

MODELING POSSIBLE CHANGES TO THE ELECTION CALENDAR (HJ 48 STUDY)

STATE ADMINISTRATION AND VETERANS' AFFAIRS INTERIM COMMITTEE
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INTRODUCTION

As part of the State Administration and Veterans' Affairs Interim Committee's work on the [HJ 48 study of moving the date of the federal primary election](#), the committee is discussing possible changes to the current election schedule, including shifting both the date of the federal primary and the regular school election. This memo and the attached models provide a rough sketch of what these changes might look like and are intended as a reference point for committee members as they continue their discussion.

CURRENT ELECTION SCHEDULE

Under the current schedule, the school election is held yearly on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in May ([20-20-105, MCA](#)) and the primary election is held in even-numbered years before a general election on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in June ([13-1-107, MCA](#)). The current date for the school election was set in 1999 and the date for the primary election was set in 1979.

POSSIBLE CHANGES IDENTIFIED BY COMMITTEE

At the November 2025 meeting, committee members requested models of the following possible changes to the current election schedule:

- Scenario #1: Keep the primary and the school elections separate, but make them both earlier by about a month
- Scenario #2: Keep the primary and the school elections separate, but move the primary earlier and the school election later
- Scenario #3: Combine the primary and school elections and move them earlier
- Scenario #4: No changes

Beginning on the next page, there are 3 models that reflect scenarios #1-#3. The models were created by staff based on the [2026 SOS Primary and General Election Calendar](#) and the [2026 OPI School Election Calendar](#). The models do not include any dates associated with the general election and only include dates related to regular school elections.

SCENARIO #1: KEEP PRIMARY & SCHOOL ELECTIONS SEPARATE AND MOVE EACH A MONTH EARLIER

School Election: Tuesday, April 4, 2028

Primary Election: Tuesday, May 2, 2028

School dates in gray boxes; Primary dates in white boxes; Election days in yellow boxes; Overlap dates in blue boxes

DATE	ACTIVITIES	REFERENCE
NOVEMBER '27		
Sun, November 7, 2027	Date by which a candidate for a legislative position must be a resident of Montana	For at least one year preceding the general election <i>Article V, Part V, Sect. 4 MT Constitution</i>
Thursday, November 11, 2027	<p>Trustees call for an election. The trustees must pass a resolution stating:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) the date of the election; 2) the purpose of the election; 3) whether the election will be by mail or poll; 4) the voting locations and boundaries for each location, if there are multiple locations within a district (if changed from a previous school election the new locations must be specifically noted); and 5) the time the polls will open, if before noon. <p>The trustees do NOT have to set levy amounts at this time; however, they must be set in time for the clerk to certify the ballot (not less than 40 days before the election). The resolution must be delivered to the county election administrator within 3 days of passage, but it need NOT be posted. The trustees must also appoint three election judges per precinct.</p> <p>Request for a mail ballot election must be sent from trustees to the election administrator. Exception: Even if no request is received, the election administrator could decide to request a mail ballot election.</p>	Not less than 145 days before election 13-19-202, 13-19-203, 20-9-422, 20-20-201, 20-20-203
Monday, November 15, 2027	Last day to file resolutions for school election with county election administrator. To assist with the provisions of late registration, include the name and best contact number for the district's election administrator with the resolution.	At least 142 days before (within 3 days of passage of the election resolution) 20-20-201(2)(a)

Thursday, November 11, 2027 - Monday, January 10, 2028	Trustee candidates file for election. A Declaration of Intent and Oath of Candidacy must be filed with district clerk (regardless of who is running the election). NO CANDIDATE MAY APPEAR ON THE BALLOT UNLESS THE CANDIDATE MEETS THIS DEADLINE.	No earlier than 145 days, or later than 85 days before 13-10-201, 20-3-305
DECEMBER '27		
Friday, December 31, 2027	Deadline for a new political party to submit a minor party petition to county EAs	No later than 4 weeks before the final date for filing the petition with the SOS (January 28) 13-10-606(3)
JANUARY '28		
Monday, January 10, 2028	Last day trustee candidates may withdraw from the election. Any candidate that has already filed for election, but wishes to withdraw their name, may do so by sending a statement of withdrawal to the election administrator.	85 days before election 20-3-305(3)(a)
Tuesday, January 18, 2028	Candidate filing opens at 8:00 a.m.	No sooner than 105 days before the election 13-10-201(7), 13-1-403(1,2), 13-1-502(1,2), HB 207 (2025)
Monday, January 24	Deadline for the county governing body to pass a resolution to change precinct boundaries	Not within 100 days before any primary or between a general and primary election 13-13-102
Tuesday, January 25	Deadline for amendments to election resolutions. The trustees may amend an election resolution passed at least 145 days prior to the election. Financial considerations not indicated in the initial resolution may be included in an amendment.	At least 70 days before election 20-20-201
Friday, January 28	Deadline for the SOS to receive verified new political party qualification petitions from county election administrators	At least 95 days before the primary 13-10-609(2)
Monday, January 31	Deadline for write-in candidate for a trustee position on a school board to file Declaration of Intent (must be filed with the district clerk, regardless of who is running the election).	Not later than 5pm the 65th day before the election 20-3-305(2)(b)

FEBRUARY '28

Wednesday, February 2	Candidate filing closes - 5:00 p.m. deadline	No sooner than 90 days before the election 13-10-201(7), 13-1-403(1,2), 13-1-502(1,2), 13-10-211(1), HB 207 (2025)
	Candidate filing closes for write-in candidates for the primary - 5:00 p.m. deadline	
	Last day for candidates to withdraw from the primary election - 5:00 p.m. deadline	A candidate may not withdraw after the filing deadline 13-10-325(1)(b)
Friday, February 4	<p>Election administrator posts mail ballot election plan/timetable/sample instructions.</p> <p>--For elections conducted by the school district: publish the mail ballot plan in a newspaper of general circulation, if one in the district and/or in 3 public places AND publish on the school district website, if active.</p> <p>--For elections conducted by the county election office: publish on the county election office website or other means of publication OR follow the publication instructions for elections conducted by school districts.</p> <p>Failure to publish plans by this date and in this manner default to a polling place election. School districts conducting their own elections must send a copy of the plan to the county election administrator.</p>	At least 60 days before the election 13-19-205
Monday, February 7	<p>Deadline for governing bodies to call for a local government election to be held on the date of the primary election</p> <p>Notice of close of regular registration. The county election administrator publishes the notice of close of regular registration for school districts at least 3 times in the 4 weeks preceding the close of regular registration. Contact the county election administrator to coordinate that publication.</p>	<p>No sooner than 85 days after a resolution calling for an election 13-1-405</p> <p>4 weeks preceding the close of regular registration 13-2-301</p>
Within 5 days of filing for office	Candidates file appropriate campaign paperwork with the COPP	Within 5 days of filing for office 13-37-201(2)
Friday, February 11	Deadline for the COPP to notify the SOS and EAs of the names of any candidates whose names may not appear on the official ballot because they have not complied with the provisions of MCA Title 13, Chapter 37	2 calendar days before the certification deadline 13-37-126(5)(b)(i)

Monday, February 14	Deadline for the SOS to certify for the ballot the names and designations of statewide and state district candidates to EAs to certify for the ballot the names of local candidates and local ballot issues	10 days after the close of candidate filing 13-10-208
By Monday, February 14	<p>If an EA determines a local primary election is unnecessary, they shall notify the governing body in writing. The governing body may cancel the election by resolution.</p> <p>If the governing body decides that a local nonpartisan election must be held, they must require it by resolution.</p> <p>An EA may give notice that a party's precinct committee election will not be held in that precinct by this date</p>	13-1-403(4) Not more than 10 days after the close of candidate filing 13-14-115(3) 13-38-201(4)(a)
Thursday, February 24	<p>Election administrator certifies ballot. The election administrator prepares the final ballot form, listing all candidates and propositions to be voted upon. The ballot must then be delivered to the election administrator, if other than the clerk.</p> <p>Trustees must pass a resolution stating exact levy amounts by this date for the clerk to certify the ballot. This resolution must include the durational limit, if any, on the levy.</p>	Not less than 40 days before the election 20-20-401
Thurs., February 24 - Sat., March 25	<p>Notice of election is posted. The election notice must be published in a newspaper of general circulation in the district if available, posted in at least three public places in the district AND posted on the district's website for the 10 days prior to the election, if the district has an active website. Notice using any other recognized media may be used to supplement the posting. The notice must include:</p> <p>1) the date and voting locations for the election; 2) voting location hours; 3) each proposition to be considered by the electorate; 4) the number of trustee positions, if any, subject to election and the length of the terms for those positions; 5) where and how absentee ballots may be obtained; and 6) where and how late registrants may obtain a ballot on election day.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the polling place has changed from the previous school election, that change must be referred to in the notice. • If more than one proposition will be considered in the same district, each proposition must be set apart and identified or placed in separate notices. 	Not less than 10 days, or more than 40 days before 20-20-204

Tuesday, February 29	Deadline for mail ballot amendments. The plan may be amended by the election administrator at any time prior to the 35th day before election day by publishing in the same manner as the original mail ballot plan.	Not more than 35 days before 13-19-205
MARCH '28		
Friday, March 3	Election by Acclamation and Cancellation of Election - Notice. If the number of candidates filing a nomination petition or filing a declaration of intent to be a write-in candidate is equal to or less than the number of open trustee positions to be elected, the trustees cancel the trustee election. They must then give notice that a trustee election will not be held. The trustee election may not be declared by acclamation until all candidate filing deadlines have passed. Send a copy to the county election administrator to aid with the provisions of late registration.	Not less than 30 days before 20-3-313
	Deadline to notify election judges of appointment.	No later than the 30th day before 13-4-101
Monday, March 6	Close of regular voter registration. Registration forms postmarked by this date and received within 3 days are accepted for regular registration. Late registration must be completed at the county election office.	30 days before any election 13-2-301
	Contact your county election administrator for the absentee ballot list.	Not more than 30 days before 13-13-212, 20-20-312
	Performance Testing and Certification of Voting System. The election administrator must publicly test and certify that the system is performing properly.	Not more than 30 days before election 13-17-212
No earlier than Monday, March 6	EAs must publish or broadcast a notice specifying the day regular voter registration will close and the availability of late registration.	3 times in the 4 weeks preceding the close of regular registration (April 3) 13-2-301(1)(b)
Tuesday, March 7	Start of Late Registration. Late voter registration starts and continues through election day. Late registration must be completed at the office of the county election administrator.	Day after Close of Regular Registration 13-2-304
Wednesday, March 15	Absentee ballots available. The election administrator prepares ballots for absentee voters. Remember to enclose four things in the absentee package. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ballot, stamped official ballot (with stub removed); • Instructions for voting and returning the ballot; • A secrecy envelope, free of marks that would identify the voter; and • A self-addressed, return envelope with affirmation printed on the back of the envelope (affirmation must include a line for signature AND the elector's date of birth). 	At least 20 days before election 13-13-214, 20-20-401

Wed. March 15 - Mon., March 20	<p>Mail ballots mailed. If conducting a mail ballot election, all ballots must be mailed on the same day (the day noted in the district's mail ballot plan). If an inactive elector reactivates after the ballots are mailed, the elector should be provided with or mailed a ballot. If the elector reactivates after noon on the day before election day, the elector must come in on election day to receive a ballot.</p>	<p>Not before the 20th day or later than the 15th day 13-19-207</p>
Friday, March 17	<p>EAs must send ballots to absent military and overseas electors as soon as the ballot is printed and no later than this date.</p>	<p>As soon as the ballot is printed but not later than 45 days in advance of the election. 13-35-205(2)</p> <p>No later than the business day preceding the 45th day 13-21-224</p>
	<p>County central committees of parties eligible to nominate candidates in the primary election submit to the EAs a list of electors to serve as election judges</p>	<p>At least 45 days before the election 13-4-102</p>
Thurs., March 23 - Sun., April 2	<p>Absentee/Mail Ballot Counting Notice. Districts must publish in a newspaper of general circulation in the county a notice indicating the method that will be used for counting absentee/mail ballots and the place and time that the absentee/mail ballots will be counted on election day. <i>This notice may be combined with the Publication of Information Concerning Voting Systems, the Polling Location Accessibility Notice and/or with the Notice of Election if the notice is published between the 12th and 10th day prior to the election.</i></p>	<p>Not more than 12 days or less than 2 days before the election 13-15-105</p>
	<p>Publication of Information Concerning Voting Systems. Districts shall broadcast on radio or television or publish in a newspaper of general circulation in the county a diagram showing the voting system to be used by voters and a sample ballot (newspaper only), a statement of location of where the voting system to be used is on public display, and instructions on how to vote. <i>This notice may be combined with the Absentee/Mail Ballot Counting Notice, the Polling Location Accessibility Notice, and/or with the Notice of Election if the notice is published between the 12th and 10th day prior to the election.</i></p>	<p>Not more than 12 days or less than 2 days before 13-17-203</p>
Sat., March 25 - Sun., April 2	<p>Polling Location Accessibility Notice. Districts must publish in a newspaper of general circulation in the county a statement of the location of the polling places and whether each location is accessible or inaccessible. <i>This notice may be combined with the Absentee/Mail Ballot Counting Notice, the Publication of Information Concerning Voting Systems, and/ or with the Notice of Election if the notice is published on the 10th day prior to the election.</i></p>	<p>Not more than 10 days or less than 2 days before 13-3-105, 13-3-207</p>

APRIL '28

Sunday, April 2	Date by which legislative candidates must be a resident in the appropriate county, if it contains one or more districts, or a legislative district, if it contains all or parts of more than 1 county	For 6 months preceding the general election <i>Article V, Part V, Sect. 4, MT Constitution</i>
Monday, April 3	Close of regular voter registration (registration forms postmarked by this date and received within 3 days are accepted for regular registration)	For 30 days before any election 13-2-301
	Absentee ballots must be available 30 days prior to election day for absentee voting in person	30 days prior to election day 13-13-205
	Beginning of the period during which EAs publicly test and certify that each type of voting system used in an election is performing properly. Reminder: An EA shall test all central count vote tabulation machines to be used if automatic tabulation begins pursuant to 13-13-241(7)(a), the day before the election.	No more than 30 days prior to an election 13-17-212
	Deadline for the county governing body to designate the polling place for each precinct and to appoint 3 or more election judges for each precinct, 1 of whom must be designated chief judge	No later than 30 days before a primary election 13-3-105, 13-4-101
	By Noon - Deadline for absentee ballot requests. Voters who wish to vote absentee may request an absentee ballot in writing or in person until noon the day before the election.	Day before (By Noon) 13-13-211, 13-13-214
	Deliver certified copy of the lists of registered electors. Before the day of election, the county election administrator shall deliver a certified copy of the lists of registered electors for each voting location to the district. The district shall deliver them to the election judges prior to the opening of a voting location.	Day before 20-20-313

Tuesday, April 4 SCHOOL ELECTION	<p>Late registration begins - Primary Election</p> <p>During late registration, those wishing to register or change their voter information and vote in this federal election may only do so before 5:00 p.m. on Friday before the election, Saturday before the election, or before noon on Election Day.</p> <p>To vote in the election, late registrants must obtain their ballot in person from the location designated by the EA.</p>	After the close of regular registration 13-2-304, SB 490 (2025)
	<p>SCHOOL ELECTION DAY. The election administrator must prepare the polling places, printed ballots, ensure election judges are present, and conduct a fair and unbiased election.</p> <p>Notify election judges of the names of write-in candidates</p>	Title 13 20-20-105 20-20-401 20-20-411
Thursday, April 6	Registration forms postmarked by April 3 and received by this date are accepted for regular registration.	For 3 days after regular registration is closed 13-2-301(3)
Friday, April 7	Ballots are mailed to electors on the absentee list.	25 days prior to election day 13-13-205, 13-13-214
Monday, April 10	After 3p.m. - The first date that provisional ballots may be counted. Following the election, unresolved provisional ballots are sealed. These ballots may not be opened until after 3pm on the 6th day after election. The election judges convene, and a determination is made as to whether the ballots are counted. If there are provisional ballots in a school election, the canvass may not occur until after all provisional ballots are resolved.	No sooner than 3pm on the 6th day after the election 13-15-107
Prior to the primary election	Any judge serving in the 2028 elections must attend training and obtain a certificate of completion. A certificate is current if obtained prior to the primary election in an even-numbered year.	Before each election 13-4-203
	The county governing body appoints at least 3 individuals to serve on the county post-election audit committee.	Prior to each federal election 13-17-504
Thursday, April 13	Deadline for EAs to enter into the statewide voter registration system all voter registration applications received by the regular registration deadline.	No later than 5 working days after the regular registration deadline 13-2-115
After April 13	SOS certifies the official statewide voter registration list.	13-2-115(2)

Thurs., April 20-Sun., April 30	EAs must publish or broadcast: a diagram showing a voting system used by voters and a sample of the ballot layout (in newspaper only), a statement of the locations where voting systems to be used by voters are on public exhibition, and instructions on how to vote	Not more than 12 days or less than 2 days before an election 13-37-203, SB 115 (2025)
	EAs must publish or broadcast a notice indicating the method that will be used for counting absentee ballots and the place and time that the absentee ballots will be counted on election day	Not more than 12 days or less than 2 days before an election 13-15-105, SB 115 (2025), 13-15-206, 13-15-207
Sat., April 22 - Fri., April 28	EAs must publish, or broadcast, locations of the precinct polling places, including accessibility designations for each polling place.	Not more than 10 days or less than 2 business days before an election 13-3-105(2), 13-3-207
Tuesday, April 25	Deadline for independent and minor party candidates to submit signed petitions to county EAs	1 week before the deadline for filing 13-10-503(1)
Thursday, April 27	EAs in counties with 8,000 or more registered electors or 5,000 or more absentee electors, may, at their option, conduct any early preparation of absentee ballots	Not sooner than 3 business days before election day 13-13-241(7)
Friday, April 28	Beginning of period for printing of primary election precinct register	Friday before each election 13-2-116
	After 5:00 p.m. - Beginning of period for qualified electors who are prevented from voting at the polls as a result of illness or health emergency, occurring between 5:00 p.m. of the Friday before the election and before the close of polls on election day, to request to vote by special absentee ballot	Friday preceding the election and before the close of polls on election day 13-13-211(2), 13-13-212(2)

By Friday, April 28	Trustees canvass the votes, issue certificates of election, and publish results. Trustees review the tally sheets compiled by the election judges to ascertain their accuracy. Recounts are ordered, if necessary. If tally is complete and accurate, trustees issue certificates of election to successful candidates. The canvassed results shall be published immediately in a newspaper that will give notice to the largest number of people in the district.	Following receipt of the tally sheets from all polls and within 25 days after the election 20-20-415, 20-20-416
	Deadline for trustees to hold organizational meeting to elect chair and appoint clerk.	Within 25 days of election 20-3-321
	Deadline for trustees to request county election administrator to conduct school elections for next year. The school district clerk/election administrator is designated the election administrator for school elections. However, the trustees of any district may request the county election administrator (EA) to become the election administrator for school elections. The request must be made by a resolution of the board of trustees. If the county EA accepts, then he/she must perform all the duties the school clerk would have. The school district must assume all costs of the election.	By May 1 20-20-417
Before Friday, April 28 (April 4 to April 28)	On these dates, electors may request or change their registration information and vote in this federal election if they obtain their ballot in person from the location designated by the county EA	Prior to the close of business on the Friday before the election 13-2-304, SB 490
Saturday, April 29 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.		Saturday before the election 13-2-304, SB 490 (2025)
MAY '28		
Monday, May 1	Polling place voters wishing to obtain a one-time absentee ballot must apply before noon on the day before the election and receive the ballot in person (except as provided in 13-13-211(2))	Before noon on the day before the election 13-13-211
	EAs print supplemental precinct registers	Administrative Procedure
	EAs may opt to conduct early preparation of absentee ballots beginning at the time set in the public notice.	1 day before election day 13-13-241, ARM 44.3.2204
	Automatic tabulation using a vote-counting machine of absentee ballots may begin. An EA shall test all central count vote tabulation machines to be used if automatic tabulation begins pursuant to 13-13-241(7)(a), the day before the election.	The day before the election 13-13-241, 13-15-104, 13-15-207, 13-17-212
	Deadline for independent and minor party candidates to file Declaration of Intent for office; deadline for SOS to receive independent and minor party candidate petitions from EAs	Before the scheduled primary 13-10-503

Tuesday, May 2 PRIMARY ELECTION	7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. - Polls are open.	Polling places must be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Fewer than 400, from at least noon to 8 p.m. 13-1-106
	Noon: Deadline to register or change voter information and vote in this election. Late registrants must obtain their ballot in person from the location designated by the county EA	Prior to noon on election day 13-2-304(3), SB 490 (2025)
	EAs must randomly test and certify 10% of each type of voting system (a minimum of 1 per county) to validate the accuracy of voted paper ballots with the voting system results	On election day ARM 44.3.1713
	Tabulation using a manual count begins	Election day 13-13-241(7)
	8:00 p.m. - End of period for qualified electors who are prevented from voting at the polls as a result of illness or health emergency, occurring between 5:00 p.m. of the Friday before the election and before the close of polls on election day, to request to vote by special absentee ballot.	Before the close of polls on election day 13-13-211(2), 13-13-212(2)
	8:00 p.m. - Polls close.	Polling places must be open until 8 p.m. 13-1-106
Wednesday, May 3	5:00 p.m. - Deadline for people who voted a provisional ballot to provide proof of registration or required identification. (Information may also be mailed to the county EA by the day after the election but must be received by 3 p.m. on the 6th day after the election.)	Until 5 p.m. the day after the election 13-15-107
By Wednesday, May 3 (April 10 - May 3)	Deadline for filing a petition for recount. When a question submitted to a vote of the people is decided by a margin not exceeding ¼ of 1% of the total votes cast for and against the question, a petition for recount must be filed within 5 days after the official canvass.	Within 5 days after the official canvass 13-16-201
Wed., May 3 - Mon., May 8	Period during which election administrators may open a package containing a precinct register to resolve provisional ballots	13-15-301(2)

Monday, May 8	3:00 p.m. – Counting of provisional ballots that are not resolved by the end of election day may not begin prior to this date and time.	The sixth day after the election 13-15-107(8)
	3:00 p.m. – Deadline for EAs to receive Federal Write-In Absentee Ballots (FWABs) sent by 8:00 p.m. on election day.	3 pm on the Monday following the election 13-21-206
	3:00 p.m. – Counting of electronically submitted ballots that were sent by absent military and overseas electors by 8:00 p.m. on election day and received by 5:00 p.m. the day after the election.	Counted at the same time as provisional ballots are counted. 13-21-226(2)
	Deadline for convening the School Recount Board. When a tie vote has been certified to the election administrator or conditions have been met for filing a recount petition, the board shall convene at its usual meeting place to perform a recount. The recount must be completed within 5 days of receipt of official canvass or recount petition.	Within 5 days of receipt of notice from the election administrator 13-16-204, 20-20-420
Tuesday, May 9	Meeting of the State Board of Canvassers to randomly choose races, ballot issues, and precincts to be audited for the post-election audit.	No sooner than 7 days and no later than 9 days after the election. 13-17-505
Wed., May 10 - Mon., May 15	Post-election audits are conducted by counties (after notification by the State Board of Canvassers of races, ballot issues, and precincts chosen).	After unofficial results are available to the public in a federal election, but before the official canvass 13-17-503 At least 1 day before the official canvass by the county board of canvassers.
By Friday, May 12	Candidate completes and files Oath of Office with the County Superintendent. <i>*Newly elected trustees may not be seated until the oath is filed. The issuance and the oath may be administered at the organizational meeting (below) but must be completed within 15 days of issuance.</i> <i>**In the event of a recount, the deadline for a candidate to complete and file the oath is 15 days from receipt of the certificate of election.</i>	Within 15 days after receipt of certificate of election 20-3-307, 20-1-202, 1-6-101
Tuesday, May 16	Deadline for the county EA to submit the reconciliation of election results spreadsheet required by SB 440 to the SOS. Deadline for the reconciliation spreadsheet to be posted to the county election website in a place accessible to all members of the public.	No later than when the board of county canvassers meets as provided in 13-15-401. SB 440(4)(a) (2025), SB 440(2) (2025), 13-15-201(3), SB 57 (2025)

By May 16	County canvass completed – Canvass Board declares nominated the individuals having received the highest number of votes cast for each county-certified office and proclaims the adoption or rejection of county ballot issues.	Within 14 days after each election 13-15-401, 13-15-403, SB 57, 13-15-405
Monday, May 22	Deadline for the SOS to complete a comprehensive reconciliation report of election results. The report will be submitted to Legislative Services and posted on the SOS website as soon as it is available.	At least 7 days prior to the certification of the election results by the Board of State Canvassers. SB 440 (4)(b), SB 440(5)(a)(b)
After the county canvass is complete	County EA issues certificates of nomination to successful local nominees after COPP informs county EAs of candidates' compliance with applicable filing requirements.	13-37-127
When the county canvass is complete	EAs send an official canvass of election results to the SOS by certified mail (On the day of, or day after, the county canvass).	13-15-501
Within 5 days of official canvass	Deadline for unsuccessful primary election candidates to initiate contest of primary election nomination after the county or state canvass, as applicable.	13-36-102(1)
	Deadline for unsuccessful primary election candidates to apply for a recount, after the county or state canvass.	13-16-201, 13-16-211, 13-16-301
Within 10 days of official canvass	Deadline for successful primary write-in nominees to file a written Declaration of Acceptance after county or state canvass, as applicable.	13-10-204
Monday, May 29	Meeting of the State Canvass Board—The Canvass Board declares nominated individuals having received the highest number of votes cast for each state-certified office and sends certified copies of the reports and results to the Governor.	Within 27 days of the election or sooner if returns are all received. 13-15-502, 13-15-507
After state canvass is complete	SOS issues certificates of nomination to successful nominees after the COPP informs the SOS of candidates' compliance with applicable filing requirements.	13-37-127

SCENARIO #2: KEEP PRIMARY & SCHOOL ELECTIONS SEPARATE; MOVE THE PRIMARY A MONTH EARLIER AND MOVE THE SCHOOL ELECTION A MONTH LATER

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DECEMBER '27		
Friday, December 31, 2027	Deadline for a new political party to submit a minor party petition to county EAs	No later than 4 weeks before the final date for filing the petition with the SOS (January 28) 13-10-606(3)
JANUARY '28		
Wednesday, January 12	<p>Trustees call for an election. The trustees must pass a resolution stating:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) the date of the election; 2) the purpose of the election; 3) whether the election will be by mail or poll; 4) the voting locations and boundaries for each location, if there are multiple locations within a district (if changed from a previous school election the new locations must be specifically noted); and 5) the time the polls will open, if before noon. <p>The trustees do NOT have to set levy amounts at this time; however, they must be set in time for the clerk to certify the ballot (not less than 40 days before the election). The resolution must be delivered to the county election administrator within 3 days of passage, but it need NOT be posted. The trustees must also appoint three election judges per precinct.</p> <p>Request for a mail ballot election must be sent from trustees to the election administrator. Exception: Even if no request is received, the election administrator could decide to request a mail ballot election.</p>	Not less than 145 days before election 13-19-202, 13-19-203, 20-9-422, 20-20-201, 20-20-203

Wed., Jan 12 - Mon., March 13	Trustee candidates file for election. A Declaration of Intent and Oath of Candidacy must be filed with district clerk (regardless of who is running the election). NO CANDIDATE MAY APPEAR ON THE BALLOT UNLESS THE CANDIDATE MEETS THIS DEADLINE.	No earlier than 145 days, or later than 85 days before 13-10-201, 20-3-305
Monday, January 17	Last day to file resolutions for school election with county election administrator. To assist with the provisions of late registration, include the name and best contact number for the district's election administrator with the resolution.	At least 142 days before (within 3 days of passage of the election resolution) 20-20-201(2)(a)
Tuesday, January 18, 2028	Candidate filing opens at 8:00 a.m.	No sooner than 105 days before the election 13-10-201(7), 13-1-403(1,2), 13-1-502(1,2), HB 207 (2025)
Monday, January 24	Deadline for the county governing body to pass a resolution to change precinct boundaries	Not within 100 days before any primary or between a general and primary election 13-13-102
Friday, January 28	Deadline for the SOS to receive verified new political party qualification petitions from county election administrators	At least 95 days before the primary 13-10-609(2)
FEBRUARY '28		
Wednesday, February 2	Candidate filing closes - 5:00 p.m. deadline	No sooner than 90 days before the election 13-10-201(7), 13-1-403(1,2), 13-1-502(1,2), 13-10-211(1), HB 207 (2025)
	Candidate filing closes for write-in candidates for the primary - 5:00 p.m. deadline	
	Last day for candidates to withdraw from the primary election - 5:00 p.m. deadline	A candidate may not withdraw after the filing deadline 13-10-325(1)(b)
Monday, February 7	Deadline for governing bodies to call for a local government election to be held on the date of the primary election	No sooner than 85 days after a resolution calling for an election 13-1-405
Within 5 days of filing for office	Candidates file appropriate campaign paperwork with the COPP	Within 5 days of filing for office 13-37-201(2)
Friday, February 11	Deadline for the COPP to notify the SOS and EAs of the names of any candidates whose names may not appear on the official ballot because they have not complied with the provisions of MCA Title 13, Chapter 37	2 calendar days before the certification deadline 13-37-126(5)(b)(i)

Monday, February 14	Deadline for the SOS to certify for the ballot the names and designations of statewide and state district candidates to EAs to certify for the ballot the names of local candidates and local ballot issues	10 days after the close of candidate filing 13-10-208
By Monday, February 14	If an EA determines a local primary election is unnecessary, they shall notify the governing body in writing. The governing body may cancel the election by resolution. If the governing body decides that a local nonpartisan election must be held, they must require it by resolution. An EA may give notice that a party's precinct committee election will not be held in that precinct by this date	13-1-403(4) Not more than 10 days after the close of candidate filing 13-14-115(3) 13-38-201(4)(a)
MARCH '28		
No earlier than Monday, March 6	EAs must publish or broadcast a notice specifying the day regular voter registration will close and the availability of late registration.	3 times in the 4 weeks preceding the close of regular registration (April 3) 13-2-301(1)(b)
Monday, March 13	By 5:00 p.m. - Last day trustee candidates may withdraw from the election. Any candidate that has already filed for election, but wishes to withdraw their name, may do so by sending a statement of withdrawal to the election administrator.	85 days before election 20-3-305(3)(a)
Friday, March 17	EAs must send ballots to absent military and overseas electors as soon as the ballot is printed and no later than this date.	As soon as the ballot is printed but not later than 45 days in advance of the election. 13-35-205(2) No later than the business day preceding the 45th day 13-21-224
	County central committees of parties eligible to nominate candidates in the primary election submit to the EAs a list of electors to serve as election judges	At least 45 days before the election 13-4-102
Monday, March 27	Deadline for amendments to election resolutions. The trustees may amend an election resolution passed at least 145 days prior to the election. Financial considerations not indicated in the initial resolution may be included in an amendment.	At least 70 days before election 20-20-201
APRIL '28		
Sunday, April 2	Date by which legislative candidates must be a resident in the appropriate county, if it contains one or more districts, or a legislative district, if it contains all or parts of more than 1 county	For 6 months preceding the general election <i>Article V, Part V, Sect. 4, MT Constitution</i>

Monday, April 3	Close of regular voter registration (registration forms postmarked by this date and received within 3 days are accepted for regular registration)	For 30 days before any election 13-2-301
	Absentee ballots must be available 30 days prior to election day for absentee voting in person	30 days prior to election day 13-13-205
	Beginning of the period during which EAs publicly test and certify that each type of voting system used in an election is performing properly. Reminder: An EA shall test all central count vote tabulation machines to be used if automatic tabulation begins pursuant to 13-13-241(7)(a), the day before the election.	No more than 30 days prior to an election 13-17-212
	Deadline for the county governing body to designate the polling place for each precinct and to appoint 3 or more election judges for each precinct, 1 of whom must be designated chief judge	No later than 30 days before a primary election 13-3-105, 13-4-101
	Deadline for write-in candidate for a trustee position on a school board to file Declaration of Intent (must be filed with the district clerk, regardless of who is running the election).	Not later than 5pm the 65th day before the election 20-3-305(2)(b)
Tuesday, April 4	Late registration begins - (for Primary Election) During late registration, those wishing to register or change their voter information and vote in this federal election may only do so before 5:00 p.m. on Friday before the election, Saturday before the election, or before noon on Election Day. To vote in the election, late registrants must obtain their ballot in person from the location designated by the EA.	After the close of regular registration 13-2-304, SB 490 (2025)
Thursday, April 6	Registration forms postmarked by April 3 and received by this date are accepted for regular registration.	For 3 days after regular registration is closed 13-2-301(3)

Friday, April 7	<p>Ballots are mailed to electors on the absentee list.</p> <p>Election administrator posts mail ballot election plan/timetable/sample instructions.</p> <p>--For elections conducted by the school district: publish the mail ballot plan in a newspaper of general circulation, if one in the district and/or in 3 public places AND publish on the school district website, if active.</p> <p>--For elections conducted by the county election office: publish on the county election office website or other means of publication OR follow the publication instructions for elections conducted by school districts.</p> <p>Failure to publish plans by this date and in this manner default to a polling place election. School districts conducting their own elections must send a copy of the plan to the county election administrator.</p>	<p>25 days prior to election day 13-13-205, 13-13-214</p> <p>At least 60 days before the election 13-19-205</p>
Prior to the primary election	<p>Any judge serving in the 2028 elections must attend training and obtain a certificate of completion. A certificate is current if obtained prior to the primary election in an even-numbered year.</p>	<p>Before each election 13-4-203</p>
	<p>The county governing body appoints at least 3 individuals to serve on the county post-election audit committee.</p>	<p>Prior to each federal election 13-17-504</p>
Monday, April 10	<p>Notice of close of regular registration. The county election administrator publishes the notice of close of regular registration for school districts at least 3 times in the 4 weeks preceding the close of regular registration. Contact the county election administrator to coordinate that publication.</p>	<p>4 weeks preceding the close of regular registration 13-2-301</p>
Thursday, April 13	<p>Deadline for EAs to enter into the statewide voter registration system all voter registration applications received by the regular registration deadline.</p>	<p>No later than 5 working days after the regular registration deadline 13-2-115</p>
After April 13	<p>SOS certifies the official statewide voter registration list.</p>	<p>13-2-115(2)</p>
Thurs., April 20-Sun., April 30	<p>EAs must publish or broadcast: a diagram showing a voting system used by voters and a sample of the ballot layout (in newspaper only), a statement of the locations where voting systems to be used by voters are on public exhibition, and instructions on how to vote</p>	<p>Not more than 12 days or less than 2 days before an election 13-37-203, SB 115 (2025)</p>
	<p>EAs must publish or broadcast a notice indicating the method that will be used for counting absentee ballots and the place and time that the absentee ballots will be counted on election day</p>	<p>Not more than 12 days or less than 2 days before an election 13-15-105, SB 115 (2025), 13-15-206, 13-15-207</p>
Sat., April 22 - Fri., April 28	<p>EAs must publish, or broadcast, locations of the precinct polling places, including accessibility designations for each polling place.</p>	<p>Not more than 10 days or less than 2 business days before an election 13-3-105(2), 13-3-207</p>

Tuesday, April 25	Deadline for independent and minor party candidates to submit signed petitions to county EAs	1 week before the deadline for filing 13-10-503(1)
Thursday, April 27	<p>EAs in counties with 8,000 or more registered electors or 5,000 or more absentee electors, may, at their option, conduct any early preparation of absentee ballots</p> <p>Election administrator certifies ballot. The election administrator prepares the final ballot form, listing all candidates and propositions to be voted upon. The ballot must then be delivered to the election administrator, if other than the clerk.</p> <p>Trustees must pass a resolution stating exact levy amounts by this date for the clerk to certify the ballot. This resolution must include the durational limit, if any, on the levy.</p>	<p>Not sooner than 3 business days before election day 13-13-241(7)</p> <p>Not less than 40 days before the election 20-20-401</p>
Thurs., April 27 - Sat., May 27	<p>Notice of election is posted. The election notice must be published in a newspaper of general circulation in the district if available, posted in at least three public places in the district AND posted on the district's website for the 10 days prior to the election, if the district has an active website. Notice using any other recognized media may be used to supplement the posting. The notice must include:</p> <p>1) the date and voting locations for the election;</p> <p>2) voting location hours;</p> <p>3) each proposition to be considered by the electorate;</p> <p>4) the number of trustee positions, if any, subject to election and the length of the terms for those positions;</p> <p>5) where and how absentee ballots may be obtained; and</p> <p>6) where and how late registrants may obtain a ballot on election day.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the polling place has changed from the previous school election, that change must be referred to in the notice. • If more than one proposition will be considered in the same district, each proposition must be set apart and identified or placed in separate notices. 	<p>Not less than 10 days, or more than 40 days before 20-20-204</p>
Friday, April 28	Beginning of period for printing of primary election precinct register	Friday before each election 13-2-116
	After 5:00 p.m. - Beginning of period for qualified electors who are prevented from voting at the polls as a result of illness or health emergency, occurring between 5:00 p.m. of the Friday before the election and before the close of polls on election day, to request to vote by special absentee ballot	Friday preceding the election and before the close of polls on election day 13-13-211(2), 13-13-212(2)

Before Friday, April 28 (April 4 to April 28)	On these dates, electors may request or change their registration information and vote in this federal election if they obtain their ballot in person from the location designated by the county EA	Prior to the close of business on the Friday before the election <i>13-2-304, SB 490</i>
Saturday, April 29 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.		Saturday before the election <i>13-2-304, SB 490 (2025)</i>
MAY '28		
Monday, May 1	Polling place voters wishing to obtain a one-time absentee ballot must apply before noon on the day before the election and receive the ballot in person (except as provided in 13-13-211(2))	Before noon on the day before the election <i>13-13-211</i>
	EAs print supplemental precinct registers	Administrative Procedure
	EAs may opt to conduct early preparation of absentee ballots beginning at the time set in the public notice.	1 day before election day <i>13-13-241, ARM 44.3.2204</i>
	Automatic tabulation using a vote-counting machine of absentee ballots may begin. An EA shall test all central count vote tabulation machines to be used if automatic tabulation begins pursuant to 13-13-241(7)(a), the day before the election.	The day before the election <i>13-13-241, 13-15-104, 13-15-207, 13-17-212</i>
	Deadline for independent and minor party candidates to file Declaration of Intent for office; deadline for SOS to receive independent and minor party candidate petitions from EAs	Before the scheduled primary <i>13-10-503</i>

Tuesday, May 2 PRIMARY ELECTION	7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. - Polls are open. (for Primary Election)	Polling places must be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Fewer than 400, from at least noon to 8 p.m. 13-1-106
	At least noon to 8:00 p.m. - Polling places with less than a net of 400 registered voters (registered minus absentee) may open after 7:00 a.m. but must open no later than noon	
	Noon: Deadline to register or change voter information and vote in this election. Late registrants must obtain their ballot in person from the location designated by the county EA	Prior to noon on election day 13-2-304(3), SB 490 (2025)
	EAs must randomly test and certify 10% of each type of voting system (a minimum of 1 per county) to validate the accuracy of voted paper ballots with the voting system results	On election day ARM 44.3.1713
	Tabulation using a manual count begins	Election day 13-13-241(7)
	8:00 p.m. - End of period for qualified electors who are prevented from voting at the polls as a result of illness or health emergency, occurring between 5:00 p.m. of the Friday before the election and before the close of polls on election day, to request to vote by special absentee ballot.	Before the close of polls on election day 13-13-211(2), 13-13-212(2)
	8:00 p.m. - Polls close.	Polling places must be open until 8 p.m. 13-1-106
	Deadline for mail ballot amendments. The plan may be amended by the election administrator at any time prior to the 35th day before election day by publishing in the same manner as the original mail ballot plan.	Not more than 35 days before 13-19-205
Wednesday, May 3	5:00 p.m. - Deadline for people who voted a provisional ballot to provide proof of registration or required identification. (Information may also be mailed to the county EA by the day after the election but must be received by 3 p.m. on the 6th day after the election.)	Until 5 p.m. the day after the election 13-15-107
Wed., May 3 - Mon., May 8	Period during which election administrators may open a package containing a precinct register to resolve provisional ballots	13-15-301(2)
Friday, May 5	Election by Acclamation and Cancellation of Election - Notice. If the number of candidates filing a nomination petition or filing a declaration of intent to be a write-in candidate is equal to or less than the number of open trustee positions to be elected, the trustees cancel the trustee election. They must then give notice that a trustee election will not be held. The trustee election may not be declared by acclamation until all candidate filing deadlines have passed. Send a copy to the county election administrator to aid with the provisions of late registration.	Not less than 30 days before 20-3-313
	Deadline to notify election judges of appointment.	No later than the 30th day before 13-4-101

Monday, May 8	3:00 p.m. – Counting of provisional ballots that are not resolved by the end of election day may not begin prior to this date and time.	The sixth day after the election 13-15-107(8)
	3:00 p.m. – Deadline for EAs to receive Federal Write-In Absentee Ballots (FWABs) sent by 8:00 p.m. on election day.	3 pm on the Monday following the election 13-21-206
	3:00 p.m. – Counting of electronically submitted ballots that were sent by absent military and overseas electors by 8:00 p.m. on election day and received by 5:00 p.m. the day after the election.	Counted at the same time as provisional ballots are counted. 13-21-226(2)
	Close of regular voter registration. Registration forms postmarked by this date and received within 3 days are accepted for regular registration. Late registration must be completed at the county election office.	30 days before any election 13-2-301
	Contact your county election administrator for the absentee ballot list.	Not more than 30 days before 13-13-212, 20-20-312
	Performance Testing and Certification of Voting System. The election administrator must publicly test and certify that the system is performing properly.	Not more than 30 days before election 13-17-212
Tuesday, May 9	Meeting of the State Board of Canvassers to randomly choose races, ballot issues, and precincts to be audited for the post-election audit.	No sooner than 7 days and no later than 9 days after the election. 13-17-505
	Start of Late Registration. Late voter registration starts and continues through election day. Late registration must be completed at the office of the county election administrator.	Day after Close of Regular Registration 13-2-304
Wed., May 10 - Mon., May 15	Post-election audits are conducted by counties (after notification by the State Board of Canvassers of races, ballot issues, and precincts chosen).	After unofficial results are available to the public in a federal election, but before the official canvass 13-17-503
		At least 1 day before the official canvass by the county board of canvassers.
Tuesday, May 16	Deadline for the county EA to submit the reconciliation of election results spreadsheet required by SB 440 to the SOS. Deadline for the reconciliation spreadsheet to be posted to the county election website in a place accessible to all members of the public.	No later than when the board of county canvassers meets as provided in 13-15-401. SB 440(4)(a) (2025), SB 440(2) (2025), 13-15-201(3), SB 57 (2025)
By May 16	County canvass completed – Canvass Board declares nominated the individuals having received the highest number of votes cast for each county-certified office and proclaims the adoption or rejection of county ballot issues.	Within 14 days after each election 13-15-401, 13-15-403, SB 57, 13-15-405

Wednesday, May 17	<p>Absentee ballots available. The election administrator prepares ballots for absentee voters. Remember to enclose four things in the absentee package.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ballot, stamped official ballot (with stub removed); • Instructions for voting and returning the ballot; • A secrecy envelope, free of marks that would identify the voter; and • A self-addressed, return envelope with affirmation printed on the back of the envelope (affirmation must include a line for signature AND the elector's date of birth). 	At least 20 days before election 13-13-214, 20-20-401
Wed., May 17 - Mon., May 22	<p>Mail ballots mailed. If conducting a mail ballot election, all ballots must be mailed on the same day (the day noted in the district's mail ballot plan). If an inactive elector reactivates after the ballots are mailed, the elector should be provided with or mailed a ballot. If the elector reactivates after noon on the day before election day, the elector must come in on election day to receive a ballot.</p>	Not before the 20th day or later than the 15th day 13-19-207
Monday, May 22	<p>Deadline for the SOS to complete a comprehensive reconciliation report of election results. The report will be submitted to Legislative Services and posted on the SOS website as soon as it is available.</p>	At least 7 days prior to the certification of the election results by the Board of State Canvassers. SB 440 (4)(b), SB 440(5)(a)(b)
After the county canvass is complete	<p>County EA issues certificates of nomination to successful local nominees after COPP informs county EAs of candidates' compliance with applicable filing requirements.</p>	13-37-127
When the county canvass is complete	<p>EAs send an official canvass of election results to the SOS by certified mail (On the day of, or day after, the county canvass).</p>	13-15-501
Within 5 days of official canvass	<p>Deadline for unsuccessful primary election candidates to initiate contest of primary election nomination after the county or state canvass, as applicable.</p>	13-36-102(1)
	<p>Deadline for unsuccessful primary election candidates to apply for a recount, after the county or state canvass.</p>	13-16-201, 13-16-211, 13-16-301
Within 10 days of official canvass	<p>Deadline for successful primary write-in nominees to file a written Declaration of Acceptance after county or state canvass, as applicable.</p>	13-10-204

	<p>Absentee/Mail Ballot Counting Notice. Districts must publish in a newspaper of general circulation in the county a notice indicating the method that will be used for counting absentee/mail ballots and the place and time that the absentee/mail ballots will be counted on election day. <i>This notice may be combined with the Publication of Information Concerning Voting Systems, the Polling Location Accessibility Notice and/or with the Notice of Election if the notice is published between the 12th and 10th day prior to the election.</i></p>	<p>Not more than 12 days or less than 2 days before the election 13-15-105</p>
Thurs., May 25 - Sun., June 4	<p>Publication of Information Concerning Voting Systems. Districts shall broadcast on radio or television or publish in a newspaper of general circulation in the county a diagram showing the voting system to be used by voters and a sample ballot (newspaper only), a statement of location of where the voting system to be used is on public display, and instructions on how to vote. <i>This notice may be combined with the Absentee/Mail Ballot Counting Notice, the Polling Location Accessibility Notice, and/or with the Notice of Election if the notice is published between the 12th and 10th day prior to the election.</i></p>	<p>Not more than 12 days or less than 2 days before 13-17-203</p>
Sat., May 27 - Sun., June 4	<p>Polling Location Accessibility Notice. Districts must publish in a newspaper of general circulation in the county a statement of the location of the polling places and whether each location is accessible or inaccessible. <i>This notice may be combined with the Absentee/Mail Ballot Counting Notice, the Publication of Information Concerning Voting Systems, and/ or with the Notice of Election if the notice is published on the 10th day prior to the election.</i></p>	<p>Not more than 10 days or less than 2 days before 13-3-105, 13-3-207</p>
Monday, May 29	<p>Meeting of the State Canvass Board—The Canvass Board declares nominated individuals having received the highest number of votes cast for each state-certified office and sends certified copies of the reports and results to the Governor.</p>	<p>Within 27 days of the election or sooner if returns are all received. 13-15-502, 13-15-507</p>
After state canvass is complete	<p>SOS issues certificates of nomination to successful nominees after the COPP informs the SOS of candidates' compliance with applicable filing requirements.</p>	<p>13-37-127</p>
JUNE '28		
Monday, June 5	<p>By Noon - Deadline for absentee ballot requests. Voters who wish to vote absentee may request an absentee ballot in writing or in person until noon the day before the election.</p>	<p>Day before (By Noon) 13-13-211, 13-13-214</p>
	<p>Deliver certified copy of the lists of registered electors. Before the day of election, the county election administrator shall deliver a certified copy of the lists of registered electors for each voting location to the district. The district shall deliver them to the election judges prior to the opening of a voting location.</p>	<p>Day before 20-20-313</p>

Tuesday, June 6 SCHOOL ELECTION	<p>SCHOOL ELECTION DAY. The election administrator must prepare the polling places, printed ballots, ensure election judges are present, and conduct a fair and unbiased election.</p> <p>Notify election judges of the names of write-in candidates</p>	Title 13 20-20-105 20-20-401 20-20-411
Monday, June 12	<p>After 3p.m. - The first date that provisional ballots may be counted. Following the election, unresolved provisional ballots are sealed. These ballots may not be opened until after 3pm on the 6th day after election. The election judges convene, and a determination is made as to whether the ballots are counted. If there are provisional ballots in a school election, the canvass may not occur until after all provisional ballots are resolved.</p>	No sooner than 3pm on the 6th day after the election 13-15-107
By Friday, June 30	<p>Trustees canvass the votes, issue certificates of election, and publish results. Trustees review the tally sheets compiled by the election judges to ascertain their accuracy. Recounts are ordered, if necessary. If tally is complete and accurate, trustees issue certificates of election to successful candidates. The canvassed results shall be published immediately in a newspaper that will give notice to the largest number of people in the district.</p> <p>Deadline for trustees to hold organizational meeting to elect chair and appoint clerk.</p> <p>Deadline for trustees to request county election administrator to conduct school elections for next year. The school district clerk/election administrator is designated the election administrator for school elections.</p> <p>However, the trustees of any district may request the county election administrator (EA) to become the election administrator for school elections. The request must be made by a resolution of the board of trustees. If the county EA accepts, then he/she must perform all the duties the school clerk would have. The school district must assume all costs of the election.</p>	Following receipt of the tally sheets from all polls and within 25 days after the election 20-20-415, 20-20-416 Within 25 days of election 20-3-321 By July 1 20-20-417
JULY '28		
By Wednesday, July 5 (June 12 - July 5)	Deadline for filing a petition for recount. When a question submitted to a vote of the people is decided by a margin not exceeding $\frac{1}{4}$ of 1% of the total votes cast for and against the question, a petition for recount must be filed within 5 days after the official canvass.	Within 5 days after the official canvass 13-16-201
By Monday, July 10 (June 12-July 10)	Deadline for convening the School Recount Board. When a tie vote has been certified to the election administrator or conditions have been met for filing a recount petition, the board shall convene at its usual meeting place to perform a recount. The recount must be completed within 5 days of receipt of official canvass or recount petition.	Within 5 days of receipt of notice from the election administrator 13-16-204, 20-20-420

By Friday, July 14	<p>Candidate completes and files Oath of Office with the County Superintendent.</p> <p><i>*Newly elected trustees may not be seated until the oath is filed. The issuance and the oath may be administered at the organizational meeting (below) but must be completed within 15 days of issuance.</i></p> <p><i>**In the event of a recount, the deadline for a candidate to complete and file the oath is 15 days from receipt of the certificate of election.</i></p>	<p>Within 15 days after receipt of certificate of election 20-3-307, 20-1-202, 1-6-101</p>
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SCENARIO #3: COMBINE SCHOOL ELECTION & PRIMARY ELECTION AND MOVE TO MAY

Primary & School Election Day: Tuesday, May 2, 2028

School dates in gray boxes; Primary dates in white boxes; Election days in yellow boxes; Overlap dates in blue boxes

DATE	ACTIVITIES	REFERENCE
NOVEMBER '27		
Sun, November 7, 2027	Date by which a candidate for a legislative position must be a resident of Montana	For at least one year preceding the general election <i>Article V, Part V, Sect. 4 MT Constitution</i>
DECEMBER '27		
Thursday, December 9	<p>Trustees call for an election. The trustees must pass a resolution stating:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) the date of the election; 2) the purpose of the election; 3) whether the election will be by mail or poll; 4) the voting locations and boundaries for each location, if there are multiple locations within a district (if changed from a previous school election the new locations must be specifically noted); and 5) the time the polls will open, if before noon. <p>The trustees do NOT have to set levy amounts at this time; however, they must be set in time for the clerk to certify the ballot (not less than 40 days before the election). The resolution must be delivered to the county election administrator within 3 days of passage, but it need NOT be posted. The trustees must also appoint three election judges per precinct.</p> <p>Request for a mail ballot election must be sent from trustees to the election administrator. Exception: Even if no request is received, the election administrator could decide to request a mail ballot election.</p>	Not less than 145 days before election 13-19-202, 13-19-203, 20-9-422, 20-20-201, 20-20-203
Thurs., December 9 - Mon., February 7	Trustee candidates file for election. A Declaration of Intent and Oath of Candidacy must be filed with district clerk (regardless of who is running the election). NO CANDIDATE MAY APPEAR ON THE BALLOT UNLESS THE CANDIDATE MEETS THIS DEADLINE.	No earlier than 145 days, or later than 85 days before 13-10-201, 20-3-305

Monday, December 13	Last day to file resolutions for school election with county election administrator. To assist with the provisions of late registration, include the name and best contact number for the district's election administrator with the resolution.	At least 142 days before (within 3 days of passage of the election resolution) 20-20-201(2)(a)
Friday, December 31, 2027	Deadline for a new political party to submit a minor party petition to county EAs	No later than 4 weeks before the final date for filing the petition with the SOS (January 28) 13-10-606(3)
JANUARY '28		
Tuesday, January 18, 2028	Candidate filing opens at 8:00 a.m.	No sooner than 105 days before the election 13-10-201(7), 13-1-403(1,2), 13-1-502(1,2), HB 207 (2025)
Monday, January 24	Deadline for the county governing body to pass a resolution to change precinct boundaries	Not within 100 days before any primary or between a general and primary election 13-13-102
Friday, January 28	Deadline for the SOS to receive verified new political party qualification petitions from county election administrators	At least 95 days before the primary 13-10-609(2)
FEBRUARY '28		
Wednesday, February 2	Candidate filing closes - 5:00 p.m. deadline	No sooner than 90 days before the election 13-10-201(7), 13-1-403(1,2), 13-1-502(1,2), 13-10-211(1), HB 207 (2025)
	Candidate filing closes for write-in candidates for the primary - 5:00 p.m. deadline	
	Last day for candidates to withdraw from the primary election - 5:00 p.m. deadline	A candidate may not withdraw after the filing deadline 13-10-325(1)(b)
Monday, February 7	Deadline for governing bodies to call for a local government election to be held on the date of the primary election	No sooner than 85 days after a resolution calling for an election 13-1-405
	Last day trustee candidates may withdraw from the election. Any candidate that has already filed for election, but wishes to withdraw their name, may do so by sending a statement of withdrawal to the election administrator.	85 days before election 20-3-305(3)(a)

Within 5 days of filing for office	Candidates file appropriate campaign paperwork with the COPP	Within 5 days of filing for office 13-37-201(2)
Friday, February 11	Deadline for the COPP to notify the SOS and EAs of the names of any candidates whose names may not appear on the official ballot because they have not complied with the provisions of MCA Title 13, Chapter 37	2 calendar days before the certification deadline 13-37-126(5)(b)(i)
Monday, February 14	Deadline for the SOS to certify for the ballot the names and designations of statewide and state district candidates to EAs to certify for the ballot the names of local candidates and local ballot issues	10 days after the close of candidate filing 13-10-208
By Monday, February 14	<p>If an EA determines a local primary election is unnecessary, they shall notify the governing body in writing. The governing body may cancel the election by resolution.</p> <p>If the governing body decides that a local nonpartisan election must be held, they must require it by resolution.</p> <p>An EA may give notice that a party's precinct committee election will not be held in that precinct by this date</p>	<p>13-1-403(4)</p> <p>Not more than 10 days after the close of candidate filing 13-14-115(3)</p> <p>13-38-201(4)(a)</p>
Tuesday, February 22	Deadline for amendments to election resolutions. The trustees may amend an election resolution passed at least 145 days prior to the election. Financial considerations not indicated in the initial resolution may be included in an amendment.	At least 70 days before election 20-20-201
Monday, February 28	Deadline for write-in candidate for a trustee position on a school board to file Declaration of Intent (must be filed with the district clerk, regardless of who is running the election).	Not later than 5pm the 65th day before the election 20-3-305(2)(b)
MARCH '28		
Friday, March 3	<p>Election administrator posts mail ballot election plan/timetable/sample instructions.</p> <p>--For elections conducted by the school district: publish the mail ballot plan in a newspaper of general circulation, if one in the district and/or in 3 public places AND publish on the school district website, if active.</p> <p>--For elections conducted by the county election office: publish on the county election office website or other means of publication OR follow the publication instructions for elections conducted by school districts.</p> <p>Failure to publish plans by this date and in this manner default to a polling place election. School districts conducting their own elections must send a copy of the plan to the county election administrator.</p>	At least 60 days before the election 13-19-205

No earlier than Monday, March 6	EAs must publish or broadcast a notice specifying the day regular voter registration will close and the availability of late registration.	3 times in the 4 weeks preceding the close of regular registration (April 3) 13-2-301(1)(b)
Friday, March 17	EAs must send ballots to absent military and overseas electors as soon as the ballot is printed and no later than this date.	As soon as the ballot is printed but not later than 45 days in advance of the election. 13-35-205(2)
	County central committees of parties eligible to nominate candidates in the primary election submit to the EAs a list of electors to serve as election judges	No later than the business day preceding the 45th day 13-21-224
Thursday, March 23	<p>Election administrator certifies ballot. The election administrator prepares the final ballot form, listing all candidates and propositions to be voted upon. The ballot must then be delivered to the election administrator, if other than the clerk.</p> <p>Trustees must pass a resolution stating exact levy amounts by this date for the clerk to certify the ballot. This resolution must include the durational limit, if any, on the levy.</p>	At least 45 days before the election 13-4-102

Thurs., March 23 - Sat., April 22	<p>Notice of election is posted. The election notice must be published in a newspaper of general circulation in the district if available, posted in at least three public places in the district AND posted on the district's website for the 10 days prior to the election, if the district has an active website. Notice using any other recognized media may be used to supplement the posting. The notice must include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) the date and voting locations for the election; 2) voting location hours; 3) each proposition to be considered by the electorate; 4) the number of trustee positions, if any, subject to election and the length of the terms for those positions; 5) where and how absentee ballots may be obtained; and 6) where and how late registrants may obtain a ballot on election day. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the polling place has changed from the previous school election, that change must be referred to in the notice. • If more than one proposition will be considered in the same district, each proposition must be set apart and identified or placed in separate notices. 	Not less than 10 days, or more than 40 days before 20-20-204
Tuesday, March 28	Deadline for mail ballot amendments. The plan may be amended by the election administrator at any time prior to the 35th day before election day by publishing in the same manner as the original mail ballot plan.	Not more than 35 days before 13-19-205
Friday, March 31	<p>Election by Acclamation and Cancellation of Election - Notice. If the number of candidates filing a nomination petition or filing a declaration of intent to be a write-in candidate is equal to or less than the number of open trustee positions to be elected, the trustees cancel the trustee election. They must then give notice that a trustee election will not be held. The trustee election may not be declared by acclamation until all candidate filing deadlines have passed. Send a copy to the county election administrator to aid with the provisions of late registration.</p>	Not less than 30 days before 20-3-313
	Deadline to notify election judges of appointment.	No later than the 30th day before 13-4-101
APRIL '28		
Sunday, April 2	Date by which legislative candidates must be a resident in the appropriate county, if it contains one or more districts, or a legislative district, if it contains all or parts of more than 1 county	For 6 months preceding the general election <i>Article V, Part V, Sect. 4, MT Constitution</i>

Monday, April 3	Close of regular voter registration (registration forms postmarked by this date and received within 3 days are accepted for regular registration)	For 30 days before any election 13-2-301
	Absentee ballots must be available 30 days prior to election day for absentee voting in person	30 days prior to election day 13-13-205
	Beginning of the period during which EAs publicly test and certify that each type of voting system used in an election is performing properly. Reminder: An EA shall test all central count vote tabulation machines to be used if automatic tabulation begins pursuant to 13-13-241(7)(a), the day before the election.	No more than 30 days prior to an election 13-17-212
	Deadline for the county governing body to designate the polling place for each precinct and to appoint 3 or more election judges for each precinct, 1 of whom must be designated chief judge	No later than 30 days before a primary election 13-3-105, 13-4-101
	Contact your county election administrator for the absentee ballot list.	Not more than 30 days before 13-13-212, 20-20-312
Tuesday, April 4	Late registration begins During late registration, those wishing to register or change their voter information and vote in this federal election may only do so before 5:00 p.m. on Friday before the election, Saturday before the election, or before noon on Election Day. To vote in the election, late registrants must obtain their ballot in person from the location designated by the EA.	After the close of regular registration 13-2-304, SB 490 (2025)
Thursday, April 6	Registration forms postmarked by April 3 and received by this date are accepted for regular registration.	For 3 days after regular registration is closed 13-2-301(3)
Friday, April 7	Ballots are mailed to electors on the absentee list.	25 days prior to election day 13-13-205, 13-13-214
Prior to the primary election	Any judge serving in the 2028 elections must attend training and obtain a certificate of completion. A certificate is current if obtained prior to the primary election in an even-numbered year.	Before each election 13-4-203
	The county governing body appoints at least 3 individuals to serve on the county post-election audit committee.	Prior to each federal election 13-17-504

Wed. April 12 - Mon., April 17	Mail ballots mailed. If conducting a mail ballot election, all ballots must be mailed on the same day (the day noted in the district's mail ballot plan). If an inactive elector reactivates after the ballots are mailed, the elector should be provided with or mailed a ballot. If the elector reactivates after noon on the day before election day, the elector must come in on election day to receive a ballot.	Not before the 20th day or later than the 15th day 13-19-207
Thursday, April 13	Deadline for EAs to enter into the statewide voter registration system all voter registration applications received by the regular registration deadline.	No later than 5 working days after the regular registration deadline 13-2-115
After April 13	SOS certifies the official statewide voter registration list.	13-2-115(2)
Thurs., April 20-Sun., April 30	EAs must publish or broadcast: a diagram showing a voting system used by voters and a sample of the ballot layout (in newspaper only), a statement of the locations where voting systems to be used by voters are on public exhibition, and instructions on how to vote	Not more than 12 days or less than 2 days before an election 13-37-203, SB 115 (2025)
	EAs must publish or broadcast a notice indicating the method that will be used for counting absentee ballots and the place and time that the absentee ballots will be counted on election day	Not more than 12 days or less than 2 days before an election 13-15-105, SB 115 (2025), 13-15-206, 13-15-207
Thursday, April 20	Absentee ballots available. The election administrator prepares ballots for absentee voters. Remember to enclose four things in the absentee package. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ballot, stamped official ballot (with stub removed); • Instructions for voting and returning the ballot; • A secrecy envelope, free of marks that would identify the voter; and • A self-addressed, return envelope with affirmation printed on the back of the envelope (affirmation must include a line for signature AND the elector's date of birth. 	At least 20 days before election 13-13-214, 20-20-401
Sat., April 22 - Fri., April 28	EAs must publish, or broadcast, locations of the precinct polling places, including accessibility designations for each polling place.	Not more than 10 days or less than 2 business days before an election 13-3-105(2), 13-3-207
Tuesday, April 25	Deadline for independent and minor party candidates to submit signed petitions to county EAs	1 week before the deadline for filing 13-10-503(1)
Thursday, April 27	EAs in counties with 8,000 or more registered electors or 5,000 or more absentee electors, may, at their option, conduct any early preparation of absentee ballots	Not sooner than 3 business days before election day 13-13-241(7)

Friday, April 28	Beginning of period for printing of primary election precinct register	Friday before each election 13-2-116
	After 5:00 p.m. - Beginning of period for qualified electors who are prevented from voting at the polls as a result of illness or health emergency, occurring between 5:00 p.m. of the Friday before the election and before the close of polls on election day, to request to vote by special absentee ballot	Friday preceding the election and before the close of polls on election day 13-13-211(2), 13-13-212(2)
Before Friday, April 28 (April 4 to April 28)	On these dates, electors may request or change their registration information and vote in this federal election if they obtain their ballot in person from the location designated by the county EA	Prior to the close of business on the Friday before the election 13-2-304, SB 490
Saturday, April 29 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.		Saturday before the election 13-2-304, SB 490 (2025)
MAY '28		
Monday, May 1	Polling place voters wishing to obtain a one-time absentee ballot must apply before noon on the day before the election and receive the ballot in person (except as provided in 13-13-211(2))	Before noon on the day before the election 13-13-211
	EAs print supplemental precinct registers	Administrative Procedure
	EAs may opt to conduct early preparation of absentee ballots beginning at the time set in the public notice.	1 day before election day 13-13-241, ARM 44.3.2204
	Automatic tabulation using a vote-counting machine of absentee ballots may begin. An EA shall test all central count vote tabulation machines to be used if automatic tabulation begins pursuant to 13-13-241(7)(a), the day before the election.	The day before the election 13-13-241, 13-15-104, 13-15-207, 13-17-212
	Deadline for independent and minor party candidates to file Declaration of Intent for office; deadline for SOS to receive independent and minor party candidate petitions from EAs	Before the scheduled primary 13-10-503
	By Noon - Deadline for absentee ballot requests. Voters who wish to vote absentee may request an absentee ballot in writing or in person until noon the day before the election.	Day before (By Noon) 13-13-211, 13-13-214
	Deliver certified copy of the lists of registered electors. Before the day of election, the county election administrator shall deliver a certified copy of the lists of registered electors for each voting location to the district. The district shall deliver them to the election judges prior to the opening of a voting location.	Day before 20-20-313

Tuesday, May 2 ELECTION DAY	PRIMARY ELECTION DAY	<p>7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. - Polls are open.</p> <p>At least noon to 8:00 p.m. - Polling places with less than a net of 400 registered voters (registered minus absentee) may open after 7:00 a.m. but must open no later than noon</p>	<p>Polling places must be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Fewer than 400, from at least noon to 8 p.m.</p> <p>13-1-106</p>
		Noon: Deadline to register or change voter information and vote in this election. Late registrants must obtain their ballot in person from the location designated by the county EA	<p>Prior to noon on election day</p> <p>13-2-304(3), SB 490 (2025)</p>
		EAs must randomly test and certify 10% of each type of voting system (a minimum of 1 per county) to validate the accuracy of voted paper ballots with the voting system results	<p>On election day</p> <p>ARM 44.3.1713</p>
	Tabulation using a manual count begins		<p>Election day</p> <p>13-13-241(7)</p>
	8:00 p.m. - End of period for qualified electors who are prevented from voting at the polls as a result of illness or health emergency, occurring between 5:00 p.m. of the Friday before the election and before the close of polls on election day, to request to vote by special absentee ballot.		<p>Before the close of polls on election day</p> <p>13-13-211(2), 13-13-212(2)</p>
	8:00 p.m. - Polls close.		<p>Polling places must be open until 8 p.m.</p> <p>13-1-106</p>
	<p>SCHOOL ELECTION DAY. The election administrator must prepare the polling places, printed ballots, ensure election judges are present, and conduct a fair and unbiased election.</p> <p>Notify election judges of the names of write-in candidates</p>		<p>Title 13</p> <p>20-20-105</p> <p>20-20-401</p> <p>20-20-411</p>
Wednesday, May 3	5:00 p.m. - Deadline for people who voted a provisional ballot to provide proof of registration or required identification. (Information may also be mailed to the county EA by the day after the election but must be received by 3 p.m. on the 6th day after the election.)		<p>Until 5 p.m. the day after the election</p> <p>13-15-107</p>
Wed., May 3 - Mon., May 8	Period during which election administrators may open a package containing a precinct register to resolve provisional ballots		<p>13-15-301(2)</p>

Monday, May 8	3:00 p.m. – Counting of provisional ballots that are not resolved by the end of election day may not begin prior to this date and time.	The sixth day after the election 13-15-107(8)
	3:00 p.m. – Deadline for EAs to receive Federal Write-In Absentee Ballots (FWABs) sent by 8:00 p.m. on election day.	3 pm on the Monday following the election 13-21-206
	3:00 p.m. – Counting of electronically submitted ballots that were sent by absent military and overseas electors by 8:00 p.m. on election day and received by 5:00 p.m. the day after the election.	Counted at the same time as provisional ballots are counted. 13-21-226(2)
Tuesday, May 9	Meeting of the State Board of Canvassers to randomly choose races, ballot issues, and precincts to be audited for the post-election audit.	No sooner than 7 days and no later than 9 days after the election. 13-17-505
Wed., May 10 - Mon., May 15	Post-election audits are conducted by counties (after notification by the State Board of Canvassers of races, ballot issues, and precincts chosen).	After unofficial results are available to the public in a federal election, but before the official canvass 13-17-503 At least 1 day before the official canvass by the county board of canvassers.
Tuesday, May 16	Deadline for the county EA to submit the reconciliation of election results spreadsheet required by SB 440 to the SOS. Deadline for the reconciliation spreadsheet to be posted to the county election website in a place accessible to all members of the public.	No later than when the board of county canvassers meets as provided in 13-15-401. SB 440(4)(a) (2025), SB 440(2) (2025), 13-15-201(3), SB 57 (2025)
By May 16	County canvass completed – Canvass Board declares nominated the individuals having received the highest number of votes cast for each county-certified office and proclaims the adoption or rejection of county ballot issues.	Within 14 days after each election 13-15-401, 13-15-403, SB 57, 13-15-405
Monday, May 22	Deadline for the SOS to complete a comprehensive reconciliation report of election results. The report will be submitted to Legislative Services and posted on the SOS website as soon as it is available.	At least 7 days prior to the certification of the election results by the Board of State Canvassers. SB 440 (4)(b), SB 440(5)(a)(b)
After the county canvass is complete	County EA issues certificates of nomination to successful local nominees after COPP informs county EAs of candidates' compliance with applicable filing requirements.	13-37-127
When the county canvass is complete	EAs send an official canvass of election results to the SOS by certified mail (On the day of, or day after, the county canvass).	13-15-501

Within 5 days of official canvass	Deadline for unsuccessful primary election candidates to initiate contest of primary election nomination after the county or state canvass, as applicable.	13-36-102(1)
	Deadline for unsuccessful primary election candidates to apply for a recount, after the county or state canvass.	13-16-201, 13-16-211, 13-16-301
Within 10 days of official canvass	Deadline for successful primary write-in nominees to file a written Declaration of Acceptance after county or state canvass, as applicable.	13-10-204
By Friday, May 26	Trustees canvass the votes, issue certificates of election, and publish results. Trustees review the tally sheets compiled by the election judges to ascertain their accuracy. Recounts are ordered, if necessary. If tally is complete and accurate, trustees issue certificates of election to successful candidates. The canvassed results shall be published immediately in a newspaper that will give notice to the largest number of people in the district.	Following receipt of the tally sheets from all polls and within 25 days after the election 20-20-415, 20-20-416
	Deadline for trustees to hold organizational meeting to elect chair and appoint clerk.	Within 25 days of election 20-3-321
Monday, May 29	Meeting of the State Canvass Board—The Canvass Board declares nominated individuals having received the highest number of votes cast for each state-certified office and sends certified copies of the reports and results to the Governor.	Within 27 days of the election or sooner if returns are all received. 13-15-502, 13-15-507
After state canvass is complete	SOS issues certificates of nomination to successful nominees after the COPP informs the SOS of candidates' compliance with applicable filing requirements.	13-37-127
By Wednesday, May 31 (May 8 - May 31)	Deadline for filing a petition for recount. When a question submitted to a vote of the people is decided by a margin not exceeding ¼ of 1% of the total votes cast for and against the question, a petition for recount must be filed within 5 days after the official canvass.	Within 5 days after the official canvass 13-16-201
By June 1	Deadline for trustees to request county election administrator to conduct school elections for next year. The school district clerk/election administrator is designated the election administrator for school elections. However, the trustees of any district may request the county election administrator (EA) to become the election administrator for school elections. The request must be made by a resolution of the board of trustees. If the county EA accepts, then he/she must perform all the duties the school clerk would have. The school district must assume all costs of the election.	By June 1 20-20-417

By Monday, June 5 (May 8 - June 5)	Deadline for convening the School Recount Board. When a tie vote has been certified to the election administrator or conditions have been met for filing a recount petition, the board shall convene at its usual meeting place to perform a recount. The recount must be completed within 5 days of receipt of official canvass or recount petition.	Within 5 days of receipt of notice from the election administrator 13-16-204, 20-20-420
By Friday, June 9	Candidate completes and files Oath of Office with the County Superintendent. <i>*Newly elected trustees may not be seated until the oath is filed. The issuance and the oath may be administered at the organizational meeting (below) but must be completed within 15 days of issuance.</i> <i>**In the event of a recount, the deadline for a candidate to complete and file the oath is 15 days from receipt of the certificate of election.</i>	Within 15 days after receipt of certificate of election 20-3-307, 20-1-202, 1-6-101