



VERMONT DEMOCRACY AND YOU

Voting: A Primer

Voting is our clearest civic duty. Yet in the United States, often fewer than 50% of those eligible, vote in general elections. Here in Vermont, participation rates are usually higher, but the fact remains: thousands of eligible Vermont voters let someone else decide who will govern them. Your opinion is important, and your participation is needed.

To be eligible to vote in Vermont, you must be at least 18 years old and a resident of Vermont. When you first move to Brandon, you must fill out a voter registration form and mail or deliver it to the town clerk. It's easy to register by stopping in at Town Hall during regular business hours. You may also register and change addresses at My Voter Page found here: <https://mvp.vermont.gov/>

Many people register to vote when they apply for a driver's license or a car registration (a program dubbed "**Motor Voter**"). If you register to vote at the Department of Motor Vehicles or any other State agency, double-check with the Town Clerk at least two weeks before the next election to make sure your registration form was received.

Voters who are added will be notified by mail. If you have registered but do not receive confirmation before voting day that your name has been added, contact the Town Clerk.

Brandon citizens vote on Town Meeting Day (first Tuesday in March) and on Election Day (first Tuesday after the first Monday in November). They also vote in party primaries (second Tuesday in August), the Presidential Preference Primary (every four years on Town Meeting Day), and in special elections warned to decide a particular question, such as whether to borrow money for a specific purpose or update the Town Plan.

Local Ballots (Town) and General Election Ballots will be mailed to all Active voters. If voters want to vote on School ballots or in the Vermont Primary, they must request an early ballot or come to the polls and vote.

Contact the Town Clerk for voting location. Voting is always wheelchair accessible, and Brandon can accommodate other accessibility issues as well. Brandon uses paper ballots.

The polls are usually open from 10 a.m. until 7 pm. On Town Meeting Day, Brandon voters not only may vote at the polls for town officers, municipal budgets and OVUUSD budgets via Australian (printed paper) ballot, but also attend the evening Town Meeting to discuss and vote on other issues warned on the agenda. See "A Voter's Guide to Town Meeting Procedures" section.

When you enter the polling place to vote, you will be asked to give your name and address to a poll worker and will be given paper ballots for state and local races. You then step into a voting booth or sit behind a screen and vote in private. After you mark your ballots, you will be asked for your name one more time before you deposit the ballots in the ballot box. Even though the poll workers may know you, they are required to ask for your name and address and to make certain it is on the voter checklist.

The ballots are counted by tabulator and by members of the Board of Civil Authority and volunteers shortly after the polls close. The results of the election are usually available within two to three hours. Maintaining a cadre of

volunteer poll workers is essential to the integrity of elections. If you are interested in volunteering to help with the tasks that keep democracy strong in Brandon, contact the Town Clerk.

State and Federal Representatives

State Representatives

Beginning with the 2022 general election, Brandon will elect a single **State Representative for the Rutland-9 legislative district**, and join with the other towns in Rutland County to elect **three State Senators**. These are your representatives in Vermont's legislature, formally known as the General Assembly.



Ethan Allen was known as one of Vermont's greatest statesmen.

The General Assembly meets at the State House in Montpelier, usually from early January through mid-May (sometimes later). It enacts and amends State laws and, each year, must appropriate funds for the operations of State programs. Vermont's legislative session is biennial, which means that it extends over two years; the first half takes place during an odd-numbered year, and the second half takes place the following year. A budget must be passed every year.

Unlike many states in which being a legislator is a full-time job, Vermont still has a "citizen legislature," people who have other occupations during the rest of the year. In addition to dealing with legislative issues, legislators can sometimes help you in dealing with State agencies. All legislators do "case work" for their constituents and can be powerful allies in problem solving.

The Vermont Legislative Home Page is at: www.leg.state.vt.us Information you'll find at this site: scheduled committee meetings; bills, calendars, and journals; the legislative bill tracking system; text of bills and other legislative documents; minutes of selected committee meetings.

Federal Representatives

Vermont has two U.S. Senators and one Representative to Congress. These leaders want to hear your views, and can offer valuable help in problem solving.

Vermont Voter Rights

You may see a ballot in advance.

- The Town Clerk has sample ballots for you to see at least ten days before the election.

You have a right to assistance.

- You may bring a person of your choice into the voting booth with you to help you vote. (Not your employer or union representative.)
- You can get help marking the ballot. Ask an election official for assistance. Two election officials will help you. But no one can tell you how to vote!
- You can bring a magnifying glass or other device to help you vote.
- If you are disabled or ill, you may ask the election officials to bring a ballot out to your car.
- You may bring a list of candidates into the voting booth to help you vote. (You may not show your list to other voters or leave it in the booth.)

You can vote early or vote from home. Some ballots will be mailed automatically.

- You can vote at the Town Clerk's office or take a ballot home to vote anytime 30 days before the election. Call the Town Clerk or sign a request for and the Clerk will send you a ballot by mail. Town Election ballots and General Election ballots will be mailed to all Active registered voters.

You can get a new ballot if you make a mistake.

- If you give your first ballot to an election official you can get another ballot to vote. You can get up to three ballots.

You may write-in a candidate.

- If you wish to vote for a candidate who is not listed, write the name of the candidate on the write-in line. Or you may place a sticker with the candidate's name on the write-in line.

Your ballot is private.

- No one has the right to see how you voted or to ask you how you voted. Cast your ballot by folding and placing your ballot in the ballot box.

Please ask questions.

- Election officials are here to help you understand how to vote. They cannot help you decide who to vote for, and they may not tell you candidate names or party designations.
- If you are not sure that you are being properly assisted, ask to speak to the presiding officer.