

Primary Election Ballot Design Guide



Issued April 8, 2025

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Overview

P.L. 2025, c. 32 revises the design of the primary election ballots. The law requires primary election ballots to be arranged in an office block format. All ballots shall be designed according to the uniform design standards set in P.L. 2025, c. 32 and these guidelines. The law also prohibits primary election ballots from being designed in a way that separates any one candidate from other candidates. This means that there cannot be a separation or any visual distinction between candidate names (i.e. different font style or size, not appearing flush or aligned with the oval or space, etc.). The ballot cannot include any distinguishing mark or notation unless it is required by law. P.L. 2025, c. 32 also gives discretion to county clerks to arrange and design the ballot in either landscape or portrait orientation.

P.L. 2025, c. 32 provides procedures for ordering the names of candidates on primary election ballots. Candidate ballot draw positions shall be labeled using a letter and number that correspond to the office block and line that each candidate is placed on and that the label shall be placed next to a candidate's name (i.e. 1A or A1).

P.L. 2025, c. 32 states that county clerks shall allow for the placement of a slogan or endorsement, not more than six words, next to or below the names of candidates. The slogan or endorsement shall be the same font and color as the candidate name but in a smaller font size. The slogan or endorsement shall not be in bold or italicized fonts and must comply with N.J.S.A. 19:23-17.

Furthermore, the county clerks shall allow candidates for the same office with more than one seat available to associate in the same office block, using a common slogan or endorsement that shall appear on the ballot as next to or below the associated candidate names. This must comply with N.J.S.A. 19:23-17 and N.J.S.A. 19:23-18.

P.L. 2025, c. 32 requires the Division of Elections to collect data from county and municipal clerks and county boards of elections on their experiences regarding the changes to ballot design and primary election procedures as a result the changes to the law. The report will include data concerning the conduct of primary elections, best practices to improve the conduct of future primary election and any other relevant information, research, guidance and expertise regarding the implementation of the new ballot designs and primary election procedures.

The Secretary of State in consultation with all county clerks have created this uniform guideline as a means for all county clerks to comply with the requirements of section 2 of P.L. 2025, c. 32. This guide will discuss certain aspects of the designing of a primary election ballot and does not encompass all of the statutorily required design elements for a primary election ballot. County Clerks should ensure that they are complying with all applicable statutes outside of this guide. Additionally, this guide provides clarity as to what must be provided by the county clerks and county boards of elections for reporting purposes. The Division must compile an impact report within 180 days after the date of the second primary election following the enactment of the law.

Primary Election Ballot Design

All primary election ballots used in New Jersey shall comply with the following design standards:

- (1) All text shall be written in plain, simple language, to the extent possible, and shall avoid overly technical language
- (2) Candidates shall be arranged by the office sought in an office block format
 - Each office block shall be separated on the ballot from other office blocks
 - Candidates for the same office shall be listed within the same office block without a page or column break appearing between their names and as further provided under N.J.S.A. 19:23-25
- (3) All office blocks appearing on one ballot shall be designed according to the same standards of design, consistent with the provisions of section 2 of P.L. 2025, c. 32
- (4) All spacing, ruling and delineation of candidates shall be consistent and uniform within each office block and across all office blocks included on each ballot, so as not to create a separation or visual distinction between the names of any candidates.
- (5) An oval or space must be included to allow for the voter to mark a vote and shall be to the left or to the right of the name of each candidate
 - Each candidate's name shall appear flush next to and aligned with the oval or space in a consistent manner that does not create any visual distinction between candidate names
- (6) Candidate ballot draw positions shall be labeled using a letter and number combination, such as 1A or A1, and shall:
 - Correspond to the office block and line each candidate is placed on and the label should be placed next to a candidate's name.
 - Each letter and number combination used should be unique to each candidate, and no combination should be repeated on any individual ballot
- (7) No primary ballot used in New Jersey shall include any distinguishing mark or notation, except as otherwise provided by law.

No primary ballot used in New Jersey shall be designed in a manner that creates for a candidate on the ballot an incongruous separation from other candidates seeking the same office, positions a candidate on the ballot among candidates for a different office, or brackets candidates together on the ballot so as to position a candidate based upon a drawing for ballot position for a different candidate for a different office.

County Clerk Responsibilities

Each County Clerk shall comply with the following:

- (1) Allow for the placement of a slogan or endorsement of not more than six words next to or below the names of candidates
 - In the same font and color as the candidate's name, but in a smaller font size
 - Slogans or endorsements may not be **bold** or *italicized*
 - Slogan or endorsement must comply with N.J.S.A. 19:23-17
- (2) Allow candidates for the same office with multiple open seats to associate in the same office block, using a common slogan or endorsement, next to or below the associated candidate names, in compliance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 19:23-18
- (3) Indicate the association of candidates for the same or different offices using a common slogan or endorsement next to or below each of the candidates' names, in compliance with N.J.S.A. 19:23-17

In addition to complying with the provisions of section 2 of P.L. 2025, c. 32, each county clerk may arrange and design the ballots in either landscape or portrait orientation.

Examples of Ballots

Below are examples of how a Clerk can design their primary election ballot.

Left Justified Ballot with Block Letter/Position Number Label

<p>Governor Vote for One</p> <hr/> <p>Governor Vote for One</p>	<p>Surrogate Vote for One</p> <hr/> <p>Surrogate Vote for One</p>	<p>Members of Council-At-Large Vote for Three</p> <hr/> <p>Members of Council-At-Large Vote for Three</p>
<input type="radio"/> Shirley U. Jest 1A Slogan for Official Party Endorsement	<input type="radio"/> Barry Kade 1C Candidate Slogan	<input type="radio"/> Les Izmore 1F Slogan for Official Party Endorsement
<input type="radio"/> Rufus Lee King 2A Candidate Slogan	<input type="radio"/> Barbie Dahl 2C Candidate Slogan	<input type="radio"/> May Flowers 2F Candidate Slogan
<input type="radio"/> Lex E. Kon 3A Candidate Slogan	<input type="radio"/> Belle Bottoms 3C Slogan for Official Party Endorsement	<input type="radio"/> Noah Guy 3F Candidate Slogan
<input type="radio"/> Tab U. Lator 4A Candidate Slogan	<input type="radio"/> Dee Tension 4C Candidate Slogan	<input type="radio"/> Write-In Write-In
<input type="radio"/> Claire D. Lune 5A Candidate Slogan	<input type="radio"/> Chuck Roast 5C Candidate Slogan	<input type="radio"/> Write-In Write-In
<input type="radio"/> Write-In Write-In	<input type="radio"/> Write-In Write-In	<input type="radio"/> Write-In Write-In
<p>Members of the General Assembly Vote for Two</p> <hr/> <p>Members of the General Assembly Vote for Two</p>	<p>Member of the County Commissioner 1st Legislative District Vote for One</p> <hr/> <p>Member of the County Commissioner 1st Legislative District Vote for One</p>	<p>Member of the State Committee Vote for One</p> <hr/> <p>Member of the State Committee Vote for One</p>
<input type="radio"/> Miss L. Toe 1B Candidate Slogan	<p>No Nomination Made</p>	<input type="radio"/> Pete Sakes 1G Candidate Slogan
<input type="radio"/> Mel O. Yellow 2B Slogan for Official Party Endorsement	<input type="radio"/> Write-In-Vote/Votar por Escrito Write-In-Vote/Votar por Escrito	<input type="radio"/> Write-In Write-In
<input type="radio"/> Anna Log 3B The Most Compelling Slogan		
<input type="radio"/> Anita Job 4B Group With the Best Agenda	<p>Mayor Vote for One</p> <hr/> <p>Mayor Vote for One</p>	
<input type="radio"/> Write-In Write-In	<input type="radio"/> Iona Carr 1E Candidate Slogan	
<input type="radio"/> Write-In Write-In	<input type="radio"/> Jim Shorts 2E Slogan for Official Party Endorsement	
	<input type="radio"/> Write-In Write-In	

Portrait Oriented Right Justified Ballot with Block Letter/Position Number Label

Governor Vote for One	
1A	Shirley U. Jest <input type="radio"/> Slogan for Official Party Endorsement
2A	Rufus Lee King <input type="radio"/> Candidate Slogan
3A	Lex E. Kon <input type="radio"/> Candidate Slogan
4A	Tab U. Lator <input type="radio"/> Candidate Slogan
5A	Claire D. Lune <input type="radio"/> Candidate Slogan
Write-In Write-In	<input type="radio"/>

Members of the General Assembly Vote for Two	
1B	Miss L. Toe <input type="radio"/> Candidate Slogan
2B	Mel O. Yellow <input type="radio"/> Slogan for Official Party Endorsement
3B	Anna Log <input type="radio"/> The Most Compelling Slogan
4B	Anita Job <input type="radio"/> Group With the Best Agenda
Write-In Write-In	<input type="radio"/>
Write-In Write-In	<input type="radio"/>

Surrogate Vote for One	
1C	Barry Kade <input type="radio"/> Candidate Slogan
2C	Barbie Dahl <input type="radio"/> Candidate Slogan
3C	Belle Bottoms <input type="radio"/> Slogan for Official Party Endorsement
4C	Dee Tension <input type="radio"/> Candidate Slogan
5C	Chuck Roast <input type="radio"/> Candidate Slogan
Write-In Write-In	<input type="radio"/>

Mayor Vote for One	
1E	Iona Carr <input type="radio"/> Candidate Slogan
2E	Jim Shorts <input type="radio"/> Slogan for Official Party Endorsement
Write-In Write-In	<input type="radio"/>

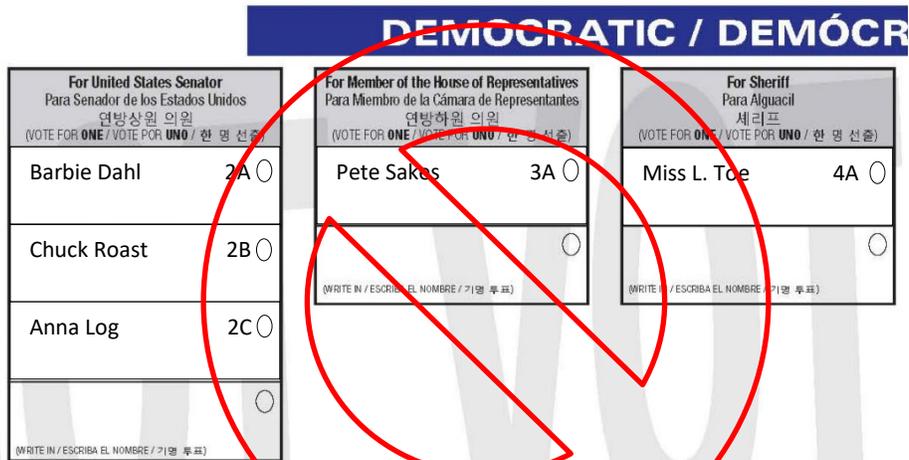
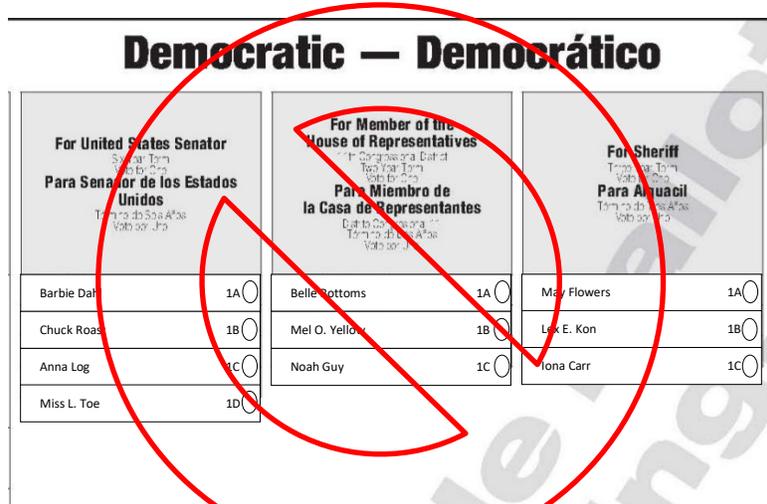
Members of Council-At-Large Vote for Three	
1F	Les Izmore <input type="radio"/> Slogan for Official Party Endorsement
2F	May Flowers <input type="radio"/> Candidate Slogan
3F	Noah Guy <input type="radio"/> Candidate Slogan
Write-In Write-In	<input type="radio"/>
Write-In Write-In	<input type="radio"/>
Write-In Write-In	<input type="radio"/>

Member of the County Committee Vote for One	
1G	Pete Sakes <input type="radio"/> Candidate Slogan
Write-In Write-In	<input type="radio"/>

Below are examples of how a Clerk SHOULD NOT design their primary election ballot.

- Block and Position Labels should NOT repeat on any individual ballot
- Block and Position Labels should NOT be placed between candidate names and voting ovals
- Candidate names are not flush to and aligned with the voting oval

These configurations SHOULD NOT be used



Primary Election Ballot Design Impact Report

In order to report accurate and true information to the Governor and Legislature, the Division of Elections will collect the following data from each county clerk, municipal clerk and board of elections offices following both the 2025 and 2026 Primary Elections. All data must be retained by the county election officials and made available to the Division upon request.

- Overall experiences of election officials, candidates and voters specific to P.L. 2025, c. 32:
 - Candidate and/or voter confusion incidents
 - Difficulties in administering primary elections by the election officials
 - Methods and remedies to resolve issues
 - Best practices to improve the conduct of future primary elections
- Implementation costs outlined in P.L. 2025, c. 32:
 - Expenses related to design, materials, vendors, education, and all other relevant expenditures associated

The Division will assess all data collected, compile a complete report, and outline recommendations as necessary. The Primary Election Ballot Design Impact Report will be provided to the Governor and the Legislature within 180 days after the date of the second primary election following the enactment of P.L. 2025, c. 32.