

TYPES OF ELECTIONS

- **Primary vs. General**

In Pennsylvania's Primary Elections, voters choose their party's nominees to run in the General Election by casting ballots.

Pennsylvania holds closed Primary Elections, meaning you must be a member of the party to vote for that party's candidate (for example, you could not vote in the Republican primary unless you are a registered member of the Republican Party). The candidates that receive the highest number of votes in the Primary Election will be the nominee representing their party on the General Election ballot.

Primary elections in Pennsylvania are held on the third Tuesday of May in all years except Presidential years, when it is held on the fourth Tuesday of April. General Elections are always held the first Tuesday, after the first Monday, in November.

- **Presidential Elections**

The United States Constitution says that a Presidential election is to be held once every fourth year, but the Presidential election process begins long before Election Day. At least one year before the election, candidates will begin raising money and campaigning for the Presidential nomination. The person each party nominates is the candidate who ultimately secures the most convention delegates based on voting in the state's primary election. Each party then announces their nominee for President at the party's national convention.

Presidential elections are held every four years, on the first Tuesday after the first Monday of November.

The Electoral College

The Electoral College is a group of citizens (known as electors) appointed by each state to cast votes for the President and Vice President of the United States on behalf of the state's citizens. It was created to ensure that each state had a role in selecting the President. When you cast your vote for President, you are actually telling the Presidential electors who are members of the Electoral College of your state to cast their votes for that candidate. In a Presidential election, the President is elected by the Electoral College, not the popular vote. However, your vote helps decide which candidate receives your state's electoral votes.

Each state gets the same number of electoral votes as it has members of Congress. There are a total of 538 votes in the Electoral College and a candidate

must win a simple majority (270) of those votes to win the election. Pennsylvania has 20 electoral votes. Most states have a winner-take-all system, meaning that all of the state's electoral votes are pledged to the person who won the state's popular vote.

- **Special Elections**

A special election is held when someone who is already in office can no longer serve and must be replaced. All registered voters in the district can vote in a special election.