



# CANDIDATE HANDBOOK



## **Representing Agriculture in Government**

**We need farmers like YOU to pursue positions in office and further promote and serve the agriculture community. This handbook is intended to inform members about elected and appointed positions that offer opportunities for representing agriculture in local government.**

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# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- MFB Elections & AgriPac Webpage: [mfbfoc.com/MFBagriPac](http://mfbfoc.com/MFBagriPac)
- MFB Academy for Political Leadership Webpage: [mfbfoc.com/MFBAPL](http://mfbfoc.com/MFBAPL)
- MFB Elections Handbook: [michfb.com/agriculture/political-action/elections-agripac](http://michfb.com/agriculture/political-action/elections-agripac)
- MFB Candidate Evaluation Committee Handbook: [mfbfoc.com/CECPlanningGuide](http://mfbfoc.com/CECPlanningGuide)

# GLOSSARY

**Academy for Political Leadership:** A program designed to give county Farm Bureau members the tools they need to engage in government, represent agriculture and positively influence the legislative process.

 For more information visit [mfbfoc.com/MFBAPL](http://mfbfoc.com/MFBAPL).

**AgriPac:** Michigan Farm Bureau's political action committee focused on electing Friends of Agriculture. AgriPac is funded by the financial support of Michigan Farm Bureau members.

 For more information visit [mfbfoc.com/MFBagriPac](http://mfbfoc.com/MFBagriPac).

**Ballot Proposal:** Also known as a ballot initiative, a ballot proposal is a means by which citizens may propose to create, amend, or repeal a state law or constitutional provision through collecting petition signatures from a certain minimum number of registered voters.

**Candidate:** An individual running for political office.

**Candidate Evaluation Committees:** This committee evaluates state and national candidates who, if elected or reelected to public office, will represent all or a portion of their county. Following their evaluation, the committee will decide which candidate for a specific public office to recommend for an AgriPac endorsement. These committees can also evaluate local candidates at the discretion of the county Farm Bureau board of directors.

**Constituents:** A person who is represented politically by a designated government official or officeholder, especially when the official is one that the person represented has the opportunity to participate in selecting through voting or through other methods of indicating political confidence and support.

**Democratic Party:** One of the two main U.S. political parties (the other being the Republican Party), which follows a liberal program, tending to promote a strong central government and expansive social programs.

**General Election:** Voters determine which candidates will occupy the offices that are up for election. Voters can vote for any candidate and on any ballot issues regardless of their political party.

**Libertarian Party:** A political party in the U.S. that promotes civil liberties, non-interventionism, laissez-faire capitalism, and limiting the size and scope of government.

**Partisan:** A strong supporter of a political party.

**Party Platform:** A statement of political party principles and goals.

**Political Party:** An organization of people who share the same views about the way power should be used in a country or society through government, policy-making, etc.

**Primary Election:** Voters narrow the field of candidates to one individual who will represent each party in the subsequent General Election. In Michigan's primary, voters do not need to register as a member of a particular political party prior to election day. They have the option of voting in either party's primary, so long as they only vote for candidates from one party.

**Political Convention:** A meeting of delegates of a political party at the local, state, or national level to select the party's nominee for office such as president, adopt a party platform, and adopt rules for the party's activities, including the presidential nominating process for the next election cycle.

**Republican Party:** One of the two main U.S. political parties (the other being the Democratic Party), favoring a conservative stance, limited central government, and a strong national defense.

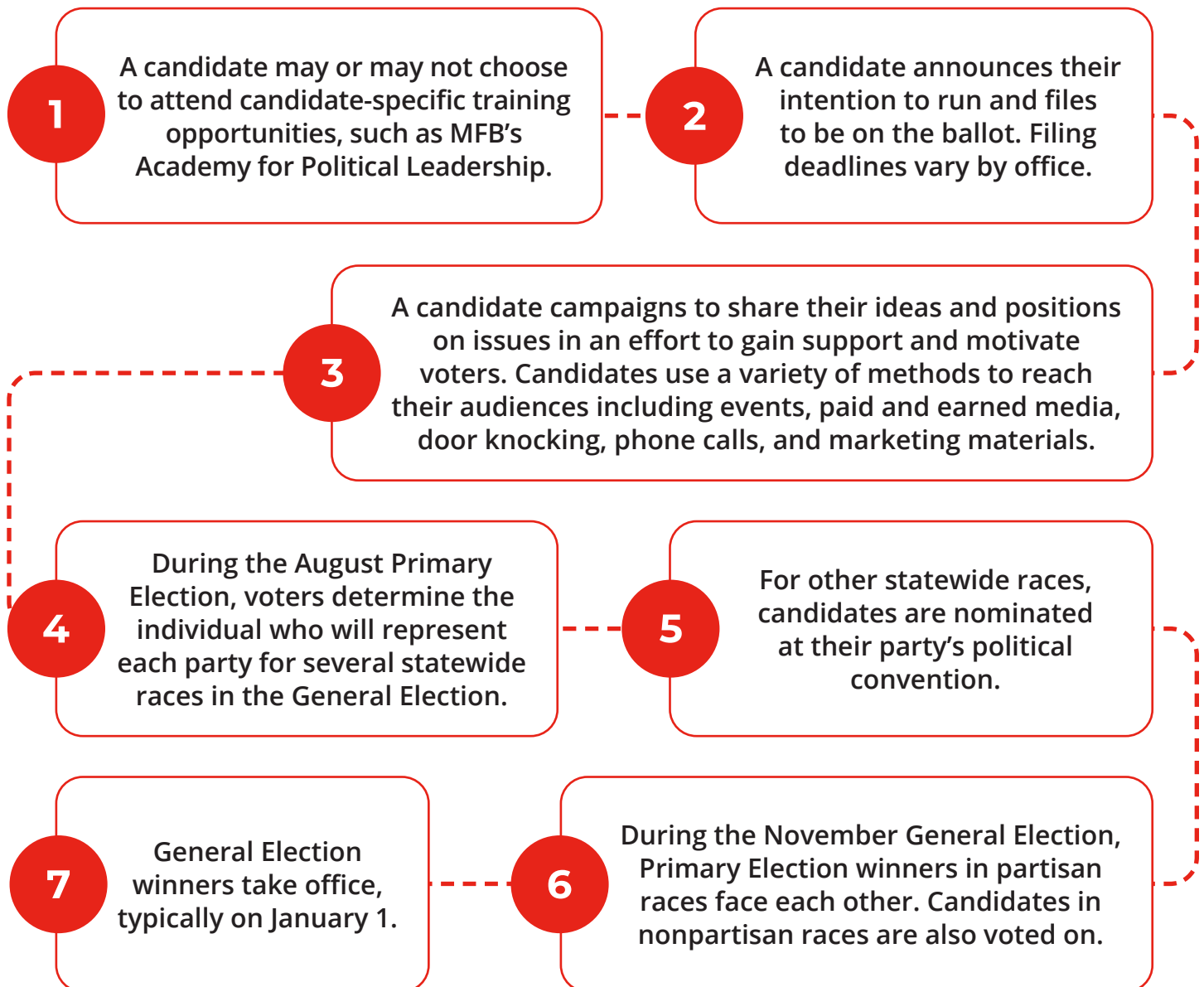
**Special Elections:** Special elections are held when someone in office can no longer serve. This may happen when someone resigns, dies, or gets removed from office. Voters must select someone to replace that person. Special elections may be held during a general election, during a primary election, or on a different day designated by the elections office.

# WHAT ARE ELECTIONS AND WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

As American citizens, we have the right to select candidates who will best represent us in government. An election is a process to determine the individuals who will make decisions for us. Those decisions can impact your life and your farm.

Different decisions are made at different levels of government. Some elections are partisan meaning a political party is responsible for selecting the candidates. Other elections are nonpartisan, meaning the candidates do not list an affiliated party on the ballot. To select our representatives in government, registered voters cast their ballots during an election.

## ELECTION PROCESS



# TYPES OF ELECTIONS

## **Primary Elections**

The Republican and Democratic parties typically select a single nominee for the offices which will be elected at the upcoming General Election. Each party determines which candidate they will throw their support behind based on the outcome of the Primary Election.

In a Primary Election, voters narrow the field of candidates to one individual who will represent each party in the subsequent General Election. Republicans run against Republicans and Democrats run against Democrats.

In Michigan's primary, voters do not need to register as a member of a particular political party prior to election day. They have the option of voting in either party's primary, so long as they only vote for candidates from that party. Remember to only vote in one column, Republican or Democratic, or your ballot will not be counted!

A regular Primary Election is held in August of even-numbered years. Special Primary Elections are held as needed.

## **General Election**

The General Election determines which candidates will occupy the offices that are up for election. Both partisan and nonpartisan races appear on the General Election ballot. In the General Election, registered voters can vote for any candidate and on any ballot issues regardless of their political party. A regular General Election is held in November of even-numbered years. Special general elections are held as needed.

## **Special Election**

Special elections are held when someone in office can no longer serve. This may happen when someone resigns, dies, or gets removed from office. Voters must select someone to replace that person. Special elections may be held during a general election, during a primary election, or on a different day designated by the elections office.

## WHO CAN VOTE?

At the time of voting, an individual must be:

**Registered to vote  
in Michigan**



**18 years old**



**A U.S. citizen**



**Not currently serving a  
jail or prison sentence**



**A resident of Michigan and the city or township  
in which they are registered for at least 30 days**



## HOW DO I REGISTER TO VOTE?

An individual must be registered PRIOR to voting. There are several ways to register to vote (or to update an existing registration), including:

- **Online:** With a valid Michigan Driver's license you can register to vote or update your voter registration online at [mivc.sos.state.mi.us/registervoter](https://mivc.sos.state.mi.us/registervoter).
- **By mail:** Individuals can mail a completed voter registration application to their city or township clerk. Download the application at [tinyurl.com/MI-voter-registration-app](https://tinyurl.com/MI-voter-registration-app).
- **In person:** Individuals can register to vote in person at the Secretary of State's office, their local clerk's office, or public assistance offices.

The deadline to register to vote and be able to vote in an upcoming election is 15 days before the election if you are registering using any method other than in-person with your local clerk. Once you get within 14 days of an election, including up to 8 p.m. on Election Day, you can only register to vote in person at your local clerk's office.



# WHAT IS VOTED ON?

## Candidates

Voting is how candidates are elected to public office, where they make decisions on behalf of their constituents. Elected positions range from local-level offices, like a township trustee, all the way up to national-level offices, like the President of the United States.

## Issues

Issues can also be voted on during an election. Examples could include:

- Funding for things such as local essential services, infrastructure, and 4-H and MSU Extension;
- Local issues such as zoning proposals; or
- Statewide ballot proposals.

### Be an informed voter!

Scan the QR code or visit  
[mvic.sos.state.mi.us/PublicBallot/Index](https://mvic.sos.state.mi.us/PublicBallot/Index)  
to learn what will be on your ballot.



# WAYS TO VOTE

## Absentee Voting

Due to the passage of statewide ballot proposal 3 of 2018, all registered voters in Michigan can now vote using an absentee ballot without providing a reason. You can vote by absentee ballot through the mail, without leaving your home. You can also go to your local clerk's office or drop box to return your absentee ballot, which is recommended if you are returning a ballot within two weeks of Election Day in order to avoid possible postal delays. To learn more about absentee voting and apply for an absentee ballot, visit [mvic.sos.state.mi.us/Home/VoteAtHome](https://mvic.sos.state.mi.us/Home/VoteAtHome).

## Vote In Person

Registered voters must go to their local polling location to vote in person on Election Day. Polls are open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. local time. You have the right to vote if you are in line by 8 p.m. You will be asked to show ID when you check in to vote. If you don't have one, you can still vote — expect a poll worker to ask you to sign a form before you vote that explains you didn't have an ID. Your ballot will be included with all others and counted on Election Day.

# ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT POSITIONS

This section outlines the roles and responsibilities of various elected and appointed local government positions. The amount of time commitment these positions require varies greatly by the size of township or county. Salary for these positions also varies from township to township and county to county. We recommend that you do your own research to learn about the time requirement and compensation for any specific position.

Scan the QR codes to read about Michigan Farm Bureau members serving in these positions.

## Township Positions

**Township Supervisor:** Chairs all township board meetings, in some townships is the main tax assessing officer, sets budgets and appoints some commission members.



**Treasurer:** Collects taxes, keeps records of revenue and expenditures, issues township checks, deposits funds, invests revenue in approved depositories and maintains bank records.

**Township Clerk:** Keeper of township records, records township meeting minutes, keeps general ledger, responsible for voter registration and elections, prepares financial statements, maintains ordinance book and is responsible for special meeting notices.



**Township Trustee:** Essentially serves as a township legislator and is required to vote on all issues while also being responsible for the financial health of the township and may be appointed to other commissions and committees by the township board.

**Township Planning Commissioner:** Appointed by the township to serve as advisors to the township board on land use-related issues and has the responsibility to develop a master plan. Responsible for approving site plans and reviewing special use permit applications. Also plans commission meetings, which are the main forum for discussion over changes to zoning ordinances and maps.



## County Positions

**County Sheriff:** Elected official who is responsible for enforcing the law of the land.

**County Road Commissioner:** Seventy five percent of roads fall under the jurisdiction of a countywide government known as the road commission, which is responsible for maintaining roads and bridges. In some Michigan counties, the road commission is appointed by the board of commissioners. In other counties, the road commission is an elected position decided by voters.



**Drain Commissioner:** Manages stormwater maintenance and drainage. Sometimes has legal management of lake levels and is involved in wastewater systems.



**County Commissioner:** Helps develop county-level ordinances, budgetary priorities and legislative policy.



**School Board:** Responsible for all school district operations including the education of students through developing curriculum standards, providing for the safety and welfare of students, management of school property, approving contracts for school employees and contractors, and making joint agreements and cooperative arrangements.



## Other

**Precinct Delegate:** The office of precinct delegate is a partisan position for both the Democratic and Republican parties that helps to elect county party chairs and officers as well as delegates to the state and national party conventions.

