

## Gubernatorial Lines of Succession

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### Issue

Describe the gubernatorial lines of succession in all 50 states.

### Summary

Each state has established a line of succession of public officials that may exercise the governor's powers should the governor, or the officials higher in order, be unable or unwilling to exercise them. This may be for temporary reasons, such as out-of-state travel or a health emergency, but may also be needed more permanently, such as the governor's death, resignation, or impeachment.

Table 1 (see below) summarizes each state's line of succession and citations to the relevant laws. However, certain states have a deeper line of succession than others, and for those states, we included the remainder of the line in Table 2.

### How do States Establish Lines of Succession?

Of all 50 states, 21 currently establish their order of succession in their constitution. The remaining 29 states generally list a select number of positions in the state constitution that are prioritized in the order and then provide additional positions within state statute, or have a constitutional provision stating that the order of succession may be established by statute.

### Who is Included in These Lines of Succession?

States have chosen a wide variety of public officials to replace the governor should it be necessary. Most commonly, the lieutenant governor is the next in line for the governorship

(44 states). However, not all states have such a position, so four have chosen the leader of the senate, and two have chosen the secretary of state as the next in line. Other states often include these offices, even if they are not the first choice.

Other public officials usually included in these lines are the speaker of the house, the attorney general, the state auditor, the state comptroller, the state treasurer, the superintendent of public instruction, and other state commissioners.

The states with the shortest line of succession are Alaska, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island, with just two alternates provided. Two states (New York and North Carolina) have the longest line of succession with 11 specifically named officers. However, several states, such as Nebraska, Texas, and West Virginia, include a group of positions at the end of the line that may extend it much further than this. These positions can include legislative committee chairs, ex-governors, appellate chief justices, or the longest-serving member of the legislature (which could pass from legislator to legislator as the situation may require).

Additionally, many states include legislative leaders such as the senate president or speaker of the house. Some of these states include provisions authorizing the legislature to convene in order to elect a leader who subsequently would serve as governor should officers earlier in the line of succession be unavailable (such as Maryland, Mississippi, and Virginia).

## **Is this Authority Permanent or Temporary?**

For circumstances requiring the governor to be permanently replaced (such as resignation, impeachment, or death), the replacing officer often serves out the remainder of the term.

However, some states authorize certain public officials to serve temporarily. For example, in Ohio, if the lieutenant governor, senate president, and house speaker are unable to serve, then the secretary of state, state treasurer, state auditor, and attorney general (in that order) may exercise the governor's power and duties until a new governor is elected or until an officer earlier in the list becomes available.

States might also have more detailed provisions about when such authority is temporary, such as Florida. Florida requires that if the vacancy in the governor's office occurs 28 months before the end of the governor's term, an election must be held at the next statewide general election to elect a governor for the remainder of the term.

States may also have provisions that certain officials only serve under circumstances such as an enemy attack, a disaster, or an emergency (such as New York, Oklahoma, and Wisconsin).

**Table 1: Gubernatorial Lines of Succession by State**

State & Citation	Order of Succession						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Alabama</b> <a href="#">Ala. Const. Art. V, § 127</a>	Lt. Governor	Pres. Pro Tem. of the Senate	House Speaker	Attorney General	State Auditor	Secretary of State	State Treasurer
<b>Alaska</b> <a href="#">Alaska Const. Art. III, §§ 10, 11 &amp; 13 &amp; Alaska Stat. §§ 44.19.040 &amp; - .042</a>	Lt. Governor	Successor to Lt. Governor, as appointed by the governor					
<b>Arizona</b> <a href="#">Ariz. Const. Art. V, § 6</a>	Lt. Governor	Secretary of State	Attorney General	State Treasurer	Superintendent of Public Instruction		
<b>Arkansas</b> <a href="#">Ark. Const. Art. VI, §§ 5, 12 &amp; 13 &amp; Ark. Code § 21-1-304</a>	Lt. Governor	Pres. Pro Tem. of the Senate	House Speaker	Attorney General	Secretary of State	State Treasurer	State Auditor <sup>^</sup>
<b>California</b> <a href="#">Cal. Const. Art. V, § 10 &amp; Cal. Gov. Code §§ 12058-12059</a>	Lt. Governor	Pres. Pro Tem. of the Senate	House Speaker	Secretary of State	Attorney General	State Treasurer	State Controller <sup>^</sup>
<b>Colorado*</b> <a href="#">Colo. Const. Art. IV, § 13</a>	Lt. Governor	Senate President	House Speaker	Senate Minority Leader	House Minority Leader		
<b>Connecticut</b> <a href="#">Conn. Const. Art. IV, §§ 18-21 &amp; Art. XI, § 3</a>	Lt. Governor	Pres. Pro Tem. of the Senate					

Table 1 (continued)

State & Citation	Order of Succession						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Delaware</b> <a href="#">Del. Const. Art. III, § 20</a>	Lt. Governor	Secretary of State	Attorney General	Pres. Pro Tem. of the Senate	House Speaker		
<b>Florida</b> <a href="#">Fla. Const. Art. IV, § 3</a> & <a href="#">Fla. Stat. § 14.055</a>	Lt. Governor	Attorney General	Chief Financial Officer	Agriculture Commissioner	The legislature elects a successor		
<b>Georgia</b> <a href="#">Ga. Const. Art. V, § 1</a>	Lt. Governor	House Speaker					
<b>Hawaii</b> <a href="#">Haw. Const. Art. V, § 4</a> & <a href="#">Haw. Rev. Stat. § 26.2</a>	Lt. Governor	Senate President	House Speaker	Attorney General	Finance Director	State Comptroller	Tax Director^
<b>Idaho</b> <a href="#">Idaho Const. Art. IV, §§ 12-14</a> & <a href="#">Idaho Code § 67-805A</a>	Lt. Governor	Pres. Pro Tem. of the Senate	House Speaker				
<b>Illinois</b> <a href="#">Ill. Const. Art. V, § 6</a> & <a href="#">15 ICLS § 5/1</a>	Lt. Governor	Attorney General	Secretary of State	State Comptroller	State Treasurer	Senate President	House Speaker
<b>Indiana</b> <a href="#">Ind. Const. Art. 5, §§ 10 &amp; 11</a>	Lt. Governor	House Speaker	Pres. Pro Tem. of the Senate	State Treasurer	State Auditor	Secretary of State	If the offices of Governor and Lt. Governor are vacant, the legislature convenes to elect a new governor*
<b>Iowa</b> <a href="#">Iowa Const. Art. IV, §§ 17-19</a>	Lt. Governor	Senate President	House Speaker		The legislature elects a successor		
<b>Kansas</b> <a href="#">Kan. Const. Art. I, § 11</a> & <a href="#">Kan. Stat. §§ 75-125 &amp; 48-1204</a>	Lt. Governor	Senate President	House Speaker	Secretary of State	Attorney General		

Table 1 (continued)

State & Citation	Order of Succession						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Kentucky</b> <a href="#">Ky. Const. §§ 84, 85 &amp; 87</a>	Lt. Governor	Senate President	Attorney General serves until Senate elect a new Senate President	State Auditor serves until Senate elects a new Senate President			
<b>Louisiana</b> <a href="#">La. Const. Art. IV, § 14</a>	Lt. Governor	Secretary of State	Attorney General	State Treasurer	Senate Presiding Officer	House Presiding Officer	
<b>Maine</b> <a href="#">Me. Const. Art. V, §§ 14 &amp; 15</a>	Senate President	House Speaker	Secretary of State serves until legislature elects new leaders				
<b>Maryland</b> <a href="#">Md. Const. Art. II, § 6</a>	Lt. Governor	Senate President serves until legislature elects a new governor	Senate elects a new Senate President to serve until legislature elects a new governor				
<b>Massachusetts</b> <a href="#">Mass. Const. Part II, Ch. II, § 2 &amp; Article LV</a>	Lt. Governor	Secretary of State	Attorney General	State Treasurer	State Auditor		
<b>Michigan</b> <a href="#">Mich. Const. Art. V, § 26 &amp; Mich. Comp. Laws §§ 10.2 &amp; 31.3</a>	Lt. Governor	Secretary of State	Attorney General	Pres. Pro Tem. of the Senate	House Speaker	As designated by the governor	
<b>Minnesota</b> <a href="#">Minn. Const. Art. V, § 5 &amp; Minn. Stat. § 4.06</a>	Lt. Governor	Senate President	House Speaker	Secretary of State	State Auditor	Attorney General	

Table 1 (continued)

State & Citation	Order of Succession						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mississippi</b> <a href="#">Miss. Const. Art. V, § 131</a>	Lt. Governor	Pres. Pro Tem. of the Senate	House Speaker	Senate elects a successor			
<b>Missouri</b> <a href="#">Mo. Const. Art. IV, § 11</a>	Lt. Governor	Pres. Pro Tem. of the Senate	House Speaker	Secretary of State	State Auditor	State Treasurer	Attorney General
<b>Montana</b> <a href="#">Mont. Const. Art. VI, §§ 6 &amp; 14</a> & <a href="#">Mont. Code §§ 2-16-511 to -515</a>	Lt. Governor	Senate President	House Speaker	Legislature elects a governor or, if vacancies are due to an enemy attack, the longest serving member of the legislature serves until the legislature elects a governor			
<b>Nebraska</b> <a href="#">Neb. Const. Art. IV, § 16</a> & <a href="#">Neb. Rev. Stat. § 84-121</a>	Lt. Governor	Speaker	Legislative committee chairs in order prescribed by state statute				
<b>Nevada</b> <a href="#">Nev. Const. Art. V, § 18</a> & <a href="#">Nev. Rev. Stat. § 223.080</a>	Lt. Governor	Pres. Pro Tem. of the Senate	House Speaker	Secretary of State			
<b>New Hampshire</b> <a href="#">N.H. Const. Pt. II, Art. 49</a>	Senate President	House Speaker	Secretary of State	State Treasurer			
<b>New Jersey</b> <a href="#">N.J. Const. Art. V, § 1</a> & <a href="#">N.J. Rev. Stat. § 52:14A-4</a>	Lt. Governor	Senate President	House Speaker	Attorney General	State Highway Commissioner	As elected by the legislature	
<b>New Mexico</b> <a href="#">N.M. Const. Art. V, § 7</a> & <a href="#">N.M. Stat. § 12-11-4</a>	Lt. Governor	Secretary of the State	Pres. Pro Tem. of the Senate	House Speaker	Attorney General	State Auditor	Public Lands Commissioner^
<b>New York</b> <a href="#">N.Y. Const. Art. IV, §§ 5 &amp; 6</a> & <a href="#">N.Y. Ch. 784-51 Art. 1-A § 5</a>	Lt. Governor	Senate President	House Speaker	Attorney General	State Comptroller	Transportation Commissioner	Health Commissioner^
<b>North Carolina</b> <a href="#">N.C. Const. Art. III, § 3</a> & <a href="#">N.C. Gen. Stat. § 147-11.1</a>	Lt. Governor	Senate President	House Speaker	Secretary of State	State Auditor	State Treasurer	Superintendent of Public Instruction^

Table 1 (continued)

State & Citation	Order of Succession						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>North Dakota</b> <a href="#">N.D. Const. Art. V, § 11</a> & <a href="#">N.D. Cent. Code § 44-02-03</a>	Lt. Governor	Secretary of State	House Speaker	Pres. Pro Tem. of the Senate	Attorney General		
<b>Ohio</b> <a href="#">Ohio Const. Art. III, § 15</a> & <a href="#">Ohio Rev. Code § 161.03</a>	Lt. Governor	Senate President	House Speaker	Secretary of State	State Treasurer	State Auditor	Attorney General
<b>Oklahoma</b> <a href="#">Okla. Const. Art. VI, §§ 15 &amp; 16</a> & <a href="#">Okla. Stat. tit. 63 § 685.4</a>	Lt. Governor	Pres. Pro Tem. of the Senate	House Speaker	State Auditor	Attorney General	State Treasurer	Superintendent of Public Instruction^
<b>Oregon</b> <a href="#">Or. Const. Art. V, § 8a</a>	Secretary of the State	State Treasurer	Senate President	House Speaker			
<b>Pennsylvania</b> <a href="#">Pa. Const. Art. IV, §§ 13 &amp; 14</a>	Lt. Governor	Pres. Pro Tem. of the Senate					
<b>Rhode Island</b> <a href="#">R.I. Const. Art. IX, §§ 9 &amp; 10</a>	Lt. Governor	House Speaker					
<b>South Carolina</b> <a href="#">S.C. Const. Art. IV, §§ 6 &amp; 7</a> & <a href="#">S.C. Code §§ 1-3-10, 1-3-130 &amp; 1-9-30</a>	Lt. Governor	Senate President	House Speaker	Secretary of State	State Treasurer	Attorney General	
<b>South Dakota</b> <a href="#">S.D. Const. Art. 4, § 6</a> & <a href="#">S.D. Codified Laws § 1-7-4.1</a>	Lt. Governor	House Speaker	Pres. Pro Tem. of the Senate	Speaker Pro Tem. of the House	Secretary of State	Attorney General	State Auditor^
<b>Tennessee</b> <a href="#">Tenn. Const. Art. III, § 12</a> & <a href="#">Tenn. Code § 8-1-107</a>	Senate Speaker	House Speaker	Secretary of State	State Comptroller			

Table 1 (continued)

State & Citation	Order of Succession						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Texas</b> <a href="#">Tex. Const. Art. III, § 9, Art. IV, §§ 3a &amp; 16-18</a> & <a href="#">Tex. Gov. Code § 401.023</a>	Lt. Governor	Pres. Pro Tem. of the Senate	House Speaker	Attorney General	Chief Justices of Courts of Appeals in District Order		
<b>Utah</b> <a href="#">Utah. Const. Art. VII, § 11</a> & <a href="#">Utah Code § 53-2a-803</a>	Lt. Governor	Senate President	House Speaker	Attorney General	State Auditor	State Treasurer	
<b>Vermont</b> <a href="#">Vt. Const. Ch. II, § 20, 3 VSA § 1</a> & <a href="#">20 VSA § 183</a>	Lt. Governor	House Speaker	Pres. Pro Tem. of the Senate	Secretary of State	State Treasurer		
<b>Virginia</b> <a href="#">Va. Const. Art. V, § 16</a>	Lt. Governor	Attorney General	House Speaker	House of Delegates convenes to fill the speakership, and if unable to convene due to an emergency or enemy attack, specified legislative leaders serve until the House fills the vacancy			
<b>Washington</b> <a href="#">Wa. Const. Art. III, § 10</a>	Lt. Governor	Secretary of State	State Treasurer	State Auditor	Attorney General	Superintendent of Public Instruction	Public Lands Commissioner
<b>West Virginia</b> <a href="#">W.V. Const. Art. VII, § 7-16</a> & <a href="#">W. Va. Code § 6a-1-4</a>	Senate President	House Speaker	Attorney General	State Auditor	Resident Ex-Governors in Order of Recent Service		
<b>Wisconsin</b> <a href="#">Wis. Const. Art. V, §§ 7 &amp; 8</a> & <a href="#">Wis. Stat. § 323.53</a>	Lt. Governor	Secretary of State	Attorney General	State Treasurer	House Speaker	Senate President	
<b>Wyoming</b> <a href="#">Wyo. Const. Art. IV, § 6</a> & <a href="#">Wyo. Stat. § 9-1-211</a>	Secretary of State	Senate President	House Speaker	State Auditor	State Treasurer	Superintendent of Public Instruction	Senate Vice-President^

\*Except for the lieutenant governor, the successor must be of the same political party as the past governor

^See Table 2 below for states with additional members in the gubernatorial line of succession



Table 2: Continuation of Succession for Certain States

Citation	Order of Succession			
	8	9	10	11
<b>Arkansas</b> <a href="#">Ark. Const. Art. VI, §§ 5, 12 &amp; 13</a> & <a href="#">Ark. Code § 21-1-304</a>	State Lands Commissioner			
<b>California</b> <a href="#">Cal. Const. Art. V, § 10</a> & <a href="#">Cal. Gov. Code §§ 12058-12059</a>	Superintendent of Public Instruction	Insurance Commissioner	Chair of Board Equalization	
<b>Hawaii</b> <a href="#">Haw. Const. Art. V, § 4</a> & <a href="#">Haw. Rev. Stat. § 26.2</a>	Human Resources Dev. Director			
<b>New Mexico</b> <a href="#">N.M. Const. Art. V, § 7</a> & <a href="#">N.M. Stat. § 12-11-4</a>	State Treasurer			
<b>New York</b> <a href="#">N.Y. Const. Art. IV, §§ 5 &amp; 6</a> & <a href="#">N.Y. Ch. 784-51 Art. 1-A § 5</a>	Commerce Commissioner	Industrial Commissioner	Public Service Commission Chairman	Secretary of State
<b>North Carolina</b> <a href="#">N.C. Const. Art. III, § 3</a> & <a href="#">N.C. Gen. Stat. § 147-11.1</a>	Attorney General	Agriculture Commissioner	Labor Commissioner	Insurance Commissioner
<b>Oklahoma</b> <a href="#">Okla. Const. Art. VI, §§ 15 &amp; 16</a> & <a href="#">Okla. Stat. tit. 63 § 685.4</a>	Labor Commissioner	Members of the Corporation Commission by Election District		
<b>South Dakota</b> <a href="#">S.D. Const. Art. 4, § 6</a> & <a href="#">S.D. Codified Laws § 1-7-4.1</a>	State Treasurer	School and Public Lands Commissioner	Public Utilities Commission Chairman	Public Utilities Commissioners in Order of Seniority
<b>Wyoming</b> <a href="#">Wyo. Const. Art. IV, § 6</a> & <a href="#">Wyo. Stat. § 9-1-211</a>	Speaker Pro Tem. of the House			

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