

## HOW JERSEY WORKS

### The Ins and Outs of Voting in NJ

Pennsylvania voters have cast their ballots. So have thousands of voters in New Jersey.

There are some key differences though: PA's primary election is over. New Jersey's won't happen until Tuesday, June 4.

Keep reading this edition of **HOW JERSEY WORKS** for the details on voting in the Garden State's primary next week.

--May 31, 2013

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#### Anything hot on the ballot?

There is one weighty race. Chris Christie is seeking a second term as governor, but must first defeat his primary challenger, lawyer Seth Grossman, for the GOP nomination. In the Democratic gubernatorial primary, state Senator Barbara Buono is taking on East Orange mayoral aide Troy Webster. The winners of the Democratic and Republican primaries will face off in the November 5, 2013 general election.

#### Isn't Christie eyeing the 2016 presidential election?

He may be, so even though pollsters predict Christie will sail through Tuesday's primary, it wouldn't hurt to win by a very wide margin over Seth Grossman. Better still would be a landslide victory over the winner of the Democratic gubernatorial primary to prove he can bridge the political divide in Washington, D.C.

#### Does Seventy support any of the candidates?

We don't support any candidate for elected office – in PA, NJ or elsewhere. Our job is to give non-partisan and accurate information about races our subscribers care about. Check out Seventy's [webpage](#) on the New Jersey primary election for information on the offices and candidates on the ballot in Camden, Gloucester and Burlington counties.

#### Aside from Governor, what other key races are on N.J.'s ballot?

All seats in the 40-person state Senate (which has one Senator per district) and in the 80-person General Assembly (which has two representatives per district). Contact your [county clerk](#) to find out about local races on the ballot where you live.

#### PA's legislature is much bigger, right?

Over twice as big: PA has 50 state Senators and 203 state Representatives. And they are members of the second-highest-paid legislative body in the country. Unlike in PA, jobs in N.J.'s Senate and Assembly are part-time. The average New Jersey legislator makes \$49,000 a year.

#### How often is N.J.'s legislature up for election?

Elections for the state legislature are held in odd-numbered years (generally only years ending in 1, 3, or 7), with the primary taking place in June of each election year and the general election in November. There are no term limits for New Jersey legislators. Representatives in the General Assembly serve two-year terms and Senators serve four-year terms. But if a state Senator's term begins at the start of a new decade, he or she is elected for a two-year term.

### **Huh?**

It has to do with legislative redistricting, which happens every 10 years after the U.S. Census figures (which are compiled at the beginning of each decade) are released. The 2-4-4 election cycle ensures that voters whose district lines change following redistricting can vote for their new state Senator at the earliest possible opportunity.

### **I'm not sure if my district changed. Where can I find this out? Where can I check to see if I'm registered to vote?**

You can find out which district you live in [here](#) and confirm your voter registration [here](#).

### **Do I need to be a Democrat or a Republican to vote in N.J.'s primary?**

Yes, but if you are not affiliated with a political party, you can register as a Democrat or Republican up to and on the day of a primary election in order to vote in that primary. On the other hand, registered Democrats who want to vote in the GOP primary and registered Republicans who want to vote in the Democratic primary, must file a form to change their party affiliation 55 days before the primary.

### **How do I know where to vote on June 4?**

You should receive a sample ballot in the mail about a week before the election. Not only does this sample ballot tell you who the candidates are, but it will also tell you where your polling place is located. You can also use the New Jersey Department of State's polling place locator [here](#).

### **No offense to Pennsylvania, but it seems like it's easier to vote in N.J.**

It is. For instance, unlike Pennsylvania, New Jersey permits voting by mail for any voter. They don't have to give a particular reason why they can't vote in person at their polling place in their home county. That's why we said earlier that people have already voted in this year's primary. The first day to vote by mail in New Jersey was April 20.

### **Is voting by mail the same thing as early voting? I thought I read something about early voting in N.J.**

Voting by mail allows voters to cast a ballot before the actual day of an election. But it's not the same thing as early voting, which means that voters can vote in person at the polls before Election Day. The New Jersey State Assembly passed a [bill](#) to allow voting at polling places up to 15 days before an election, but Governor Christie recently vetoed it, citing high costs.

### **Why is early voting necessary if you can vote by mail before the election?**

Lots of people like to go to the polls. But voting just on one day not only may be inconvenient, it may not be possible in some cases. That's why 32 states allow early voting. As a panel appointed by

President Obama looks at ways to reduce long lines at polling places, many are hoping for a recommendation that Congress should require early voting around the country.

**I just found out I can't vote in person on June 4. Do I still have time to vote by mail?**

No problem. You can visit your County Clerk's [office](#) and pick up an application to vote by mail up to 3:00 p.m. on Monday, June 3. But make sure your voted ballot is received by the County Clerk's office by the time the polls close on Election Day at 8:00 p.m. Also – and this is important – once you've decided to vote by mail, you can't change your mind and vote at your usual polling place.

**Voting by mail seems pretty nice.**

And it gets better. Voters can request one of three schedules to receive their mail-in ballot. They can request to receive a ballot for the next general election, for all remaining elections in the calendar year, or for all future general elections. Be sure to let your County Clerk know if your address changes.

**Is there anything else I should know about New Jersey elections?**

You may notice that in General Assembly races where there are two positions available some candidates choose to "bracket" themselves with other candidates. For instance, in the competitive Republican General Assembly race in the 8<sup>th</sup> legislative district, the two sets of candidates are listed in two columns with the "bracketed" candidates listed one above the other (see [sample ballot](#).) They may do this because they share the same values or have the same agenda as one another. (It doesn't hurt to share fundraising expenses either.) Bracketing will only happen in primary elections.

**If I vote for one person in a "bracket," do I have to vote for the other person in the bracket?**

No, you are allowed to pick and choose. A bracket is just a way for the candidates to show voters who they support.

**I think I'm ready to vote.**

Good. Let's just hope no hurricanes interrupt this election. Right now it looks like there will be clear skies for Tuesday.

*As always, if you have any questions or ideas for future **HOW PHILLY (or JERSEY) WORKS**, please send your ideas to [info@seventy.org](mailto:info@seventy.org).*