



Voting : A Right and Privilege for America's Youth

Instructor Resource Guide

**Materials intended for young, first-time voters
attending high school and college**

**A project made possible by Help America Vote Act (HAVA) voter education
grant funds**

League of Women Voters of Bismarck-Mandan
PO Box 2393
Bismarck ND 58502-2393



Acknowledgement

The League of Women Voters of Bismarck-Mandan's project, "Voting: A Right and Privilege for America's Youth," would not have been possible without financial support from the federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA) voter education grant program, which is administered by the Elections Division of the North Dakota Secretary of State's Office.

The League wishes to acknowledge the ongoing support provided by State HAVA Coordinator Danette Odenbach throughout this project. This Instructor Resource Guide is part of a project focusing on educating young, first-time voters about voting in North Dakota. Other materials, including a video, poster, and handout, would not have been possible without the very creative and talented staff at KAT Productions of Bismarck. Thank you Todd, Candace, and your terrific staff – especially Lori Wolf for her organizational skills.

Our thanks to members Rose Stoller for developing the League's grant proposal and Heather Steffl for steering this project through to completion and compiling this guide. Thanks to the other League volunteers, who provided feedback, editing skills, and support especially – Kathi Osteen.

Youth voting information developed with HAVA funding support is available at <http://www.lwvnd.org/>. Complete voting and election information is available on the North Dakota Secretary of State's website at <http://www.nd.gov/sos/>.

Sincerely,

Marella Krein
President, League of Women Voters of Bismarck-Mandan



League Involvement In Voter Education

Born out of the women's suffrage movement, the League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that works to encourage the informed and active participation of citizens in government. The League does not endorse or oppose candidates or political parties.



Index

Introduction.....	6
Voting Matters	7
•....Handout: History Of Voting Rights In The U.S	
Voting Process	11
• Registration	
• Early/Absentee Voting	
• Residency Issues	
• Information For College Students	
• Voter Identification Requirements	
Voting Equipment.....	13
• HAVA	
• Casting A Ballot	
• Student Poll Worker Information	
Voter Bill Of Rights & How To Report Complaints	16
Learn About The Candidates & Issues	17
• Things To Think About When Watching Debates	
• Seeking Information About Candidates And Issues	
• Evaluating Ads	
• Distortion Tactics	
• Other Things To Evaluate	
• About Telephone Polls	
Handout: Electoral College.....	20
Resources	21
End Notes.....	22

Introduction

This is a non-partisan project funded with support from the Help America Vote Act program administered by the North Dakota Secretary of State's Office.

Purpose:

The *Voting: A Right and Privilege for America's Youth* project is intended to support the objectives of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) Plan in North Dakota. It focuses on young voters and is intended to equip them with the information they need to effectively participate in our democratic form of government.

Goals:

Educate young, first-time voters about the voting process including:

- Absentee voting (sometimes called “early voting”)
- Voter identification and general requirements
- Voting instructions
- Voting equipment and technology
- Voter rights

Materials:

1. DVD
2. Poster
3. Handout: Voter Rights
4. Instructor Resource Guide

Voting Matters

Discussion Questions To Introduce The Topic

1. Why is voting important in a democracy?
2. Have all Americans always had the right to vote?
3. What percent of Americans vote?
4. What are some issues on which candidates might have opinions that could result in public policy affecting young people? (*HINT: Funding for K-12 education and the state colleges and universities, sales taxes on essentials like food and clothing, gas taxes, graduated drivers licenses, marriage license fees, pre-marriage counseling programs, etc.*)

Talking Points

- **The right to vote is one of the most fundamental rights enjoyed by citizens of democracies, but many Americans remain on the sidelines on Election Day.**
- **Americans age 18 to 24 consistently demonstrate some of the lowest turnout rates according to the National Association of Secretaries of State.¹**
 - ✓ According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 47 percent of 18 to 24-year-old American citizens participated in the 2004 presidential election.²
 - ✓ That compares to 50 percent of 18 to 24-year-olds who voted in 1972, the year the voting age was lowered to 18.³
 - ✓ In the presidential election of November 2004, 64 percent of voting-age American citizens voted.⁴
- **Voting rights have gradually expanded in the United States**
See Handout: Voting Rights in the United States
- **Elections decided by ONE VOTE⁵**
 - ✓ In 1994, Republican Randall Luthi and Independent Larry Call tied for a seat in the **Wyoming** House of Representatives from the Jackson Hole area with 1,941 votes each. A recount produced the same result. Mr. Luthi was finally declared the winner in a drawing before the State Canvassing Board.
 - ✓ **In 1997, South Dakota** Democrat John McIntyre led Republican Hal Wick 4,195 to 4,191 for the second seat in Legislative District 12 on election night. A recount showed Wick the winner at 4,192 to 4,191. The S.D. Supreme Court however, ruled that one ballot counted for Wick was invalid due to an **over vote**. This left the race a tie. After hearing arguments from both sides, the State Legislature voted to seat Wick 46 to 20.
- **Voting is the great equalizer.** Every eligible voter has the same power to cast a decisive vote.
- **Your one vote counts toward issues that affect you.**

- ✓ The candidates who want to represent their fellow citizens on school boards, park boards, in the legislature, or in state or federal offices have perspectives about issues that touch your life.
- ✓ Ballot measures give voters the chance to make decisions directly.
- **To vote in North Dakota, an individual must be:**
 - ✓ A United States citizen,
 - ✓ At least 18 years old on the day of an election,
 - ✓ A legal North Dakota resident,
 - ✓ And a resident in the **precinct** for 30 days preceding the election.
- **There are 24.5 million Americans between the ages of 18 and 24.**
Campaign officials work to reach this and other key **voting blocks**.

Guest Speaker Ideas

- League of Women Voters volunteers – Invite a member to talk about the history of voting.
- County Auditor – Invite this election official to talk about close races and the impact voting blocks and a single vote can have.

Activity Ideas

- Ask students to interview one of their older relatives and write a brief summary.
Possible Questions:
 - ✓ When did you first vote?
 - ✓ Why do you vote?
 - ✓ Why does voting matter in America?
- Explore historical voting trends at: www.census.gov/population/socdemo/voting.html.
- Go to the North Dakota Secretary of State’s website to learn about ballot measures: www.nd.gov/sos/electvote/elections/measures.html.
- Ask students to identify issues that affect young people; compile a list and discuss what elected entities might deal with it. (See box to the right.)

Key Words

Precinct: A subdivision of a county with boundaries that is used for election purposes. Every home is assigned to a precinct. Each precinct has a polling (voting) site – often a public building.

Voting Block: A group of voters with common characteristics that political campaigns will target with specific messages (Examples: women, minorities).

Government Levels & Some Issues They Deal With That May Interest/Affect Students

School Board Candidates

- Money spent on schools
- Budgets for extra-curricular activities
- Student fees

Local City Councils and County Commissions

- Sales taxes

State Legislature

- Determines Budget for state agencies including the Higher Education System (impacts tuition rates, student fees, the need for loans, etc.) and acts on related legislation
 - ✓ Recent Example: Bill dealing with college instructors and their ability to communicate effectively with students
- Public Policy Decisions – Lawmakers can and do consider legislation that affects young people such as college entrance requirements, graduated drivers licenses, driving while eating or talking on cell phones, and many other matters.
 - ✓ Recent Example: North Dakota’s Cohabitation Law (HB 1184 in the 2005 session)

A Brief History of Voting Rights in the United States

Source, unless otherwise noted: http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/election2004/history_of_voting.htm

1788: The founding fathers of the United States established the Electoral College to elect the President.

1789: The U.S. elected George Washington as its first President.

1820–1830: As states joined the union, they created state constitutions outlining who was allowed to vote. Eligible voters were mostly white males who owned property. A small number of free black men were allowed to vote. Women could not vote.

1840: Women began to organize to petition for suffrage, or the right to vote. Early leaders of this movement included Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Stanton.

1848: Wisconsin entered the union. The new state had liberal voting laws that gave male non-citizens the right to vote if they lived in Wisconsin for one year and planned to become citizens of the United States.

1850: Some states enacted laws requiring voters to pass literacy tests before they could vote. Because many blacks and immigrants could not read or write, many were denied the right to vote.

1866: Congress passed the *14th Amendment to the Constitution* granting men age 21 and older who were residents of the United States the right to vote. Any state preventing these rights risked losing electors in the Electoral College.

1869: Congress passed the *15th Amendment to the Constitution* granting all men the right to vote regardless of race, color, or if they were formerly slaves.

1869: In the *Wyoming Territory* women were given the right to vote, and that right continued after Wyoming became a state in 1890.

1870: *Utah Territory* gave women the right to vote.

1878: An act to amend the Constitution and give women the right to vote was introduced into Congress but did not pass.

1890: Many states began to use secret ballots so that voters could not be bullied into voting for candidates they did not support.

Voting Rights in Other Countries

- 1893: New Zealand women received the right to vote.
- 1917: Canadian women received the right to vote.
- 1928: Women in the United Kingdom and Ireland received the right to vote.
- 1944: Women in France received the right to vote.
- 1950: Women in India received the right to vote.
- 1990: The Soviet Union held its first elections.
- 1994: The first multiracial election took place in South Africa. Prior to that, only white men and women were allowed to vote.

1896: Idaho granted women the right to vote.

1911: California gave women the right to vote.

1920: On August 18, Congress passed the *19th Amendment to the Constitution* giving women the right to vote in the United States.

1924: Congress passed the *Indian Citizenship Act* granting all Native Americans citizenship and the possibility of suffrage.¹ However, some states maintained laws that made it difficult for Native Americans and other minorities to vote.

1964: Congress passed the *24th Amendment to the Constitution* outlawing **poll taxes** (fees charged for voting that were used to discourage poor people from voting).

1965: President Lyndon Johnson signed the *Voting Rights Act*. It enforced the *15th Amendment* by explicitly stating that no person could be denied the right to vote on account of race or color, and removed obstacles such as literacy tests or complicated ballot instructions.²

1971: Youth Get the Right to Vote. On July 1, Congress passed the *26th Amendment* lowering the voting age from 21 to 18. The law resolves the disparity that 18-year-old men were old enough to be drafted to fight in the Vietnam War, yet did not have the right to vote.

1975: Congress expanded the *Voting Rights Act* to protect the voting rights of people who do not speak or read English.

2000: For the first time in United States history, in a close and controversial election, the President of the United States was chosen based on a decision by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Al Gore won the nation's popular vote, but George W. Bush had the lead in the Electoral College. The vote in Florida was too close to call and plagued with voting irregularities. Vice President and Democratic candidate for President, Al Gore, requested a recount. The recount had to be done by the state's deadline to cast Florida's Electoral College vote, so the Florida Supreme Court decided to extend the deadline. The U.S. Supreme Court suspended the recount and enforced the state's deadline. George W. Bush was declared President-elect on December 13, more than one month after the November 4 election.

Other Sources:

¹ City University of New York, Voting Rights and Citizenship page, http://www1.cuny.edu/portal_ur/content/voting_cal/americans_chinese.html

² U.S. Department of Justice – Office of Civil Rights, *Introduction to Federal Voting Rights Laws*, <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/voting/intro/intro.htm>

Voting Process

Discussion Questions

1. What are the benefits to voting early?
2. Do you know where to get information about voting?

Voting Typically Involves Some Basic Steps:

- Registering to vote (exception: North Dakota)
- Educating yourself about candidates and issues
- Determining where to go to vote (or requesting an absentee/early voting ballot)
- Casting a ballot

Registration

- North Dakota is the only state in the United States, which does not require some form of voter registration.
- State voter registration processes may impact voter participation. For example, North Dakota ranked 6th in voter participation in the 2004 election. Of the states in the top five, four allowed election-day registration, with also made it easy for people to participate.⁶

Absentee Voting

- You **do not need a reason** to vote using an absentee ballot in N.D.
- You simply **apply for an absent voter's ballot using a form**. Forms are available at the county auditors' offices or on the North Dakota Secretary of State's website at <http://www.nd.gov/sos/electvote/voting/voting-absentee.html>
- You may receive your absentee ballot as early as 40 days before the election. If you need help filling out your ballot, you can have someone assist you.
- Plan ahead because absentee ballots **must be returned by the day before the election** to count.
- They **can be returned in person or by mail**. Overseas and military voters may return ballots via fax.

Where You Vote Is Based On Your Residence.

- "Act and intent" is the foundation of North Dakota's residency laws.
- Your residence is the place where you live or will return to live when away temporarily for school or work.
- You can only have one residence for voting purposes.
- You have to live at your current address for at least 30 days before you can vote in the precinct assigned to your address.
- If you have lived there less than 30 days, you should vote at the voting site assigned for your last address.

What About College Students?

The place where students consider their residence (home) determines where they vote.

Out-of-State Students

- If you go to school out of state but still have a residence you think of as your home in N.D., then you may remain a citizen of North Dakota.
- If you choose to remain a citizen of North Dakota, do not register to vote, or vote in another state, because that will end your North Dakota residency.

In-State Students

- If you attend a North Dakota college in a town different from where you grew up, you can vote either in your college precinct – if you've been there at least 30 days – or where you grew up, but not both! Or you can vote by absentee ballot. Contact your county auditor's/clerks office in advance for a ballot.

- To find your precinct number and the polling site where you vote, look in the newspaper a few days before the election, go on-line to the North Dakota Secretary of State's website (<http://www.nd.gov/sos/>), or call your county auditor's office.

Activity Ideas

- Ask students to locate their precinct and voting location using on-line tools or information available from the county auditor's office.

Voter Identification And General Requirements Of Voting

- HAVA requires first-time voters registering by mail to supply acceptable documentary evidence of identity along with their registration form, or else face an ID check at the polls. It does not require a photo ID.
- In 2003, the North Dakota Legislature passed a law requiring all voters to show identification with their name and street address on it.
- Watch for more decisions in Congress, the states, and the courts regarding voter identification.

Bring One Of These Types Of ID With You When You Vote In North Dakota:

(This material is thoroughly discussed in the video.)

- Valid Drivers License
- Valid State Identification Card
- Valid Federally Issued Identification Card
- Valid Tribal Government Issued Identification Card
- Valid Student Identification Card
- Valid United States Military Identification Card
- Utility bill dated 30 days prior to election day with name and residential address
- Change of address verification letter from the US Postal Service

Forget Your ID? You Cannot Be Denied Your Right To Vote.

- What Happens Next
 - ✓ A poll worker can vouch for the person if the poll worker knows that the voter is a qualified elector of the precinct.
 - ✓ The voter can fill out a *Voter's Affidavit*, under oath, certifying his/her identity and right to vote in the precinct.

(A voter who fraudulently completes a Voter's Affidavit is guilty of a Class A misdemeanor, which carries a maximum penalty of one year's imprisonment, a fine of \$2,000, or both.⁷)
 - ✓ After one of these actions is taken, the individual can cast a ballot.

Don't Have ID?

- North Dakotans can get an identification card from the driver license sites in the state.
 - ✓ There is a small fee.
 - ✓ You'll need to prove who you are by providing a birth certificate or court order containing your legal name and date of birth with a court issued seal.

Voting Equipment

Discussion Questions

1. How can technology be used to enhance elections?

Help America Vote Act (HAVA) Strengthens The Voting Process

- In 2002, Congress passed the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) to improve election processes and election equipment so that voters could have confidence in election results.
- HAVA provided federal funding to:
 - ✓ Replace punch card voting equipment
 - ✓ Better educate election workers and voters
 - ✓ Improve access to voting sites for people with disabilities
 - ✓ Purchase new and advanced voting equipment to enable people with disabilities to more fully exercise their right to vote and support increased accuracy in polling results
- ALL states have been working to fully implement HAVA.

Casting A Ballot

- After arriving at the polling/voting site assigned to your address, go to the check-in table and show the poll workers your ID.
- A poll worker will verify your name and address in the **poll book**, writing in information if necessary.
- If you inadvertently go to the wrong precinct, the poll clerk should direct you to the correct precinct using information provided by the county auditor.
- The poll workers will give you a ballot and direct you to an open voting booth where you can mark your ballot by darkening the appropriate ovals.
 - ✓ **IMPORTANT:** If you vote for a **write-in candidate**, bring something with you to ensure that you spell the name correctly and fill in the oval next to the line where you wrote the name so that your vote counts.
- In N.D., **accessible AutoMark** voting equipment is available at all polling sites.
 - ✓ This enables people with disabilities to cast a private ballot.
 - ✓ The *AutoMARK* is available for everyone. People with disabilities are not required to use it, however it is provided to ensure that people with disabilities can exercise their right to vote.
 - ✓ People vote by touch screen or keypad on this special equipment, using headphones to hear what is on the ballot. Large print and high contrast text is available as well.
 - ✓ The *AutoMARK* machine does not create a paper ballot. It marks the paper ballot that is inserted into it.
 - ✓ Whether a voter uses the *AutoMARK* or manually fills out the ballot, ballots need to be inserted into the scanner by the voter to be counted.
- If you don't use the accessible machine, mark the paper ballot with your choices, insert your ballot in the secrecy sleeve, and bring it to the optical scanner. The ballot is inserted and scanned, which counts the votes, and then it is dropped into a locked box.

Key Words

Poll book: Record of voters who voted at the voting location in recent elections.

Accessible: Able to be used by people of all abilities

Write-in Candidate: Individual whose name is not pre-printed on the ballot

- If you've made an error (darkened the wrong oval), ask for a new ballot. If you voted for too many candidates for an office (called an **over vote**), the equipment will alert you. The worker will take your ballot with the error on it and give you a new one to complete. *This is called "second chance voting" and is a provision of the Help America Vote Act.*
- **N.D. has a paper record of all votes cast.**

Speaker Ideas

- County Auditors
- Experienced Poll Workers (*Ask your county auditor for referrals.*)
- Staff from the Elections Division of the Secretary of State's Office
They all can provide information about the voting and election process, equipment, and how HAVA has enhanced election processes in North Dakota

Resources

- Secretary of State's website: www.nd.gov/sos
- College Student Voting Fact Sheet: <http://www.nd.gov/sos/forms/pdf/college-students-voting.pdf>

Extra Credit Projects

- Bring a sample ballot to class (*Hint: These usually appear in the newspaper close to an election, and may also be available on-line.*)
- Research and report on a ballot measure. What will the measure do if passed?
- To learn about the process of managing an election at a polling site, check out the latest *Election Officials Manual* at <http://www.nd.gov/sos>.

Consider Taking An Active Role In An Election

Be A Student Poll Clerk

Precinct workers have important roles in administering elections. A student 16 years of age or older enrolled in a high school or college in North Dakota is eligible to serve as a poll clerk if the student meets these qualifications:

- ✓ Is a United States citizen or will be a citizen at the time of the election;
 - ✓ Is a North Dakota resident residing in the precinct at least 30 days before the election;
and
 - ✓ Is a student in good standing.
- Poll workers earn at least minimum wage.
 - Bring your lunch or have it delivered, because you can't leave the voting site on Election Day.
 - No more than two students can serve as clerks in a single precinct.
 - **Training is required.**
 - ✓ A student may be excused from school attendance during the hours that the student is serving as a clerk, including training sessions, if the student submits a written request to be absent from school that is signed by 1) the student's parent or guardian, 2) the school administrator and 3) a certification from the district party chairman or county auditor stating the hours during which the student will serve.
 - A student excused from school attendance under this provision may not be recorded as "absent" on any date covered by the excuse.

Source: N.D. Secretary of State's Office, 2006 Election Officials Manual, January 2006, p. 5

**North Dakota
Residents
Have The Right To:⁸**

1. Vote free from interference in a private and secret manner.
2. Ask for and receive assistance in voting.
3. Receive written instructions to use when voting, and, upon request, oral instructions on voting from election officers.
4. Cast a vote if you are in line at the official closing of the polls.
5. Correct your ballot. You may receive up to two replacement ballots if you believe you've made a mistake. The third ballot must be cast as voted.
6. Receive an explanation if your residency or identity is in question.
7. Prove your residency or identity by signing a Voter's Affidavit.
8. Vote by absentee ballot.
9. Report illegal or fraudulent activity to an election officer or to the Secretary of State's Office.

**Experience Problems Voting?
*You Can File A Complaint***

According to the *Help America Vote Act* (HAVA), all states are required to provide a uniform and nondiscriminatory administrative process for filing a complaint related to any violation of Title III of HAVA. (Examples: denial of or difficulty casting a ballot for a federal election because of issues related to access to a polling place, availability of information in accessible formats, and independent and secret access to the ballot for persons with disabilities)

To File A Complaint

- You are encouraged to fill out the “**North Dakota Election Administrative Complaint**” (SFN **54152**). Have it notarized, and submit your complaint to the North Dakota Secretary of State.
- The form is available online at <http://www.nd.gov/eforms/Doc/sfn54152.pdf> or by contacting the North Dakota Secretary of State's Office.
 - ✓ For assistance in filling out the complaint form, contact the Elections Division of the North Dakota Secretary of State's Office at 1-800-352-0867 or 1-800-366-6888 TTY (ND Relay).
- The Secretary of State has 90 days from the date of submission to determine a complaint, unless you agree to a longer period of time.
- A copy of this complaint form may be forwarded to the party complained against.
- North Dakota has implemented this provision in N.D.C.C. § 16.1-01-16.

Resources

Check out the *Election Official's Manual* on the N.D. Secretary of State's website at www.nd.gov/sos or the state *N.D.HAVA website* at <http://www.nd.gov/hava/>

Learn About Candidates and Issues

Activity Ideas

- Have students research the candidates' backgrounds and gather information about where they stand on issues. (*Hint: For information, see materials developed by a candidate's campaign and news clippings.*)
- Ask students to attend or watch a candidate debate/forum and write an essay about what they learned about each candidate's position on key issues.
- Ask students to research the key issues in a particular "race" and determine which issues are most important to them.

Talking Points

- Candidates aggressively market themselves to voters using advertising, appearances, direct mail, brochures, flyers, and websites.
- While candidates focus on voters of their own political party, they also work to attract independent voters.
 - ✓ According to a September 3, 2006, *Washington Post* article, "A Nation of Free Agents," by Marc Ambinder independent voters make up about 10 percent of the electorate, and the percentage of persuadable independents has increased to about 30 percent.⁹
- The media, the League of Women Voters, and other civic groups may sponsor candidate **debates** or forums to give voters opportunities to see candidates face-to-face discussing the issues.
- Debate formats vary. A debate may involve a moderator who asks questions, a panel – perhaps of journalists – who ask questions, or a "town hall" format where audience members have an opportunity to submit or ask questions.
- When watching debates, voters should open their minds to new opinions/impressions of the candidates regardless of party affiliation.

Key Words

Debate: An event in which candidates running for elected office meet face-to-face to answer questions. They may take place in front of a live audience; they may be broadcast.

Independent Voter: A voter who is not affiliated with a political party and who typically marks his or her ballot for candidates of several political parties; may also be applied more broadly to minor party voters (e.g. Green Party, Libertarian Party)

Things to Think About When Watching Debates¹⁰

- ✓ Which candidate appeared more qualified?
- ✓ Did they seem sincere, confident, and relaxed?
- ✓ Did the candidates answer questions or evade them?
- ✓ Do they give specifics about their plans or speak in generalities?
- ✓ Do they support their positions with facts and figures?
- ✓ Do they talk about their own policies or positions, or do they mostly attack their opponents?
- ✓ Where do the candidates stand on the issues you care about?
- ✓ Do their proposals seem realistic? Can they carry them out?
- ✓ Did you learn something new about the candidates?
- ✓ Are their answers consistent with their previous comments?
- ✓ Do their responses seem overly rehearsed or "canned"?

Seeking Information about the Candidates:

- In addition to candidate forums and debates, information is available from a candidate's political party or the candidate's own campaign office, as well as other public resources and the media.
- Political advertising may be created and paid for by candidates and their campaigns, political parties, or other interest groups that operate independently of candidates.
 - ✓ The Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002 (also known as the McCain-Feingold Bill) put restrictions on candidates' and parties' fundraising. As a result, a large number of groups emerged, which raised funds and ran ads independent of candidates. Examples include Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, MoveOn.org, the Media Fund, and America Coming Together.¹¹ Consider the possible biases of these organizations.

Evaluate The Ads

- What did you learn about the candidate from the ad?
- Was it intended to affect feelings or attitudes?
- Was it made to appeal to certain voters (e.g. veterans, women, older voters, young voters, single-issue groups)?
- Does it rely on distortions or evasions?

Some Distortion Tactics¹²

- **Name-calling** Be aware of inflammatory statements that distort truth. An elected representative may change his or her mind on an issue and change the way he or she votes on an issue if the representative receives new correct information, or gains life experience or personal experience with a matter. Don't be side-tracked by attacks on a candidate based on family, ethnicity, gender, race or personal characteristics that don't make a difference in a candidate's performance in public office.
- **Rumor-mongering** Be alert for unsubstantiated statements or innuendo. Have you heard of quotes like these in campaigns? "Although everyone says my opponent is unethical, I have no personal knowledge of any wrongdoing." "I've heard that Jones is soft on terrorism." Such "dark hints" are dirty campaigning and can sway elections by creating false impressions if voters aren't wary and don't evaluate what they hear.
- **Loaded statements** "I oppose wasteful spending," doesn't say much, and it implies that a candidate's opponent favors it. It gives voters no information about which programs and services a candidate would prioritize and support funding.
- **Guilt by association** Carefully evaluate criticism of a candidate based on that candidate's supporters. "The union has Jones in its pocket." "We all know Smith is backed by out-of-state interests." Running for public office is very expensive. Unless a candidate is independently wealthy, candidates must rely on support from a wide range of people and groups who may not represent that candidate's views on all the issues. Judge a candidate's own words and deeds.
- **Catchwords** Beware of empty phrases such as "law and order," ... "the American way," that are intended to trigger knee-jerk emotional reactions without saying much.
- **Baiting** Think twice about a candidate that uses campaign tactics intended to make the other candidate look weak or out of control by harassing until the opposing candidate "flies off the handle" or says something rash.

Other Things to Evaluate

- Incumbents tend to **take credit for everything** that is going good such as high employment, low inflation, new business locating to a community, income growth, drop in the number of uninsured persons, etc. Was the candidate really in a position to change the condition he or she is taking credit for?
- Challengers may “**pass the blame**” or accuse another candidate or his or her party of being the cause of a major problem. Was the candidate in a position to address the problem? Has there been time to tackle the problem? What other factors were at work?¹³
- **Evading real issues** Watch out for candidates who talk about benefits and never mention costs or how the nuts and bolts of a program will work. Does the candidate have a detailed plan?¹⁴

Key Words

Incumbent: *n* 1. Person who holds a public office.

Poll: *n* 1. A survey of persons selected at random or by quota to obtain information or opinions to be analyzed.

About Telephone Polls¹⁵

The media usually reports on poll results. Before you believe everything you read about a poll, ask these questions:

- **Who sponsored the poll?** Many polls are sponsored by credible impartial entities. Were all the results released? If a candidate or political party paid for the poll, they may not publish unfavorable data.
- **Was the poll affected by a key event?** Public opinion can change dramatically due to highly publicized events.
- **What questions were asked?** Were they slanted, or blatantly biased, steering the respondent to a certain answer?
- **Who was interviewed?** Credible polls/surveys use random sampling of a representative population. If not, the results may tell how a small group feels and nothing about the total population.
- **How many people were interviewed?** Smaller “samples” produce larger margins of error.
- **How many were undecided?** Were the questions clear, and did they reflect real choices? Results can change dramatically once “undecided” voters make up their minds.
- **How long ago was the poll/survey taken?** Polls/surveys are a “snapshot” in time. People can and do change their minds. Look for polls that compare current figures with past ones, and try to spot trends.

The Electoral College

Source, unless otherwise noted: http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/election2004/history_of_voting.htm

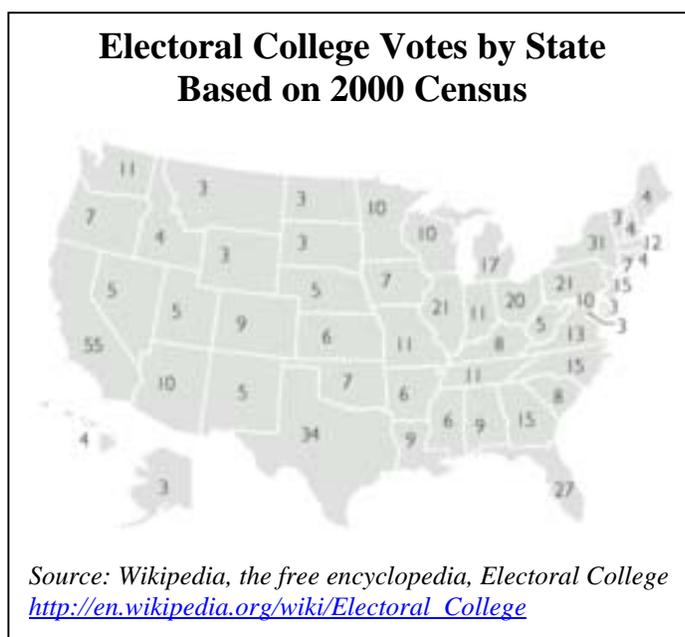
Discussion Questions

1. Why was the Electoral College created?
2. Do you think the Electoral College is still relevant today?

Talking Points

1788: The founding fathers of the United States established the Electoral College.

- **The American people do not directly elect the President.** Instead, the Electoral College elects the President.
- **The Electoral College votes are divided among the states and the District of Columbia.** Each state gets two votes for its two Senators and a vote for each of its Representatives in Congress. The number of congressional representatives varies from state to state depending on the state's population.
- **There are 538 electoral votes.** A candidate needs 270 to win.¹⁶
- **North Dakota has 3 electoral votes.** The District of Columbia has three electoral votes because the *23rd Amendment* granted it the same number of votes as the least populated state.
- In most states (48), the candidate who wins most of the popular vote wins that state's Electoral College votes.
 - ✓ Nebraska and Maine do not follow the winner-takes-all rule, but use a proportionate distribution method.¹⁷
 - ✓ It is possible, mathematically, to win the popular vote and lose the presidential election if the candidate does not win enough Electoral votes.



Disputed Elections

- This happened before the 2000 Presidential Election. In 1877, after the presidential election of 1876, the Electoral Commission gave disputed Electoral votes to Rutherford B. Hayes, despite the fact that Samuel Tilden won the popular vote.

Electoral College Resources

- Office of Federal Register, U.S. National Archives, Electoral College Home Page, <http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/electoral-college/index.html>
- League of Women Voters, *Who Will Elect the President? The Electoral College System*, <http://www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Home&template=/CM/HTMLDisplay.cfm&ContentID=2176>

Resources for Teachers

- For **Election Lesson Plans** see: <http://www.lessonplanspage.com/Elections.htm> (Note: The National Archives Electoral College website refers visitors to this page.)
- **National Association of Secretaries of States – *New Millenium Young Voters Project*** - founded in 1994 to help reconnect young Americans with the democratic process. Research indicated that young people ages 18-24 were dropping out of the electoral process. <http://www.stateofthevote.org/index.html>
- National Association of Secretaries of State "Can I Vote?" website at www.canivote.org
- For information about Constitution of the United States of America and Amendments to it, see <http://www.archives.gov/national-archives-experience/charters/constitution.html>, a site maintained by the National Archives.

End Notes

-
- ¹ National Association of Secretaries of States, New Millenium Young Voter Project
<http://www.stateofthevote.org/why.html>
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ U.S. Department of Commerce -Economics and Statistics Administration, U.S. Census Bureau, *Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2004*, March 2006, p. 1,
<http://www.census.gov/prod/2006pubs/p20-556.pdf>
- ⁵ United States Election Assistance Commission, Frequently Asked Questions,
<http://www.eac.gov/faq.asp?format=none>
- ⁶ Ibid. page 9.
- ⁷ N.D. Secretary of State's Office, *2006 Election Officials Manual*, January 2006, p. 9-10
- ⁸ North Dakota Help America Vote Act (HAVA) website,
<http://www.nd.gov/hava/education/doc/voters-rights.pdf>
- ⁹ Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, Independent (voter),
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Independent_%28voter%29
- ¹⁰ League of Women Voters of the United States, *How to Watch a Debate*, www.lwv.org
- ¹¹ Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, *United States presidential election 2004*,
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._presidential_election,_2004
- ¹² League of Women Voters of the United States, *Pick A Candidate*, (brochure)
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ Office of Federal Register, U.S. National Archives, Electoral College website,
<http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/electoral-college/2004/allocation.html>
- ¹⁷ Office of Federal Register, U.S. National Archives, Electoral College website, Frequently Asked Questions, <http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/electoral-college/faq.html#takeall>