

CHOOSING A GOVERNMENT



VOCABULARY WORDS

Constituency: body of voters in a district

Policy: plan of action stated by a political party or a group of people who have the same ideas about how a country or organization should be run

Dissolve: Parliament ends & an election is called

Prorogue: to close a session of Parliament

Candidate: someone who stands for an election

Election campaign: time when candidates persuade people to vote for them

Rally: political meeting

Polling station: place where people go to vote

Ballot: voting form

Secret ballot: voting so that only the voter knows who or what he or she has voted for

Preliminary Return: the first count of votes

Bye election: an election held in a single political constituency to fill a vacancy

Our country is divided into voting areas called constituencies.

There were 39 constituencies in the 2017 elections.

Some examples of constituencies are: North Eleuthera, Marathon & South Beach.

A Member of Parliament is elected for each constituency.



Who is eligible to vote on Election Day?



A voter must be at least 18 years old because that is the age that they are considered mature enough to make important decisions.

People who are mentally ill are not allowed to vote because they are not considered able to make important national decisions.

Prisoners are denied the right to vote as part of their punishment.



Once you are eligible to vote you should register your name and prove your citizenship. Your name will then be added to the voters' list.

Political Parties



The first formal political party was the **Progressive Liberal Party (PLP)** formed in **1953**. The **United Bahamian Party (UBP)** was founded in **1958**.

Each party has its own ideas about how the country should be run, and these ideas are stated as **policies**.

In The Bahamas the two major parties are the **Progressive Liberal Party (PLP)**, and the **Free National Movement (FNM)**. Other parties include the **Democratic National Alliance (DNA)** and **independents** who are not a part of any party.

STEPS TAKEN DURING THE RUN-UP TO A GENERAL ELECTION



1. Parliament dissolved

2. Election day announced

4. Campaign

3. Nomination day

5. Election Day

• Parliament Dissolved

- Parliament must be dissolved, or closed 21 to 26 days before the date of a general election. This gives each party enough time to prepare its case for election.



• Election Day Announced

- The date of election is announced by the Prime Minister. Our constitution states that an election must be held every five years, although it may be more frequently than this.

Nomination Day

On nomination day the candidates for each party must submit their names and pay a deposit of money  to the constituency office.

If the candidate wins at least one-sixth ($1/6$) of all the votes in the constituency, he or she gets the deposit back.

Campaigning for Elections



In an **election campaign**, **rallies** are held at which candidates tell the people about their party's plans for the future.

The different candidates have posters made to advertise themselves and to try to influence people to vote for them.

There are also radio and television broadcasts, and newspaper articles, in which the candidates and the political parties set out their policies.

Election Day



On Election Day the sale of alcohol is banned to make sure that every voter thinks clearly before voting.

Voters go to **polling stations** to vote where the voter's card is shown as proof of registration.

The voter's name is then crossed off the voters' list to ensure that each voter only votes once.

Next the voter is given a special **ballot**, dips his/her thumb in indelible ink and enters the polling booth.

There the voter marks an X on the ballot beside the name of the candidate he/she is supporting.

The voter then folds the paper and drops it into the ballot box. This is a **secret ballot** which means that no one knows how the voter votes.

When the polling station closes, the votes are counted for the first time which is called **preliminary return**.

Votes are counted in front of many people to make sure there is no cheating. Votes are counted again a day or two later to double check the results.

The candidate who wins the most votes secures the constituency for his/her party. However, if the candidate has to vacate his/her seat before a general election, a bye-election is called.

The party that wins the most constituencies or seats in Parliament wins the election and becomes the government party.

In The Bahamas, elections are usually peaceful as most voters exercise their right to choose a leader with little or no trouble.

