has [no dedicated intermediate appellate court](#).)



**Means of Reform:** [Citizen initiatives and referenda](#) are Wyoming’s most democratic means of reform. The state legislature [must obtain popular approval to change the state constitution](#), but citizens can also initiate laws themselves and demand a referendum on a legislature-approved law. However, citizens cannot initiate amendments.

## Washington, DC

**Redistricting Reform** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

Washington, DC, maintains legislative control over redistricting, but since it [lacks \(voting\) congressional representation](#), the [DC Council only determines local election districts](#).

**Primary Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Washington, DC, currently uses closed partisan primaries](#) for its congressional delegate and local elections. However, after citizens [adopted a 2024 ballot measure](#), DC will establish semi-open primaries in 2026, meaning independent voters may participate in a party primary but crossover voting is prohibited (i.e., party members cannot vote in another party’s primary).

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Washington, DC, currently does not use RCV](#) for its congressional delegate or local elections. Instead, it operates under the standard pluralistic, first-past-the-post election process. However, after citizens [adopted a 2024 ballot measure](#), DC will begin using general-election RCV in 2026.

**“Sore Loser Laws”** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Washington, DC, has a sore loser law](#) in place.

**Multimember Districts with Proportional RCV** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Washington, DC, does not use MMDs](#) to any extent in its legislative elections, and [proportional RCV is not consistently used anywhere](#) in the District.

**Money-in-Politics Reforms** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Washington, DC, has not taken steps to limit the prevalence of dark money and/or Super PACs](#) in state elections. However, [DC has implemented a hybrid partial grant and 5:1 matching public funds](#) system for small-dollar donations to local candidates.

**Term Limits** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Washington, DC, has no term limits in place](#) for its elected officials.

**Fusion Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Washington, DC, does not practice fusion voting](#) for its congressional delegate and local elections.

**Approval Voting** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

[Washington, DC, has not adopted approval voting](#) for its congressional delegate and local elections.

**Judicial Elections** (Learn more about what this means [here](#))

Because of its [limited home rule](#), the federal government generally holds authority over the [unique judicial selection process in Washington, DC](#). As such, the president appoints judges to DC courts from a list provided by DC's [judicial nominating commission](#) (JNC), a separate government body (a [mix of local and federal appointees](#), in DC's case) that provides the nominator with a list of vetted candidates for a judicial position. These DC judiciary nominees must then be approved by a majority of the US Senate. After their first term, judges undergo a performance review by the DC [Commission on Judicial Disabilities and Tenure](#) (another mix of local and federal appointees) and, depending on that commission's determination, they may be deemed "[well qualified](#)" and automatically reappointed to a new term, qualified enough for renomination and reconfirmation (should the respective authorities do so), or unqualified and barred from further service as a DC judge.

**Means of Reform:** [Citizen initiatives and referenda](#) are the most democratic means of reform in Washington, DC. The DC Council [must obtain popular approval to change the DC charter](#), but citizens can also initiate laws themselves and demand a referendum on a Council-approved law. However, citizens cannot initiate charter amendments.