

PARTY AFFILIATION & PRIMARY ELECTIONS IN FLORIDA

Frequently Asked Questions

How does party affiliation affect the ballot I get in a primary election?

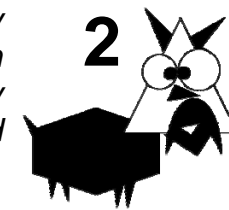
Florida is a “closed primary state.” This means that the primary elections in Florida are held so that the political parties, such as the Democrats or Republicans — or even the Surfer Party — may **nominate** their candidates for the general election. The winner of each party’s primary election goes on to the general election to face the nominees from other parties or any candidates who are running under no party affiliation.

In a closed primary election, Democratic voters vote for Democratic candidates, Republican voters vote for Republican candidates, and members of other parties vote for their parties’ candidates.

But ... there are a couple of exceptions!



1 If all candidates for an office have the same party affiliation and the winner won’t have any opposition in the general election, then all voters of all parties may vote in the primary election for that office. This is called a “Universal Primary Contest.”



2 All voters may vote for nonpartisan offices, such as judicial and school board members, and issues (like local ballot measures/referenda) that are on the primary election ballot.

If I am registered under “No Party Affiliation,” will I get to vote in the primary election?

Voters who are registered under “No Party Affiliation” (and those voters who are registered with minor parties that don’t have candidates in the primary election) may vote for Universal Primary Contests, nonpartisan offices, such as judicial and school board members, and issues (like local county or city issues/referenda) in the primary election.

How often may I change my party affiliation?

As often as you want, **up until 29 days before an election**. The voter registration books close 29 days before each election, so no party changes or new registrations can be accepted while the books are closed. Your party affiliation at the time of book closing will be your party affiliation on Election Day.

So, if I want to be a Democrat this week, a Republican next week, and then “No Party Affiliation” the next, I can?

We can’t imagine why anyone would want to change party affiliation over and over, but the answer is yes. Just remember this: During the 29-day period while the books are closed before an election, you cannot change your party.

How can I change my political party affiliation?

The **ONLY** way you can change your political party affiliation is to fill out a Florida Voter Registration Application and check the “party change” box (or by changing your party affiliation on the voter registration application at the driver license office). **Then mail or deliver the application to the Supervisor of Elections Office at least 29 days before an election.** (Applications that are postmarked before the deadline will be accepted, and changes that are made in the driver license office before the deadline will also be accepted.) If you wait longer than that, you won’t be able to change your party until **AFTER** the election.

Because Florida law requires party changes to be made ON the application and with your original signature, we cannot change your party over the telephone or accept your application by fax.

Calhoun County Supervisor of Elections, 20859 Central Avenue East, Room G-10, Blountstown, Florida 32424
Phone (850) 674-8568 ★ Fax (850) 674-2449 ★ E-mail soecalco@fairpoint.net ★ On the Web www.votecalhoun.com

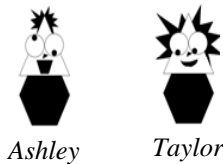
To go along with Calhoun County's annual "Goat Day" festival, let's create an elected partisan office for "Goat Agent" and look at some possible primary election scenarios.

Since our fictional "Goat Agent" will be a partisan office, candidates from any political party may run for the office, or candidates may run for the office with no party affiliation. In the **primary election**, who you can choose (vote for) for Goat Agent depends on the party you are registered with. Below are three possible combinations of candidates and their party affiliations and an explanation of how a primary election would work in each scenario. While many other scenarios are possible with different numbers of candidates or parties, these three portray some of the most common.



Primary Election—Scenario 1

TWO REPUBLICAN CANDIDATES



THREE DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES



It's a primary election, so the Republican candidates will run against each other, and only voters registered Republican will vote for them. The three Democratic candidates will run against each other, and only Democratic voters will vote for them. This is a **closed primary**.

The Republican winner in the primary election will become the Republican Party's nominee for Goat Agent for the general election. The Democratic winner will become the Democratic Party's nominee for the general election.

PRIMARY ELECTION WINNERS ("NOMINEES")

REPUBLICAN NOMINEE



DEMOCRATIC NOMINEE



In this scenario, Ashley will face Pat in the general election.

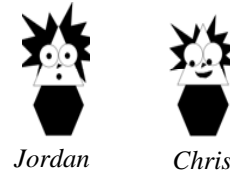
Because the primary election's Republican winner ("nominee") will run against the primary election's Democratic winner ("nominee") in the general election, both Ashley and Pat will be on the ballot for the general election. Party affiliation doesn't matter in the general election: You may vote for any candidate you wish on your ballot in the general election.

Primary Election—Scenario 2

THREE DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES



TWO "NO PARTY AFFILIATION" CANDIDATES



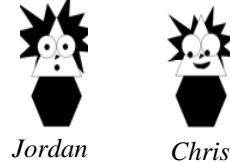
Because primary elections in Florida are nominating elections for the political parties, the candidates who are running under "No Party Affiliation" will not appear on any ballot until the general election. And since the winner of the Democratic race in this scenario will have opposition in the general election, this Democratic primary election race must be closed, meaning that only Democratic voters may vote in this race to "nominate" their candidate to go on to the general election.

PRIMARY ELECTION WINNER ("NOMINEE")



In this scenario, Pat will face Jordan and Chris in the general election. Voters will elect one of the three for Goat Agent.

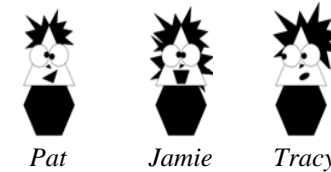
TWO "NO PARTY AFFILIATION" CANDIDATES



Your party affiliation doesn't matter in the general election: You may vote for any candidate you wish on your ballot in the general election. You may vote for Pat, Jordan or Chris in this scenario.

Primary Election—Scenario 3

THREE DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES



THERE ARE NO REPUBLICAN CANDIDATES, NO CANDIDATES RUNNING FROM ANY OTHER PARTY, NO "NO PARTY AFFILIATION" CANDIDATES, AND NO WRITE-IN CANDIDATES

It's a primary election, and the only candidates who are running are three Democrats. There are no candidates from any other political parties and there aren't any "No Party Affiliation" candidates, so the winner of this race will have no opposition in the general election. In this scenario, the Florida Constitution allows all voters of all parties (or voters registered under "No Party Affiliation") to vote in this race. This is called a **Universal Primary Contest**.

PRIMARY ELECTION WINNER



Pat

Since Pat won't have any opposition in the general election, Pat's name won't appear on the general election ballot, and Pat will automatically win the general election.

What about write-in candidates? How do they fit into the picture?

*If anyone qualifies to be a write-in candidate in a race, a blank line to write in the name will appear on the general election ballot in that race. (The write-in candidate's name will NOT be pre-printed on the ballot.) A write-in candidate creates opposition in the general election for primary election candidates running in the same race. This closes the race in the **primary election**, and voters may only vote for candidates who are running under the political party that the voters are registered under. Of course, in the general election, you may vote for any candidate of any party on your ballot.*

CHALLENGE YOURSELF! How many primary election scenarios can you come up with? How would your party affiliation affect your primary election ballot in each scenario?

