

Everything You Need to Know About the Special Elections in The Bronx and Queens

What's so special about the special elections for City Council this year? Lots — including the advent of ranked choice voting. Early voting is already underway in one race and the others are coming soon.

BY CLAUDIA IRIZARRY APONTE AND CHRISTINE CHUNG, THE CITY

Hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers are gearing up to vote for mayor, city comptroller, public advocate, district attorney, borough president and for their local City Council members.

Most voters in the city will only have to cast a ballot twice this year: during the Democratic or Republican primaries in June and in the general election in November.

But some folks in The Bronx and Queens will have the opportunity to vote three times in 2021 thanks to a string of special elections for four City Council districts on the calendar from now until early spring.

What's so special about these elections?

Special elections are triggered when an elected official ends their term early, whether it was because they won a higher office, accepted a new job, or were expelled.

The contests are traditionally held on the first Tuesday at least 80 days after the office was vacated. The mayor confirms the date with a proclamation.

One remarkable way in which special elections veer from the normal cycle in New York is that they are nonpartisan, so candidates cannot identify as Democrat or Republican — allowing for self-created party names, like the “Pay Folks More” and “No More Delays” parties of the 2019 special election race for public advocate.

Do candidates who win special elections serve full terms?

Not exactly. Candidates who win their special elections do begin their official terms immediately, usually lasting at least through the end of the calendar year.

But in the case of the four special elections announced so far this year, candidates who win must also run again during the June primary of the major party of their choosing and, if they win, again in the November general.

Whoever wins the general elections in these four districts would then serve a full four-year term starting in January 2022, and can run for a final term in 2025.

A candidate who wins the special election but loses any of the subsequent races stays on through the end of 2021.

Why should I care?

Voters who live in the Council districts up for special elections will be among the first in the city's history to participate in ranked-choice voting. The short explanation: Instead of choosing only one favorite candidate, voters will rank each candidate in a race by preference, choosing their top five candidates on the ballot. You can learn more about ranked-choice voting [here](#).

Also, participating in local elections — no matter how small — is in your self-interest. City Council members can wield considerable influence, as we [explain here](#).

Figure out which Council District you live in with [this tool](#) from the CUNY Graduate Center and the League of Women Voters. If you live in District 11, 15, 24 or 31, you have a chance to vote in a special election.

When are these elections happening?

There are multiple ways to vote in these elections. You can cast ballots by mail, or vote early in-person or on the stated election day.

You can find information about when to vote in-person below, and additional information about where and when to request your absentee ballot [here](#).

- **Feb. 2 (Early voting began Jan. 23):**
- **District 24, Queens:** Kew Gardens Hills, Pomonok, Electchester, Fresh Meadows, Hillcrest, Jamaica Estates, Briarwood, Parkway Village, Jamaica Hills, Jamaica
- **Feb. 23 (Early voting begins Feb. 13):**
- **District 31, Queens:** Arverne, Brookville, Edgemere, Far Rockaway, Laurelton, Rosedale, Springfield Gardens
- **March 23 (Early voting begins March 13):**
- **District 11, The Bronx:** Bedford Park, Kingsbridge, Norwood, Riverdale, Van Cortlandt Village, Wakefield and Woodlawn Heights
- **District 15, The Bronx:** Bedford Park, Fordham, Mount Hope, Bathgate, Belmont, East Tremont, West Farms, Van Nest, Allerton, Olinville

Who's running?

District 24, Queens:

Why is there an election here?

The seat has been vacant since November, when Democratic City Councilmember Rory Lancman resigned to take a newly created position in Gov. Andrew Cuomo's administration. Lancman, who was first elected to the Council in 2013, would have hit his term limits this year.

Candidates:

- [Moumita Ahmed](#), a community activist and co-founder of Bangladeshi Americans for Political Progress
- [Michael Brown](#), a real estate broker
- [James Gennaro](#), former City Council member representing District 24, most recently deputy commissioner for NYC sustainability in the Cuomo administration
- [Neeta Jain](#), an activist, Democratic district leader and psychologist
- [Dilip Nath](#), a health care and higher education technology executive, president of the New American Voters Association
- [Deepti Sharma](#), founder of Food to Eat, a concierge catering service

- [Soma Syed](#), an attorney and president of the Queens County Women's Bar Association
- [Mujib Rahman](#), community activist, self-employed

District 31, Queens:

Why is there an election here?

The seat has been vacant since Dec. 2, when Democratic City Councilmember Donovan Richards was [sworn in](#) as Queens borough president.

Candidates:

- [Latoya Benjamin](#), a Queens County Judicial Delegate and staffer for state Sen. James Sanders (D-Queens)
- Bradley Berfas, attorney
- [Selvena Brooks-Powers](#), a manager of external affairs and community outreach with the Port Authority
- [Latanya Collins](#), a public school teacher
- [Rev. Sherwyn James](#), an African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church minister
- [Nicole Lee](#), special needs advocate
- [Nancy Martinez](#), founder of the Rockaway Adult Social Center
- Kevin Morgan
- Pesach Osina, former staffer to Assemblymember Phil Goldfeder, [previously ran](#) for the City Council seat against Richards in a 2013 special election
- [Perri Pierre](#), self-employed podcast host
- [Shawn Rux](#), deputy superintendent for School District 29 in Queens
- [Manuel Silva](#), former chief of staff to Richards

District 11, The Bronx:

Why is there an election here?

The seat is currently vacant: Democratic City Councilmember Andy Cohen was [nominated for a Bronx Supreme Court judgeship](#) in August 2020. He [won](#) the November election and started his new job in January. The seat has been vacant since.

Candidates:

- [Carlton Berkley](#), retired NYPD detective
- [Eric Dinowitz](#), teacher, Democratic district leader, and son of longtime Assemblymember Jeffrey Dinowitz (D-The Bronx)
- [Jessica Haller](#), environmental activist and entrepreneur
- [Mino Lora](#), artist, activist and nonprofit executive
- [Daniel Padernacht](#), attorney and Bronx Community Board 8 member

District 15, The Bronx:

Why is there an election here?

This seat was vacated after Ritchie Torres was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in November.

Candidates:

- [John Sánchez](#), district manager for Bronx Community Board 6
- [Elisa Crespo](#), education liaison for Bronx Borough President Ruben Díaz Jr.
- [Ischia Bravo](#), district manager for Bronx Community Board 7 and former executive director of the Bronx Democratic County Committee
- [Kenny Agosto](#), deputy chief of staff to state Sen. Jamaal T. Bailey
- [Troy Blackwell](#), criminal justice reform advocate
- [Oswald Feliz](#), tenant attorney and state committeeman
- [Bernadette Ferrara](#), Bronx Community Board 11 member
- [Latchmi Gopal](#), transportation advocate
- Lilithe Lozano, NYCHA tenant advocate

- Altagracia Soldevilla