



JUSTICES OF THE PEACE

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ISSUE

How are justices of the peace selected and what are their duties?

SUMMARY

In Connecticut, the process of selecting a justice of the peace is prescribed by statute ([CGS §§ 9-183a](#), et. seq.). By law, two-thirds of such justices of the peace are selected by major political parties and one-third of the positions are reserved for electors who are not members of the major parties (i.e., unaffiliated voters or minor party members).

The duties of a justice of the peace are prescribed by statute. These include administering oaths, acknowledging certain legal documents, and issuing tax warrants.

JUSTICE OF THE PEACE SELECTION PROCESS

Two-thirds of a municipality's justices of the peace are selected by major political parties. A party qualifies as major if its enrolled members comprise at least 20% of all enrolled party members in the state. Only the Democratic Party and the Republican Party qualify as major political parties at this time. Thus, each party gets to select one-third of the justices of the peace in each municipality ([CGS § 9-183b](#)).

The major party candidates for justice of the peace are endorsed according to the parties' rules. The Democrats and the Republicans are endorsed by the party town committee, a caucus of enrolled party members, or party convention between the 84th and 77th days before a primary election, if applicable ([Justice of the Peace Manual](#), page 3).

The names of justice of the peace candidates do not appear on the November election ballot. However, the candidates are voted on in a primary election. The winners of the primary election are the nominees of the party and become qualified



to act as justices of the peace. If no petition is filed, the endorsed candidates become the nominees and are qualified to serve as justices of the peace ([Justice of the Peace Manual](#), page 3 and [CGS § 9-183b](#)).

Twenty-percent of the remaining one-third of the justices of the peace are selected by any "major" party that acquired that status solely because its candidate for governor received 20% of the vote in the last election. In such a case, the remaining 80% of this last one-third would be selected by minor party electors ([CGS § 9-183c](#)).

If no party qualifies as a major party based solely on gubernatorial votes, the last one-third of the positions in each municipality are selected by electors who are not members of the major parties. These minor party members and unaffiliated electors can become justices by applying to their town clerk between August 1 and November 1 of a presidential election year ([CGS § 9-184c](#)).

Justices are selected during presidential election years and serve a four-year term.

For more details on the selection process, please see the Connecticut secretary of state's [Justice of the Peace Manual](#).

DUTIES PERFORMED BY JUSTICES OF THE PEACE

The role of a justice of the peace is authorized by statute. Among other things, a justice of the peace may:

1. administer oaths ([CGS § 1-24](#)),
2. sign affidavits after administering oaths ([CGS § 1-24](#)),
3. acknowledge legal written documents ([CGS § 1-29](#)),
4. perform marriage ceremonies ([CGS § 46b-22](#)),
5. take depositions and issue subpoenas to compel witnesses to attend such depositions ([CGS § 52-148c](#)),
6. subpoenas witnesses to appear before the board of police commissioners of any municipality ([CGS § 7-279](#)), and
7. issue tax warrants ([CGS § 12-130](#)).

For more details on the duties of a justice of the peace, please see the [Justice of the Peace Manual](#).

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