

The following article is courtesy of Town of Dryden Resident Kathy Zahler.

ITHACA, NY - Having a daughter who gets to vote in her first presidential election this year makes crystal clear to me all that I don't know about primaries, despite having voted in them for decades.

I'll leave aside her most difficult, insoluble questions: Why do Democrats have superdelegates? Why does each state do things differently? But with the help of the Board of Elections, the League of Women Voters, and other smart people, I'll try to answer the most common questions you may have about the presidential primary ballots you will see on Tuesday, April 19.

### **WHO CAN VOTE?**

New York's is a completely closed primary. Only registered Democrats may vote in the Democratic primary. Only registered Republicans may vote in the Republican primary. If you are a new voter who enrolled in one of those parties by March 25, you may vote.

If you changed your registration to one of those parties prior to last October 9, 2015, you may vote. If you are not listed on the voter rolls but believe that this is an error, you have the right to request an affidavit ballot. Your registration will be double-checked after you complete that ballot.

### **WHY ARE WE VOTING ONLY FOR PRESIDENT?**

New York has the potential for three separate primaries in 2016: Tuesday's presidential primary, a federal primary (Congressional) in some areas on June 28, and a state and local primary on September 13. We like to keep our election inspectors fully employed, it seems.

### **WHEN AND WHERE DO I VOTE?**

Polls will be open in Tompkins County from noon until 9 on Tuesday, April 19. Unlike in some other states, in New York, Republicans and Democrats vote on the same day and at the same polling places. To find your polling site (and check to make sure that you are registered), use this handy search site: [Voter Lookup](#).

### **WHAT CAN I EXPECT AT MY POLLING PLACE?**

In Tompkins County, some polling places will have two lines, one for Democrats and one for Republicans. Others may have a mixed line, especially if registration is skewed very Republican or very Democratic in that election district. When you sign in, you will receive the ballot that matches your party registration.

Take the ballot to the voting booth, fill it in, and feed it into the voting machine. Election inspectors will help you if you have questions about the process.

## WHAT WILL I SEE ON THE BALLOT?

The ballots for Democrats and Republicans are quite different from one another. Here’s what you will see.

### DEMOCRATS

Here’s a sample of the Democratic ballot.

	PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (Vote for any ONE)	DELEGATES TO NATIONAL CONVENTION (Vote for any FIVE different candidates even if in same column)				
Democratic 	<input type="radio"/> Bernie Sanders	<input type="radio"/> Emily Adams (F)	<input type="radio"/> Mathew K. Ashford (M)	<input type="radio"/> Molly E. C. Grover (F)	<input type="radio"/> Donald M. Bazley (M)	<input type="radio"/> Mary D. Thorpe (F)
Democratic 	<input type="radio"/> Hillary Clinton	<input type="radio"/> Barbara Lifton (F)	<input type="radio"/> Svanick Myrick (M)	<input type="radio"/> Irene Stein (F)	<input type="radio"/> Shawn D. Hogan (M)	<input type="radio"/> Bushna Sheikh (F)

OFFICIAL ARGENTINE / AFFIDAVIT BALLOT - PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY ELECTION STATE OF NEW YORK, COUNTY OF TOMPKINS - APRIL 15, 2016 Ballot ID: 3881 Tompkins County All Election Districts

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

- (1) Mark only with a blue or black felt tip marker or pen.
- (2) To vote for a candidate whose name is printed on this ballot, fill in the oval (O) next to the name of the candidate (see Box #).
- (3) Any other mark or writing, or any erasure made on this ballot outside the voting oval will void this entire ballot.
- (4) Do not overvote. If you select a greater number of candidates than there are vacancies to be filled, your ballot will be void for that public office or party position.
- (5) If you tear, or deface, or wrongly mark this ballot, call the Board of Elections at (867) 274-8027 for instructions on how to obtain a new ballot. Do not attempt to correct mistakes on the ballot by making erasures or cross-outs. Erasures or cross-outs may invalidate all or part of your ballot. Prior to submitting your ballot, if you make a mistake in completing the ballot or wish to change your ballot choices, you may obtain and complete a new ballot. You have a right to a replacement ballot.

On the Democratic ballot, the candidates for president appear in column 1, followed by the people who are their local delegates.

## WHO ARE THOSE DELEGATES?

Each Congressional District sends a set number of pledged delegates to the convention in Philadelphia. Here in the 23rd District, we get five Democratic delegates in all. Larger districts get as many as seven.

Each delegate applied to one of the two campaigns and was selected to serve at the convention. The delegates are committed to vote for their designated candidate on the first ballot at the convention. Should there be additional ballots, they may or may not change their votes.

### **WHY ARE THEY LABELED F AND M?**

Gender matters in the delegate choices. Delegates are chosen by gender from the highest vote getters. According to party rules, three out of five of our Congressional District's delegates must be female.

### **MAY I VOTE FOR DELEGATES WHO DO NOT MATCH MY CANDIDATE?**

Yes. You may choose any five delegates on the ballot. Most people will probably choose the horizontal row of delegates that matches their candidate, but some may know one or two of the other delegates and respect them enough to think that they will do the right thing at the convention on the second or third ballot. Be careful, though. If you choose more than five delegates, you will invalidate your ballot. (If you realize that you have made a mistake, though, you may trade in your ballot for a fresh one and start over.)

### **MAY I VOTE FOR NO DELEGATES AT ALL?**

Yes. Your ballot still counts if you vote only for a presidential candidate.

### **IF MY PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE WINS, DO ALL FIVE OF HIS/HER DELEGATES GO TO THE CONVENTION?**

No. New York Democratic primary results are proportional. If one candidate gets 40 percent of the vote, that candidate gets two (2/5, or 40%) delegates from the 23rd District. One will be the highest-vote-getting female delegate for that candidate, and the other will be the highest-vote-getting male.

### **AM I VOTING FOR SUPERDELEGATES?**

Sort of. Some of the party leaders and elected officials are officially unpledged, and those (e.g., the governor, our senators, Bill Clinton [do we

really think he’s “unpledged”?) are already chosen. But the pledged party leaders and elected officials are chosen based on the primary results.

## REPUBLICANS

The Republican ballot is much simpler.

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (Vote for only ONE)				
Republican 	<input type="radio"/> Donald J. Trump	<input type="radio"/> John R. Kasich	<input type="radio"/> Ben Carson	<input type="radio"/> Ted Cruz

OFFICIAL ABSENTEE / AFFIDAVIT BALLOT - PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY ELECTION STATE OF NEW YORK, COUNTY OF TOWNSEND - APRIL 19, 2016 Ballot ID: 0449  
All Towns County Election Clerks

**INSTRUCTIONS**

(1) Mark only with a blue or black felt tip marker or pen.

(2) To vote for a candidate whose name is printed on this ballot, fill in the oval (O) next to the name of the candidate. See this .

(3) Any other mark or writing, or any erasure made on this ballot outside the voting oval will void this entire ballot.

(4) Do not overvote. If you select a greater number of candidates than there are vacancies to be filled, your ballot will be void for that public office or party position.

(5) If you tear, or deface, or wrongly mark this ballot, call the Board of Elections at (800) 274-0022 for instructions on how to obtain a new ballot. Do not attempt to correct mistakes on the ballot by making erasures or smudges. Erasures or smudges may invalidate all or part of your ballot. Prior to submitting your ballot, if you make a mistake in completing the ballot or wish to change your ballot choices, you may obtain and complete a new ballot. You have a right to a replacement ballot.

## WHERE ARE THE DELEGATES?

The Republican Committee will choose Republican delegates for the Cleveland convention in Congressional District meetings soon after the primary election. They will give delegate positions to the “party faithful,” a new rule for 2016. In the 23rd Congressional District, as in all other CDs in New York State, we are allowed three Republican delegates.

Like the Democratic delegates, Republican delegates will be bound, or pledged, to a particular candidate for the first convention ballot only. Unlike the Democratic delegates, the Republican delegates are “winner takes most” rather than proportional.

That means that if one candidate gets over 50 percent of the vote, that candidate gets all three delegates. If one candidate gets 45 percent and another gets 37 percent and a third gets 18 percent, the first gets two delegates, the second gets one, and the third gets none at all.

## WHY IS BEN CARSON ON THE BALLOT?

According to the Board of Elections, he never filed the necessary paperwork to have his name removed.

### **AM I VOTING FOR SUPERDELEGATES?**

No. Only the Democrats have superdelegates. At-large delegates will be chosen at the Republican State Committee meeting in May and bound to candidates based on the primary results.

It is very rare for New York's late primary to matter at all in the scheme of things. Someone told me that it hasn't been meaningful in 40 years. But it's certainly significant this year; New York could make a real difference. Let's get that turnout up. Don't forget to vote.

(Featured photo courtesy of Memphis CVB on Flickr)