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Restrictions on Schools as Polling Places

Many state statutes mention the use of schools as polling places, but just nine states either close schools on Election Day, or restrict the use of schools as polling places.

Six states specify that schools may be closed when used as polling places:

California – the governing body may choose to close schools or designate the day for staff development ([Cal. Elec. Code § 12283](#))

Montana – schools are closed for state and national elections ([Mont. Code Ann. § 20-1-305](#))

Illinois – school districts may choose to close schools, or may hold teacher training instead of class ([10 ILCS 5/11-4.1](#))*

Rhode Island – schools are closed for statewide primary and general elections, but may hold staff development instead of class ([R.I. Gen Laws § 17-18-15](#))

New Mexico – school boards may choose to close schools ([N.M. Stat. § 1-3-7](#))

North Dakota – school boards may choose to close schools (NDCC [§ 15.1-06-02](#))

Three states specify that schools are to be used when requested, but elections are not to interfere with school functions:

Arizona ([Ariz. Rev Stat. 16-411\(E\)-\(F\)](#))

Georgia ([Ga. Code Ann., § 21-2-266](#))

New Jersey ([N.J. Rev Stat § 19:8-2](#))

Illinois also addresses sex offenders whose designated polling places is a school. These individuals may vote early or absentee ([10 ILCS 5/11-4.1](#)).

Source: National Conference of State Legislatures

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For questions or updates, contact NCSL's Elections Team at 303-364-7700.