

**The Vermont Public 2022 midterm election debates** will cover the general election races for the U.S. House, U.S. Senate, governor and lieutenant governor. 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 midterm election debates will be held?**

Vermont Public will hold four debates prior to the Nov. 8 midterm election. The debates will be one hour, broadcast live on *Vermont Edition* and our [YouTube webstream](#) at 12 p.m., and broadcast on Vermont Public's PBS channel at 7 p.m.

- Tuesday, Oct. 11: U.S. House
- Thursday, Oct. 13: U.S. Senate
- Tuesday, Oct. 18: Governor
- Thursday, Oct. 20: Lieutenant governor

**When and where will the debates be held?**

The debates will be held live and in-person at the Vermont Public Winooski studios.

**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, Vermont Public has established the following objective criteria to determine the debate lineup:

**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 Vermont Public cover independent and minor party candidates?**

Debates are just one part of Vermont Public's election coverage, and we are committed to covering all candidates on the ballot for statewide and federal offices. Vermont Public 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 Vermont Public's campaign coverage 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.