



An Instructional  
Guide to  
Elections

# **NYC Department of Education**

Civics For All

*A Passport to Social Studies Companion*

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**“Decisions are made by  
those who show up.”**

-Unknown

# VOTE: An Instructional Guide to Elections

**C**ivics Week, a component of the NYC DOE Civics for All initiative, encourages students to find their voice on issues that matter to them, to identify ways to become more engaged community members, and to feel empowered to make decisions. This guide provides avenues for all NYC DOE high school students to become further civically engaged in their communities. During Civics Week we look to educate and empower students as agents of change in the political process. Some of the following activities will encourage and support students to identify issues that are important, learn how to contact government officials, and get involved in their communities. We need youth at the forefront of democracy, contributing the power of their voices to make a difference on the issues they care about.

An important aspect of Civics Week is voter registration. This newly expanded guide provides teachers with resources that can be used to encourage students to register to vote and to engage in upcoming elections, whether as voters themselves or by encouraging and supporting family members and friends who are eligible to vote. Before students begin to complete a voter

**During Civics Week we look to educate and empower students as agents of change in the political process.**

registration form, they should have an understanding of the significance of this rite of passage, know which political party aligns with their views on different issues, and be

aware of the responsibility and privileges associated with being an informed voter in elections. The activities in this guide are designed to encourage students to see how issues at the polls affect their everyday lives.

Overarching guiding questions are provided to help teachers make connections between civic participation, voting in elections, and steps that can be taken to impact elections regardless of voter registration status. The guiding questions also provide a framework for connecting the concerns students have for their communities with the elected officials who can support them in bringing about change.

## OVERARCHING GUIDING QUESTIONS

- How can students become civically engaged?
- How have voting rights in the United States of America expanded and contracted throughout history?
- How do elected officials impact our communities? How do communities influence elected officials?
- What are the issues that we most want elected officials to tackle?
- Do our current representatives hold platforms with which we agree? If not, how do we find candidates who do?
- How can we influence an election if we are not eligible to register to vote?

In addition to the activities, there are other resources to share with students that allow for greater exploration of political party platforms, current candidates for elected office, and options for civic engagement for non-voters. The activities in this guide can be modified to meet the individual needs of every classroom.

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# Suggested Activity 1

## Political Cartoon

### Objective:

Students analyze a political cartoon to understand the relationship between activism and voting.

### Materials:

- *Student Walkout* cartoon connecting the March 24, 2018 March for Our Lives to Election Day
- National Archives [Political Cartoon Analysis](#) or *Analyze a Cartoon* tools

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Ask students to use a “thumbs up” to signify if they participated in:

- political action (e.g., marching, canvassing, registering people to vote, attending a protest) in the past four years.
- a student-led protest, march, or demonstration.
- any student-led activism following the school shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School (remind students of the student walkout that took place on March 14th and the nationwide March for Our Lives that took place on March 24, 2018).

Facilitate a discussion with students about why they chose to participate in any of the political actions above.

Display *2 Good Ways to Get Lawmakers Attention* political cartoon and ask students to analyze it using the primary source analysis tool available from the National Archives.

Bring the class together to discuss the cartoon. During the discussion, you may want to ask:

- What is the main idea of the cartoon? (How do you know?)
- Who is the intended audience for this cartoon (and why is this audience being targeted?)
- What is the cartoonist’s point about the student activism that took place in March of 2018?
- Is there a clear connection between the actions you’ve engaged in in the past and voting? How can we make that connection clear to other young people?

Following the discussion have students consider ways they could share the message of the cartoon with their classmates and family members.

Ask the class to identify and discuss other issues that are important to them that could also be influenced by student-led activism or young people voting in large numbers.



## Suggested Activity 1

### 2 GOOD WAYS TO GET LAWMAKERS' ATTENTION:



#### 1.) YOUTH WALK-OUT



#### 2.) YOUTH WALK-IN



SACK  
STAR TRIBUNE

**Citation:** Steve Sack, 2 Good Ways to Get Lawmakers' Attention, *The Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, Used by permission © 2018.

## Analyze a Cartoon

### Meet the cartoon.

Quickly scan the cartoon. What do you notice first?

What is the title or caption?

### Observe its parts.

#### WORDS

*Are there labels, descriptions, thoughts, or dialogue?*

#### VISUALS

*List the people, objects, and places in the cartoon.*

*List the actions or activities.*

### Try to make sense of it.

#### WORDS

*Which words or phrases are the most significant?*

*List adjectives that describe the emotions portrayed.*

#### VISUALS

*Which of the visuals are symbols?*

*What do they stand for?*

Who drew this cartoon?

When is it from?

What was happening at the time in history it was created?

What is the message? List evidence from the cartoon or your knowledge about the cartoonist that led you to your conclusion.

### Use it as historical evidence.

What did you find out from this cartoon that you might not learn anywhere else?

What other documents or historical evidence are you going to use to help you understand this event or topic?



Materials created by the National Archives and Records Administration are in the public domain.

**Citation:** "Analyze a Cartoon," *National Archives and Records Administration*, accessed February 20, 2019, [https://www.archives.gov/files/education/lessons/worksheets/cartoon\\_analysis\\_worksheet.pdf](https://www.archives.gov/files/education/lessons/worksheets/cartoon_analysis_worksheet.pdf)

## Suggested Activity 2

# Indicators of Community Life

### Objective:

Students analyze issues within their community and identify a list of priorities to better understand the need to advocate for political and social change.

### Materials:

- Computers with internet access
- Citizen's Community for Children [Keeping Track Online Database](#)
- *Indicators of Community Life* Graphic Organizer

Students work in groups to define what *community* means to them and record their definitions on chart paper. Engage in consensus building to agree on one collective definition of community. Review different types of communities including borough, school district, community district, and UHF district. Brainstorm possible issues that affect the daily lives of people who live in the community district using chart paper.

Students access *Keeping Track Online Database* to research one of the issues within their community district from the earlier brainstorm and complete the *Indicators of Community Life* Graphic Organizer. An example of an indicator could include choosing:

- Economic Conditions category and then the subcategory Labor Statistics and either Educational Attainment or Unemployment Rate.
- The data tracker contains data for all age groups in every community.

Students share their findings from the data with the class, draw conclusions in their groups, and brainstorm the possible reasons for disparities between different communities in New York City.

Facilitate a class discussion by asking:

- For which indicators did you choose to gather data? Why?
- How does the data change when narrowing the focus to different communities, neighborhoods, or districts?
- What did you learn by engaging in some analysis of the research data?
- How does this data help to inform your knowledge of issues that are taking place in the community?

- Were you surprised by any of the data that you found?
- How does the topic we looked at today help to illustrate why civic engagement is important to a healthy democracy?
- How does the topic we looked at today help to illustrate why civic engagement, specifically in support of voting, is important to a healthy democracy?

### Extension:

Students develop an action plan to address one community issue or to bring awareness about a particular issue and share with their local representatives.

### Additional Resources:

- *NYC Department of City Planning*
- [Community Tool Box](#)
- [New York City Community Health Profiles](#)

## Suggested Activity 2

# Indicators of Community Life Graphic Organizer

<b>Community District:</b>	
School District/Community District/Borough:	School District/Community District/Borough:
Select an indicator:	Select an indicator:
Ranking:	Ranking:
What was most surprising about the data?	What was most surprising about the data?
How does the community compare to another community within the same borough?	How does the community compare to another community within the same borough?
How does the community compare with another community in another borough?	How does the community compare with another community in another borough?
What do the data reveal about problems in the community?	
What might people in these districts do to empower themselves?	

## Suggested Activity 3

# Becoming an Informed and Active Citizen

### Objective:

Students consider what it means to be an informed citizen and why the participation of informed citizens is significant to the functioning of a democratic society.

### Materials:

- *School Board Scenario*

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**NOTE TO TEACHERS:** While students should be aware that one definition of the word citizen relates to a person's birth or naturalization status, the word citizen also refers to any member or inhabitant of a community. The latter definition is used in this activity.

Project the following quotes for students to interpret and discuss:

**“No one is born a good citizen; no nation is born a democracy. Rather, both are processes that continue to evolve over a lifetime”**

*–Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations*

**“Whenever the people are well informed, they can be trusted with their government, for whenever things go so far wrong to attract their notice, they can be relied on to set things right”**

*–Thomas Jefferson, third President of the United States of America*

Students work in groups to brainstorm and write down the characteristics of an active citizen on chart paper. Facilitate a class discussion by asking:

- What does citizenship mean to you?
- What are ways you can show good citizenship?
- Why is an informed and active citizenry important to our democracy?
- How does one become an informed citizen?
- How might this relate to the concept of citizenship as a process according to Kofi Annan?

## Suggested Activity 3

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Students work as a whole class to vote for the top five to ten characteristics that they want to use as part of their collective definition of citizenship.

Have students read the following scenario:

**On the day of the school board election, three individuals: Mr. and Mrs. Whipcord, Harold (brother of Mrs. Whipcord) have all made their decision on how they are going to vote on the school board election. Analyze the voting behavior of the three individuals and use the conceptual understanding of citizenry developed in class to determine which of the behavior constitutes [more responsible or less responsible] citizenship and what can you recommend for the person who exhibits [less responsible] citizenship behavior to do to become a better citizen.**

Ask students to look at the voting behavior of Mr. and Mrs. Whipcord and Mrs. Whipcord's brother Harold, on the day of the local school-board election.

- Mrs. Whipcord: "I have studied the candidates and have made up my mind. I will vote for Jones."
- Mr. Whipcord: "I know nothing about the candidates or the issues. I will stay home and allow the election to be decided by the votes of those who have made a study and formed an opinion."
- Harold: "I don't know anything about the candidates or the problems, but by golly, I'm going to vote. It's my duty. I'll pick the fellows with the shortest names."<sup>1</sup>

Students discuss the following questions in their groups:

- If there is a less responsible citizen among these three, which one is it? Explain.
- If there is a responsible citizen among these three, which one is it? Explain.
- Whose behavior is least likely to bring good governance to the school district?
- What would you recommend someone do to be an informed citizen?

Explain to students that this scenario was written in 1955 and provide some of the historical context for that period. Discuss why the scenario might remain relevant today even though more than six decades has passed.

Students compose a reflection to answer the following:

- Why is it important to become an informed citizen? Why is civic engagement in support of voting necessary in a healthy democracy?

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<sup>1</sup> *School Board Scenario*. Adapted from Coulson, Robert E. "Let's Not Get Out the Vote" Robert E. November 1955. Accessed July 23, 2018. <https://harpers.org/archive/1955/11/lets-not-get-out-the-vote/>

### Extension:

Students organize an active and informed citizen campaign in their school to address an issue within their community. Some issues may include recycling or promoting healthy habits.

### Additional Resources:

- [\*iCivics: What Does “Informed Citizen” Mean Right Now\*](#)
- [\*Becoming an Informed Citizen\*](#)
- [\*Citizens Campaign\*](#)
- [\*Open Society Foundation\*](#)



## Suggested Activity 4

# Voting Rights History<sup>1</sup>

### Objective:

Students examine the history of voting rights to understand the struggle for enfranchisement and voter expansion.

### Materials:

- *So Why Does Voting Matter?*
- *Voting Rights Cards*
- *Voting Rights Timeline*

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Have students read *So Why Does Voting Matter?* and ask them to write a few sentences that tell the “story of voting rights.”

Provide students with guiding questions to use while reading, such as:

- Who is eligible to vote in America?
- What is the significance of the 26th Amendment as it pertains to youth and young adults?
- What were some of the recent changes made to the Voting Rights Act?
- What impact might these changes have in the future?
- How old does someone need to be to vote?

Cut the *Voting Rights Cards* into strips along the dotted lines, and distribute one to each student. Divide the class into two groups with the years 1776–1964 in one team and the years 1965–present in another team. Based on the number of students in the class some students may receive more than one strip or some students may share a strip. Ask each team to work on one side of the room to create a timeline of voting rights, as quickly as possible. Ask students to read aloud, in chronological order, the date and corresponding event on their strip to the class. Then distribute the *Voting Rights Timeline* and have students read through the timeline and, in groups or individually, create an accurate “story of voting rights” in three or more sentences. Have groups share their stories with the class.

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<sup>1</sup> This activity is modified from Democracy Class. The History of Voting Rights. Rock the Vote and Teaching Tolerance. Accessed February 17, 2019.

Ask students why it's important to see the full picture of the history of voting.

- What if we only focused on the Amendments?
- What key points would be missing from our understanding?

Post three vocabulary terms on the board: **franchise**, **disenfranchise**, and **voter suppression**.

- **Franchise:** the right to vote
- **Disenfranchise:** depriving someone of the right to vote
- **Voter suppression:** tactics designed to limit the number of people who vote

Explore the relationship between disenfranchisement and voter suppression. Ask students to look through the *Voting Rights Timeline* and facilitate a discussion by asking students, “How has disenfranchisement and voter suppression played a role in the history of voting rights in the United States?”

# So Why Does Voting Matter?

## What is voting?

Voting is a means for citizens to choose their elected representatives. Voting is the best way for you to have an impact and make a difference on the issues you care about.

## Voting Rights History

Below is a brief overview of the history of voting in the United States, covering the 14th, 15th, 19th, 24th, and 26th Amendments to the Constitution. Before these changes were made, voting rights and eligibility were defined by each state. Most states allowed only white males who either owned property or had taxable incomes to vote. From 1776 to 1926, 40 states and federal territories permitted non-citizens to vote in local, state, and even federal elections. Non-citizens could also hold certain public offices, such as alderman, coroner, and school board member.

- **14th Amendment, 1868:** All persons born or naturalized are citizens of the United States and the state where they reside. All U.S. citizens are guaranteed equal protection under the law.
- **15th Amendment, 1870:** All men, irrespective of race, color, or previous servitude, are granted the right to vote.
- **19th Amendment, 1920:** Women are granted the right to vote.
- **24th Amendment, 1964:** Poll taxes for voters in federal elections are prohibited.
- **26th Amendment, 1976:** 18-year-olds are granted the right to vote

## The Voting Rights Act of 1965

This act was passed in 1965 in order to prohibit barriers to voting for African Americans and other racial minorities as protected under the 15th Amendment. The Act was amended five times to extend or expand its provisions. Prior to the Act, some of the discriminatory barriers that were used to deny the right to vote included poll taxes and literacy tests. In 2013, in the case *Shelby County v. Holder*, the Supreme Court struck down part of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which required state and local governments to submit proposed changes to their voting procedures to the U.S. Department of Justice. Since then, many state laws that make it more difficult to vote have gone into effect around the country.

## Voting Rights Cards



### 1776–1789

The Articles of Confederation and the Constitution leave to the states the power to decide who gets to vote.

### 1790

Enslaved men and women are denied the right to vote in all 13 states.

Free women are denied the right to vote in 12 of 13 states.

Free men of color are denied the right to vote in 3 of 13 states.

### 1790–1820

Four states change their laws, taking the right to vote away from men of color.

Massachusetts changes its laws, taking the right to vote away from most Native American men.

New Jersey changes its laws, taking the right to vote away from women.

### 1821–1830

States change their laws, expanding the right to vote for white men.

### 1831–1844

Three more states change their laws, taking the right to vote away from black and Native American men.

**Citation:** Democracy Class. *The History of Voting Rights*. Rock the Vote and Teaching Tolerance. Accessed February 17, 2019.

## Suggested Activity 4



### 1845–1864

States expand voting rights for white men. The last property requirement for white men is lifted.

New York votes to keep property restrictions in place for black voters.

### 1848

The federal government expands voting rights for some Mexican Americans living in some Southwestern States and territories.

### 1870

The 15th Amendment is ratified: Black men gain the right to vote throughout the United States.

### 1865–1874

States in the South find ways to deny the right to vote to black men.

### 1875–1885

Congress denies voting rights to Chinese-American men.

The Supreme Court upholds the denial of voting rights to Native American men.

### 1886–1900

Former Confederate states continue to deny the vote to black men.

States deny voting rights to more people convicted of crimes.

**Citation:** Democracy Class. *The History of Voting Rights*. Rock the Vote and Teaching Tolerance. Accessed February 17, 2019.



### 1901–1919

Every former Confederate state now denies black men their right to vote through a poll tax.

Western territories and states deny voting rights to people who don't speak English.

Western states and territories (along with Michigan and New York) expand voting rights for women.

### 1920

The 19th Amendment is ratified: Women are legally granted the right to vote throughout the United States.

### 1921–1940

Jim Crow laws continue to deny black men the right to vote throughout the South.

Court cases and some state laws continue to refuse the right to vote to Native Americans.

### 1941–1960

New federal laws open citizenship to Asian Americans. States throughout the country restrict voting rights with literacy tests; The Supreme Court rules that this is constitutional.

### 1961

The 23rd Amendment is ratified: Residents of Washington D.C. gain the right to vote.

**Citation:** Democracy Class. *The History of Voting Rights*. Rock the Vote and Teaching Tolerance. Accessed February 17, 2019.

## Suggested Activity 4



**1964**

The 24th Amendment is ratified: Poll taxes are now unconstitutional.

**1965**

The Voting Rights Act Passes: Black men and women can exercise their right to vote throughout the South for the first time.

**1971**

The 26th Amendment is ratified: The voting age is lowered to 18.

**1970–1975**

The Voting Rights Act is expanded: People who don't speak English have their right to vote protected.

**1984**

Federal law expands voting rights for people with disabilities.

**2000**

The Supreme Court rules against allowing Puerto Ricans to vote for President.

**2002**

The U.S. Senate votes not to expand the right to vote to those convicted of felonies.

**Citation:** Democracy Class. *The History of Voting Rights*. Rock the Vote and Teaching Tolerance. Accessed February 17, 2019.



### **2000–present**

Voter ID requirements expand across the U.S.

### **2013**

The Supreme Court overturns some parts of the Voting Rights Act.

### **2014–present**

States formerly restricted by the Voting Rights Act pass laws restricting voting.

### **2015–present**

States allow automatic voter registration, registering voters when they interact with government agencies like public assistance programs or the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV).

### **Coming in 2020**

New York State expands voter rights to allow early voting and preregistration for 16- and 17-year olds.



# Voting Rights Timeline

### 1776–1789

The Articles of Confederation and the Constitution leave to the states the power to decide who gets to vote.

In the early years of the new Republic, states develop their own constitutions outlining who has citizenship—and, by extension, who has the right to vote.

After 1789, the U.S. Constitution leaves to the states the power decide who can vote for Congressional representatives. States set laws that generally favor Protestant Christian men over the age of 21 who meet property requirements.

### 1790

Enslaved men and women are denied the right to vote in all 13 states.

Free women are denied the right to vote in 12 of 13 states.

Free men of color are denied the right to vote in 3 of 13 states.

Women have the right to vote in New Jersey.

Free men of color have the right to vote in Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island.

### 1790–1820

Four states change their laws, taking the right to vote away from men of color.

Massachusetts changes its laws, taking the right to vote away from most Native American men.

New Jersey changes its laws, taking the right to vote away from women.

Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, and New Jersey deny some people the vote based on race, sex, and/or place of residence.

- Most Native American men are now denied the right to vote in all five of these states.
- Free black men are now denied the right to vote in Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, and New Jersey.
- Women are now denied the right to vote in New Jersey and, by extension, throughout the U.S.

### 1821–1830

States change their laws, expanding the right to vote for white men.

In 1828, Maryland is the last state to stop denying white men the right to vote based on their religion.

- White, male citizens can vote in every state if they meet property requirements and haven't been convicted of certain crimes.

### 1831–1844

Three more states change their laws, taking the right to vote away from black and Native American men.

North Carolina and Pennsylvania enact new requirements to vote based on race.

- Free black men are now denied the right to vote in North Carolina and Pennsylvania. Rhode Island enacts new voting requirements.
- Members of the Narragansett Tribe are now denied the right to vote.

**Citation:** Democracy Class. *The History of Voting Rights*. Rock the Vote and Teaching Tolerance. Accessed February 17, 2019.

### 1845–1864

States expand voting rights for white men. The last property requirement for white men is lifted.

New York votes to keep property restrictions in place for black voters.

North Carolina is the last state to change its laws, lifting its property requirements for white men in 1856.

- White men can now vote across the U.S. unless they've been convicted of a crime or they are classified as "paupers."

Free black men can vote in five states: Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont (though New York maintains a property requirement for black voters).

In 1860, New Yorkers vote deny the right to vote to black men who don't meet the property requirement.

### 1848

The federal government expands voting rights for some Mexican Americans living in some Southwestern states and territories.

The treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo ends the Mexican War. Mexican Americans living in the state of Texas, and the territories of Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Nevada are granted citizenship. Mexican Americans in the state of Texas can vote in federal elections.

Despite the treaty, the right to vote is still based on race. The California Constitution of 1849, for example, gives the right to vote to "every white male citizen of the United States and every white male citizen of Mexico who shall have elected to become a citizen of the United States under the treaty."

### 1865–1874

States in the South find ways to deny the right to vote to black men.

In 1871, Georgia introduces the first poll tax, requiring citizens to pay to vote. These laws are eventually passed throughout the former Confederacy. Poll taxes target black voters by including a "grandfather clause" excusing those from the tax whose grandfathers voted. Because only white men could vote in the South before 1870, these clauses essentially limit the poll tax to black men.

### 1870

The 15th Amendment is ratified: Black men gain the right to vote throughout the United States.

The United States changes its Constitution. It is now illegal to restrict voting based on race.

- African-American men now have the right to vote in every state.
- Between 1865 and 1877, black men serve in capitols across the South, and in the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives. More than 600 black men serve in state legislatures.
- Mexican-American men now have the right to vote in every state.
- Because Native Americans and Asian Americans don't have citizenship, they are still denied the right to vote in most states.
- Women are still denied the right to vote in every state.

### 1875–1885

Congress denies voting rights to Chinese-American men.

The Supreme Court upholds the denial of voting rights to Native American men.

The Chinese Exclusion Act and its amendments refuse citizenship—and through it, the vote—to all Chinese Americans, no matter their country of origin.

John Elk, a Winnebago man who moved to Omaha, Nebraska, sues the state for his right to vote. The Supreme Court rules against him.

**Citation:** Democracy Class. *The History of Voting Rights*. Rock the Vote and Teaching Tolerance. Accessed February 17, 2019.

## Suggested Activity 4

### 1886–1900

Former Confederate states continue to deny the vote to black men.

States deny voting rights to more people convicted of crimes.

Louisiana revises its constitution to include poll taxes and a literacy test, which requires citizens to take a test to vote. The state also implements a grandfather clause to ensure white men aren't excluded from voting.

- The effect of the new constitution on black voters is clear: In 1896, 130,000 black people were registered to vote in Louisiana. In 1904, that number was 1,342.

In the 35 years after the Civil War, 13 states (of 38) pass laws taking the vote away from people convicted of felonies.

### 1901–1919

Every former Confederate state now denies black men their right to vote through a poll tax.

Western territories and states deny voting rights to people who don't speak English.

Western states and territories (along with Michigan and New York) expand voting rights for women.

By 1904, every former Confederate state has also passed a poll tax to deny black men the right to vote. While some of these laws are repealed over time, poll taxes remained legal—and in effect—in Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, Texas, and Virginia until the passage of the 24th Amendment in 1964.

Laws in Arizona, California, Wyoming, Washington, Arizona, and Oklahoma require voters to prove they can read in English.

Women gain the right to vote in 11 states and territories.

### 1920

The 19th Amendment is ratified.

The United States changes its Constitution. It is now illegal to restrict voting based on sex.

- White women now have the right to vote in every state.
- Black and Mexican-American women now have the right to vote in every state, but Jim Crow laws requiring poll taxes or literacy tests prevent them from exercising that right in many states.
- Because Native Americans and Asian Americans don't have citizenship, they are still denied the right to vote in most states.

### 1921–1940

Jim Crow laws continue to deny black men the right to vote throughout the South.

Court cases and some state laws continue to refuse the right to vote to Native Americans.

Jim Crow laws, reinforced with violence against registering voters or encouraging voting, severely limit African-American voter registration. In the South, 97% of eligible black voters are not registered to vote in 1940.

The 1924 Indian Citizenship Act grants citizenship to Native Americans born in the United States, but many states continue to deny Native Americans the right to vote.

**Citation:** Democracy Class. *The History of Voting Rights*. Rock the Vote and Teaching Tolerance. Accessed February 17, 2019.

**1961**

The 23rd Amendment is ratified

The United States changes its Constitution. Residents of Washington D.C. can now vote in federal elections.

Residents of the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and Guam are still denied the vote in federal elections unless they move to the mainland.

**1964**

The 24th Amendment is ratified.

The United States changes its Constitution. States can't require citizens to pay a tax to vote.

- The last states with poll taxes—Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, Texas, and Virginia—abolish them.

This makes voting easier for men and women of color throughout the South, but literacy tests and other voter suppression tactics are still common.

**1965**

The Voting Rights Act Passes: Black men and women can exercise their right to vote throughout the South for the first time.

Federal law makes it illegal for states to discriminate against groups of voters. States and localities with histories of “denying or abridging the right to vote on account of race or color” must have any future changes to voting laws approved by the federal government.

- Black women in the South can freely exercise their right to vote for the first time.
- Black men in the South can freely exercise their right to vote for the first time since the 1870s.

The law has an immediate impact. In Alabama, for example, more than 250,000 new black voters are registered by the end of 1965.

**1971**

The 26th Amendment is ratified.

Men and women age 18 and older can now vote in every state and Washington D.C.

**1970–1975**

The Voting Rights Act is expanded: People who don't speak English have their right to vote protected.

The Voting Rights Act is expanded to prevent discrimination based on language.

Native Americans, Asian Americans, Hawaiians and Latinx people can exercise their right to vote in every state.

**1984**

Federal law expands voting rights for people with disabilities.

Precincts are required to provide accessible polling places or provide accommodations for voters with disabilities to ensure they can exercise their right to vote on election day.

**Citation:** Democracy Class. *The History of Voting Rights*. Rock the Vote and Teaching Tolerance. Accessed February 17, 2019.

## Suggested Activity 4

**2000**

The Supreme Court rules against allowing Puerto Ricans to vote for President.

Gregorio Igartúa sues for the right for Puerto Ricans to vote for President, and he loses. The First Circuit Court of Appeals rules against Igartúa. Residents of U.S. territories are denied the right to vote for President and Vice President.

**2002**

The U.S. Senate votes not to expand the right to vote to those convicted of felonies.

The Senate votes down an amendment to the Voting Rights Act of 2001 that would have restored voting rights to people convicted of felonies, leaving that power to the states. While criminal convictions have been used to justify the denial of the vote since colonial times, the disenfranchisement of everyone convicted of a felony only became common after the Civil War, when black men were granted the right to vote.

Today, state laws fall on a spectrum—in two states (Maine and Vermont), voting rights are independent of conviction history. In most states (21), voting rights are restored only at the end of probation. And in three states (Florida, Iowa, and Kentucky), people convicted of felonies are automatically denied their right to vote for life.

**2013**

The Supreme Court overturns some parts of the Voting Rights Act.

The Supreme Court rules in favor of Shelby County in *Shelby v. Holder*. The ruling allows states restricted by the 1965 Voting Rights Act to change their laws without federal approval.

**2014–present**

States formerly restricted by the Voting Rights Act pass laws restricting voting.

Almost immediately following the Supreme Court ruling in 2013, states began passing laws restricting voting: closing polling places, purging voter rolls, strengthening ID laws and limiting or ending early voting.

**2015–present**

States allow automatic voter registration, registering voters when they interact with government agencies like public assistance programs or the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV).

These policies expand registration, ensuring that more Americans are prepared to vote. Since 2015, Automatic Voter Registration (AVR) has been adopted in 13 states and the District of Columbia.

**Coming 2020**

New York State expands voter rights to allow early voting and preregistration for 16- and 17-year olds.

On January 24, 2019, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo signed legislation that begins the process of bringing New York State's voting laws into the 21st Century.

Historic new laws will:

- allow for eight days of early voting before an election
- synchronize federal and state primary elections
- allow voter preregistration for teenagers, and provide voter registration portability within the state.

**Citation:** Democracy Class. *The History of Voting Rights*. Rock the Vote and Teaching Tolerance. Accessed February 17, 2019.

## Suggested Activity 5

### Voter Turnout Articles

#### Objective:

Students consider the impact of voting by discussing contemporary voter turnout.

#### Materials:

- FairVote [What Affects Voter Turnout Rates](#) article
- Vox [Virginia Just Determined Control of Its State House by Picking a Name Out of a Bowl](#) article

Distribute the article *What Affects Voter Turnout Rates* and ask students to read it in small groups. After students read, distribute chart paper and markers and ask pairs or groups to rank the top three reasons for **voter apathy** from most important to least important with reasoning. Have students engage in a gallery walk, commenting on each other's charts to identify possible solutions for each of the reasons for voter apathy.

Distribute the article *Virginia Just Determined Control of Its State House by Picking a Name Out of a Bowl* and either read it together or have students read it independently. Provide students with the following guiding questions while reading:

- Why were candidates' names picked out of a bowl?
- Why did this lead to the Republicans controlling the House in Virginia?
- If you were a Democrat who did not vote, how would you feel?
- How does this election illustrate the importance of voting?

Post the quote:

**“Bad officials are the ones elected by good citizens who do not vote.”**

–George Jean Nathan, award-winning drama critic and magazine editor

Facilitate discussion using the following questions:

- What does Nathan imply about voting?
- According to Nathan, what is the consequence for not voting?
- Why is civic engagement in support of voting necessary in a healthy democracy?

## Suggested Activity 5

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### Additional Resources:

- [\*Why is voter turnout so low in the U.S.?\*](#)
- [\*Gender Differences in Voter Turnout\*](#)
- [\*A Closer Look at Voter Turnout in 2018 New York Congressional Primaries\*](#)
- [\*Voter Turnout Data\*](#)

## Suggested Activity 6

# Expanding Voting Rights in New York State 2019

### Objective:

Students examine and discuss efforts to expand voting rights in New York State.

### Materials:

- New York State Senate press release: [Protecting New York's Democracy: Senate Majority Conference Passes Historic Election Reform](#)
- *New York Times* article: [Early Voting and Other Changes to Election Laws Are Coming to New York](#) by Jesse McKinley
- New York State Senate Bills:
  - [Senate Bill on Early Voter Registration](#)
  - [Senate Bill on pre-registration of 16 and 17 Year olds](#)
  - [Senate Bill on No excuse/Vote by mail Constitutional Amendment](#)
  - [Senate Bill on Universal Transfer of Voter Registration records](#)
  - [Senate Bill on Consolidation of Federal and State primaries](#)
  - [Summary of Voting Reform Package from NY Senate](#)

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Provide students with this excerpt:

**“The denial of this sacred right is a tragic betrayal of the highest mandates of our democratic tradition. And so our most urgent request to the president of the United States and every member of Congress is to give us the right to vote.”**

*–Martin Luther King Jr.’s speech, “Give Us the Ballot,” May 17, 1957*

Facilitate a discussion to answer the following:

- What is Martin Luther King Jr.’s view regarding the right to vote?
- Why does Martin Luther King Jr. view voting as so important?
- How can Martin Luther King Jr.’s quote apply to today’s society?



## Suggested Activity 6

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**NOTE TO TEACHERS:** Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Give Us the Ballot" speech has many quotes related to the importance of voting to make change.

Explain to students that New York State has been ranked near the bottom of the country in voter turnout (it was 42nd in 2018). Explain that New York State has recently addressed voting laws and on January 25th Governor Cuomo signed six bills into law that will increase voter access to the polls.

Divide students in small groups and assign a discussion leader in each group. Each discussion leader should be asked to generate a few open-ended questions to begin the Socratic Seminar. Provide students with either *Protecting New York's Democracy: Senate Majority Conference Passes Historic Election Reform* or *Early Voting and Other Changes to Election Laws are Coming to New York*. Encourage students to annotate the text while they read to prepare for their discussion.

Prior to starting the Socratic Seminar explain that within the small groups the discussion leader will begin by asking an open-ended question and then the group will be responsible for responding to one another and continuing the discussion. Remind students to talk to the group and not just to the discussion leader and to reference the text to support their claims.

Ask students to reflect and evaluate the Socratic Seminar activity once completed.

## Suggested Activity 7

# Elected Officials Responsibilities and Duties

### Objective:

Students analyze roles and functions of local officials to understand which officials can best address their needs and concerns.

### Materials:

- *Take Me to Your Leader* Worksheet
- *Campaign Finance Board's Turnout in the 2016 and 2017 General Elections, By Age Group* chart
- *Elected Officials Responsibilities and Duties*
- *Which Elected Official Do I Need for My Issue?*

### Suggested Activity:

Provide students with the *Take Me to Your Leader* worksheet and challenge them to complete the names of each of the elected officials that represent them without conducting any research. After students have completed the sheet, have them look up their representatives and take a class tally of how many students were able to correctly identify the elected official in each position. Ask students why they think they were all able to identify some elected officials but not others. It is most likely that the majority of students will be able to identify federal officials like the president, but will have a more difficult time naming the officials who represent them more locally.

Use the *Turnout in the 2016 and 2017 General Elections, By Age Group* chart to point out to students the difference in voter turnout when a federal position like the presidency is up for election versus when a more local election, such as mayor, is up for election. Facilitate discussion asking students what they think accounts for this difference.

Provide students with the *Elected Officials Responsibilities and Duties* resource. Give students time to read through the elected officials and determine which elected officials are responsible for some of the issues they are most concerned with in their community. Provide students with *Which Elected Official Do I Need for My Issue?* to give them additional information on the issues that concern them most.

Facilitate a discussion by asking students which elected officials have the most impact on the issues that concern them on a daily basis. Have students share out their responses to the question, "How do local elections matter?"

## Suggested Activity 7

### Take Me to Your Leader

Position	Name(s)	Number of Classmates That Answered Correctly
President of the United States		
U.S. Senators from New York		
Your District's Representative in U.S. Congress		
Governor of New York State		
Your District's New York State Senator		
Your District's New York State Assembly Member		
Mayor of New York City		
Your District's New York City Council Member		

## Turnout in the 2016 and 2017 General Elections, By Age Group

Age Group	Turnout in the 2016 Election	Turnout in the 2017 Election	Difference in Turnout
Overall	60.3%	25.2%	35.1%
18-29	55.4%	13.5%	41.0%
30-39	58.3%	19.6%	38.7%
40-49	61.1%	24.3%	36.8%
50 to 59	65.3%	29.9%	35.3%
60 to 69	67.4%	35.9%	31.6%
70 and older	56.0%	31.6%	24.4%

**Citation:** New York City Campaign Finance Board. 2017-2018 Voter Assistance Annual Report, April 2018, 37.

# Elected Officials: Responsibilities and Duties

## City Officials

### Mayor

As the leader of city government, the Mayor sets city policy and impacts the day-to-day lives of New Yorkers by creating the budget, appointing the heads of boards and agencies like the NYPD or the Department of Education, signing or vetoing bills from City Council, and issuing executive orders.

### Public Advocate

As the people's representative in city government, the Public Advocate can investigate complaints and make recommendations about city services, provide information that allows New Yorkers to protect themselves (such as the Worst Landlords Watchlist), and introduce and co-sponsor bills. The Public Advocate is responsible for acting as the Mayor if the Mayor is absent or unable to perform his or her duties.

### Comptroller

As the chief financial officer, the Comptroller issues and sells city bonds, which are used to finance public projects like roads and bridges, and monitors the city's spending by conducting audits and reports. The Comptroller also manages the funds in NYC's pension system, the largest public city employee retirement system in the country, by making sure that they are protected and invested wisely.

### Borough President

While Borough Presidents can't create or pass laws, they can fund organizations in their boroughs (about \$4 million of the city budget is set aside for this purpose); make land use decisions; appoint members of local Community Boards and the City Planning Commission, who advise on land and neighborhood needs; and advocate for residents of their boroughs.

### City Council

City Council is the lawmaking branch of the city's government, responsible for negotiating and approving the mayor's budget, making and passing laws, deciding how to use land throughout the city, and making sure agencies are serving the people of NYC. Each City Council member represents one of the city's 51 City Council districts.

# Elected Officials: Responsibilities and Duties

## State Officials

### Governor

The Governor has the power to approve or veto bills and enforces state laws.

### Lieutenant Governor

The Lieutenant Governor is elected in the same election as the Governor and is responsible for stepping in if the Governor is unable to fulfill their duties. The Lieutenant Governor is also the president of the Senate, but has a casting vote only.

### Attorney General

The Attorney General is the chief legal officer of the state of New York and is the head of the Law Department. The Attorney General prosecutes and defends all legal actions and proceedings in which the state is interested.

### Comptroller

The State Comptroller is the head of the Department of Audit and Control of the State of New York. The Comptroller is required to audit payments made by the state and all official accounts of the state.

### State Senator\*

The State Senate is one of the two houses of the New York State Legislature. New York has 63 state senators who work to write and pass state laws and approve the state budget. Senators must be residents of the Senate districts they are chosen to represent for at least twelve months at the time of election.

### State Assembly Member\*

The Assembly is one of the two houses of the New York State Legislature. New York has 150 State Assembly members that work to write and pass state laws and approve the state budget. Assembly members must be residents of the Assembly districts from which they are chosen to represent for at least twelve months at the time of election.

\* part-time positions

**Citation:** Campaign Finance Board. *Student Voter Registration Day 2018 Resource Guide*.  
[https://www.nyccfb.info/pdf/2018\\_SVRD\\_Resource\\_Guide.pdf](https://www.nyccfb.info/pdf/2018_SVRD_Resource_Guide.pdf)

# Elected Officials: Responsibilities and Duties

## Federal Officials

### President

The President is the chief executive of the United States and the commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces. With the approval of the Senate, the President appoints federal judges, cabinet members, and other public officials, except as otherwise provided by law.

### Vice President

The Vice President is elected together with the president and is responsible for stepping in if the President is unable to fulfill their duties. The Vice President is also the president of the Senate, but may only cast a vote to break a tie.

### U.S. Representative

The House of Representatives is one of the two houses that compose the U.S. Congress, with the power to enact laws, impeach officials, and determine budget priorities. The number of representatives for each state is apportioned according to the population of that state, based on the census, which is taken every ten years. Representatives must be an inhabitant of the state from which they are elected at the time of election.

### U.S. Senator

The U.S. Senate is one of the two houses that comprise the U.S. Congress. The Senate enacts laws, approves presidential appointments, and also has the sole authority to try all impeachments. The Senate is composed of two senators from each state, each of whom must be an inhabitant of the state at the time of election.

## Which Elected Official Do I Need for My Issue?

Issue	Elected Official
My building has had no heat or hot water for the past month.	City Council Member
My school is in danger of closing and needs funding to stay open next year	State Senator State Assembly Member Public Advocate City Council Member
The cost of rent is too high, and my family is about to lose our apartment.	Public Advocate City Council Member
I'm a college student, and I can't afford tuition.	State Senator State Assembly Member Mayor City Council Member
I want to see changes made to our city's gun laws that will keep my school and community safe.	U.S. Representative State Senator State Assembly Member Mayor City Council Member
There are not enough healthy food options in my community.	Mayor Borough President City Council Member
My community garden needs funding to continue into next year	City Council Member
I have a criminal record, and I want to see the laws for minor convictions changed.	State Senator State Assembly Member
I want to be able to vote early and online.	Governor State Senator State Assembly Member
I am concerned about climate change and pollution in NYC.	Mayor City Council Member
I can't afford a MetroCard, but I need public transit to get to work and/or school.	City Council Member Public Advocate State Senator State Assembly Member

**Citation:** Campaign Finance Board. *Student Voter Registration Day 2018 Resource Guide*.  
[https://www.nycffb.info/pdf/2018\\_SVRD\\_Resource\\_Guide.pdf](https://www.nycffb.info/pdf/2018_SVRD_Resource_Guide.pdf)



## Suggested Activity 8

# Getting to Know Your Candidates

### Objective:

Students consider political issues that appeal to them personally and identify candidates and elected officials who align to their political views.

### Resources:

- *Elected Officials: Responsibilities and Duties* (from the previous resource)
- *Vote Smart* website:
  - [Vote Smart Galaxy](#)
  - [Vote Smart](#)
- [Countable](#)

In small groups, students brainstorm a list of issues that they would most want their elected officials to address. When possible, group students living in the same neighborhood together to permit discussion of candidates and elected officials they have in common. Once the groups create their list of issues, students take time to individually consider and rank which of the issues listed are the most important to them.

Using *Elected Officials: Responsibilities and Duties* students determine which elected positions are most likely to affect change on the issues that are most important to them. Students can then use the *Vote Smart* resources to determine who the **incumbent** candidate is, the person presently holding that elected office, and the **challenger(s)**, people who have not held the position who are seeking to be elected to it. The *Vote Smart* tool can also be used to identify what positions candidates hold on the issues students deemed most important. Students can determine which issues are most important to them and, using the *Vote Smart Galaxy* and *Vote Easy*, identify the elected officials that most align with their views on the issue.

Students evaluate the extent to which an incumbent candidate's legislative record aligns with their campaign platform using *Countable*. To do this, students click on the magnifying glass icon to search, type in the name of the politician, and select the "politician" button. A list will populate bills the politician has voted on and sponsored. Using *Countable*, students investigate the bills to evaluate whether the incumbent candidate's legislative record on student-identified issues aligns with the candidate's campaign platform, which students can identify by locating the candidate's campaign website. Students then consider how they would evaluate whether a challenger with little-to-no legislative record presents an accurate campaign platform. Students work in groups to draft emails to incumbent candidates reflecting their investigation of the candidate's legislative record, and draft emails posing questions to the challenger.

# Suggested Activity 9

## Political Party Platforms

### Objective:

Students examine Republican and Democrat platforms to identify the positions of the parties on issues.

### Materials:

- [New York State Voter Registration form](#)
- [Democratic Party Platform](#) website
- [Republican Party Platform](#) website
- *Political Party Positions* note catcher
- *Political Party Resources Chart*

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**NOTE TO TEACHERS:** In advance of completing voter registration forms, this activity can help students consider in which political party they may wish to enroll. Be sure to explain to students that they can still register to vote if they do not wish to enroll in a political party, but this will mean that they will not be able to vote in future primary elections. Students should understand that they are not required to vote for any candidate based on the party affiliation they choose. Also explain that if, in the future, they wish to change their political party affiliation, they can complete a new voter registration form. Spend time reviewing the purposes and differences of primary, state and local, congressional and mid-term, and general elections.

Explain to students that their views on public policies and issues may align with those of a specific political organization that share the same views. Those organizations are called **political parties**.

Define the term political party as a group of people who share the same interests and views on public policy and how the government should be run. Explain that **political party platforms** are the goals supported by a political party or individual candidate to gain support and votes about political issues. Explain that there are hundreds of political parties in the United States, and that in New York State, qualified political parties are listed on the state's voter registration form.

Display a copy of New York State's voter registration form, focusing on section 14, Political Party.

## Suggested Activity 9

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On the displayed copy, circle the top two parties, *Democratic Party* and *Republican Party*. Explain that these are the two largest political parties in the United States, and that the United States operates in a **Two-Party System**. However, the United States does have smaller parties that are also represented in elections and some of these parties are represented on the voter registration form. These parties are called **third parties**.

Provide each student with the *Political Party Positions* note catcher and *Political Party Resources Chart*. Encourage students to explore several different political party platform websites to research issues they care most about, and to make note of the political parties' positions on these issues in order to consider if they would choose to be affiliated with that political party.

## Political Party Positions

**Directions:** Visit several political party platform websites. Research issues you care about and take notes in the chart about the different political parties' positions on the issues.

Political Party: _____	Political Party: _____
Political Party: _____	Political Party: _____

## Suggested Activity 9

# Political Party Resources Chart

Visit the websites of the different political parties to get a sense of which beliefs and values you share.

Political Party	Website
Republican Party	<a href="https://www.gop.com/">https://www.gop.com/</a>
Democratic Party	<a href="http://www.democrats.org">www.democrats.org</a>
Reform Party	<a href="http://www.reformparty.org/">http://www.reformparty.org/</a>
Democratic Socialists of America	<a href="https://www.dsausa.org/">https://www.dsausa.org/</a>
Libertarian Party	<a href="https://www.lp.org/">https://www.lp.org/</a>
Communist Party USA	<a href="http://www.cpusa.org/">http://www.cpusa.org/</a>
Constitution Party	<a href="https://www.constitutionparty.com/">https://www.constitutionparty.com/</a>
Green Party	<a href="https://www.gp.org/">https://www.gp.org/</a>
Working Families Party	<a href="https://workingfamilies.org/">https://workingfamilies.org/</a>

# Suggested Activity 10

## Third Parties

### Objective:

Students examine the impact of third parties on presidential elections to better understand the role of a two-party system.

### Resources:

- PBS News Hour [Third Parties in the U.S. Political Process](#) article
- *Presidential Election Results* Table

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Introduce students to the popular saying, “Two is company, three’s a crowd.” Explain that not only is this a popular saying, but it is also applicable to presidential elections when examining political parties. Explain to students that their views on public policies and issues may align with those of a specific political party that shares the same views.

Facilitate a class discussion by asking:

- How many political parties do you know of in the United States?
- Which political parties are the most influential? How can you tell?
- How does this fact relate to the opening quote?
- Does the prevalence of two major parties limit democracy? Why or why not?

Distribute the *Third Parties in the U.S. Political Process* and ask students to read and annotate the article.

**NOTE TO TEACHERS:** The text was written in 2004 and the last paragraph refers to that year’s election. Prompt students to draw inferences about how third party candidates have influenced various elections, and struggled to be elected in various political elections.

Students work in groups to investigate the *Presidential Election* table to answer the following questions:

- What was surprising about the table?
- What trends or patterns do you notice across the four presidential elections?
- What impact do third party candidates appear to have on presidential elections?

## Presidential Election Results

Year	Party	Popular Vote	Electoral Votes
1912	Democratic	6,296,284 (41.8%)	435
	Progressive	4,122,721 (27.4%)	88
	Republican	3,486,242 (23.17%)	8
	Socialist	901,551 (5.99%)	0
	Prohibition	208,156 (0.19%)	0
	Socialist Labor	29,324 (0.03%)	0
1992	Democratic	44,909,806 (43.01%)	370
	Republican	39,104,550 (37.45%)	168
	Independent	19,743,821 (18.91%)	0
	Libertarian	290,087 (0.28%)	0
	Populist	106,152 (0.10%)	0
	New Alliance Party	73,622 (0.07%)	0
	U.S. Taxpayers Party	43,369 (0.13%)	0
2000	Republican	50,462,412 (47.87%)	271
	Democratic	51,009,810 (48.38%)	266
	Green	2,883,443 (2.74%)	0
	Reform	449,181 (0.43%)	0
	Libertarian	384,532 (0.36%)	0
	Constitution	98,027 (0.09%)	0
	Natural Law	83,710 (0.08%)	0
2016	Republican	62,984,828 (45.93%)	306
	Democratic	65,853,514 (48.02%)	232
	Libertarian	4,489,341 (3.27%)	0
	Write Ins	1,154,084 (0.84%)	7 <sup>1</sup>
	Green	1,457,218 (1.06%)	0
	Independent	731,991 (0.53%)	0
	Constitution	203,090 (0.15%)	0
	Socialism and Liberation	74,401 (0.05%)	0

<sup>1</sup> These seven Electoral College votes were cast by “Faithless Electors,” members of the Electoral College who do not vote for their party’s designated candidate.

# Suggested Activity 11

## Women in Government

### Objective:

Students examine challenges women face when running for political office and efforts to alleviate those challenges.

### Resources:

- Rutgers University [Women in the U.S. Congress 2018](#)
- Rutgers University [History of Women in the U.S. Congress](#)
- Washington Post [With More Women Running For Office, New Opportunities-and challenges-Arise](#)
- Washington Post [Why Don't More Women Run For Office? Three Powerful Women Weigh In](#)
- [She Should Run](#) or [Women's Campaign Fund](#) vision statements
- Computers with internet access

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Students work in groups to brainstorm as many politicians as they can think of that have held office or are currently in office. Facilitate a discussion by asking:

- How many of the people that you identified are men? How many are not? Why does this matter?

Students then analyze data available on the *History of Women in the U.S. Congress* and *Women in the U.S. Congress 2018* and *Facts on Women of Color in Office* website.

After students analyze the data, facilitate a class discussion to answer:

- In 2017, women represented only 19.6% of members of Congress and yet they are the majority of the population.
- Why might underrepresentation be a challenge for implementing change, specifically on issues that impact women more significantly than others?
- How might the lack of women voices affect legislation passed by Congress about these issues?



## Suggested Activity 11

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Students work in pairs to brainstorm a list of barriers women face for running and winning political office.

Students read *With More Women Running For Office, New Opportunities-and Challenges-Arise* or view *Why Don't More Women Run For Office? Three Powerful Women Weigh In* to assess challenges for running for office as a woman.

Students continue to work in pairs to review the vision statements of a non-partisan group such as *She Should Run* or *Women's Campaign Fund* to identify how the organization seeks to respond and affect change in the number of women represented in elected office.

Students discuss:

- How does the topic we looked at today help to illustrate why civic engagement in support of voting is important to a healthy democracy?

### Extension:

- Students identify an issue that has a more significant impact on women than others and create a letter writing campaign to their member of Congress to influence change.
- Students develop a brochure to encourage more women to run for office.

# Suggested Activity 12

## Primary vs. General Election

### Objective:

Students analyze primary and general election processes to better understand the purpose of both and the differences between the two.

### Materials:

- [Republican Primary Debate](#) YouTube video
- Vote Smart [United States Presidential Primary](#) website
- [Primary Elections Explained](#) YouTube video
- *New York Times* [Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez Defeats Joseph Crowley in Major Democratic House Upset](#) article

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Students view a segment of the first Republican primary debate video from August 6, 2015 (recommended: at least five minutes starting from minute 10:00). Facilitate a student discussion focusing on why each party would allow so many candidates to run for office.

**NOTE TO TEACHERS:** It may make more sense to reference videos of the most contemporary debates in lieu of the suggested debate above. Use discretion to select the most relevant footage.

Distribute a copy of *United States Presidential Primary* and ask students to read about the role of primaries in the election process. Students analyze the relationship between primary elections and general elections.

View *Primary Elections Explained* and organize students into small groups to summarize the difference between open, closed, and semi-closed primaries. Students draw a diagram of the nomination process using information from the readings and videos.

Students read *Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez Defeats Joseph Crowley in Major Democratic House Upset*. Facilitate a class discussion by asking:

- Why does the author think this primary election was significant and important?
- What seemed to be the prevailing attitude of the electorate toward the candidates in this election? How do you know?
- What does this primary illustrate about voting demographics?
- What are long-term and short-term effects of primary challenges to established incumbents in New York City?

# Suggested Activity 13

## Electoral College Process

### Objective:

Students analyze the Electoral College to better understand its role in electing the President of the United States.

### Materials:

- *New York Times* [Presidential Election Results: Donald J. Trump Wins](#) infographic
- [2016 Presidential Election by County](#) map
- Vox [This might be the best map of the 2016 election you ever see](#) map
- Slate [In Defense of the Electoral College](#) article
- [The Trouble with the Electoral College](#) YouTube video
- [Four Corners Debate](#)
- *Four Corners Note Catcher*

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Display or distribute the color-coded maps *Presidential Election Results: Donald J. Trump Wins, 2016 Presidential Election by County*, and *This might be the best map of the 2016 election you ever see*. Ask students to draw inferences and conclusions about the differences between the maps. Facilitate a discussion to answer the following:

- What information is revealed in each map?
- How is this information different?
- What are the issues that may arise from the differences in the maps?

Ask students to recall how the Electoral College works:

- The Electoral College is a process established in the Constitution as a compromise between election of the President by a vote in Congress and election of the President by a popular vote of qualified citizens.
  - The Electoral College process consists of the selection of the electors, the meeting of the electors, in December following a presidential election, where they vote for President and Vice

President, and the counting of the electoral votes, in January following a presidential election, by Congress.

- The Electoral College process consists of the selection of the electors, the meeting of the electors where they vote for President and Vice President in December following a presidential election, and the counting of the electoral votes by Congress in the January following a presidential election.

Divide students into pairs. Student pairs create a T-chart labeled Pros and Cons of the Electoral College. Students read and annotate *In Defense of the Electoral College* to identify ways in which the Electoral College protects the electoral process, taking notes for the Pros column of the T-chart. Students then view *The Trouble with the Electoral College* video, noting ways in which the Electoral College does not protect the electoral process in their T-chart.

Engage students in a Four Corners Debate to share their opinions about whether the Electoral College should continue to be used to decide elections for the Executive branch of United States government.

A Four Corners<sup>1</sup> debate requires students to show their position on a specific statement (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree) by standing in a particular corner of the room. This activity elicits the participation of all students by requiring everyone to take a position.

Teacher reads Quote 1 aloud and students move to the corner of the room that best matches their opinion about the statement.

Students discuss their reasoning for the position they chose about the quote with the whole class. Then they repeat the process with other statements.

After the Four Corners Debate, students write a response to the prompt: Are you in favor of keeping or getting rid of the Electoral College? Support your argument with evidence from the class debate and readings.

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<sup>1</sup> Copyright © 2019 by Facing History and Ourselves. Reproduced by permission. [www.facinghistory.org](http://www.facinghistory.org)  
<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/four-corners>

## Suggested Activity 13

# Four Corners Note Catcher

**Before the activity:** Respond to the quotes below, recording either the central idea, or what you infer the quotes mean.

**After the activity:** Reflect on your new thinking about the quotation.

### Quote 1

“I have ever considered the constitutional mode of election [the electoral college]...as the most dangerous blot on our constitution, and one which some unlucky chance will some day hit.”

— Thomas Jefferson to George Hay, after surviving the first contingent election, 1823

Initial response to the quote:

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Reflection following the *Four Corners* activity:

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### Quote 2

“You win some, you lose some. And then there’s that little-known third category.”

— Al Gore, at the Democratic National Convention, 2004

Initial response to the quote:

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Reflection following the *Four Corners* activity:

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### Quote 3

“Modern candidates have to accommodate farmers in rural states, factory workers in industrial states, and software engineers in tech-dominated states, the president must consider the needs and opinions of people across the country instead of just the views of a few, highly populated urban centers. . . The Electoral College ensures that the interests of ‘flyover country’ in middle America cannot be ignored.”

— Jarrett Stepman, in *The National Interest*, 2016

Initial response to the quote:

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Reflection following the *Four Corners* activity:

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### Quote 4

“It is well past time we eliminate the Electoral College, a shadow of slavery’s power on America today that undermines our nation as a democratic republic.”

—Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, 2018

Initial response to the quote:

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Reflection following the *Four Corners* activity:

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### Quote 5

“[T]he splintering of the vote [as a result of removing the electoral college] works against the moderate candidates and works to the advantage of the immoderate, extreme candidates. It does this because the middle is where the inclusive coalitions can be built. By undermining coalition building prior to the general election, a runoff fragments the middle, not the extremes; the extremes are rarely fragmented—fanatics have solidarity.”

—Judith Best, Professor of Political Science SUNY Cortland

Initial response to the quote:

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Reflection following the *Four Corners* activity:

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# Suggested Activity 14

## Regional Identity and Voting Patterns

### Objective:

Students discuss rural voting patterns to better understand how regional identity impacts elections.

### Materials:

- NPR [Rural Voters Played a Big Part in Helping Trump Defeat Clinton](#) webpage
- NPR [Is 'Rural Resentment' Driving Voters to Donald Trump?](#) podcast
- [2016 US Presidential Election Map By County & Vote Share](#)

---

**NOTE TO TEACHERS:** Create a gallery walk using the graphs from the *Rural Voters Played a Big Part in Helping Trump Defeat Clinton* webpage. Write the questions underneath the graph to guide student thinking.

Students participate in a Think-Pair-Share activity to brainstorm issues that they think are important to rural versus urban populations.

Students take part in the gallery walk to view graphs from *Rural Voters Played A Big Part In Helping Trump Defeat Clinton*. Facilitate a class discussion and track answers in a T-Chart labeled “Urban” and “Rural” as students respond to the following questions:

- What is the change in the share of votes given to Republican candidates in rural areas from the 2008, 2012, 2016 elections?
- How does this compare to the voting patterns of Democrats in urban areas across the same three elections?
- What does the data reveal about how individuals from rural, suburban, and urban environments vote in political elections?

Students listen to the NPR podcast “Is ‘Rural Resentment’ Driving Voters To Donald Trump?” Students then Turn-and-Talk to answer the following questions:

- What issues do rural voters care about that Trump speaks to?
- How do the issues that Trump discusses seem to contrast with that of the urban voter?

Students examine the *2016 US Presidential Election Map By County & Vote Share* and evaluate the significance of the urban and rural divide in influencing the outcome of the 2016 election.

**NOTE TO TEACHERS:** Draw connections to the activity that referenced the results of the Electoral College (Activity 13). Highlight the relationship between voting patterns and the effects of the Electoral College in presidential elections.

### Extension:

- Students can identify and research additional issues impacting rural voters to gain an understanding of the historical context of the issues, the problems associated with the issues, and possible ways to address them.
- Students research the state of political polarization in the US to determine whether the issues causing the political divide can be attributed to issues affecting urban and rural voters.



# Suggested Activity 15

## Ballot Measures

### Objective:

Student debate referendums to better understand the role of direct ballot initiatives in a democracy.

### Materials:

- *Ballot Measures* handout
- [Excerpt of New York Proposal #1, Constitutional Convention Question \(2017\)](#)
- [Every 20 years New Yorkers get to decide if they want a constitutional convention—now is their chance](#)

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Provide students the *Ballot Measures* handout. Ask students to reflect on the purpose of these ballot measures. Ask students to vote on each of the proposals. Collect and tally the results.

Facilitate a class discussion by asking:

- Which questions received a majority vote?
- Why might each measure have been a “yes or no” question?
- If some students did not vote, why did they choose to abstain?
  - How did decisions to abstain affect the results?

Explain that there are three kinds of **ballot measures**:

- **initiatives:** allow for citizen or organizations to bypass their state legislature by placing proposed measures and—in some states—constitutional amendments on the ballot
- **amendments:** changes or additions to an existing text of legislation or the constitution (in some states)
- **referendums:** a general vote by the electorate on a single political question or measure. Referendums can be popular (meaning citizens or organizations put them on the ballot) or **legislatively-referred** (meaning the legislature voted to put the measure on the ballot).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> National Conference of State Legislatures, Initiative, Referendum and Recall, September 20, 2012, <http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/initiative-referendum-and-recall-overview.aspx>.

Students identify why each of the *Ballot Measures* is either an initiative, amendment, or referendum.

Explain that New York State does not currently allow **initiatives** or **popular referendums**. New York State has **legislatively-referred ballot measures** and **constitutional amendments**. So, community members or organizations cannot bypass the legislature to add ballot measures, only the legislature can vote to refer a ballot measure. Additionally, once every twenty years, a **constitutional convention** question is automatically referred to the statewide ballot. The question will next appear in 2037.<sup>2</sup>

Distribute the abstract excerpt from *Excerpt of New York Proposal #1, Constitutional Convention Question (2017)* and give students time to read and identify the proposed changes to the New York State Constitution and what type of proposed change it was.

Distribute the article *Every 20 years New Yorkers get to decide if they want a constitutional convention—now is their chance*. Students read the article in small groups to identify the issues surrounding the debate on holding a Constitution Convention in New York State.

Students then engage in a Carousel Debate where they record their opinion and their rationale, and rotate to comment and add to their classmates' responses about holding a Constitutional Convention.

Engage in a class vote on the referendum. Then reveal the final vote where more than 80 percent of the voters voted No<sup>3</sup> after the November 2017 elections.

Facilitate a discussion to evaluate the significance of voter referendums in shaping political decisions. Wrap up the discussion by asking:

- How does the topic we looked at today help to illustrate why civic engagement in support of voting is important to a healthy democracy?

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2 Adapted from: "New York 2017 ballot measures," Ballotpedia, accessed February 20, 2019, [https://ballotpedia.org/New\\_York\\_2017\\_ballot\\_measures](https://ballotpedia.org/New_York_2017_ballot_measures)

3 <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/07/nyregion/new-york-state-constitutional-convention.html>

## Suggested Activity 15

# Ballot Measures

A ballot measure is a question or proposed change to legislation that appears on ballots for voters to approve or reject.

### **New York State Legislature Proposal #1: Allow for No-Excuse Absentee Voting Amendment**

Authorizes the state legislature to pass a law for no-excuse absentee voting. This would allow voters to request an absentee ballot without needing to state a reason for their desire to vote absentee, which would increase access to voters who cannot vote on election day.

Yes      No  
     

### **People’s Clean Water Committee Proposal #2: Bond For School Water Infrastructure**

Authorization of \$60 million dollars in state bonds to renovate existing water delivery systems in public and charter school buildings and construct new water delivery systems where necessary. This will improve nutritional health outcomes for students and prevent possible future heavy metal contamination in the water supply.

Yes      No  
     

### **New York State Legislature Proposal #3: Forest Preserve Land Bank Amendment**

Authorizes the creation of a 250-acre land bank designed to allow local governments to request state Forest Preserve land for qualifying projects (addressing bridge hazards, eliminating dangerous curves on roads, relocating local highways, or stabilization devices for existing utility poles) in exchange for the state acquiring 250 new acres for the forest preserves.

Yes      No  
     

1 Adapted from: “New York Proposal 3, Forest Preserve Land Bank Amendment (2017),” Ballotpedia, accessed February 20, 2019, [https://ballotpedia.org/New\\_York\\_Proposal\\_3,\\_Forest\\_Preserve\\_Land\\_Bank\\_Amendment\\_\(2017\)](https://ballotpedia.org/New_York_Proposal_3,_Forest_Preserve_Land_Bank_Amendment_(2017))

# Suggested Activity 16

## Get Out and Vote!

### Objective:

Students analyze and design promotional Get Out the Vote materials to better understand efforts to increase voter participation.

### Materials:

- Ideas.Ted.com [Gallery: Posters That Will Make You Want to Go Vote](#)
- American Institute of Graphic Arts [Get Out the Vote](#)

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Project two political campaign posters from the most recent election for students to analyze how Democrats and Republicans advertised themselves to the general public.

Ask students, “What does it mean to Get Out the Vote?” Explain that Get Out the Vote is a type of political campaign aimed at increasing voter turnout in elections. Facilitate a class discussion by asking:

- Can you think of any nonpartisan Get Out the Vote organizations? (e.g., the League of Women Voters)
- Why would a nonpartisan organization be interested in getting out the vote?
- Why would a political campaign or partisan organization be interested in getting out the vote?
- Do Get Out the Vote campaigns serve an important purpose? Why or why not?

Students interpret each poster by assessing the poster’s use of imagery, graphics color, and fonts, and determine which one is more persuasive to them as possible voters.

Students work in groups to take on the role of graphic designers to design a Get Out the Vote poster that includes a slogan that appeals to young voters with the purpose of increasing voter participation in US elections (local, state, national).

**NOTE TO TEACHERS:** Civics for All is launching a new poster contest, designed so students can share about issues and encourage each other to get civically involved. Winning designs will be distributed to high schools in the fall.

# Suggested Activity 17

## Voting Registration, Process, and Requirements

### Objective:

Students learn about voter registration requirements, how to register to vote, and how to complete a ballot.

### Materials:

- Scholastic [Voting in the United States](#) text
- New York City and New York State voting information:
  - [NYC Campaign Finance Board](#)
  - [New York City Board of Elections Registration & Voting](#)
  - [New York State Board of Elections](#)
  - [Voting in New York](#)
- *Guide to the New York State Registration Form*
- NYC Board of Elections [Instructional Video 2012](#) YouTube video

### Suggested Activity:

Distribute copies of *Voting in the United States*. Students read and annotate the text, focusing on the questions:

- Who can vote in the United States?
- How do people vote?
- Why do people vote?

Students work in small groups to create a **First-time NYC Voter Registration Guide** to educate others on the requirements of voting, how to register, and what to expect when voting for the first time. Students can also include a trouble-shooting at the polling place section.

Provide students with New York City and New York State-specific information on registering to vote, requirements, deadlines, locations, and important tips when going to the voting booth. Students work with their group to gather the information they will include in their guide.

- Review eligibility requirements for registering to vote.
- Distribute copies of *Guide to the New York State Registration Form* to preview the information needed to register to vote.
- Review the New York City Board of Elections Registration & Voting guide for information on absentee voting, steps to follow at the polling site, and frequently asked questions.
- Watch the Board of Elections Instructional video to learn how to complete and scan their ballots.
  - Review the correct protocol of how to complete a ballot with a ballot marking device, which includes completely shading in the oval next to the name of the chosen candidate, not using a “✓” or an “x.”
  - Based on the video, discuss how to handle possible problems that may arise while completing the ballot:

What if I make a mistake on marking the ballot?

*Tell a poll worker prior to submission and receive a new ballot. A voter can receive up to three ballots.*

I “undervoted” (failed to mark a choice for one or more contests).

*Select “Don’t Cast – Return Ballot,” and finish marking your choices before scanning your ballot.*

I “overvoted” (filled in too many ovals for a contest).

*If you overvote, your vote for that office or ballot proposal will not be counted. If you realize you have overvoted before placing your ballot in the scanner, ask a poll worker for a new ballot to fill out. If you insert a ballot with an overvote into the scanner, the display screen will show an error message with two choices. Select “Don’t Cast – Return Ballot,” and the scanner will return your ballot so you can ask a poll worker for a new ballot to fill out. If you choose “Cast Ballot,” the scanner will keep your ballot and your vote will not be counted for the contest in which you overvoted, but the rest of your choices will count.*

The text is too small; I cannot read my paper ballot.

*There will be a magnifying sheet available. You can also ask to use a Ballot Marking Device (BMD).*

**NOTE TO TEACHERS:** All students who meet all the eligibility requirements should be encouraged to register to vote. However, it is not a mandate that students register to vote.



# GUIDE TO THE NEW YORK

You may register to vote at age 17 as long as you will be 18 by the end of the year. **2**

Write the address where you live in Box 8. To receive mail at a different address, write it in Box 9.

If you are currently residing in temporary housing:

- write a location where you currently reside in Box 8.
- write an address where you can receive mail, such as a shelter or P.O. Box in Box 9.

If you are updating your voter registration, fill in your previous name, address, or county/state to help the BOE find your existing registration. **12**

You must choose one of the parties listed, write in the name of a party, or choose not to enroll in any party. You must enroll in one of the listed parties to vote in that party's primary elections, unless state rules allow otherwise.

You may change your party once a year by completing a new registration form and submitting it no less than 25 days before the general election. This will go into effect 7 days after the election. **14**

If you are unable to vote at your poll site on Election Day, check the box to receive an absentee ballot application. You may request an absentee ballot from the BOE after registering to vote whether or not you check this box. **15**

<b>Qualifications</b>		1	Are you a citizen of the U.S.? <input type="checkbox"/>
			If you answer <i>No</i> , you cannot register.
		2	Will you be 18 years of age or older on or before election day? <input type="checkbox"/>
			If you answer <i>No</i> , you cannot register.
Your name	3	Last name <input type="text"/>	
		First name <input type="text"/>	
More information	4	Birth date <input type="text"/> M, M / <input type="text"/> D, D / <input type="text"/> Y, Y	
Items 6 & 7 are optional		6	Phone <input type="text"/> - <input type="text"/> - <input type="text"/>
The address where you live	8	Address (not P.O. box) <input type="text"/>	
		Apt. Number <input type="text"/>	
		City/Town/Village <input type="text"/>	
		New York State County <input type="text"/>	
The address where you receive mail	9	Address or P.O. box <input type="text"/>	
Skip if same as above			P.O. Box <input type="text"/>
		City/Town/Village <input type="text"/>	
Voting history	10	Have you voted before? <input type="checkbox"/>	
Voting information that has changed	12	Your name was <input type="text"/>	
Skip if this has not changed or you have not voted before			Your address was <input type="text"/>
			Your previous state or New York State <input type="text"/>
Identification	13	<input type="checkbox"/> New York State DMV number <input type="checkbox"/> Last four digits of your Social Security number <input type="checkbox"/> I do not have a New York State ID	
You must make 1 selection		For questions, please refer to <i>Verifying your identity</i> above.	
Political party	14	<b>I wish to enroll in a political party</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Democratic party <input type="checkbox"/> Republican party <input type="checkbox"/> Conservative party <input type="checkbox"/> Green party <input type="checkbox"/> Working Families party <input type="checkbox"/> Independence party <input type="checkbox"/> Women's Equality party <input type="checkbox"/> Reform party <input type="checkbox"/> Other ..... <b>I do not wish to enroll in a political party</b> <input type="checkbox"/> No party	
You must make 1 selection		Political party enrollment is optional but that, in order to vote in a primary election of a political party, a voter must enroll in that political party, unless state party rules allow otherwise.	
Optional questions	15	<input type="checkbox"/> I need to apply for an Absentee ballot application <input type="checkbox"/> I would like to be an Election Day voter	

**WRITE LEGIBLY IN BLUE**

Citation: Campaign Finance Board. Student Voter Registration Day 2018 Resource Guide. [https://www.nyccfb.info/pdf/2018\\_SVRD\\_Resource\\_Guide.pdf](https://www.nyccfb.info/pdf/2018_SVRD_Resource_Guide.pdf)

# STATE VOTER REGISTRATION FORM

Yes  No  
 Register to vote.

Yes  No  
 Register to vote unless you will be 18 by the end of the year.

Suffix \_\_\_\_\_  
 Middle Initial \_\_\_\_\_

Sex  M  F

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Zip code \_\_\_\_\_

Zip code \_\_\_\_\_

What year? \_\_\_\_\_

State County was \_\_\_\_\_

Security number x x x - x x - \_\_\_\_\_

driver's license or a Social Security number.

**16**

**Affidavit: I swear or affirm that**

- I am a citizen of the United States.
- I will have lived in the county, city or village for at least 30 days before the election.
- I meet all requirements to register to vote in New York State.
- This is my signature or mark in the box below.
- The above information is true, I understand that if it is not true, I can be convicted and fined up to \$5,000 and/or jailed for up to four years.

party \_\_\_\_\_

Sign \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**1** You must be a citizen to register to vote.

**3** Your name must match the name on your ID.  
**6** Writing your phone number and/or email allows the BOE to contact you if there are any problems with your registration form. It is not required.  
**7**

**10** If you are updating your voter registration, this information will help the BOE locate your voting record. It is not required.  
**11**

**13** Provide either a New York State ID number or the last 4 digits of your social security number.  
 If you don't have either, check the third box. The first time you vote, you will need to present identification at the poll site: (1) a photo ID or (2) a proof of address, such as an electric or gas bill that shows your name and address.

**16** Please read the terms of the affidavit carefully before you sign and date to validate your form.  
 Someone can assist you with filling out the rest of the form, but you must sign it yourself.

**BLUE OR BLACK INK!**

**Citation:** Campaign Finance Board. Student Voter Registration Day 2018 Resource Guide. [https://www.nyccfb.info/pdf/2018\\_SVRD\\_Resource\\_Guide.pdf](https://www.nyccfb.info/pdf/2018_SVRD_Resource_Guide.pdf)



# Suggested Activity 18

## Having an Effect on an Election Without Voting

### Objective:

Students create informational pamphlets illustrating ways to effect change during an election without voting.

### Materials:

- KQED News [Too Young to Vote, Old Enough to Act: A Brief History of Major Youth-Led Movements](#) article
- *New York Times* [How Aicha Cherif, Student Activist, Spends Her Sundays](#) article
- *Vanity Fair* [Meet the Ultra-Organized Teenager Masterminding Parkland's Midterms Push](#) article
- Yea Camp [10 Ways Kids Too Young to Vote Can Get Involved in Politics](#) website
- Splinter [Can't vote? Here's how you can still influence the 2016 election](#) website

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Provide students with *Too Young to Vote, Old Enough to Act: A Brief History of Major Youth-Led Movements*. After students read the article, ask them to explain two movements in history led by youth younger than 18.

Facilitate a class discussion by asking:

- What impact have youth movements had throughout history?
- Can youth influence politics without being able to vote? Explain.

Divide students into small groups and provide them with a choice of the articles to read and annotate.

Ask students to create a pamphlet/guide to promote civic responsibility in their school or larger community.

Ask students to discuss:

- How does the topic we looked at today help to illustrate why civic engagement in support of voting is important to a healthy democracy?

# Appendix



## Ways Youth Can Be Civically Engaged

- Get the NYC ID → IDNYC is a government-issued identification card for all residents of New York City who are at least 14 years of age. Any resident of NYC may apply, regardless of immigration status, as long as they provide proof that they reside in New York City. It is free, and provides many benefits, including acting as a library card; a free membership to NYC's museums, zoos, and more; and discounts on a variety of activities, from movie tickets to gyms to supermarkets.
- Getting involved:
  - Become a poll worker or poll interpreter. For both positions you must be at least 18 years old. Poll workers must be U.S. citizens and registered to vote in NYC. Interpreters must be citizens or permanent U.S. residents who live in NYC and are fluent in English as well as Spanish, Chinese, or Korean.
  - Contact your local elected officials about issues in your neighborhood.
  - Get involved with your local community board: community boards are local democratic bodies that address neighborhood needs and concerns. Find information on your community board at <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/cau/community-boards/community-boards.page>
  - Take part in participatory budgeting: Learn more about participatory budgeting and see what ideas your neighbors have at <https://council.nyc.gov/pb/>
  - Get involved in education councils: all New Yorkers are eligible to participate in the community education councils (CEC) in each school district and the four citywide education councils. Learn more about how you can support schools at <https://www.nycparentleaders.org/>
  - Volunteer on a political campaign: even if you are not eligible to register to vote, you can still volunteer your time on a political campaign. Find a list of current candidates at <http://voting.nyc/>

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**Citation:** Campaign Finance Board. *Student Voter Registration Day 2018 Resource Guide*.  
[https://www.nyccfb.info/pdf/2018\\_SVRD\\_Resource\\_Guide.pdf](https://www.nyccfb.info/pdf/2018_SVRD_Resource_Guide.pdf)

## Voter FAQ

### **Q How old do I need to be to register to vote?**

**A** You must be 17 to register, and turn 18 by the end of the year to register. You must be 18 years old on the day of the election to vote.

### **Q What is the difference between primary and general elections?**

**A** A primary election determines which candidates from each party will be on the ballot, and the general election determines which candidates get elected into office.

### **Q What elections can I vote in?**

**A** If you are registered to a political party, you can vote in any primary or runoff election. Any registered voter can vote in the general election.

### **Q Where do I go to vote on Election Day?**

**A** Go to [voting.nyc](http://voting.nyc) and click on “Where to Vote” to find your poll site.

### **Q I am a permanent resident. Can I still register to vote?**

**A** No. You can only vote if you are a United States citizen.

### **Q Should I register to vote if I don’t know my citizenship status?**

**A** You should only register to vote if you are sure of your citizenship status. If you register to vote when you are ineligible to do so, you may face criminal and/or immigration consequences.

### **Q I don’t know if I’m registered to vote—how can I find out?**

**A** Go to [voting.nyc](http://voting.nyc) and click on “Voter Registration” to find out if you’re registered to vote.

### **Q What happens if I move out of the country or go away to school?**

**A** You can still vote by absentee ballot (<http://vote.nyc.ny.us/downloads/pdf/forms/boe/absenteevoting/absenglish.pdf>). Call in to the Board of Elections to ask one to be sent to you, or fill out the form, print, and mail it in to the Board of Elections.

*continued on next page*

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**Citation:** Campaign Finance Board. *Student Voter Registration Day 2018 Resource Guide*.  
[https://www.nycffb.info/pdf/2018\\_SVRD\\_Resource\\_Guide.pdf](https://www.nycffb.info/pdf/2018_SVRD_Resource_Guide.pdf)

## Voter FAQ *continued*

### **Q Can I register to vote if I was previously convicted?**

**A** If you were convicted of a felony, you can register and vote as long as you have completed your prison sentence and you are no longer on parole. If you meet this criteria, you must submit a new voter registration form.

### **Q I am a college student. Can I register to vote at my school address?**

**A** Yes! You have the right to register to vote at your school address—this includes a dorm room. Any student living in a dorm is entitled to the same rights as any other student. To imply otherwise is illegal. If you receive mail in a P.O. box you can sign an affidavit (or, in some cases, get a letter from your college's Residential Life office) asserting that you live at your dorm address.

### **Q I am currently residing in temporary housing, can I register and vote?**

**A** Yes, you have the right to vote. Write a location where you can be found as the address where you live. Write the address of a shelter, a P.O. box, or family member's address as the address where you receive mail. Your voter card will be sent to this address and you will be assigned a poll site according to the address where you live.

### **Q Do I need to re-register every time I move?**

**A** Yes. For each time you move, you will likely have a new poll site address, depending on the location.

### **Q What happens if I get to my poll site and I am not listed?**

**A** First, make sure you are signing in at the correct table for your Assembly and election district. Once you confirm this, and you believe you are eligible to vote, you can still vote by filling out an affidavit/provisional ballot and follow the instructions. After the election, the BOE will check its records, and your vote will be counted if you were eligible to vote. If not, you will receive a notice that you were not eligible to vote, and you should fill out a new registration form for future elections.

### **Q Does my voter registration ever expire?**

**A** Your registration has no expiration date, but it may be moved to inactive if you did not vote in the last two federal elections, or if you moved and did not update your address with the BOE.

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## Voter FAQ *continued*

**Q I recently changed my legal name. How do I change my name on my voter registration form?**

**A** To change your name, address, political party, or email, fill out a new registration form (<http://vote.nyc.ny.us/downloads/pdf/forms/boe/voterreg/voterregenglish.pdf>) and send it in to your local Board of Elections office.

**Q Which political party should I select?**

**A** As a nonpartisan initiative, we are not allowed to tell you which party to select. To learn more about the political parties in New York State, click here ([https://ballotpedia.org/Ballot\\_access\\_requirements\\_for\\_political\\_parties\\_in\\_New\\_York](https://ballotpedia.org/Ballot_access_requirements_for_political_parties_in_New_York)). In order to vote in a primary election, you must be registered in New York State with the party whose primary you would like to participate in.

**Q How do I change what political party I am registered with?**

**A** To change your party, you must submit a new registration form and indicate which party you would like to enroll in. All changes submitted prior to the deadline to register for the next general election will go into effect the following year.

**Q Do I need to show identification to vote? If so, what type?**

**A** You may have to show identification to vote if you are voting for the first time at your polling place. Otherwise, you should not be asked to show identification. If a poll worker insists on seeing your ID and you do not have it, you can vote by affidavit ballot. Acceptable forms of ID include a current and valid photo ID, current utility bill, bank statement, government check or paycheck, or government document that shows your name and address.

**Q On Election Day, if I think my rights have been violated, what should I do?**

**A** Call **(866) OUR-VOTE** if you feel your rights have been violated. There will be lawyers on hand to answer Election Day questions and concerns about voting procedures.

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## Voter FAQ *continued*

**Q** Where can I learn more about the elections: political parties, who’s running for office, issues, and voting rights laws?

**A** Check out [voting.nyc](http://voting.nyc) to find out what candidates are on the ballot in your upcoming elections, where to vote, and information about voting laws and your rights.

**Q** What happens after I register to vote?

**A** After you register, you will receive a confirmation in the mail from the Board of Elections within 3–6 weeks that will include your poll site and voter card. Use this information to vote on Election Day. If you do not receive this card, contact your borough’s Board of Elections office or visit [voting.nyc](http://voting.nyc) to check your registration status and find your poll site.

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# Contacting My Elected Official

**Step 1:** Find your elected officials. There are a number of websites that make it easy for you to find your elected officials.

- [Common Cause](#)
- [MyGov.NYC.org](#)
- [New York City Council](#)

**Step 2:** Search online for the official websites of your elected officials. Within the official websites, the elected officials may have their email addresses listed, as well as the street addresses for their district officer.

**Step 3:** Find their social media accounts. Their official websites may also list links to their social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram. You can use these accounts to contact your elected officials directly, or their press managers.

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# How to Reach the NYC Board of Elections Offices

## Bronx

1780 Grand Concourse, 5th Floor  
Bronx, NY 10457  
Tel: 1.718.299.9017  
Fax: 1.718.299.2140  
Hours of Operation: 9am–5pm

## Brooklyn

345 Adams Street, 4th Floor  
Brooklyn, NY 11201  
Tel: 1.718.797.8800  
Fax: 1.718.246.5958  
Hours of Operation: 9am–5pm

## Queens

118-35 Queens Boulevard  
Forest Hills, NY 11375  
Tel: 1.718.730.6730  
Fax: 1.718.459.3384  
Hours of Operation: 9am–5pm

## Manhattan

200 Varick Street, 10th Floor  
New York, NY 10014  
Tel: 1.212.886.2100  
Fax: 1.646.638.2047  
Hours of Operation: 9am–5pm

## Staten Island

1 Edgewater Plaza, 4th Floor  
Staten Island, NY 10305  
Tel: 1.718.876.0079  
Fax: 1.718.876.0912  
Hours of Operation: 9am–5p

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# Absentee Voting

## New York absentee ballot rules

### You may vote by absentee ballot in New York if you expect to be:

- Absent from your county or, if a resident of New York City absent from New York City, on Election Day.
- Unable to appear at the polls due to temporary or permanent illness or disability; or because you are the primary care giver of one or more individuals who are ill or physically disabled.
- A resident or patient of a Veterans Health Administration Hospital.
- Detained in jail awaiting Grand Jury action or confined in prison after conviction for an offense other than a felony.

### How to Vote by Absentee Ballot—Deadlines

- Applications for Absentee Ballots are available at your county board of elections.
- You may also download a PDF version of the New York State Absentee Ballot Application Form.
- Upon completion, applications must be mailed to your county board no later than the seventh day before the election or delivered in person no later than the day before the election.
  - In Person: 1 day Before Election Day.
  - By Mail: 7 days before Election Day.

### Once you receive your ballot:

- Sign and date where indicated
- Mail your voted ballot back to the address indicated on the return envelope.
- Your voted ballot must arrive by the deadline or it will not be counted.
- *Voted ballots are due:* Postmarked 1 day before Election Day and received 7 days after Election Day.
- If you cannot pick up your ballot or will not be able to receive it through the mail, you have the right to designate someone to pick it up for you. Only that person designated on your application may pick up and deliver your ballot.
- If you are permanently ill or disabled, you have the right to receive an Absentee Ballot for each subsequent election without further application. Simply file an application with your county board of elections indicating permanent illness or physical disability. You will then automatically receive an absentee ballot for every election until your registration is canceled.

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# Voter Vocabulary

<b>Absentee ballot:</b>	When voters cannot make it to their poll site on Election Day, they have the option to vote via absentee ballot, which can be sent in by mail or delivered in person to the Board of Elections. In order to vote absentee, you must request and fill out an application for an absentee ballot in advance.
<b>Affidavit/ provisional ballot:</b>	An affidavit/provisional ballot is used to record a vote when there are questions about a given voter's eligibility. For example, if your name does not appear on the electoral roll at your poll site, you have the option to vote via affidavit ballot.
<b>Amendment:</b>	A change that is made to the Constitution of the United States or the constitution of a state. Voters approve amendments.
<b>Assembly district:</b>	The state is divided into smaller districts known as Assembly districts. Each district is represented by a member of the State Assembly, one of the two bodies of the State Legislature.
<b>Ballot proposal:</b>	A ballot proposal is a question placed on the ballot for voters to weigh in on. Ballot questions may involve bond issues, or proposed amendments to the New York State Constitution, or the New York City Charter. In some cases, an individual or group can submit a petition to place a question on the ballot.
<b>Candidate:</b>	A person who is seeking an office through an election.
<b>Civics:</b>	The study of the rights and duties of citizenship.
<b>Election district:</b>	The basic political subdivision for purposes of registration and voting. By state law, there are no more than 950 registered voters in an election district.
<b>Electoral college:</b>	A body of "electors" chosen by popular vote on a state-by-state basis, who formally elect the president and vice president of the United States.
<b>General election:</b>	A regular election of candidates running for city, statewide, or federal offices.
<b>Gerrymander:</b>	To manipulate the boundaries of an electoral constituency so as to favor one party or class.

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## Voter Vocabulary *continued*

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**Initiative:** A proposed law that can be placed on a ballot and be voted on in some states. If the initiative is approved, it will become a law or constitutional amendment.

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**Nonpartisan:** Not biased or partisan, especially toward any particular political group.

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**Participatory budgeting:** A democratic process in which residents of a district directly decide how to spend public funds given to that district. In other words, the people who pay taxes in that community get the opportunity, through participatory budgeting, to decide how those tax dollars should be spent.

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**Partisan:** A strong supporter of a party, cause, or person.

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**Petition:** A formal request or call to action, often bearing the names of a number of those making the request, that is addressed to a person or group of persons in authority or power, soliciting some favor, right, mercy, or other benefit.

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**Political party:** An organized group of people with similar political aims and opinions that seeks to influence public policy by getting candidates elected to public office.

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**Poll site:** A place where votes are cast.

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**Poll worker:** A person who is responsible for operating the polls. Responsibilities include opening the poll site, serving voters, and closing the polls. The poll worker can serve as an inspector, poll clerk, information clerk, door clerk, or interpreter.

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**Primary election:** An election in which enrolled members of a party vote to nominate party candidates and elect party officials.

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**Referendum:** A vote on a political question that is passed on to the public for a direct decision during a general election.

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# First You Register, Then You Vote!

## Before Election Day:

### Verify that you are registered

- ✓ Visit [voting.nyc](https://voting.nyc.gov) and click on “Your Voter Status.”
- ✓ Once you put in some information about yourself you will see your voter information and your district information.
- ✓ Make sure that your “Voter Status” is “Active.”

### Know your polling place

- ✓ Your polling place is the location near your home where you will go to vote. Visit [voting.nyc](https://voting.nyc.gov) and click on “Where to Vote.”

### Know the issues and elected positions

- ✓ Visit [https://ballotpedia.org/Sample\\_Ballot\\_Lookup](https://ballotpedia.org/Sample_Ballot_Lookup) to see the Ballot Measures you will be able to vote on as well as the candidates for each of the positions up for election.\*

### Decide which candidates you will vote for

- ✓ Research the candidates up for election in your district and in New York State.
- ✓ Visit [voteeasy.votesmart.org](https://voteeasy.votesmart.org) for an easy way to identify candidates and read about their records.\*

### Make a plan and tell your friends!

- ✓ Polling sites in New York City are open from 6:00 am until 9:00 pm on November 6th.
- ✓ Decide which time of day will be best for you to go to the polls.
- ✓ Plan to meet friends and family and vote together.

## On Election Day:

### Go Vote

- ✓ You may have to wait in line, but be patient; you will get your turn to vote.
- ✓ If you are in line at your polling place by 9:00 pm you can vote. You may not be turned away, so stay in line!

### Be prepared to give your name and address

- ✓ Provide your address to the volunteers and they will tell you your district and send you to the right district table to get your ballot.
- ✓ Give the volunteers at the district table your full name, sign the voter roll, and you will be handed your ballot.

### Take your time

- ✓ You will be sent to a private booth to vote. Read the ballot carefully to make sure you complete it correctly (the front and back).
- ✓ If you have any questions you can come out of the booth and ask a volunteer for help. Interpreters are available at some polling sites if you need one.
- ✓ When you are finished filling out your ballot a volunteer will direct you to a scanner. Scan your ballot in the direction that the screen shows you to and you’re done!

### Congratulate yourself!

- ✓ Get an I VOTED sticker and wear it proudly!
- ✓ Even though you’ll want to inspire others to get out and vote too, make sure you don’t take pictures of your ballot; it’s against the law.

**FIRST TIME VOTERS:** If you did not provide the last digits of your social security number or driver’s license number on your voter registration, you will be asked for a government issued ID. If you do not have a government issued ID with you, you may still vote using an affidavit ballot. An affidavit ballot is a different paper ballot used in case your name is not listed in the poll book. Do not let anyone turn you away for not having identification!

\* Information from third party websites is not verified or endorsed by NYCDOE. The DOE is not responsible for content found on or through these sites.



An  
Instructional  
Guide to  
Elections