

## THE PRIMARY ELECTION AND WHAT IT MEANS

In the United States, we use two different types of presidential elections. The elections form a two-step process and are used together to determine the winner. The first of these is the **Primary Election**. This election serves as a party nomination for the political office sought by the candidates. The Primary Elections serve as the preliminary step in the process of selecting the United States president and all other candidates, whether running for Federal, State or Local Government.

Each political party holds a primary election. The winner of the party's primary election goes on to represent that party in the presidential election. After a primary winner is determined, the political party will officially nominate that winner at the party's **national convention**. This is simply a political party's official meeting, where a presidential candidate will be nominated. The Democratic and Republican national conventions are typically held in the summer of an election year and are normally large, televised events.

For example, let's say that Roe, Roberts and Ramey are all Republican presidential candidates. These three candidates will first run against each other in the Republican primary election. The winner will be officially nominated at the Republican national convention and go on to represent the Republican party in the presidential election in November.

Each political party is allowed only one candidate in the presidential election. Therefore, the primary election is the means to determine the party's one official presidential candidate. The same stands true for all other Federal, State and Local county races. The primary election does not elect any candidate for any office sought, even if the candidate is unopposed in the primary.

Different states have different rules regarding their primaries. In fact, there are four (4) different types of primary elections. The state of Texas uses **Semi-Open primaries**, where anyone of any political party affiliation may vote in any primary of their choosing but can only vote in one party primary. Let's say Mr. Roberts is our voter in a semi-open primary. Mr. Roberts must choose a primary election in which to vote. He may not vote in more than one primary election, but he can choose which party primary he desires to vote in. So, even if Mr. Roberts has always voted in the Republican primary, he can choose to vote in the Democratic primary this voting year instead and vice versa. Voting in the Democratic primary affiliates Mr. Roberts with the Democratic party for the remainder of the voting year.

(Election Code, Chapter 162, Sec. 162.003 & 162.004) Party Affiliation – A person becomes affiliated with a political party when the person is accepted to vote in the party's primary election or returns an early voted mail in ballot from either party. The affiliation is effective until the end of the voting year. What this means is that if a voter chooses to vote in the Republican primary, that voter is recognized as Republican for the remainder of the voting year. The same applies if a voter participates in the Democratic primary. This information is entered into the Texas Secretary of State Election System and the voter's voting history will reflect that the voter participated in either the Republican or the Democratic primary for that year. Voters cannot vote in one particular primary and remain affiliated with the opposite party. In other words, you cannot vote Democratic and remain Republican or vote Republican and remain Democrat for that election year. However, a voter has the right to change party affiliation in the next primary election.

After the primary elections, a **General Election** will be held in November of the election year. This is the **MAIN ELECTION**, held between the winners of the various primary elections. This election typically results in a much higher voter turnout than the primary elections. The General Election formally elects a candidate for office.

I want every voter to understand the election and voting process in regards to the Primary and General Elections. Voting is a privilege and every voter has the right to exercise their vote. Keep in mind, every vote will count. The election process, as a whole, is determined by the State of Texas and the Texas Election Code. The local county government has no control of the procedures or laws in regards to conducting elections. It is impossible to publish all the Election Codes and cover every question and/or concern that has been presented to me within this article, but I do hope that this information will be of some benefit to assist you in determining how you would like to vote. If you would like any additional information or have any questions/concerns about the voting process, please call my office (409-379-5341) and either myself or one of my Clerk's will be more than happy to assist you.

Sandra "Kay Kay" Duckworth  
Newton County Clerk