



North Dakota Native Vote
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What to Expect in the 2026 Midterm Elections

Every two years, voters across the country head to the polls, and 2026 will be no exception. While midterm elections often fly under the radar compared to presidential years, their impact is just as significant. Held halfway through the president's four-year term, these elections help shape the direction of federal, state, and local leadership for years to come.

North Dakota's **Primary Election** will take place on **June 9, 2026**, determining each political party's official nominees for the **General Election** on **November 3, 2026**.

Understanding the U.S. Congress and Congressional Elections

The **U.S. Congress** is the legislative branch of the federal government, consisting of two chambers: the **House of Representatives** and the **Senate**. Congressional elections decide who represents each state in Congress and which political party will hold the majority in each chamber for the next two years.

U.S. House of Representatives

All **435 members** of the U.S. House of Representatives serve two-year terms, meaning every seat is up for election during both midterm and presidential years. To qualify, a candidate must be at least 25 years old, have been a U.S. citizen for at least seven years, and reside in the state they seek to represent. The number of representatives from each state is based on population, with each representative serving a specific congressional district. North Dakota, due to its smaller population, currently has **one at-large representative** who serves the entire state.

U.S. Senate

The U.S. Senate is composed of 100 senators, **two from each state**, who serve six-year terms. Unlike the House, Senate elections are staggered so that roughly **one-third** of the seats are up for election every two years. To run for the Senate, candidates must be at least 30 years old, have been a U.S. citizen for at least nine years, and reside in the state they represent.



Understanding the North Dakota State Legislature and State Elections

Similar to the U.S. Congress, the **North Dakota Legislative Assembly** was established when the state joined the Union in 1889. The first legislative session convened on November 19, 1889, shortly after statehood was granted on November 2, 1889. The Legislative Assembly consists of two chambers: the **House of Representatives** and the **Senate**. The legislature is appointed to committees that review and oversee legislation on key areas such as tribal sovereignty, economic development, public safety, transportation, education, and more.

North Dakota House of Representatives

The North Dakota House of Representatives consists of **94 members, with two representatives elected from each of the state's 47 legislative districts**. Each representative serves a **two-year term**. In 2026, state voters will elect representatives from the **odd-numbered districts, totaling 24 districts**. To qualify as a candidate for the House of Representatives, individuals must:

- Be a qualified elector in North Dakota.
- Be a resident of the legislative district they wish to represent for at least 30 days prior to the election.
- File a petition or certificate of nomination with the North Dakota Secretary of State by the official deadline, 4 p.m. on April 6, 2026.
- Obtain at least 100 valid signatures from qualified electors within their legislative district.

North Dakota Senate

The North Dakota Senate is composed of **47 members, with one senator representing each legislative district**. Senators serve **four-year terms**, with elections staggered so that roughly half of the seats are up for election every two years. In 2026, approximately **24 of the 47 Senate seats** will be on the ballot. To run for the Senate, candidates must:

- Be a qualified elector in North Dakota.
- Be a resident of the legislative district they wish to represent for at least 30 days prior to the election.
- File a petition or certificate of nomination with the North Dakota Secretary of State by the official deadline, 4 p.m. on April 6, 2026.
- Obtain at least 100 valid signatures from qualified electors within their legislative district.



What Does the Legislative Body Do?

The legislative body, at both the federal and state levels, are responsible for **proposing**, **debating**, and **passing laws** that impact everyday life. Legislators introduce bills, hold hearings, and vote on policies that affect areas like education, healthcare, public safety, infrastructure, and taxation. At the **federal level**, Congress passes national laws, approves budgets, confirms presidential appointments, and provides oversight of federal agencies. The **House of Representatives** typically focuses on budget and revenue-related legislation, while the **Senate** reviews and confirms federal appointments and treaties in addition to legislating.

When Does the Legislature Meet?

The **U.S. Congress** meets year-round in Washington D.C., typically beginning a new session every **January 3rd**. Each Congress lasts two years, divided into **two annual sessions**. While there are breaks and recess periods, **committees** and **subcommittees** continue to hold hearings and mark up bills throughout the year.

The **North Dakota Legislative Assembly** meets **biennially**, meaning once every two years, in the state's capital city, Bismarck. The **regular session** begins in early January of odd-numbered years and can last up to **80 legislative days**. Special sessions may be called by the Governor or by the legislature itself to address urgent matters between regular sessions.

Legislative Priorities

Legislative priorities often depend on the needs of the public, the economy, and the political landscape at the time. Generally, both federal and state legislatures focus on:

- **Economic and Budget Policy** – legislators set tax rates, approve budgets, and allocate funds to maintain efficient and balanced government operations.
- **Education and Workforce Development** – lawmakers fund schools and higher education while supporting training programs that prepare for future employment.
- **Public Health and Safety** – legislators ensure access to healthcare, mental health services, and emergency systems to protect community well-being.
- **Infrastructure and Environment** – lawmakers fund and maintain roads, housing, and utilities while managing natural resources and environmental protections.
- **Civil Rights and Governance** – legislators protect voting rights, uphold tribal sovereignty, and promote equal representation in the democratic process.



Why Do Midterms Matter?

Midterm elections play a powerful role in shaping the country's direction and determining how effectively the government functions between presidential election years. These elections decide who will represent the people in Congress, state legislatures, and local offices. These are positions that influence everything from national policies to the daily lives of residents.

At the **federal level**, midterms determine the balance of power in the **U.S. House of Representatives** and the **U.S. Senate**. The outcomes affect whether the sitting president's party maintains control of Congress or faces new opposition. A shift in majority power can change the course of legislation, budget priorities, and even how judicial or executive appointments move forward.

At the **state and local levels**, midterm elections decide who will write and enforce state laws, manage budgets, oversee education and healthcare, and address community issues like infrastructure, energy, and public safety. In North Dakota, for example, voters help shape the foundation of the **state legislature**, which directly impacts laws and funding that affect everyday life in tribal nations, rural communities, and growing cities.

Midterms also tend to see **lower voter turnout** than presidential elections, meaning **every single vote carries more weight**. When fewer people participate, the results can shift dramatically based on which communities show up. Voting in the midterms ensures that all voices are heard, keeping the government accountable and representative of the people it serves.

“Every ballot cast in a midterm is a reminder that power belongs to the people, not just every four years, but every single election. For our Tribal Nations, that power is a voice carried forward from generations who fought to be recognized, counted, and respected. When we vote, we honor their struggle and protect the sovereignty, resources, and future of our people.”

– Nicole Montclair, Executive Director



How to Prepare

Getting ready for an election doesn't have to be complicated, it just takes a little planning and awareness. By preparing early, you can make sure your voice is heard when it matters most.

1. **Know What's on the Ballot** – Research which federal, state, and local offices will be up for election in 2026, along with any ballot measures or constitutional amendments. Understanding the issues and candidates ahead of time helps you make informed decisions.
2. **Learn About the Candidates** – Look beyond campaign ads. Visit candidate websites, attend community forums, or read local news coverage to learn about each candidate's priorities, experience, and voting record.
3. **Check Your Voting Requirements** – In North Dakota, there is no voter registration system. Instead, voters must present an accepted photo ID at the polls that include their name, current address, and date of birth. Make sure your ID is up to date before Election Day.
4. **Know When and Where to Vote** – Mark your calendar for the Primary Election on June 9, 2026, and the General Election on November 3, 2026. Find your polling location early and confirm its hours through the North Dakota Secretary of State's website at sos.nd.gov/elections.
5. **Stay Engaged and Encourage Others** – Talk with friends, family, and neighbors about why voting matters. Midterms are a community effort, when more people show up, representation becomes stronger and more reflective of everyone's interests.