

THE VPR VERMONT PBS DEBATES

The VPR-Vermont PBS 2022 Debates will cover the primary and general election races for the U.S. House, U.S. Senate, governor, lieutenant governor, and other statewide elected offices as needed. The goal is to give listeners a comprehensive look at where candidates stand on the issues. **Below are answers to some frequently asked questions about our debate policies and guidelines.**

How many primary debates will be held?

VPR-Vermont PBS will hold eight primary debates prior to the Aug. 9 primary. Unless otherwise noted, the primary debates will be one hour, broadcast live on VPR and YouTube webstream at 12 p.m., and broadcast on PBS at 7 p.m.

- Thursday June 2: Republicans for U.S. Senate
- Tuesday June 7: Republicans for U.S. House
- Wednesday June 8: Democrats for U.S. Senate
- Thursday June 9: Democrats for U.S. House (*note: 90 mins live at 7 p.m.*)
- Tuesday, June 14: Democrats for governor
- Wednesday June 15: Republicans for governor
- Thursday, June 16: Republicans for lieutenant governor
- Wednesday, June 22: Democrats for lieutenant governor

When and where will the debates be held?

The debates will be held live and in-person at the VPR-Vermont PBS Winooski studios. A remote option will be offered for candidates who test positive for COVID-19 prior to a debate, or for candidates who do not meet VPR-Vermont PBS vaccination requirements for our facilities (which require a primary vaccination series and a booster; with accommodations for medical exemptions).

How many general election debates will be held?

VPR-Vermont PBS will hold at least four debates prior to the Nov. 8 general election.

- U.S. House
- U.S. Senate
- Governor
- Lieutenant governor
- *TBD debates: Secretary of State, attorney general, and treasurer*

Who's invited?

The goal is to provide voters with the best opportunity to draw clear distinctions among candidates so that voters are informed by Election Day. Given the limited time for each debate, it may be impractical to have all candidates participate. Therefore, VPR-Vermont PBS have established the following objective criteria to determine the debate lineup:

For primary election debates:

- Major party status
- Candidates must have filed necessary paperwork and signatures with the Vermont Secretary of State and the Federal Elections Commission (FEC)

- VPR news editors have determined a candidate is actively campaigning for office (including, but not limited to, consideration of recent campaign events, appearances, and a review of FEC data related to campaign fundraising)

For general election debates:

- Major party status
- Incumbent office-holder
- Independent or minor party candidates who received 5% or more of the vote in the previous statewide general election for state or federal office
- Candidates for minor parties which received 5% or more in a previous statewide general election for state or federal office
- Independent or minor party candidates who received 5% or more in a statewide scientific nonpartisan poll, conducted within the last six months
- Candidates must have filed necessary paperwork and signatures with the Vermont Secretary of State and the Federal Elections Commission (FEC)

What is a major party?

Major parties, as defined by the Vermont Secretary of State, must have received at least 5% of the vote in a statewide election and be organized in at least 30 towns and 7 counties. Currently, the major parties in Vermont are the Democratic Party, the Republican Party and the Progressive Party.

How does VPR cover independent and minor party candidates?

Debates are just one part of VPR-Vermont PBS's election coverage, and we are committed to covering all candidates on the ballot for statewide and federal offices. VPR-Vermont PBS interviews all minor party and independent candidates for statewide office (if they agree to be interviewed) throughout the campaign season on *Morning Edition*, *Vermont Edition* and/or *All Things Considered*. Candidates also are covered through our daily news coverage both online and on-air. [You can find all of VPR's campaign coverage here.](#)

How does Vermont PBS cover independent and minor party candidates?

VPR-Vermont PBS will broadcast and make available on its website one-minute, filmed candidate commentaries of all candidates who wish to participate and who are on the Vermont Secretary of State's ballot for statewide office. All of Vermont PBS' election coverage is available [here](#).

Don't you have a responsibility to let all candidates have an equal voice in the debates?

Our civic responsibility is public service, and to ensure our audience has the information they need to make decisions when voting. A political debate is not a candidate forum; our overall coverage provides that forum throughout the campaign season. The purpose of the debates is to provide voters the chance to draw clear distinctions between viable candidates. Too many candidates in a debate would be impractical and not serve our audience well.

How does your policy comply with the FCC's equal time rule?

The equal time rule does not apply to regularly scheduled news programs, such as *Vermont Edition*. In order to encourage broadcast stations to cover political campaigns, the FCC exempts a variety of news programming from its "equal opportunities" requirements.

How does your policy affect your nonprofit status?

The IRS allows nonprofit media organizations to choose which candidates are invited to debates, for practical and educational reasons, as long as objective selection criteria is used.