

CHAPTER 44  
HB 481 - FINAL VERSION

26Mar2025... 1360h  
01/07/2026... 3068s

2026 SESSION

25-0794  
07/08

HOUSE BILL

**481**

AN ACT relative to the state primary date.

SPONSORS: Rep. Schultz, Merr. 29; Rep. Berry, Hills. 44; Rep. Gregg, Hills. 7; Rep. Moffett, Merr. 4; Sen. Lang, Dist 2

COMMITTEE: Election Law

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ANALYSIS

This bill moves the state primary date to June.

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Explanation: Matter added to current law appears in ***bold italics***.  
Matter removed from current law appears ~~[in brackets and struckthrough.]~~  
Matter which is either (a) all new or (b) repealed and reenacted appears in regular type.

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STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

*In the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand Twenty Six*

AN ACT relative to the state primary date.

*Be it Enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court convened:*

1 44:1 Election of Officers and Delegates; Election Dates; State Primary Election. Amend RSA 653:8  
2 to read as follows:

3 653:8 State Primary Election. The state primary election shall be held on the second Tuesday in  
4 [September] **June** of every even-numbered year.

5 44:2 Voters and Checklists; Hearings on Alterations to Party Registration. Amend RSA 654:32 to  
6 read as follows:

7 654:32 Hearings on Alterations to Party Registration. Before each state or presidential primary  
8 election, the supervisors of the checklist shall be in session before each primary for the change of  
9 registration of legal voters as provided in RSA 654:34 or 654:34-a or both. Before the presidential  
10 primary, the session shall be on the Friday preceding the first day of the filing period, between 7:00 p.m.  
11 and 7:30 p.m. and at the discretion of the supervisors for extended hours. Before the state primary  
12 election, the session shall be on Tuesday before the first [Wednesday] **Friday** in [June] **March** between  
13 7:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. and at the discretion of the supervisors for extended hours.

14 44:3 Voters and Checklists; Change of Registration. Amend RSA 654:34, IV to read as follows:

15 IV. No person, who is already registered to vote, whether his **or her** party membership has been  
16 previously registered or not, shall affiliate with a party or disaffiliate from a party between the first  
17 [Wednesday] **Friday** in [June] **March** and the day before the state primary election.

18 44:4 Elections; Nominations by Primary; Filing: General Provisions. Amend RSA 655:14 to read as  
19 follows:

20 655:14 Filing; General Provisions. The name of any person shall not be printed upon the ballot of  
21 any party for a primary unless he or she is a registered member of that party, he or she shall have met the  
22 age and domicile qualifications for the office he or she seeks at the time of the general election, he or she  
23 meets all the other qualifications at the time of filing, and he or she shall file with the appropriate official  
24 between the first [Wednesday] **Friday** in [June] **March** and the Friday of the following week a declaration of  
25 candidacy as provided in RSA 655:17.

26 44:5 Elections; Nominations; Personal Filing. Amend RSA 655:16 to read as follows:

27 655:16 Personal Filing. Except for those who must file with a town or city clerk, any person who files  
28 on the last day of the filing period must do so in person before the secretary of state[; provided, however,  
29 that this requirement shall not apply to the filling of vacancies by party committees. If the person must file  
30 with a town or city clerk and is filing on the last day of the filing period, he or she shall do so in person].

31 44:6 Elections; Nominations by Primary. Amend RSA 655:21 to read as follows:

32 655:21 Form. Primary petitions shall be made in the following form:

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1 State of New Hampshire  
2 County of \_\_\_\_\_ ss.  
3 City (Town) of \_\_\_\_\_

4 I do hereby join in a petition for the printing on the primary ballot of the name of  
5 \_\_\_\_\_ whose domicile is in the city (town) of \_\_\_\_\_ (ward, street, and  
6 number, if in a city), in the county of \_\_\_\_\_, for the office of \_\_\_\_\_ to be voted for on  
7 Tuesday, the \_\_\_\_ day of [~~September~~] **June**, \_\_\_\_ (year), and certify that I am qualified to vote for a  
8 candidate for said office, that I am a registered member of the \_\_\_\_\_ party, and am not at this  
9 time a signer of any other similar petition for any other candidate for the above office; that my domicile is  
10 in the city (town) of \_\_\_\_\_ (ward, street, and number, if in a city), in the county of  
11 \_\_\_\_\_. I certify that to my knowledge the above-named candidate is not a candidate for  
12 incompatible offices as defined in RSA 655:10, and that he or she is not a federal employee which makes  
13 him or her ineligible to file as a candidate for this office. I further certify that I believe the above-named  
14 person is especially qualified to fill said office.

15 I hereby swear, under the penalties for voting fraud set forth below, that the information above is true  
16 and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

17 \_\_\_\_\_

18 Print Voter's name

19 \_\_\_\_\_

20 Voter's Signature

21 In accordance with RSA 659:34, the penalty for knowingly or purposefully providing false information  
22 when registering to vote or voting is a class A misdemeanor with a maximum sentence of imprisonment  
23 not to exceed one year and a fine not to exceed \$2,000. Fraudulently registering to vote or voting is  
24 subject to a civil penalty not to exceed \$5,000.

25 44:7 Elections; Nomination by Primary; Examination and Rejection. Amend RSA 655:26 to read as  
26 follows:

27 655:26 Examination and Rejection. The officer with whom primary petitions are filed shall  
28 immediately upon receipt thereof examine the same and ascertain whether they conform to the law. If  
29 found not to conform thereto or to be conflicting as provided in RSA 655:23, [~~he~~] **they** shall then endorse  
30 thereon the reason why such petition cannot be accepted and shall, within 24 hours, return the same to  
31 the candidate in whose behalf it was filed. In such case, the candidate may file supplementary petitions  
32 with the official, but not later than the third [~~Wednesday~~] **Friday** in [~~June~~] **March**.

33 44:8 Elections; Nominations; Straw Candidates. Amend RSA 655:31 to read as follows:

34 655:31 Straw Candidates. No person shall be a candidate for nomination at any primary unless his  
35 candidacy is bona fide and is filed for the actual purpose of personally seeking the nomination. Any  
36 candidate for nomination whose name is to be voted upon at primary election may, no later than the  
37 [~~Wednesday~~] **Friday** after the last day for filing declarations of candidacy and primary petitions, file a  
38 petition with the ballot law commission alleging that one or more candidates for the same nomination is  
39 not a bona fide candidate. Upon receipt of such a petition, the commission shall notify in writing all

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1 candidates of that party for the same nomination of the time and place for its hearing. After such hearing,  
2 the ballot law commission shall have the power and duty to order stricken forthwith from the primary ballot  
3 the name or names of any candidate or candidates for said nomination if the commission finds that such  
4 candidate or candidates is obviously not a bona fide candidate, obviously having filed not primarily for the  
5 purpose of seeking the nomination but primarily for the purpose of drawing votes which might otherwise  
6 be cast for some other candidate for the same nomination. The decision of the commission shall be final  
7 as to questions both of law and fact, and no court shall have jurisdiction to review such decision.

8 44:9 Elections; Nominations; No Declaration Filed. Amend RSA 655:32, I to read as follows:

9 I. In case no declaration shall be filed by a candidate for any nomination to be voted for at a  
10 primary, the nomination may be made by the appropriate party committee as provided in this section. The  
11 appropriate party committee shall notify the secretary of state in writing of a person it designates to fill the  
12 vacancy. The person so designated may accept the nomination by, on or before the [~~Wednesday~~] **second**  
13 **Friday** following the expiration of the period for filing declarations of candidacy as provided in RSA 655:14,  
14 filing with the secretary of state a declaration of candidacy as provided in RSA 655:17. Any candidate  
15 accepting a nomination under this paragraph who has already filed for an incompatible office as defined in  
16 RSA 655:10 shall withdraw the prior filing. Any vacancy created by the withdrawal of a filing may be filled  
17 pursuant to this section. If the candidate is designated for the office of governor, councilor, state senator,  
18 or state representative, he or she shall also file on or before the [~~Wednesday~~] **second Friday** following the  
19 period for filing declarations of candidacy the appropriate affidavit as provided in RSA 655:29. Any  
20 candidate so designated by a party committee who has not filed all the forms required by this section  
21 within the required period of time shall not have his or her name printed on the state primary election  
22 ballot for that office.

23 44:10 Elections; Nominations; Certification. Amend RSA 655:41, I to read as follows:

24 I. Each nomination paper shall be submitted to the supervisors of the checklist of the town or  
25 ward in which the signer is domiciled or is registered, and a majority of the supervisors shall certify  
26 whether or not the signer is a registered voter in said town or ward. The supervisors of the checklist shall  
27 certify nomination papers under this section in a timely fashion, so that their certification shall be complete  
28 for each candidate, together with any objections to the nomination papers submitted, no later than 5:00  
29 p.m. on the [~~Wednesday~~] **Friday** 2 weeks before the primary. Each nomination paper shall be submitted  
30 to the supervisors of the checklist no later than 5:00 p.m. on the [~~Wednesday~~] **Friday** 5 weeks before the  
31 primary.

32 44:11 Elections; Nominations; Filing Deadline. Amend RSA 655:43, I to read as follows:

33 I. Nomination papers shall be filed with the secretary of state no later than 5:00 p.m. on the  
34 [~~Wednesday~~] **Friday** one week before the primary. Nomination papers to be filed shall be grouped by  
35 municipality. No nomination papers shall be accepted by the secretary of state unless the candidate shall  
36 have met the age and domicile qualifications for the office he or she seeks at the time of the general  
37 election and meets all the other qualifications at the time of filing; and if a candidate for the office of  
38 governor, executive councilor, state senator, or state representative, unless the candidate shall file with  
39 the nomination papers an affidavit of qualifications as provided in RSA 655:28 and 655:29; and if a

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1 candidate for United States senator or United States representative, unless the candidate shall meet the  
2 qualifications for office under RSA 655:3 and 655:4.

3 44:12 Ballot Law Commission; Hearing Date. Amend the introductory paragraph of RSA 665:5, I to  
4 read as follows:

5 I. If necessary, the ballot law commission shall meet on the third Thursday of [~~September~~] **June**  
6 in each general election year and the third Friday following the presidential primary election in order to  
7 hear and decide:

8 44:13 Appointment of Inspectors of Election. Amend RSA 658:2 to read as follows:

9 658:2 Appointment.

10 Each state political committee of the 2 political parties which received the largest number of votes  
11 cast for governor at the last previous general election is authorized through their respective chairmen to  
12 appoint between May 15 and July 15 of each general election year 2 inspectors of election to act at each  
13 polling place. If the number of voters qualified to vote at a polling place shall exceed 2,000, said political  
14 committees may each appoint for such polling place one additional inspector for each 1,500 qualified  
15 voters or fraction thereof in excess of 2,000. By April 15 of each general election year, the secretary of  
16 state shall provide a list to the chairman of each such state political committee of the number of inspectors  
17 of election that should be appointed for each town or ward. Each such state political committee may also  
18 appoint such equal number of additional inspectors as the moderator considers necessary for the efficient  
19 conduct of the election. [~~On or before July 15~~] **Between February 1 and April 30**, the chairmen of said  
20 political committees shall notify the appointees and the town or ward clerk concerned as to appointments  
21 made under this authority. If any such appointments are not made by said political committees and  
22 proper notification thereof given [~~on or before July 15~~] **between February 1 and April 30**, then the  
23 appointments shall be made by the selectmen of the town or ward in equal numbers from said 2 political  
24 parties.

44:14 Effective Date. This act shall take effect January 1, 2028.

Approved: May 08, 2026  
Effective Date: January 01, 2028