



A Citizen's Guide to the Presidential Campaign

Democracy is difficult and demanding. It takes work and vigilance. Democracy is precious – ask any people who have lost it, or who have come to America to escape despotism.

Yet, typically, America's presidents have been selected by only one-fourth of our voters.

Secretary of State Susan Bysiewicz of Connecticut has pointed out that in 2006, 18 U.S. House races were decided by fewer than 5,000 votes. Seventy-seven legislative races decided by fewer than 100 votes.

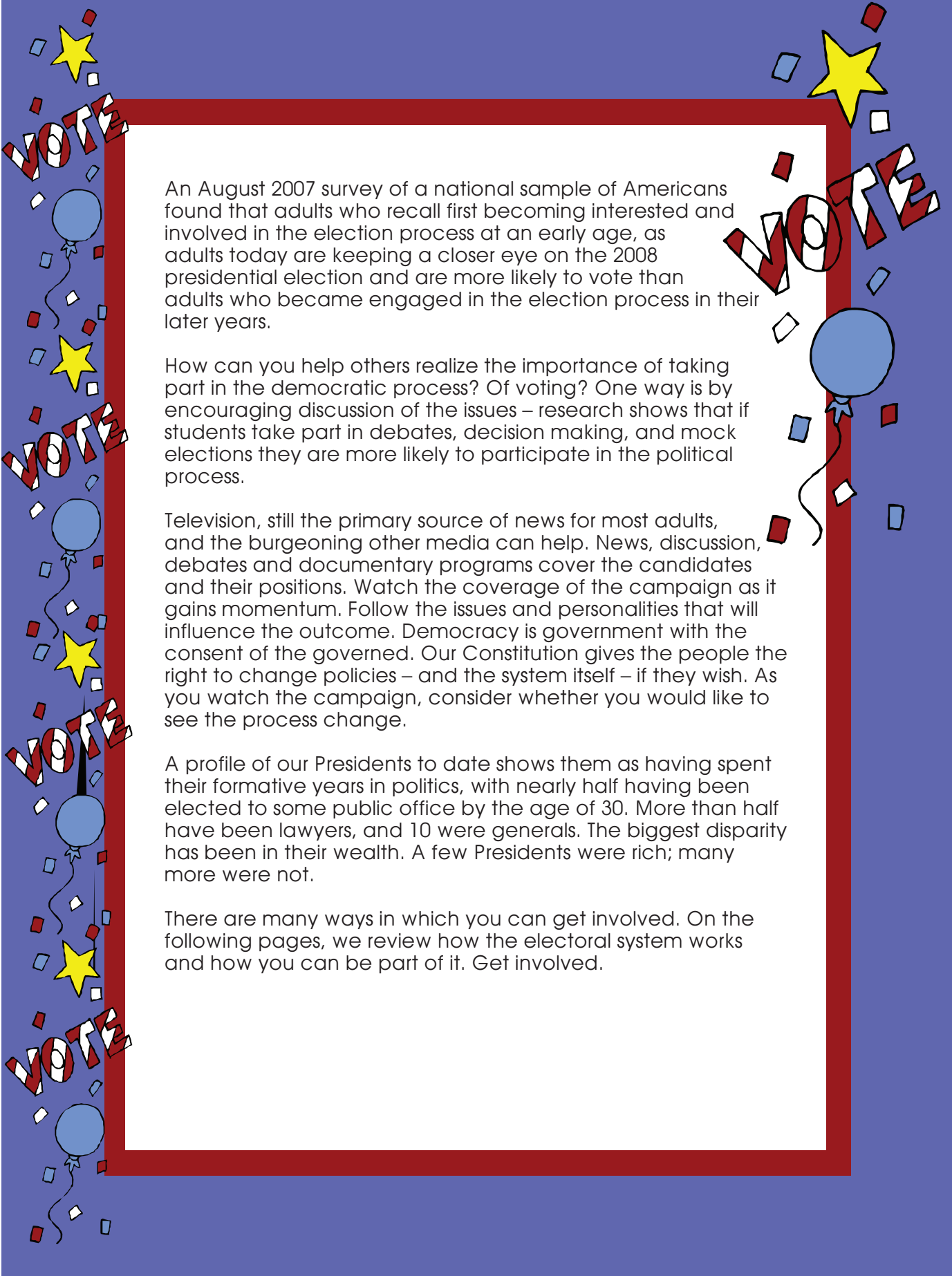
"Young voters can certainly make or break close races today, but they will also be each party's base voters 15 or 20 years from now.... Investment in young voters now pays off in the long run."

George Washington University

In the 2006 midterm elections, nearly 2 million more Americans under 30 voted as compared to the 2002 midterm elections, according to the Pew Charitable Trust.

The youth turnout increased from 22.5 percent in 2002 to 25.5 percent in 2006, a 3 percent gain and the greatest percentage increase in turnout for any age group for the second election in a row, Pew said.

Eighty-eight percent of Americans want their children taught about elections, democracy and ethical behavior starting in elementary school and continuing through high school, according to a July survey for Leo J. Shapiro & Associates marketing in Chicago. Elections and democracy are central to what the Mock Election stands for.



An August 2007 survey of a national sample of Americans found that adults who recall first becoming interested and involved in the election process at an early age, as adults today are keeping a closer eye on the 2008 presidential election and are more likely to vote than adults who became engaged in the election process in their later years.

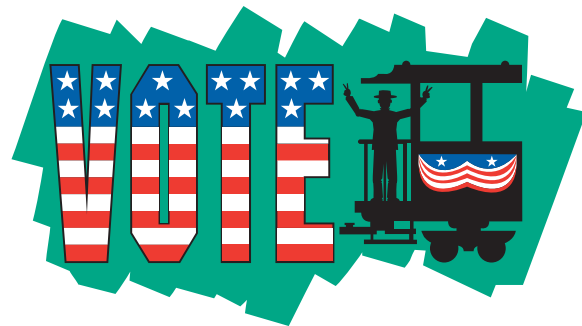
How can you help others realize the importance of taking part in the democratic process? Of voting? One way is by encouraging discussion of the issues – research shows that if students take part in debates, decision making, and mock elections they are more likely to participate in the political process.

Television, still the primary source of news for most adults, and the burgeoning other media can help. News, discussion, debates and documentary programs cover the candidates and their positions. Watch the coverage of the campaign as it gains momentum. Follow the issues and personalities that will influence the outcome. Democracy is government with the consent of the governed. Our Constitution gives the people the right to change policies – and the system itself – if they wish. As you watch the campaign, consider whether you would like to see the process change.

A profile of our Presidents to date shows them as having spent their formative years in politics, with nearly half having been elected to some public office by the age of 30. More than half have been lawyers, and 10 were generals. The biggest disparity has been in their wealth. A few Presidents were rich; many more were not.

There are many ways in which you can get involved. On the following pages, we review how the electoral system works and how you can be part of it. Get involved.

It's a Wonderful System ... and It's Up to You to Make It Work



Back in the days of town meetings, Americans could thrash out all of the major issues affecting the community. Now that most Americans receive political information via television and other media, we can follow on our home screens issues that involve the whole country. And, unlike earlier generations, we can see and hear the candidates in a presidential campaign and learn how they plan to run the country if elected.

Traditionally, politics in America has been channeled through the parties (see below), and the rise of the parties coincided with the growth of mass-circulation daily newspapers. Political parties are still essential, but once television came along, the ability of candidates to speak directly to the voters added a new dimension to the political process. In the television era, political parties were no longer the principal way for candidates to get public exposure.

Television and the world-wide Web can now help prepare students to participate in our democratic process. In the case of those seeking both the Democratic and Republican nominations, multimedia will help them become better known to the voters. If there are minor-party candidates, multimedia will make their views known. And it will give minority groups a means of voicing their needs and aspirations to the nation as a whole.

THE CONTENDERS

As the 2008 election cycle began, eight Democratic and eight Republican contenders competed for their parties' presidential nominations. Former Senator John Edwards and Ohio Representative Dennis Kucinich are competing for the nomination they both lost in 2004. Hillary Clinton, former First Lady and current New York senator, hopes to become the first woman president. Other Democratic contenders include Illinois Senator Barack Obama, New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson, Delaware Senator Joe Biden, Connecticut Senator Chris Dodd, and Mike Gravel, who represented Alaska in the Senate from 1969-1981.

On the Republican side, Arizona Senator John McCain makes his second attempt at the party nomination after losing in 2004. His political opponents include actor and former Tennessee Senator Fred Thompson, former New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani, former Governor of Massachusetts Mitt Romney, former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee, Duncan Hunter, representative from California; Alan Keyes, diplomat and broadcaster, and Ron Paul, who represents Texas in the House of Representatives.

THE ISSUES

What are the issues that we will follow on our computer monitors, on television screens, on the news programs, in debates, and in the candidates' paid advertisements?

The ongoing war in Iraq ranks first. Many opinion polls report this as the major concern of Americans, especially as the United States faces an uncertain future, with many economists predicting a possible recession.

Linked to the economy as an issue are President Bush's economic policies, which many Democrats claim favor the rich. Republicans, on the other hand, believe the President has saved the nation from a recession.

With 40-plus million Americans still uninsured, the topic of universal health care will once again be a campaign issue. The problems of global warming and illegal immigration appear in polls as major topics of public concern.

Behind these major areas of debate come the Administration's foreign policy, terrorism, taxes and education.

CAMPAGNING ON TV AND THE WEB

The year 1960, when Richard Nixon, then vice president, and Senator John Kennedy, the Democratic Party's candidate, argued over the issues face to face in four television debates, marked a breakthrough for television and a significant change in the American political process. For the first time, the entire nation could watch the presidential nominees of each party together, and make a choice between them. In 1960, we were able to retrieve a sense of personal choice that had been lost since our society grew too complex for the old town meeting. The television debate has restored this feeling of direct involvement.

Today, we've come a long way from those television debates thanks to the computer and the Internet. Now that 76 percent of Americans have access to the Internet, either at home or at work, the world has become a vast library of information and the more computer savvy among us constantly monitor a number of different media – newspapers, magazines, radio and television – while search engines, Google and others, give us access to myriad libraries world wide. The Internet has also allowed increased interaction in presidential debates, enabling viewers to pose questions to candidates on the Internet site, YouTube, for the first time.

THE "EQUAL TIME" RULE

To permit these debates, Section 315 of the Communications Act had to be suspended. Section 315 is the "equal time" rule that requires television stations offering time to any candidate to offer equal time on the same basis to every other candidate for the same office. This means, according to the Federal Communications Commission, not just candidates from the two major parties but every candidate in the race for that office.

After a major rewrite in 1991, broadcasters were legally compelled to provide equal access only to political advertising. Any candidate must be allowed to purchase advertising at the same price as a competing candidate or for free if no price was charged.

POLITICAL PARTIES

The U.S. has more than a half million elective offices, more than any other major nation in the world, and nearly every week an election is held somewhere. Ever since our republic was founded, people have been banding together into political parties to try to vote into office men and women who share their views and who they hope can be trusted to run things the “right” way. Although the Constitution nowhere prescribes a party system, our electoral process at all levels, from local government to federal offices, has become heavily dependent upon its existence.

George Washington spoke of the “baneful effects of the spirit of party” but even so, since the very first president, political parties have flourished. Some are now just names in the history books, like the Free Soil, the Green-Backers, the Know-Nothings, and the Barnburners-Liberty. Most of the time, our system has been based on two major parties, the Democrats and the Republicans.

The Republicans in recent years have been characterized as more conservative in their approach to the role of government than the Democrats. This was not always the case. After his term of office was over, President Theodore Roosevelt formed the Bull Moose Party because he felt the Republican candidate, William Howard Taft, did not show enough of the true progressive spirit of the Republicans.

How is it that our democracy has come to be based on a two-party system, when most other democracies have multi-party systems?

The electoral structure works on a plurality basis, where the winner needs only one more vote than any other candidate. In the U.S. it would be possible for the Republican Party, say, to elect every single member of the House of Representatives if each Republican candidate polled just one more vote than any other candidate in each district. A party must have considerable strength at the polls to win any political victory at all. So the electoral system itself tends to discourage “third parties.”

Our method of electing the president, chosen by the winner-take-all method in the Electoral College, also tends to inhibit the growth of minor parties. For most of our history, the presidential election has been a race between the candidates backed by the major political parties.

Why are political parties a feature of representative governments? What do you think might happen to the party system? What role will computers play? What role will local television newscasts and newspapers play in local races?

PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARIES

“A primary fight, at any level, is America’s most original contribution to the art of democracy,” wrote Theodore H. White in *The Making of the President 1960*. In a primary election, the voters choose their party’s candidates for elective office. Presidential primaries are used to pick delegates to the national conventions that name each party’s candidates.

In the nation’s earliest days, presidents were chosen by party leaders, generally men of stature. From the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln in 1865 to the turn of the century, the choice of presidential candidates was left in the hands of the party “bosses,” men like

“Boss” Tweed in New York and Abraham Ruef in San Francisco, whose methods of manipulating the voters were notoriously corrupt. Bosses wanted presidents they could control through Congress, and their selections have gone down in history as undistinguished at best.

Early in the 20th century, the Progressive Movement, a broad-based reform campaign that went on to form a political party, worked for social change, including measures that would give control of key political processes such as presidential nominations to the voters of the party, rather than the bosses. The direct primary election, where voters finally got their say, was one reform the Progressives succeeded in pushing through. Since then, bossism has waned.

Presidential nominees are still chosen in national conventions, as they have been since the first convention in 1831. However, a large number of the convention delegates are now elected in state primaries or have instructions, based on the popular state vote, to support a specific candidate. By 1976, three-fourths of all Democratic national convention delegates and more than two-thirds of Republican delegates were chosen in primaries. Not all states have primaries, and the balance of delegates is still selected by party organizations in closed state caucuses.

It has been suggested that this jumble of state conventions, primaries and caucuses (*see Calendar overleaf*) be replaced by several regional primaries – or indeed that the whole process of nominating a party’s presidential candidate be done in one nationwide presidential primary. However, the present system – an amalgam as it is – will not soon be changed.

Why are some primary elections more important to candidates than others? Would you change the primary system? If so, how?

NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

Balloons, straw hats, trumpets – pandemonium. Next August in Denver at their national convention, the Democrats will formally choose their party’s candidates for president and vice president. In a similar eruption of political passions, the Republicans will choose their candidates in Minneapolis-St. Paul in September. The two parties will also determine their positions on important issues – their platforms.

A former Democratic chairman, James A. Farley, remarked: “There is a carnival spirit, a touch of the sawdust and sideshow, about a national convention that makes it unique among public gatherings.” And for years, amid the hoopla, nobody paid much attention to the question of whether the internal party methods of picking delegates were democratic.

Then, at the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago, a confrontation took place between the “new politics” supporters of Senator Eugene McCarthy and the late Robert F. Kennedy on the one hand, and the “regular” adherents of Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey on the other. The televising of the convention made public the undemocratic party processes. Reforms have followed: fairer representation of women, minorities and young people, and open delegate-selection procedures, with advance publicity and written rules. The Republican National Committee also set up reform studies to encourage stronger participation of women and minorities. State laws were changed in response to pressures for party reform.

The general effect of the new rules has been to turn the conventions from a meeting of established party leaders who bargain over naming the party's presidential candidate into a meeting with much more public participation. Broadly speaking, the modern convention expresses the decisions made at state level by voters who took part in the primaries or caucuses.

How do you become a delegate? You begin by becoming an active worker in party affairs. It's not hard to do this: campaigns never have enough workers. Years of ringing doorbells and canvassing votes may be rewarded by your being selected as a delegate.

Should the candidate of a party be bound by the platform the party convention has adopted? Or be free to make an independent decision? What could be the consequences of such a decision?

THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

In almost every American election, voters pick their candidates by name. The single important exception is the presidential election. Although you see the names of the presidential and vice presidential candidates on the ballot, in fact you are voting for an elector, who will actually cast the votes. These electors form the Electoral College. How are they chosen?

Every four years, each state legislature selects a number of state electors equal to its whole representation in the Senate and the House of Representatives. In each state, each party runs a slate of electors pledged to that party's candidates for president and vice president. The slate whose candidates win more popular votes than any other is authorized to cast all the votes of that state in the Electoral College.

In 1968, for example, Richard Nixon won only 45% of the popular vote in Missouri, but even so, he got all of Missouri's 12 electoral votes because his two rivals each won fewer popular votes.

So, in each state, when you vote for president you are voting for his party's list of electors. The winning slates of electors are directed by the Constitution to vote in their state capitals. In the first week in January, the state electoral ballots are opened and counted in Congress, and the winner is formally announced, although the nation has known the name of its next president since Election Night in November. To win, a presidential candidate must have more than half the votes in the Electoral College.

If no candidate has a majority, the House of Representatives chooses from among the three leading candidates with each state casting one vote. Only two presidents, Thomas Jefferson and John Quincy Adams, had to be elected by the House in that manner.

The framers of the Constitution set up the Electoral College in order to free the president from immediate popular control. The system encourages candidates to concentrate disproportionately on the more heavily populated states and it has the potential of not truly reflecting the will of the people. Many proposals to alter the Electoral College and change the method of presidential elections have been made but so far none has succeeded. The most sweeping would abolish it altogether, and elect the president by direct, national, popular vote.

Florida's experience with "hanging chads" in the 2000 election resulted in a battle that sent the election to the Supreme Court for a decision on the winner. President George Bush was declared the victor, even though

Al Gore had won 500,000 more popular votes, because Bush had won more Electoral College votes.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of the Electoral College? Would you change it? Is so, how?

There have been many proposals to change the Electoral College.

In 2007, activists in California proposed, but then withdrew, a ballot initiative that would no longer have used the winner-takes-all system now in place for California's vote. California has 55 electoral votes, about one-fifth the numbers needed by a would-be president. The winner-takes-all system would be replaced by one in which the winning presidential candidate in each of California's 53 congressional districts would get one electoral vote, with two additional votes going to the statewide winner.

Nebraska and Maine now have a system similar to the one proposed for California. Their electoral votes are based on who wins individual congressional districts. The statewide winner receives two electoral votes earned for each state senator. What are the pros and cons of relating electoral votes to congressional districts which, if history is a guide, can be gerrymandered to provide the desired result?

Which system do you believe will best help protect your democracy? Prevent another election from going to the Supreme Court for a final decision? Why didn't the Founding Fathers change this system?

Seeking Ways to Improve our Democracy

Every generation must win its democracy anew. As the 2008 presidential election approaches, there are a great many problems the citizens of the world's longest lasting democracy must resolve. Previous generations struggled with such issues as slavery and its aftermath, the expansion of suffrage to include blacks, women and 18-year-olds, the efforts to combat the threats of communism and fascism, the dangers of Watergate.

Today's voters must seek solutions to concerns that vary from campaign financing to tamper-proof voting machines. Analyze the list below and add to it your own concerns about the future of our democracy. How can you use today's media to make your voice heard?

CAMPAIGN FINANCING

The McCain Feingold Act became law in 2003 to regulate financing of political campaigns. This law prohibits political party committees from raising or spending any funds not subject to federal constraints and limits the proliferation of issue ads paid for with corporate or union funds.

Despite the McCain-Feingold Act restrictions on campaign financing, hundreds of millions of dollars are expected to be spent in 2008 by groups reminiscent of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth of 2004. The intention is to influence voting outside of campaign law limitations. The amounts spent are expected to swamp the record-breaking tens of millions that the top candidates are raising for their carefully orchestrated campaigns. As long as the groups claim they are more concerned with the promotion of an issue than the election of a candidate, they are legal, according to the Supreme Court. In *Federal Election Commission v. Wis-*

consin Right to Life, Inc. the court ruled that the right to free speech protected any such advertisements except those that could be interpreted as appeals to vote for or against candidates.

The Citizens Clean Election Commission provided dollar for dollar matches of money that candidates raised privately plus money spent by others on their behalf.

Publicly subsidized campaign financing, a strategy that resulted from the felonies of Watergate, worked well for 30 years. Congress failed to update the available funding to account for inflation, however. As a result, candidates are discovering it does not pay to accept the restrictions that come with public funding as opposed to private donations.

A bi-partisan and bi-cameral bill has just been introduced by Senators Russ Feingold and Susan Collins and Representatives Christopher Shays and David Price. The subsidy and spending formulas would permit candidates to compete without being dependent on special interest groups.

The measure would not take effect until 2012, however.

If you believe it will make a difference, how can you help the bill's passage? What could help in 2008?

VOTING EQUIPMENT

In 2002, President George W. Bush signed into law the Help America Vote Act to help states update their systems of voting and ensure the integrity of elections. Under this law people registering to vote are required to prove that they are who they say they are, with appropriate identification. Each polling place must accommodate disabled voters. Voters with questionable registration will not be turned away but allowed to cast ballots subject to later verification. All states must have electronic voting equipment in place by 2010. The act provided \$3 billion in federal funds to achieve that goal. If the election of 2008 is to be fair, the equipment that counts the votes must be absolutely reliable in every state.

Ohio, Colorado, California and Florida, all considered swing states for the 2008 election, have each found significant flaws in their voting machines, forcing election officials to make last minute changes in how the states' vote will be counted. Other states have been forced to make changes as well, though not as substantial.

"Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty," Wendell Phillips, abolitionist, orator and columnist for The Liberator, said.

What would you suggest to guarantee the fairness of the 2008 elections? How will you share your ideas?

THE RIGHTS OF MINORITIES

Democracy is a system of government in which the policy decisions of government rest upon the freely given consent of the governed. Public policy is determined by the vote of the majority, but the rights of any individual or group whose beliefs or practices do not match those of the majority are guaranteed.

Another factor in the upcoming elections is the growing number of nonwhite Americans, who now top 100 million for the first time. More than 20 percent of all children in the United States are foreign born or have a parent who was foreign born. Nearly half of the children under age 5 are Hispanic, black or Asian, according to the U.S. Census.

The new requirements for voter ID cards in many states have been attacked as a way to discourage minorities, who may have less access to multiple forms of identification, from voting. Lack of access for handicapped voters has often kept the handicapped from participating in elections. Keep a daily log of the ways you observe members of any minority group being treated differently in your school or community. How will this reflect in their treatment at the polls? What about the dangers of fraud at the polls? How much fraud has actually been documented in the past?

"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing," Edmund Burke wrote.

How can you help the America you will inherit move closer toward the dream of "with liberty and justice for all?"

THE VALUE OF EACH VOTE

Presidential elections are often so close that the shift of a few thousand votes in a few states can make the difference between victory and defeat. That's why every vote counts in primary as well as general elections.

To vote in the general elections, you must be a U.S. citizen, at least 18 years old, usually a resident of a state and local area for a certain period of time (this depends on state laws), and registered. To vote in a primary you must indicate your party when you register.

Even young people not old enough to vote yet can start to take part in the process by discussions at home and in class, by working for a candidate in their area, and by taking part in mock elections; in brief, learning how to make the power of the individual felt in the electoral process.

The result, research by the University of Colorado found, will be a decrease in the sense of powerlessness – a feeling troubling many teenagers. (Psychologists believe that sense of powerlessness is the root cause of violence.)

In addition, participating in the National Student/Parent Mock Election's activities will increase young people's decision-making ability, increase the belief that voting is important, increase their involvement in current issues, increase their belief that social studies classes are relevant and increase the discussion of political and election issues with parents. Parents will learn about our democracy along with their children.

"He who expects to be ignorant and free,"
Thomas Jefferson said, "expects what
cannot and never will be."



Thank you to Kimberly Craft for her contributions to this guide.

STATE	PRESIDENTIAL CONTEST DATE & DETAILS
Alabama	February 5 Primary*
Alaska	February 5 Caucuses**
Arizona	February 5 Primary*
Arkansas	February 5 Primary*
California	February 5 Primary*
Colorado	February 5 Caucuses*
Connecticut	February 5 Primary*
Delaware	February 5 Primary*
District of Columbia	February 12 Primary***
Florida	January 29 Primary**
Georgia	February 5 Primary*
Hawaii	February 19 (D) Caucus* <i>GOP will select delegates during a week-long period in February.</i>
Idaho	February 5 (D) Caucus May 27 (R) Primary <i>Voting is binding for Dems & partially binding for GOP; 80% of delegates determined by primary results.</i>
Illinois	February 5 Primary***
Indiana	May 6 Primary*
Iowa	January 3 Caucuses**
Kansas	February 5 (D) Caucus* February 9 (R) Caucus*
Kentucky	May 20 Primary**
Louisiana	February 9 Primary**
Maine	February 1 (R) Caucus* February 10 (D) Caucus*
Maryland	February 12 Primary*
Massachusetts	February 5 Primary**
Michigan	January 15 Primary***
Minnesota	February 5 Caucuses*
Mississippi	March 11 Primary**
Missouri	February 5 Primary*
Montana	June 3 Primary**
Nebraska	May 13 Primary**
Nevada	January 19 Caucuses*
New Hampshire	January 8 Primary*
New Jersey	February 5 Primary**
New Mexico	February 5 (D) Caucus* June 3 (R) Primary*
New York	February 5 Primary**
North Carolina	May 6 Primary*
North Dakota	February 5 Caucuses*
Ohio	March 4 Primary**
Oklahoma	February 5 Primary*
Oregon	May 20 Primary*
Pennsylvania	April 22 Primary**
Rhode Island	March 4 Primary*
South Carolina	January 19 (R) Primary*** January 26 (D) Primary***
South Dakota	June 3 Primary*
Tennessee	February 5 Primary**
Texas	March 4 Primary**
Utah	February 5 Primary <i>Binding for GOP; Dems will hold state convention to select delegates.</i>
Vermont	March 4 Primary**
Virginia	February 12 Primary**
Washington	February 19 Primary <i>Dems will select delegates at Feb. 9 caucus; GOP will hold state convention to select 49% of delegates on Feb. 9 with the remaining 51% determined by primary results.</i>
West Virginia	May 13 Primary <i>Binding for Dems; GOP will select delegates February 5.</i>
Wisconsin	February 19 Primary***

To the Teacher:

There are many websites with lesson plans for the 2008 Election that Mock Election teachers may wish to take advantage of. Among them are:

http://www.google.com/Top/Reference/Education/K_through_12/Educators/Lesson_Plans/

<http://www.teachablemoment.org/>

http://www.education-world.com/a_lesson/00-2/lp2088.shtml

<http://www.csun.edu/~hcedu013/plans.html>

<http://www.aolatschool.com/message>

<http://www.nea.org/classroom/aol.html>

<http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/studentmockelection.htm>

<http://www.secstate.wa.gov/elections/outreach/>

<http://www.vermontvotesforkids.com/>

<http://www.nhptv.org/mockelection/mockresources1.htm>

http://www.nationalmockelection.org/docs/curriculum_issues_forum_2002.pdf

http://www.nationalmockelection.org/docs/curriculum_issues_forum_2004.pdf

http://www.nationalmockelection.org/docs/curriculum_issues_forum_2006.pdf

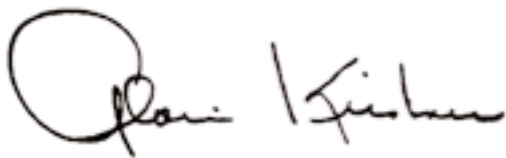
http://www.nationalmockelection.org/docs/curriculum_electoral_sec.pdf

(This is a 100-page "Guide to the Electoral Process")

The 2008 Teacher's Guide to the National Student/Parent Mock Election Issues Forum will be available in the spring, when the issues of most concern to the electorate prior to the election are solidified. Until then, teachers may wish to use the guides to the issues chosen from the 2002, 2004 and 2006 elections. See other curriculum materials on the National Student/Parent Mock Election website at: <http://www.nationalmockelection.org/curriculum.html>.

We welcome your comments and suggestions at all times and hope you will share your ideas for motivating classroom activities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gloria Kirshner". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "G".

Gloria Kirshner

President

National Student/Parent Mock Election

E-mail: nspme@aol.com

Visit our website at: <http://www.nationalmockelection.org>