

Presidential Preference Primary

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Issue

What is the date of the state's presidential preference primary and how has it changed over time? How do candidates qualify to appear on the ballot? **This report has been updated by OLR Report [2024-R-0007](#).**

Primary Date

State law requires the parties with the largest and second-largest number of enrolled members in the state to hold a presidential preference party if the names of two or more candidates are placed on the party's ballot (see below) ([CGS § 9-464](#)). The date of the primary is set by statute: currently, the law requires that it be held on the last Tuesday in April in each presidential election year ([CGS § 9-464](#)). Table 1 below shows the date of the primary from 1980-2020.

The state's presidential preference primary law was enacted in 1977 (PA 77-535) and originally set the primary date as the Tuesday after the first Monday in March. However, legislation enacted in 1979 moved the primary to the Tuesday after the fourth Monday in March, where it remained until 1996.

Table 1: Connecticut Presidential Preference Primary Dates, 1980-2020

Year	Date
1980	Tuesday after the fourth Monday in March (changed to this date by PA 79-481)
1984	Tuesday after the fourth Monday in March
1988	Tuesday after the fourth Monday in March
1992	Tuesday after the fourth Monday in March

Table 1 (continued)

Year	Date
1996	First Tuesday in March (changed to this date by PA 95-95)
2000	First Tuesday in March
2004	First Tuesday in March
2008	First Tuesday in February (changed to this date by PA 07-132)
2012	Last Tuesday in April (changed to this date by PA 11-143)
2016	Last Tuesday in April
2020	Second Tuesday in August*

*Moved to this date due to the COVID-19 pandemic ([EO 7G](#), § 1, and [EO 7BB](#), § 2)

In 2023, the legislature considered a bill ([sHB 6908](#), § 1) that would have moved the primary to the first Tuesday in April (i.e., from April 30 to April 2 in 2024). The bill passed the House (with an unrelated amendment) but was not taken up by the Senate. According to recent media reports, the legislature may convene in special session in September to consider similar legislation on this topic.

Ballot Access

State law provides two methods for candidates to appear on the presidential preference primary ballot. First, the secretary of the state, at 10:00 a.m. on the 74th day before the primary, must publicly announce a list of candidates who are to be placed on the ballot. She must include on this list anyone whose candidacy is generally and seriously advocated or recognized according to reports in the national or state news media. Any candidate included on the list may withdraw by notifying the secretary by the 36th day before the primary ([CGS §§ 9-465 & -466](#)).

If a candidate is not named by the secretary, he or she may petition onto the ballot by obtaining signatures from 1% of the party's enrolled members in the state. Petition forms must be available from the secretary beginning at noon on the 74th day before the primary and must be submitted to the party's registrar of voters for the town of the petition signers by the 53rd day before the primary. The registrars must verify the signatures on each petition page and forward them to the secretary by the 49th day before the primary. The secretary must tabulate the signatures by the 46th day before the primary ([CGS §§ 9-465 to -469](#)).

By law, the secretary must determine, by lot, the order in which candidates' names appear on the ballot. She must do so in a public ceremony on the 35th day before the primary. The category "uncommitted" must appear last on the ballot ([CGS § 9-470](#)).

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