

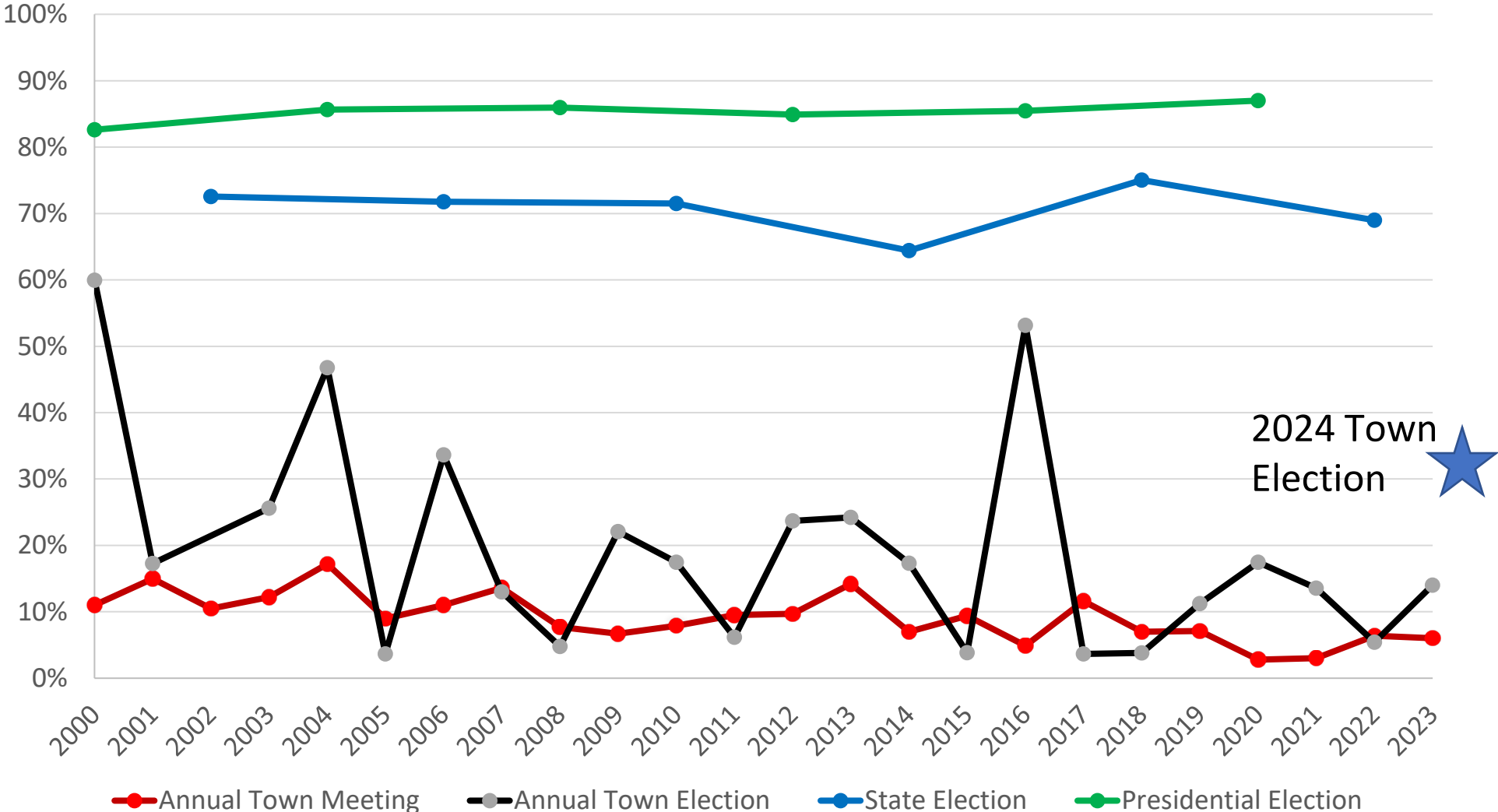
## Article 27: Town Meeting Voting Reform

Mr. Gonatas moves that: Beginning in 2025 and thereafter, all warrant articles for Town Meeting shall be presented to all registered voters in a Town special election to be held within three weeks of Town Meeting, and that the special election shall bind the town, any vote to the contrary in Town Meeting notwithstanding.

This reform would enable voting in a special election, *similar to process that's been available in New Hampshire for nearly 30 years*

# Very Low Town Meeting Voting Turnout

## Special Election Turnout higher than Town Meeting



## Legal Authority

Massachusetts Laws Chapter 39, §9A

“A town may provide by charter or by-law that the election of town officials ***and other matters to be determined by ballot*** shall take place in February, March, April, May or June before or after the annual meeting...”

No discernable prohibition anywhere in State laws on what the “other matters” may be

# Is Town Meeting a “Legislature?”

	US Congress	State Legislatures	Town Meeting
Absenteeism Rate	2% <sup>1</sup>	5-15% <sup>2</sup>	95% <sup>3</sup>
Quorum	51%	51% (Massachusetts)	0%
Partisanship	Yes	Yes	No
Committee Membership	Yes	Yes	No
Compensation	\$174K	\$91.5K (in Massachusetts)	0

<sup>1</sup>Low absenteeism aided by proxy voting in House of Representatives, turnout averaged over ALL measured not the *highest* turnout measure

<https://riponsociety.org/article/the-absentee-congress/>

<sup>2</sup>Wide range of absenteeism by state: “Why do Legislators Skip Votes? Position Taking vs Policy Influence” Adam Brown & Jay Goodliffe, Political Behavior (2017) **39**: 425-455

<sup>3</sup>Depending on data used, tabulated votes of a few hundred on contested measures (eg leaf blower article) vs 13,764 registered voters indicates 97.5% absenteeism rate

# Alternatives to live debate and deliberation

- Discussion in Concord Bridge
- Technology such as “Blackboard” enables thread creation & asynchronous discussions – used widely in Universities

The screenshot displays a Blackboard forum interface. At the top, a purple header reads "Create Threads". Below this, a note states: "This information applies only to the Original Course View. Your institution controls which tools are available." The main text explains that a thread is a conversation within a forum and provides two examples of how to structure threads for discussion. A diagram illustrates a forum titled "Forum: How can we reduce our reliance on oil?" with three main threads: "Nuclear Power", "Solar Power", and "Conserve Power". Each thread contains a vertical list of posts (Post A, B, C; Post 1, 2, 3; Post X, Y, Z). A vertical bracket on the right side of the diagram labels these as "Threads". A final note at the bottom states: "If you enable thread grading, members can't create new threads."

**Create Threads**

*This information applies only to the Original Course View. Your institution controls which tools are available.*

A **thread** is a conversation within a forum that includes the initial post and all replies to it.

**Example:** You can create a forum that addresses a broad subject, such as "Addicted to Oil." Next, you create two threads containing the specific issues to be discussed, such as replacing oil usage with nuclear power, and the pros and cons of conservation. To ensure students post only to existing threads, consider disallowing thread creation in the forum settings.

**Example:** You create a forum and ask a question or provide the instructions or details in the description, such as "How can we reduce reliance on oil?" Then, students create threads for each solution to the problem of oil addiction. All members post to existing threads, comment on given answers or create new threads to present new solutions. In the forum settings, be sure you select the *Allow Members Create New Threads* option.

*If you enable thread grading, members can't create new threads.*

Forum: How can we reduce our reliance on oil?

- Nuclear Power
  - Post A
  - Post B
  - Post C
- Solar Power
  - Post 1
  - Post 2
  - Post 3
- Conserve Power
  - Post X
  - Post Y
  - Post Z

Threads

## Article 22: Town Meeting Voting Reform

Mr. Gonatas moves that: Beginning in 2025 and thereafter, all warrant articles for Town Meeting shall be presented to all registered voters in a Town special election to be held within three weeks of Town Meeting, and that the special election shall bind the town, any vote to the contrary in Town Meeting notwithstanding.