







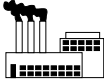



Section CE 5: The Political Process

<i>Fastrack Civics</i>		
Second Edition		
		
		
		
	An interactive guide to the Virginia Civics SOL exam by David Burns	

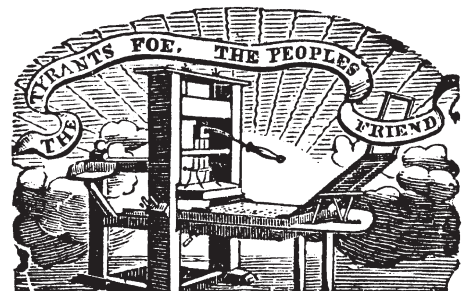


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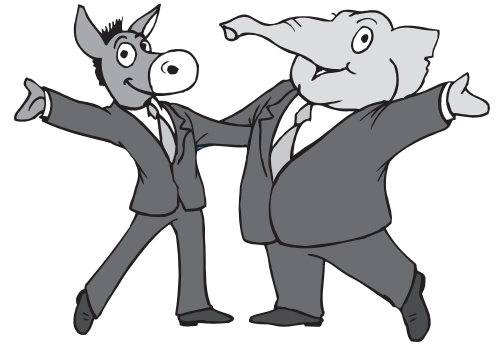
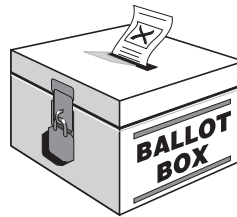
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CE 5

The Political Process

This unit will focus on these big questions:



- What are political parties and what do they do?
- How can citizens make informed choices in elections?
- What role do newspapers, television, and other news media play in elections?
- What impact does money have on politics and elections?
- How does the Electoral College select the President and Vice President?



Vocabulary:

bias	media	political spectrum
campaign	moderate	primary election
campaign finance reform	nominate	propaganda
conservative	nominating convention	simulation
editorial	Op-Ed pieces	third party
Electoral College	PACs	two party system
interest group	platform (of a political party)	
liberal	political party	

Contents & References

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Glossary for CE 5 Vocabulary Words		

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Notes:

What is a Political Party?

Complete this page with your teacher to review and summarize the topic.



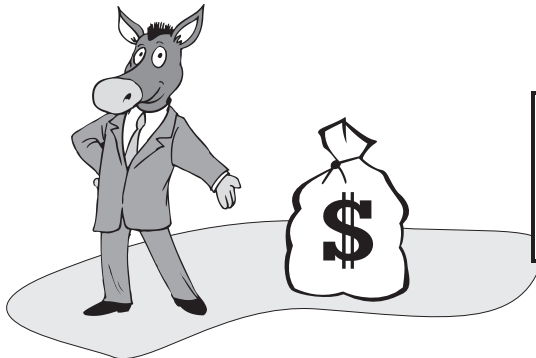
VOTE LIBERTARIAN

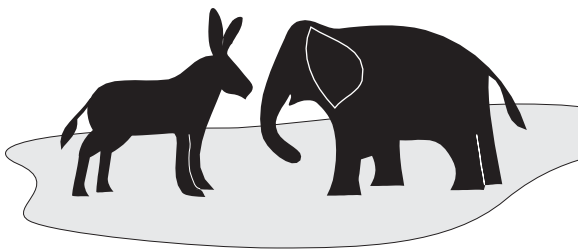
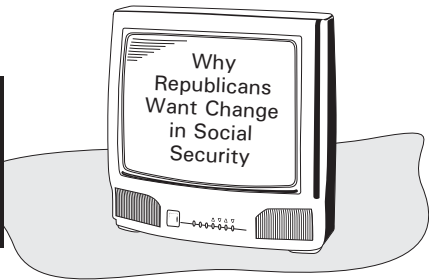


Green Party

Political parties are organizations of citizens who join their efforts together to have a bigger voice and more influence in government.

Political parties have different views, but they all do certain things, such as:

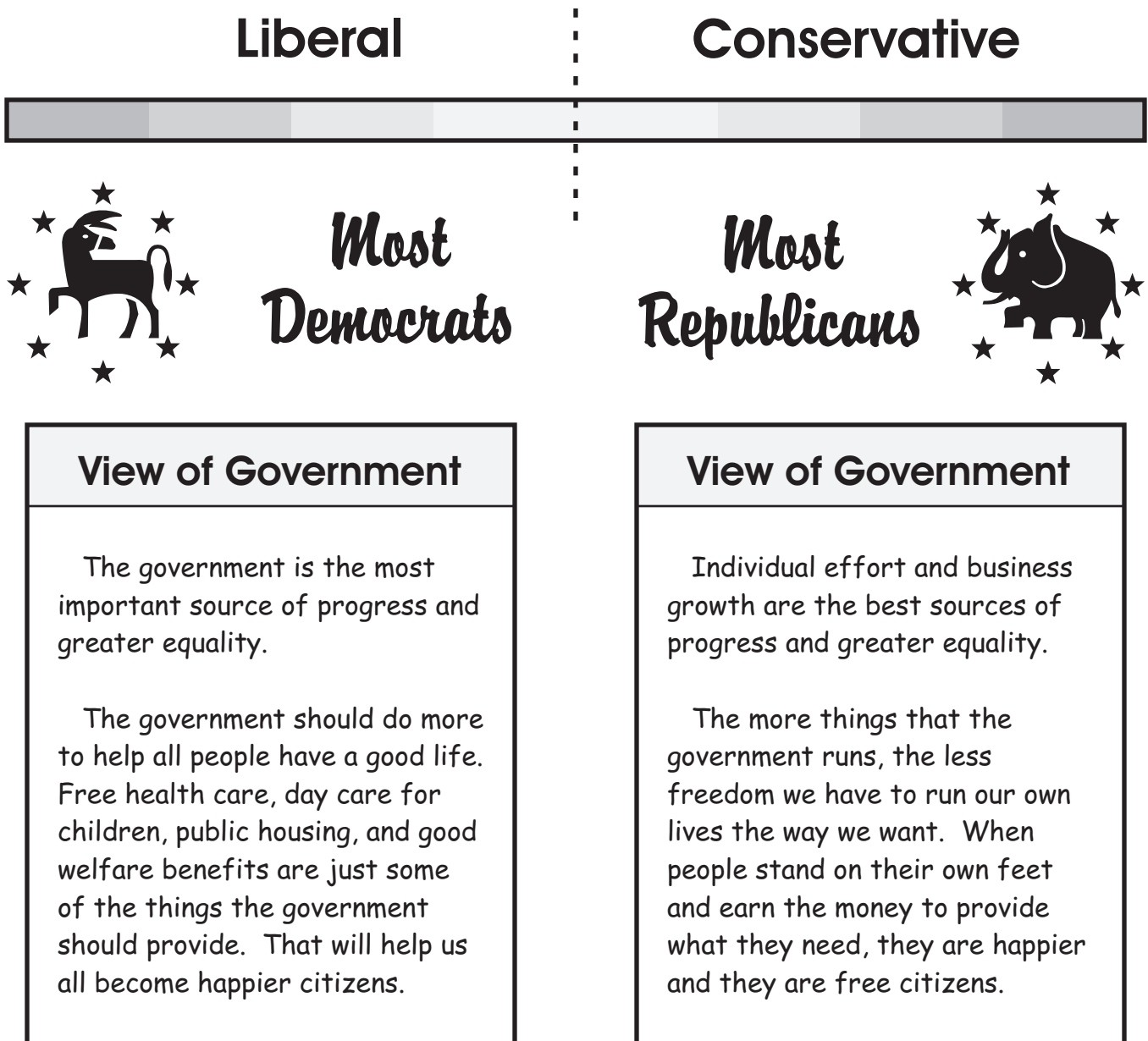




The Political Spectrum

Complete this page with your teacher to review and summarize the topic.

The political spectrum is a way to describe, in very general terms, the views of individuals and groups involved in politics.



The Big Issues on the Political Spectrum

Circle the number from 1 to 5 that shows where you stand on each issue - you may be strongly on one side, or somewhere in the middle. The statements are arranged so that the more liberal view is on the left, and the more conservative view is on the right. Discuss your views with your classmates.

The government should be doing more to help people. Free health and hospital care, day care for children, public housing, job training - these are some of the things the government should provide. That will help us all become more equal.

The Role of Government

1 2 3 4 5

The more things the government runs and provides, the less freedom we have to run our own lives the way we want. When people stand on their own feet, and earn the money to provide what they need, they are happier and they are free citizens.

Taxes should be raised so that the government has money to help less fortunate people. People with good incomes should pay 35% or more of their income in taxes.

Taxes

1 2 3 4 5

Taxes need to be kept low, because money belongs to the people who work to earn it. When taxes take more than 20% of a person's income, it's like robbery.

The most important function of government is to help improve society here in the United States. The money spent on the military should be reduced.

The Military

1 2 3 4 5

The most important function of government is to protect the nation from attack by foreign enemies. The Congress should support a very strong, effective military.

Welfare and other government programs for the poor must be expanded. It's not fair to blame poor people or say they should help themselves. No one wants to be on welfare.

Poverty and Welfare

1 2 3 4 5

Welfare programs are necessary, but there must be time limits. Poor people need to do more to help themselves. Welfare can easily become a crutch that makes people unwilling to get a real job.

Guns are not really needed in a modern society like ours. They are dangerous, and often lead to accidents and crime. We need laws that outlaw gun ownership, or at least greatly restrict it.

Gun Control Laws

1 2 3 4 5

Guns ownership is one of the most basic rights of Americans. People have a right to protect themselves, and lots of people enjoy the sport of shooting. Stop criminals, not gun owners.

Crime

The cause of crime is poverty and other bad conditions in society. To reduce crime, the government should start more programs to help people get job skills. Putting more people in jail is not the best answer to crime.

1 2 3 4 5

The cause of crime is criminals, not social conditions. Criminals choose to commit crimes, and if they know they will do hard time in prison, they are less likely to commit them. If we are soft on crime, we just get more of it.

Women and Jobs

Women have the right to make their own choices about marriage and careers. When a woman has children, however, it is best that she keeps her job. It's not fair to expect women to give up their careers. Equality of the sexes means women should have careers.

1 2 3 4 5

Women have the right to make their own choices about marriage and careers. When a woman has children, however, it is best if she can stay at home to take care of them. Women have a special role in the family as mothers. Families are much more important than careers.

Affirmative Action In College Admissions

Colleges need to make sure all racial and ethnic groups are represented on campus in fair numbers. If that means admitting minority students with lower than the usually accepted grades, that's what the policy should be.

1 2 3 4 5

Colleges should look only at real qualifications, and treat all groups the same. A person's race should not matter at all. Students of all races who want to go to college can study hard and earn good grades like anyone else.

Business

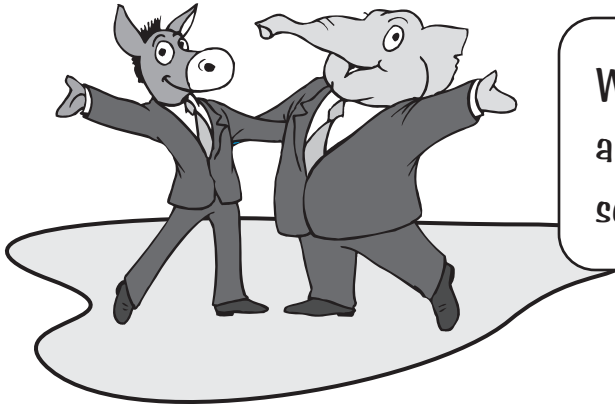
Businesses must be closely regulated by government, or businesses will cheat people as much as they can. Businesses don't pay workers enough, and they pay top managers too much. The government needs to develop laws and restrictions covering just about everything businesses do.

1 2 3 4 5

Business is the true source of progress and opportunity in America. The government should avoid passing too many laws or restrictions on business. When there are too many restrictions, businesses stop growing, and that hurts everyone. Most businesses operate honestly and pay fairly.

Similarities of Political Parties

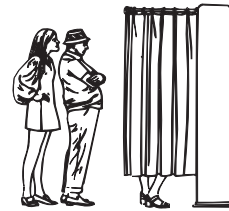
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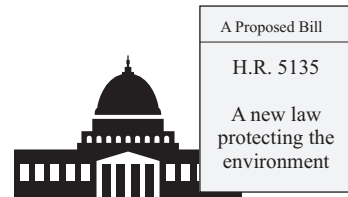


Whatever their differences, political parties all share certain similarities. Here are some of the things they have in common!

Checklist of Similarities











Political Parties: How Are They Different?

Complete this page with your teacher to review and summarize the topic.

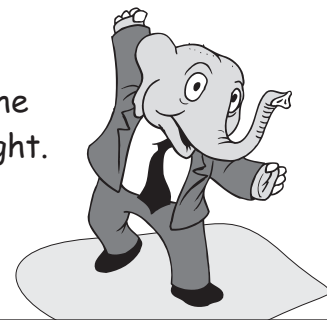
Political parties agree on some things, but there are important differences!

Let's look at where the parties stand on the "political spectrum" of views that stretches from liberal to conservative:



Democrats usually favor policies from the center to the left.

Republicans usually favor policies from the center to the right.



You can find exactly where a party stands on all the big issues of an election by looking at the party's platform statement.

party platform - _____



Differences in party views are also reflected in campaign speeches by the candidates, and in political ads that run during an election year!



Third Parties: Something Extra

Complete this page with your teacher to review and summarize the topic.

Besides Democrats and Republicans, there are other political parties in the U.S. that are known as third parties.

• **Green Party**

• **America First Party**

• **Libertarian Party**

• **Reform Party**

Third parties rarely win big elections, but sometimes do win state and local elections. Even at the national level, they can affect politics in many ways. Here's why:

IT'S TIME FOR CHANGE!

This Year, Vote for Candidates of a Different Party!



Here are some other facts to know about third parties:

The Republican Party was a third party when it formed in the 1850s as an anti-slavery political party. With the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1861, it became a major party.




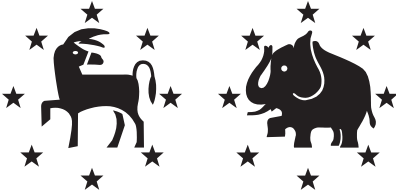

Third parties often revolve around a dynamic leader or a political personality. Theodore Roosevelt is an example. He ran as the presidential nominee of the Progressive Party in 1912, although in a previous election he had been elected to the White House as a Republican.

In a three-way race, "Teddy" Roosevelt lost that famous election of 1912 to Woodrow Wilson, the Democratic Party candidate!

Political Parties: Numbers Really Do Matter

Complete this page with your teacher to review and summarize the topic.

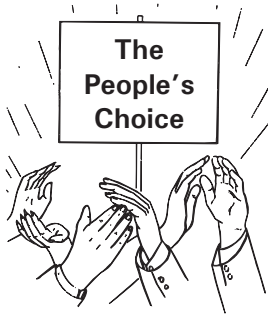
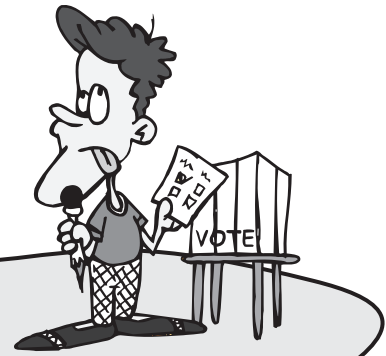
The U.S. has a long history with a two-party political system. As the chart below shows, however, not all countries use that system.

One-Party System	Two-Party System	Multi-Party System
	 <p data-bbox="651 961 967 1031"><i>May include some smaller "Third Parties"</i></p>	
<p data-bbox="164 1094 302 1125"><i>Examples:</i></p> <p data-bbox="188 1192 537 1205">_____</p>	<p data-bbox="607 1094 745 1125"><i>Examples:</i></p> <p data-bbox="631 1192 980 1205">_____</p>	<p data-bbox="1050 1094 1188 1125"><i>Examples:</i></p> <p data-bbox="1075 1192 1424 1205">_____</p>
<p data-bbox="164 1283 513 1314"><i>Usual type of government:</i></p> <p data-bbox="188 1381 537 1394">_____</p>	<p data-bbox="607 1283 956 1314"><i>Usual type of government:</i></p> <p data-bbox="631 1381 980 1394">_____</p>	<p data-bbox="1050 1283 1399 1314"><i>Usual type of government:</i></p> <p data-bbox="1075 1381 1424 1394">_____</p>
<p data-bbox="164 1472 310 1503"><i>The result:</i></p> <p data-bbox="188 1577 537 1589">_____</p> <p data-bbox="188 1650 537 1663">_____</p> <p data-bbox="188 1724 537 1736">_____</p> <p data-bbox="188 1797 537 1810">_____</p>	<p data-bbox="607 1472 753 1503"><i>The result:</i></p> <p data-bbox="631 1577 980 1589">_____</p> <p data-bbox="631 1650 980 1663">_____</p> <p data-bbox="631 1724 980 1736">_____</p> <p data-bbox="631 1797 980 1810">_____</p>	<p data-bbox="1050 1472 1196 1503"><i>The result:</i></p> <p data-bbox="1075 1577 1424 1589">_____</p> <p data-bbox="1075 1650 1424 1663">_____</p> <p data-bbox="1075 1724 1424 1736">_____</p> <p data-bbox="1075 1797 1424 1810">_____</p>

Strategies for Making Informed Choices

Complete this page with your teacher to review and summarize the topic.

Political candidates can say almost anything. Here are three ways to evaluate what you see and hear during an election campaign!



1

Facts can be proven with evidence that can be checked. Opinions are simply the views of an individual or group.

2

Some sources of information are more reliable than others. Check to find out how trustworthy the sources really are.



3

Propaganda is false or misleading information repeated over and over, in hope that the voters will be fooled into believing it.

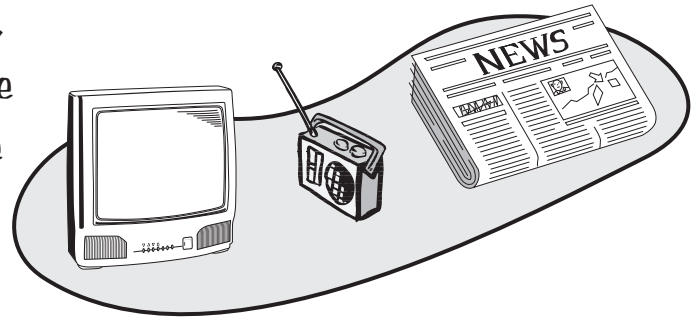
Bias is consistently favoring one side of an issue, while ignoring the facts that support the other side.

**F
I
L
L**

The Mass Media and Elections

Complete this page with your teacher to review and summarize the topic.

The mass media includes newspapers, radio, TV, and all the other large scale means of public communication. The mass media plays a big role in our election process because it:



**Susan Smith Declares
As Candidate for Mayor**

**Sheriff Jones to
Seek Re-election**

**Two in U.S. Senate Race
Call for Cut in Gas Tax**

**Tonight on TV 13 News:
The Politics of Power**

**NUCLEAR ENERGY
BECOMES A HOT
ISSUE IN THIS
YEAR'S ELECTION!**

**Congressman Blimey's new
re-election plan!**



Running for Office: It Costs Big Bucks

Complete this page with your teacher to review and summarize the topic.

Election campaigns for national and state offices can cost millions. Here's a list of some problems that result from the high cost of running for office.



\$ _____



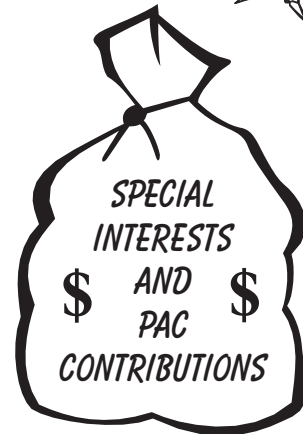
\$ _____



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\$ _____



\$ _____

Campaign Finance Reform

Complete this page with your teacher to review and summarize the topic.

Campaign finance reform laws try to limit how much money an individual or organization can contribute to a political candidate.

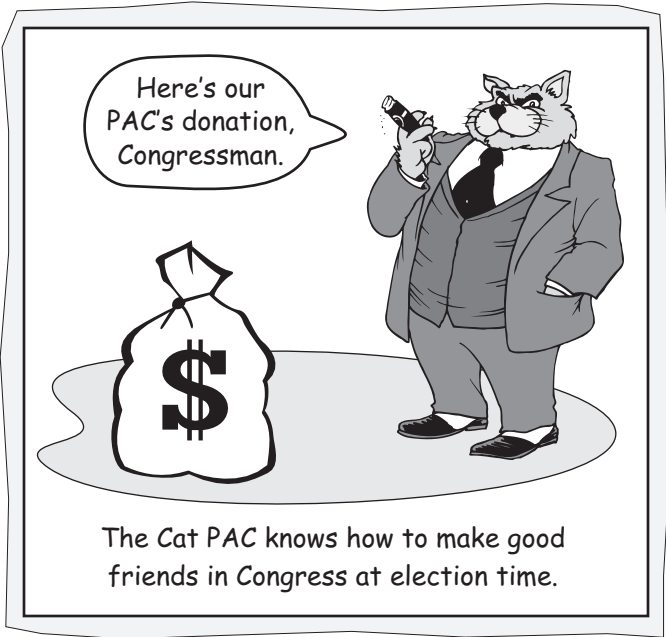
THE ISSUE

Do big campaign donations from individuals, businesses, interest groups, and PACs make the election process less fair?

YES!

Large donations to a candidate, especially in a close election, can tilt the election process unfairly. They may allow candidates to buy so much advertising that opponents hardly stand a chance of winning.

Also, candidates may feel they owe special favors to large contributors.



NO!

Candidates get support from all kinds of different sources, so it all balances out. Laws that limit donations end up favoring the candidates who are already well known, and hurt the challengers.

campaign finance reform - _____

Campaign finance reform is still a hot topic in politics and in the halls of Congress!



Get Ready, Get Registered, Vote!


Complete this page with your teacher to review and summarize the topic.


To vote, you must first be registered.


To register, you must meet the qualifications!




Qualifications to Register to Vote in Virginia

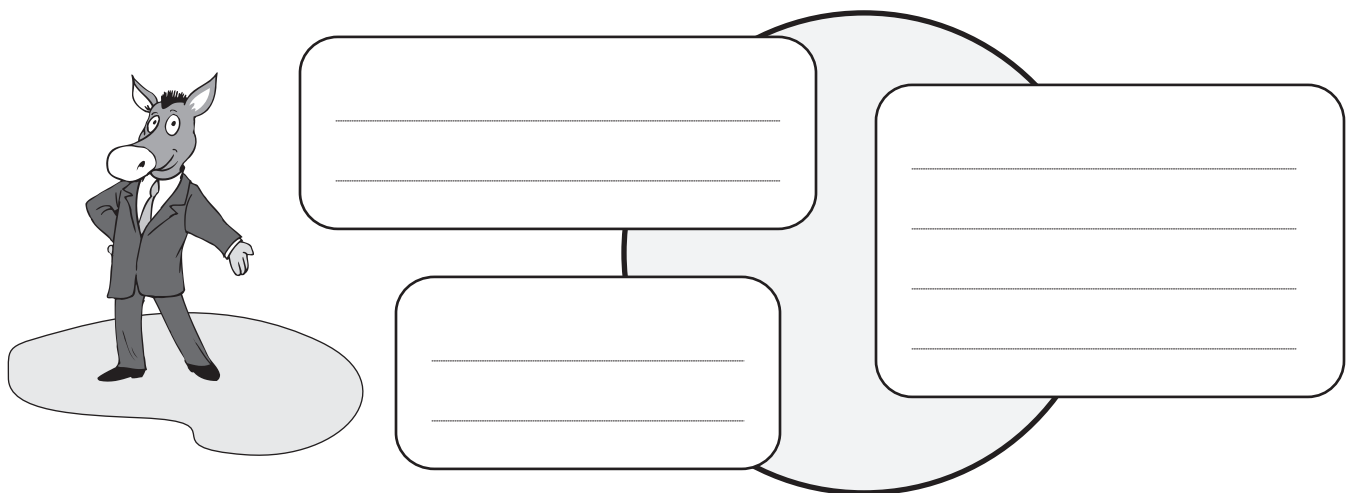








Where to Register



Elections: Patterns of Voter Participation

Complete this page with your teacher to review and summarize the topic.

Voter turnout is usually highest in presidential election years. Here are some other patterns experts have noticed on election days:

Education

Under 18?
As a student, you can still participate by helping out in an election campaign! You can also be part of an election simulation in school or online.



Age



Income

Why do citizens fail to vote?

The Electoral College System

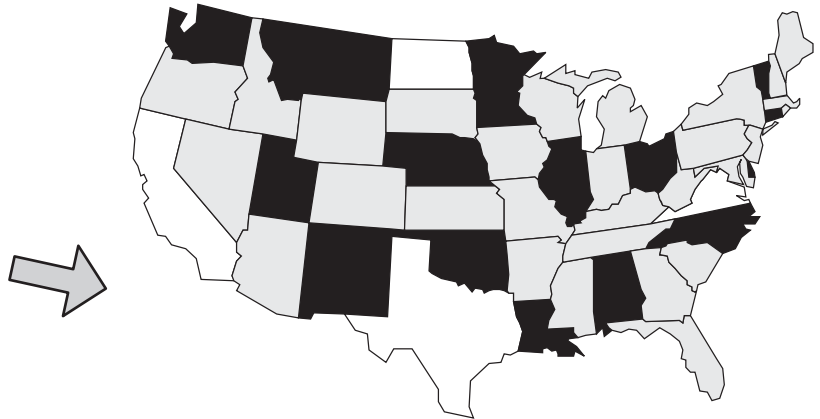
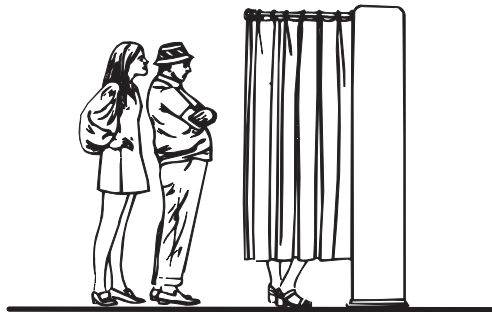
Complete this page with your teacher to review and summarize the topic.

The president and vice president are elected with a two-step process:

Step 1:

Notice on the ballot below that voters do not actually vote for the candidates, but for "electors" from the candidates' own political party.

Ballot - 2008 Election	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Democratic Party Electors for Barack Obama, President Joe Biden, Vice President
<input type="checkbox"/>	Republican Party Electors for John McCain, President Sarah Palin, Vice President



Each state gets a certain number of electors. The number is the same as the state's total Congressional representation. Virginia has 13 electors, Texas gets 34, California gets 55, and North Dakota gets only 3.



Step 2:

In almost all states, the winner of the popular vote gets all of that state's electoral votes.

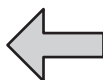
After the popular vote, the electors from the winning candidate's party in each state go to their state capital to cast their votes.



These are the official votes of the Electoral College that actually elect the president. It takes a majority to win.

total electors

total to win



bias - a consistent tilt to favor one side of an issue, while ignoring or discounting evidence that supports the other side.

campaign - the organized effort by a candidate to win support in an election. Also, if used as a verb, the act of seeking support in an election.

campaign finance reform laws - laws that try to limit how much money an individual, an organization, or a company can donate to a candidate. These laws attempt to make sure no one can "buy" an election.

conservative - political views that favor traditional ideas about individual responsibility, family life, and business freedom. Conservatives generally believe the role of the government, and especially federal government social programs, should be limited. Most conservatives today tend to be in the Republican Party.

editorial - in a newspaper, a short essay that gives the newspaper publisher's or top editors' view of a public issue. An editorial can focus public attention on an important issue, and often gets public officials to act.

Electoral College - the group, as described in the Constitution, that actually casts the votes that select the President and Vice-President. The members from each state are chosen by the public according to how votes in that state are cast in the November election.

interest group - an organization of people with an interest in a particular public issue, such as gun control or the environment. Interest groups play a big role in politics because they can bring attention, money, and votes to public issues.

liberal - political views that favor a large role for the government in promoting greater equality of conditions in society. Liberals believe the government should create extensive social welfare programs to help meet the needs of citizens. Liberals today tend to be members of the Democratic Party.

media - the term for all forms of communication, including radio, TV, newspapers, books, magazines, the Internet, recordings and movies, etc.

moderate - in politics, people who fall in the middle range of the liberal - conservative split.

nominate - to officially put forth a candidate to run for political office.

nominating convention - a large meeting held by a political party to officially pick the party's candidate for a public office. Often they are held in July or August before the November election.

Op-Ed pieces - commentary essays run in a newspaper, usually on the page facing the editorial page (opposite the editorial page). They may be submitted by anyone, including readers, political leaders, and experts.

PACs - Political Action Committees. These organizations raise money to donate to candidates based on whether they support the PAC's particular views on issues.

platform (of a political party) - the official statement of a political party's view or position on various public issues.

political party - an organization of citizens that tries to get its members elected to public office and influence public policies and laws.

political spectrum - the imaginary line stretching from liberal (or "left wing") to conservative (or "right wing") along which political views can be placed.

primary election - an election in which members of a political party vote to help select the party's candidate. The primary is typically held 6 to 12 months before the general election in November.

propaganda - information, usually false or misleading, that is deliberately repeated over and over in an attempt to influence votes or public opinion on an issue.

simulation - a "play acting" version of a real activity, such as an election or trial, often done so the participants can gain practice.

third party - in a two-party system, the smaller "extra" political parties. While third parties rarely win big national elections, they can influence politics by focusing attention on specific issues.

two-party system - a political system with two main political parties, as in the United States. Smaller "third parties" may exist, but have much less influence than the major parties.