



FILLING VACANCIES IN THE OFFICE OF UNITED STATES SENATOR

Source: National Conference of State Legislatures

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Vacancies Filled by Special Election

The 14 states listed below require that a special election be held to fill a vacancy in the office of U.S. Senator. Nine of these states allow the governor to make an interim appointment (with specific restrictions in three), but these are short-term appointments as in most cases, a special election is held within a few months. In the remaining four states (**Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, and Wisconsin**), the seat remains vacant until filled by the voters at a special election.

State	Interim Gub. Appt.?	Special Election Must be Held
Alabama	Yes	On such a day as the governor may direct, unless vacancy occurs between 2 and 4 months before the next regularly-scheduled general election, in which case it is held at that election. If vacancy occurs within 60 days of the next regularly-scheduled general election, a special election must be held on the first Tuesday after 60 days have elapsed since the vacancy occurred.
Alaska	Yes	60-90 days after vacancy occurs
Arkansas	Yes (1)	Not more than 120 days after vacancy occurs
Connecticut	Yes (2)	160 th day after vacancy occurs (excluding weekends), unless vacancy occurs between the 125 th and 63 rd days preceding a regularly-scheduled November general election, in which case vacancy is filled at that election
Louisiana	Yes (3)	on specific dates provided by law, not less than 11 weeks after the governor's proclamation
Massachusetts	Yes	145-160 days after vacancy occurs
Mississippi	Yes	Within 100 days of when governor receives official notice of vacancy, unless vacancy occurs in the year of a general state or congressional election, in which case the vacancy is filled in that election

Oklahoma	No	Special primary must be held not less than 53 days after vacancy occurs; runoff primary occurs not less than 20 days later, and general election not less than 20 days after runoff primary; if vacancy occurs after March 1 in an even year, vacancy is filled at regular primary and general election dates
Oregon	No	"as soon as practicable"
Rhode Island	No	At as early a date as is in compliance with the provisions of law. If vacancy occurs between July 1 and October 1 in an even-numbered year, the special election to fill the vacancy is held concurrently with the regularly-scheduled general election.
Texas	Yes	If vacancy occurs in an even year on or before the 62 nd day before the primary, remainder of term is filled at next regular general election. If vacancy occurs after 62 nd day before the primary in an even year, or in an odd year, special election is held on the first uniform election date occurring on or after the 36 th day the election is ordered
Vermont	Yes	3 months following vacancy, unless vacancy occurs within 6 months of the general election, in which case the vacancy is filled at the general election
Washington	Yes	not less than 100 days following vacancy, unless vacancy occurs within 6 months of the general election, in which case the vacancy is filled at the general election
Wisconsin	No	between 62 and 77 days after date of order of special election, unless vacancy occurs between the 2 nd Tuesday in May and the 2 nd Tuesday in July in an even year, in which case the vacancy is filled at the regular primary and general elections

- (1) Governor may make a temporary appointment only if the next statewide general election is scheduled to be held more than 60 days and less than 12 months after the vacancy occurs.
- (2) Governor may make a temporary appointment only in cases where a vacancy occurs after the municipal election in the year preceding the last year of the term or in the last year of the term of a senator. Approval of such nomination requires an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the membership of each chamber of the General Assembly.
- (3) If the unexpired term is more than one year, an appointment to fill the vacancy shall be temporary. Any senator so appointed shall serve until his successor is elected at a special election and takes office.