# 2026 DC Primary Election

# PRIMARY AWARENESS GUIDE

Prepared by Civic Vision Strategies for Community Awareness

In Partnership with Voices for a Second Chance (VSC)

## About This Guide

Voices for a Second Chance created this guide because we believe that returning citizens and justice-impacted communities deserve clear, accessible information about the democratic process. Too often, the people most affected by government decisions are the least informed about who is making them.

This guide covers the June 16, 2026, Washington, D.C. primary election. It includes information about ranked choice voting, the issues that matter most to returning citizens, how to vote if you are currently incarcerated, and key election dates.

**This guide is for informational and educational purposes only. VSC is a nonpartisan 501(c)(3) organization and does not endorse any candidate, campaign, or political party.**

## What's Inside

- How ranked choice voting works (including technical terms)
- Why your vote matters: elections and policy enforcement
- How to vote if you are currently incarcerated
- What's on the ballot: a community-friendly summary
- Common questions for outreach teams
- Sources and verification

## Why This Matters

Every election shapes the systems that affect daily life — public safety, housing, reentry supports, youth programs, economic opportunity, and DC's ability to govern itself. Your vote helps determine the future of these systems and the wellbeing of our communities.

## Voices for a Second Chance (VSC)

VSC supports individuals returning home from incarceration and their families through reentry services, advocacy, and community partnerships. This guide reflects VSC's commitment to ensuring that justice-impacted residents have access to the information they need to participate fully in the democratic process.

## How This Guide Is Organized

This guide is organized around five issue areas most relevant to VSC's mission and the people we serve. These are the areas where elected officials make decisions that directly affect

returning citizens:

- **Public Safety & Justice:** Policing, violence prevention, accountability, alternatives to incarceration, and reentry.
- **Housing & Stability:** Affordable housing, homelessness, and supportive housing.
- **Economic Opportunity:** Jobs, small business support, workforce development, and opportunities for returning citizens.
- **Youth & Families:** Education, youth programs, family supports, and prevention.
- **DC Autonomy & Governance:** Home rule, federal interference, statehood, and the role of the office.

These categories reflect VSC's priorities. What matters most is that community members understand how elected officials shape the policies that affect their lives.

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## How Ranked Choice Voting Works

This is the first DC election to use ranked choice voting (RCV), approved by voters through Initiative 83 in November 2024. Here's what you need to know:

### The Basics

- Instead of voting for just one candidate, you can rank up to five candidates in order of preference for each race with three or more candidates.
- Mark your favorite candidate as your 1st choice, your second favorite as your 2nd choice, and so on.
- You do not have to rank all five. You can rank as many or as few candidates as you like. Ranking just one candidate is still a valid vote.

### How Votes Are Counted

- All first-choice votes are counted first. If any candidate receives more than 50% of the vote, they win.
- If no candidate reaches 50%, the candidate with the fewest first-choice votes is eliminated.
- If your top choice is eliminated, your vote moves to your next-ranked candidate.
- This process repeats until one candidate earns a majority and is declared the winner.

### Important Tips

- Ranking additional candidates does not hurt your first choice. Your second choice is only counted if your first choice is eliminated.
- Do not give multiple candidates the same ranking.
- Do not rank the same candidate more than once.
- Do not skip rankings (for example, ranking 1st and 3rd but skipping 2nd).

Ranked choice voting means the winning candidate must earn broad support. It is designed to give voters more choices and more voice in the outcome.

### RCV Technical Terms (For Outreach Workers)

Under Initiative 83 (D.C. Act 25-652), the following terms have specific meanings. Outreach workers should be familiar with these so they can answer voter questions:

- **Inactive Ballot:** A ballot becomes inactive if all of a voter's ranked candidates have been eliminated in counting rounds. The ballot is not thrown out — it simply has no remaining active candidate to transfer to. This is why ranking more candidates gives your ballot more chances to count.
- **Overvote:** If a voter gives the same ranking to more than one candidate (for example,

marking two candidates as their 1st choice), that ranking and all lower rankings are not counted. The ballot counts only for rankings above the overvote.

- **Skipped Ranking:** If a voter skips a ranking (for example, ranking 1st and 3rd but leaving 2nd blank), the skipped ranking is ignored and the next valid ranking is counted. However, skipping can increase the risk of an inactive ballot, so voters should rank candidates consecutively.

*Source: Initiative 83 (D.C. Act 25-652), funded in the DC FY2026 budget. Full text available at dcboe.org/elections/ranked-choice-voting.*

## Why Your Vote Matters: Elections and Policy Enforcement

Voting is not just about picking a candidate. It is about choosing the people who decide whether the policies that affect your life get enforced. Here are real examples:

- **Housing:** DC has funding set aside for affordable housing for people leaving incarceration. But if the officials overseeing that money don't prioritize it, those dollars can sit unspent or get redirected.
- **Jobs:** DC law requires that certain jobs go to DC residents. But enforcement is inconsistent, and many returning citizens never see those opportunities.
- **Healthcare:** Gaps in healthcare coverage during the transition from incarceration to community can be life-threatening. The Mayor and Council decide how much funding goes to continuity of care.
- **Halfway Houses:** Halfway houses in DC are overcrowded and under-resourced. The officials you elect control the budget and oversight that determine whether conditions improve.
- **Voting Rights:** DC passed the Restore the Vote Act to let incarcerated residents vote. But incarcerated people and returning citizens still need access to election information in order to fully participate.

When elected officials know that returning citizens are paying attention, showing up, and holding them accountable, they are far more likely to follow through.

## How to Vote If You Are Currently Incarcerated

DC is one of a small number of jurisdictions where incarcerated residents retain the full right to vote. Here is a step-by-step guide:

### If You Are in the DC Jail (Central Detention Facility / Correctional Treatment Facility)

- A polling place is located inside the DC Jail. You can vote in person during early voting (June 8–14) or on Election Day (June 16).
- The DC Department of Corrections (DOC) is required to offer voter registration during intake and at multiple points during your stay.
- The DC Board of Elections (BOE) is required to provide voter registration forms, educational materials, voter guides, and absentee ballots with postage-paid return envelopes.
- If you have not received these materials, contact DOC staff and request them. You can also ask a trusted visitor or advocate to contact the BOE on your behalf.

### If You Are in a Federal (BOP) Facility

- The BOE is required to endeavor to provide registration and ballot materials to DC residents in BOP custody. Electronic voter registration forms are posted on BOP internal messaging systems.

- Request an absentee ballot by contacting the DC Board of Elections. You can write to: DC Board of Elections, 1015 Half Street SE, Suite 750, Washington, DC 20003.
- You can also call: (202) 727-2525 or toll-free 1-866-DC-VOTES (1-866-328-6837).

### Key Dates for Incarcerated Voters

- May 11: BOE began mailing absentee ballots.
- May 22: Mail ballot drop boxes available (through 8:00 PM on June 16).
- May 26: Voter registration deadline (same-day registration available during early voting and on Election Day).
- June 8–14: Early voting (in-jail polling place open daily, 8:30 AM – 7:00 PM).
- June 16: Election Day (polls open 7:00 AM – 8:00 PM).

**For questions or help, contact the DC Board of Elections: (202) 727-2525 | Toll-free: 1-866-328-6837 | dcboe.org**

## What's on the Ballot?

The June 16, 2026 primary election ballot includes races for Mayor, Attorney General, DC Council At-Large (Democratic primary and special election), and Delegate to the U.S. House. You must be registered with a party to vote in that party's primary. All registered voters can vote in the At-Large Special Election.

### Important Notes for Voters

- This election uses ranked choice voting for races with three or more candidates.
- You can vote early (June 8–14, 8:30 AM – 7:00 PM daily), on Election Day (June 16, 7 AM – 8 PM), or by mail.
- Mail ballot drop boxes are available May 22 through 8:00 PM on June 16.
- You must be registered with a party to vote in that party's primary. All registered voters can vote in the At-Large Special Election.
- DC offers automatic voter registration at the DMV. Check your status at dcboe.org.
- Same-day voter registration is available during early voting and on Election Day.
- Returning citizens can vote in DC — including individuals on probation, parole, or supervised release.
- DC residents currently incarcerated can also vote. See "How to Vote If You Are Currently Incarcerated" earlier in this guide for step-by-step instructions.

### Where to Learn More

- **DC Board of Elections:** dcboe.org | (202) 727-2525 | Toll-free: 1-866-328-6837
- **Candidate information:** Visit dcboe.org for a full list of candidates in each race.

## Common Questions: A Quick Reference for Outreach

This section helps VSC team members, peer educators, and volunteers answer the most common questions during outreach.

**Q: Can I vote if I have a felony conviction?**

Yes. In DC, if you are a U.S. citizen and a DC resident you never lose your right to vote, even while incarcerated. This includes felony convictions.

**Q: Can I vote if I'm currently incarcerated?**

Yes. DC residents in DC Jail can vote in person or by absentee ballot. DC residents in federal (BOP) facilities can request an absentee ballot. See "How to Vote If You Are Currently Incarcerated" for step-by-step instructions.

**Q: Can I vote if I'm on probation, parole, or supervised release?**

Yes. Your supervision status does not affect your right to vote in DC.

**Q: How do I register to vote?**

Register online at dcboe.org, at the DMV, by mail, or in person. Same-day registration is available during early voting and on Election Day.

**Q: Am I already registered?**

If you got a DC ID at the DMV, you may have been automatically registered. Check at dcboe.org or call (202) 727-2525.

**Q: What is ranked choice voting?**

Instead of picking one candidate, you can rank up to five in order of preference. If no one gets over 50%, the last-place candidate is eliminated and those votes move to the next choice.

**Q: What if I make a mistake on my ranked ballot?**

If you give the same ranking to two candidates (overvote), that ranking and any below it won't count. If you skip a ranking, the next valid one will count, but skipping increases the risk of your ballot becoming inactive. Rank candidates consecutively to be safe.

**Q: What do I need to bring to vote?**

DC does not require photo ID. You can present your name and address. For same-day registration, bring proof of residency.

**Q: When and where can I vote?**

Early voting: June 8–14 (8:30 AM – 7:00 PM daily). Election Day: June 16 (7 AM – 8 PM). Check dcboe.org for locations.

**Q: Does my vote really make a difference?**

Yes. The people who win these races decide what happens with housing, jobs, healthcare, and the agencies you deal with every day. When returning citizens show up as informed, organized voters, elected officials must pay attention.

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## Sources & Verification

This guide is for informational and educational purposes only. It does not endorse any candidate, campaign, or political party.

### Verification Sources

Election information was verified against the following DC Board of Elections (DCBOE) documents on May 18, 2026:

- 2026 General Election calendar
- 2026 General Election vote centers and drop boxes list
- DCBOE ranked choice voting overview

### Legal Authority for Ranked Choice Voting

Initiative 83 (D.C. Act 25-652), approved by DC voters in November 2024 and funded in the DC FY2026 budget. Full implementation details at dcboe.org/elections/ranked-choice-voting.

Information reflects what was publicly available as of May 18, 2026.

## Your Vote, Your Voice

Whether this is your first time voting or you're a longtime participant, your voice matters. The people elected in this primary will make decisions about the systems that shape your life and your community.

### Need help? Contact the DC Board of Elections:

- Phone: (202) 727-2525 | Toll-free: 1-866-DC-VOTES (1-866-328-6837)
- TTY: 711 (in DC) | 800-643-3768 (out of DC) | Spanish TTY: 800-546-7111
- Address: 1015 Half Street SE, Suite 750, Washington, DC 20003
- Website: dcboe.org

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