



# WHY WE VOTE

Voting is the tool that we use to ensure our voices are heard and needs are met by our elected officials. People who vote find their needs best met by our local, state, and federal governments. Here is a factsheet with descriptions of some of the elected offices in our state that are on the ballot in 2024 and an explanation of why they matter to you and your relatives.

# FEDERAL RACES ▶

## President & Vice President

The President of the United States is the head of state and government, responsible for executing federal laws, leading the executive branch, and serving as Commander-in-Chief of the military. The Vice President supports the President, steps in when the President is unable to fulfill their duties, and serves as President of the Senate, casting tie-breaking votes when needed. Together, they play key roles in shaping national policy and representing the country domestically and internationally.

## U.S. Senator

A United States Senator is an elected member of the Senate, one of the two chambers of Congress, representing their state on a federal level. Each state has two U.S. Senators. They serve six-year terms, working to draft, debate, and vote on legislation, confirm presidential appointments, and ratify treaties. They also play a crucial role in overseeing government operations and advocating for the interests of their constituents.

## U.S. Representative

A United States Representative is an elected member of the House of Representatives, the lower chamber of Congress, serving two-year terms to represent a congressional district within their state. Minnesota has eight CDs and U.S. Representatives. They introduce and vote on federal legislation, address constituent concerns, and play a key role in shaping a range of issues that affect our community.

### Federal Issues:

- **Environmental regulation:** National policies on air and water quality, endangered species, and land use.
- **Gun control:** National policies on background checks and assault weapons.
- **Reproductive rights:** The right to access abortion services, birth control, and sex education.
- **Social Security and Medicare:** Administration of federal health care and retirement programs.
- **National Defense and Foreign Affairs:** Military operations, treaties, diplomacy, and international trade agreements.

# STATE RACES



## State Senator

A Minnesota State Senator is an elected official who serves in the Minnesota Senate, the upper chamber of the state legislature. Representing specific legislative districts, Minnesota State Senators are responsible for drafting, debating, and voting on laws that impact the state's policies, budget, and overall governance. There are 67 members who serve four-year terms and often participate in various committees that focus on key issues such as education, healthcare, and public safety. Additionally, Minnesota State Senators engage with their constituents to address concerns and advocate for the needs of their communities. Whether or not a State Senator is on your ballot depends on what district you live in.

## State Representative

A Minnesota State Representative is an elected official serving in the Minnesota House of Representatives, the lower chamber of the state legislature. Representing specific legislative districts, these representatives are responsible for proposing, debating, and voting on legislation that affects the state's laws and policies. There are 134 members who serve two-year terms and often participate in various committees to address important issues such as taxation, education, and health care. Minnesota State Representatives engage with their constituents to understand their needs and advocate for their interests at the state level. Whether or not a State Representative is on your ballot depends on what district you live in.

## Associate Justice (Minnesota Supreme Court)

An Associate Justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court is one of the seven justices on the court, which is the highest judicial authority in the state. They participate in hearing and deciding cases that involve important legal questions, including constitutional issues, statutory interpretation, and appeals from lower courts. All justices serve six-year terms.

## Chief Justice (Minnesota Supreme Court)

The Chief Justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court is the highest-ranking judicial officer in the state's judicial system. They preside over the state's Supreme Court, leading the court in deciding significant legal cases, interpreting state laws, and overseeing the administration of the state's judiciary. In addition to hearing cases, the Chief Justice often has administrative duties, such as setting court procedures, managing court budgets, and sometimes serving as a spokesperson for the state's judicial system.

## Court of Appeals

Court of Appeals judges serve on the intermediate appellate court in the Minnesota Court of Appeals. They review decisions made by lower trial courts to ensure that the law was applied correctly and that legal procedures were followed. Court of Appeals judges typically do not conduct trials or hear new evidence; instead, they examine the records of cases, review legal arguments presented in written briefs, and may hold oral arguments. Their rulings can set important precedents for lower courts and are critical in shaping state law. In Minnesota, the Court of Appeals consists of 19 judges, each serving a six-year term.

### State Issues:

- **Education:** Regulation and funding of K-12 schools and state universities.
- **Transportation:** Maintenance of state highways, public transit systems, and vehicle regulations.
- **Public Health:** Management of state health departments, health care regulations, and response to public health emergencies.
- **Criminal Justice:** State laws on criminal offenses, law enforcement, and corrections.
- **Labor and Employment:** Regulation of labor practices, minimum wage laws, and workplace safety.
- **Family Law:** Issues related to marriage, divorce, child custody, and adoption.
- **Utilities and Energy:** Regulation of state energy providers, water supply, and waste management.

# LOCAL RACES



## Mayor

This is the highest-ranking official in your city who can elect citizens to serve on advisory boards, assign council members to serve on committees, and make the annual city budget, which includes funding for things such as the police department and the arts.

## City Council

This is a group of elected officials who pass laws that govern your city, which can include setting tax rates, approving new construction, and passing the budget. This council and the mayor play a large role in enforcing the policies that we live by every day, even things like the state of public parks, street sweeping, police reform, and much more.

## County Commissioner

A county commissioner is an elected official responsible for governing and overseeing the administration of county services and operations. They serve on the county board, which is the legislative body for the county, making decisions on budgets, policies, and local laws. County commissioners address various issues, including public health, transportation, land use, and public safety, ensuring that the needs of their constituents are met.

## District Court

A district court judge is a judicial officer who oversees cases in Minnesota's district courts, which function as the trial courts in the state's judicial system. Minnesota is divided into 10 judicial districts, with 298 district court judges handling civil disputes, criminal cases, family law matters, and probate issues. These judges ensure trials are fair, rule on legal motions, instruct juries, and issue rulings, serving six-year terms if elected.

## Sheriff

These are elected law enforcement officers who are often separate from your local law enforcement agency that tend to oversee local jails and investigations into crimes at the county level. As sheriffs are elected, they work for the people and are supposed to be free of influence from other members of the county government.

## School Board Members

A district's school board is made up of elected or appointed officials who approve positions like the superintendent, budgets, and textbooks. School board members have also made decisions about when students return to school in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, enforcing or removing cops in schools, and more.

## Clerks

Elected officials who handle administrative duties, such as maintaining public records, overseeing elections, and managing licenses and permits.

### Local Issues:

- **Public Safety:** Law enforcement, fire services, and emergency medical services.
- **Zoning and Land Use:** Regulation of property development, building permits, and land use planning.
- **Local Infrastructure:** Maintenance of roads, public transportation, and community facilities.
- **Parks and Recreation:** Management of local parks, recreational programs, and community events.
- **Housing and Development:** Affordable housing initiatives, building codes, and housing assistance.
- **Local Health Services:** Public health initiatives, local clinics, and health education programs.
- **Waste Management:** Local regulations on trash collection, recycling, and waste disposal.

For more information about offices on the ballot and how to participate in your local elections, visit the [Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State website](#).

