

Our Vote, Our Power

A YW Boston Voter Guide for the 2026 Massachusetts Midterms

Nonpartisan notice

YW Boston does not endorse candidates, political parties, or ballot positions. This guide is intended to educate, convene, and connect our community to trusted resources — informed by our mission to eliminate racism and empower women, with particular attention to the experiences of women of color and other historically excluded communities in Greater Boston.

Voting Rights Are Under Active Threat



Federal Level

In April 2026, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 6–3 in *Louisiana v. Callais*, significantly weakening Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act — the core federal tool used for six decades to challenge maps and rules **that dilute the political power of voters of color**. The decision makes it far harder for Black, Latina, AAPI, and other voters of color to challenge discriminatory district maps in court. Several states have moved to redraw maps with fewer majority-minority districts ahead of the 2026 midterms.



State Level

In Massachusetts, Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act does not play the same role in congressional redistricting that it does in many Southern states. The ruling is nevertheless relevant to the state because it reflects a broader reduction in the scope of federal protections for voters of color, placing greater significance on the voting protections that remain within state authority, including voter registration requirements, registration deadlines, and access to the registration process.

YW Boston is paying attention to Massachusetts' voter access laws. These are not abstract policy questions; they are the layer of protection that state government can strengthen, even as federal protections weaken.

How to Vote in Massachusetts

Start Here

Even if you've voted before — moving, changing your name, or long gaps between elections can all affect your status.

[Click here](#) to check your registration status and address on file.
[Click here](#) to register, apply for an absentee ballot, find your polling place, and view a sample ballot.

[Click here](#) to view your polling location.
[Click here](#) to update online, by mail, or in-person.

FYI: Massachusetts has Automatic Voter Registration. If you've completed certain transactions at the RMV, MassHealth, or the Health Connector since 2023, you may already be registered. Be sure to confirm your registration status.

Voting Options

Massachusetts allows no-excuse voting by mail and in-person early voting for both the primary and general election. Please visit the [Secretary of the Commonwealth of MA website](#) to find more about absentee voting, including eligibility requirements, deadlines and how to fill out and submit an application.

Same-day registration is not yet available in Massachusetts. Be sure to register prior to the deadlines.

More resources for voting in Massachusetts can be found [here](#).

KEY DATES FOR 2026

Milestone	State Primary	General Election
Election Day	Tuesday, Sept. 1, 2026	Tuesday, Nov. 3, 2026
Voter registration deadline	Sat., Aug. 22, 2026	Fri., Oct. 23, 2026*
Early voting window	Aug. 22–28, 2026	Oct. 17–30, 2026*
Vote-by-mail application deadline	5:00 p.m., Aug. 25, 2026	5:00 p.m., Oct. 27, 2026*
Deadline to request an absentee ballot	August 25, 2026	

- Boston does not have a municipal election in 2026 — city elections happen in odd years (2025, 2027).
- The 2026 elections are state and federal races: statewide offices, the Legislature, Governor's Council, and Massachusetts' congressional delegation.
- Nine statewide ballot questions are expected on the November 2026 general election ballot, alongside candidate races.

Where Massachusetts stands on voter access – and what we're advocating for:

- Automatic Voter Registration (AVR) — in effect since 2023. Massachusetts was the 14th state to adopt it.
- Early voting — in effect since 2016, for both primary and general elections.
- Same-day registration — not yet law.

*Massachusetts currently requires registration 10 days before an election, one of the stricter cutoffs among states with same-day registration options elsewhere. Legislation (S.505 / H.2093) has been filed again this session, and a citizen ballot initiative for same-day registration is also in motion for 2026.

Why this matters (*especially for women of color in Massachusetts*)

Turnout gaps by race, and to a lesser extent gender, persist in Massachusetts:

- In the 2022 midterm general election, Massachusetts' overall turnout (48.8% of eligible voters) outpaced the national average (46.2%) — but this statewide number masks real gaps beneath it.
- A 2024 analysis by the Massachusetts Voter Table and partner organizations found that while voter turnout statewide was 76%, only 51% of lower-propensity voters of color actually voted. That's a gap of about 26 percentage points.
- **Off-cycle and municipal elections in Boston — where many of the decisions most directly shaping daily life (schools, housing, policing) are made — see especially low turnout, a pattern documented by Boston Indicators.**

Midterm elections — e.g. non-presidential years like 2026 — consistently see lower turnout than presidential election years, and that drop-off is not evenly distributed.

Evaluating Candidates and Ballot Questions

YW Boston will not tell you who or what to vote for. What we can offer is a lens — a set of questions rooted in our mission that you can bring to any race or ballot question, from Governor to a local ballot initiative.

A ballot (i.e. the piece of paper you vote on) usually contains candidates—the people competing for elected positions in your town, city, state, and sometimes country—and also ballot questions or initiatives that are citizen-run.

Preview your ballot [here](#).

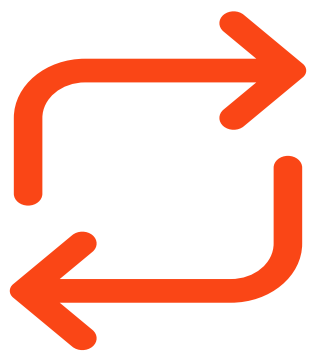
Ballot Question Breakdown, a mission-driven lens:

Use these questions to help guide your vote on a ballot, a candidate, or an initiative.

- Does this advance the elimination of racism and the empowerment of women-- YW Boston's mission — or does it maintain the status quo?
- Does this campaign have a track record — not just rhetoric — of dismantling structural racism and gender inequity, including in how they've built their own team, staff, or coalition?
- Who is centered in this candidate's platform or this ballot question's language, and who is missing? Whose economic mobility does it advance, and whose does it leave out?
- Does this position engage seriously with the specific, compounding barriers facing women of color — in pay, in housing, in health care, in political representation?



Spread the Word!



Learn something or want to keep making an impact? Share this guide with a friend, colleague, or neighbor. Or repost with your “I Voted!” sticker and tag YW Boston. We love to see our community in action!

Issue areas close to YW Boston's community

Economic mobility and pay equity for women and girls

including enforcement of the Frances Perkins Workplace Equity Act and EEOC reporting

Increased representation of women, people of color, and especially women of color in public or private-sector leadership Parity on Boards

↳ [LeadBoston](#)

Reproductive health, gender-affirming care, and bodily autonomy

Uplifting the voices of youth, especially girls and gender expansive young folks of color

↳ [FYRE program](#)

Safe and thriving workplaces for trans and gender-expansive community members

Liberatory and just work environments in Massachusetts

↳ [Massachusetts Alliance for Equity](#)