

# New York State Primaries & the February 14 Deadline

## Included in this packet:

- **FAQs**
- **Sample phone and email messages**
- **Sample Letter to Editor**
- **Sample OpEd**

## **FAQs:**

### **What is a primary election?**

A primary election is how political parties choose their nominees for the general election in November. Voters select the candidates who will represent a party on the general election ballot for offices such as mayor, state legislature, Congress, and president.

### **What does “closed primary” mean in New York State?**

New York State has a **closed primary system**. This means that **only voters who are enrolled in a political party may vote in that party’s primary**. If you are not enrolled in a party, you cannot vote in a primary unless you take action before the February 14 deadline.

### **Who can vote in a New York State primary?**

You can vote in a primary if you:

- Are a registered voter in New York State, **and**
- Are enrolled in one of the four recognized political parties holding a primary election

You may only vote in the primary of the party you are enrolled in. In other words, only Democrats can vote in Democratic primaries, only Republicans can vote in Republican primaries,

### **What if I enrolled in a different political party when I originally registered or selected “No Party”?**

Voters who did not enroll in one of the four recognized NYS political parties when they registered **cannot vote in party primaries** in New York **unless** they enroll in one of those parties by February 14, 2026.

### **What is the deadline to enroll in or change a party to vote in the June 2026 primary?**

**February 14, 2026** is the **last day** to:

- Enroll in a political party for the first time, or
- Change your party affiliation

in order to vote in the **June primary election**. If you miss this deadline, you will not be able to vote in the primary and your party choice will not take effect until after the primary. **In accordance with NYS Election Law, the Board of Elections must receive – have in hand - your voter registration form by February 14, 2026.**

## How can I check my current party enrollment?

You can:

- Go to the League's VOTE411.org to check your registration status
- Check your voter registration and party enrollment online through the New York State Board of Elections [Online Voter Registration Portal](#)

## How can I enroll in or change my party enrollment?

To change your party enrollment, you must submit a new [voter registration form](#):

- Online using the NY State Board of Elections [Online Voter Registration Portal](#)
- Online using the DMV's [Electronic Voter Registration Application](#) (by February 13). *Registrations submitted to the DMV are received by the Board of Elections the following day, meaning enrollment changes filed with the DMV must be submitted on February 13 or earlier to meet the deadline*
- Online using the voter registration form to change your party enrollment from one party to another or to enroll for the first time in a party.
- In person at your local Board of Elections office
- By Mail

An application to change one's party enrollment on line, in person, or by mail for the primary election in 2026 **must be received** by the Board of Elections no later than February 14, 2026. Any enrollment change request received *after* February 14 will not take effect until after the primary **even if it was postmarked on or before February 14, 2026**.

## Why is the February 14 deadline so early?

New York State law requires party enrollment changes to be made well in advance of primary elections. This is part of how the state administers closed primaries, but it often catches voters by surprise.

## Why are primary elections important?

In many parts of New York State, **the primary election effectively decides the winner**. When one party dominates a district, the candidate who wins that party's primary is very likely to win the general election in November. That means primaries often determine who will represent you in government.

## I always vote in November. Why should I vote in primaries?

If you skip primaries, you may miss the election where the real choice is made. Voting in primaries gives you a voice **earlier in the process**, when voters are deciding *who* will be on the ballot in November.

## Do all parties hold primaries every year?

No. A party only holds a primary for a specific office if more than one candidate is seeking that party's nomination. If you are enrolled as member of that party, you may vote in its primary if a primary does occur. Your party affiliation will be part of your voter registration record so you don't have to enroll every year. However, if you wish to

*change* your party affiliation, you must do so by the February 14 deadline in order to vote in that party's primary in that election year.

**Does the League of Women Voters support any party or candidate?**

No. The League of Women Voters is **nonpartisan**. We do not support or oppose political parties or candidates. Our mission is to **empower voters and defend democracy** by providing accurate, trusted election information.

**What is the League encouraging voters to do right now?**

The League encourages all New Yorkers to:

- Check their voter registration status
- Confirm or update their party enrollment **by February 14**
- Make a plan to vote in the primary

An informed and prepared voter is essential to a healthy democracy.

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**SAMPLE Messaging for Primaries**

**Telephone Messages:**

Hello! I am a member of the LWV (insert your local league). Primary elections will soon be here and to vote in them you must be a member of a political party. February 14, 2026 is the deadline to join or change your party. It is easy to do! Simply visit the NYS Board of Elections online voter portal. Your voice is your vote and the LWV is encouraging everyone to vote!

Hello! I am a member of the LWV (insert your local league.) The 2026 Primary Elections are around the corner and sometimes can decide an election! But to vote in the primaries you must be a member of a political party. If you are not, and would like to be, you must update your voter registration by February 14, 2026. Go to the NYS Board of Elections website to enroll in or change your party affiliation so that you can vote in the primaries. Your voice is your vote!

Hello! I am a member of the LWV (insert your local league.) Ready to vote in the primaries? Make sure you can!! You must registered as a member of a political party and Saturday, February 14 is the last day to enroll in or change your party affiliation. Go to the NYS BOE website at [elections.ny.gov](https://elections.ny.gov) to confirm or enroll in a party and make sure you can vote.

**Email:**

February 14, 2026 is not just for love! It is the last day that you can enroll in or change your political party affiliation so that you can vote in the primaries. Check out the [NYS Board of Elections website](https://elections.ny.gov) to confirm your party affiliation or change it by February 14, 2026. Your voice is your vote!

February 14 is right around the corner! It's the deadline for enrolling in or changing your political party affiliation in order to vote in the primaries. Check out <https://elections.ny.gov/voter-registration-process#register-online> to confirm or change yours. Your voice is your vote!

Are you ready to vote in the June primaries? You must be a member of a political party and Feb 14 is the last day to enroll in or change your party affiliation. Go to <https://elections.ny.gov/voter-registration-process#register-online> to make sure you can vote!

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### **SAMPLE Letter to the Editor**

Don't Forget the Primaries!

Election day, what comes to mind? Is it the November General Election? There is another Election Day that is overlooked by a majority of voters. It is the primary election day. If you thought turnout for the general election was low, it's even lower for primaries and in NYS, primaries can often decide elections.

In NYS we have a closed primary system. That means in order to participate, you need to be registered with a political party. **February 14, 2026 is the last date to enroll in a party and be able to vote in the primary in June.**

Voting in a primary is crucial because it determines which candidates will represent each political party in the general election, influencing the overall political landscape. Additionally, participating in primaries allows you to have a say in shaping party platforms and policies that affect your communities. The primaries give you a greater chance of selecting a candidate who truly aligns with your values. You can weigh in on the issues that matter to you most and shape your party's platform.

Find out about your candidate on the League's VOTE411.org. And there is nothing like spending time with candidates when they come to an event near you like a (insert name of League) candidate forum.

Voting in the primaries is a way to engage in the political process and make your voice heard. You are strengthening our democracy, ensuring that it truly represents the will of the people.

**Take Action: February 14, 2026 is the last date to enroll in a party and be able to vote in the primary in June.**

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### **SAMPLE OpEd**

## **Opinion: New York Primaries Matter and Why Voters Shouldn't Sit Them Out**

*By the League of Women Voters of New York State*

In New York State, many of the most important decisions in our democracy are made well before the general election in November during primary elections. Yet primary turnout remains consistently low, and many voters are unaware of how New York's election rules affect their ability to participate.

New York operates under a closed primary system, meaning that only voters who are enrolled in a political party may vote in that party's primary. Voters who are not affiliated with a party are excluded unless they enroll or change their party affiliation by the required deadline.

That deadline is critical. **In New York State, the last day to enroll in a political party or change party affiliation in order to vote in the June primary is February 14.** Missing this date means losing the opportunity to vote in many of the elections that will ultimately determine who holds public office.

This matters because primaries often decide the outcome of elections long before November. In many parts of New York, one political party dominates local and statewide races. As a result, the winner of that party's primary is very likely to win the general election. For offices ranging from mayor and state legislature to Congress and local judgeships, the primary election is frequently the election that counts.

Primary elections were originally created as a democratic reform. In the early 20th century, they were intended to reduce the power of party insiders and give voters a direct role in choosing candidates. Primaries were meant to expand participation, increase accountability, and strengthen democracy.

Today, however, that promise is undermined when voters are unaware of primary rules or miss early enrollment deadlines. Closed primaries can be confusing for young voters, newly naturalized citizens, and people who have recently moved. When eligible voters don't understand their options, participation narrows and representation suffers.

The League of Women Voters does not support or oppose political parties or candidates. Our mission is to **empower voters and defend democracy**. That mission includes ensuring voters understand how and when they can participate in elections especially primaries, where choices are often decided.

We want elections that truly reflect the will of the people, and urge voters to participate when decisions are made. In New York, that means going to the polls in primary elections and making sure you are eligible to vote in them.

Democracy works best when everyone participates. The League of Women Voters encourages all New Yorkers to check their voter registration, understand their options, and make their voices heard starting with the primary elections.