

Future Voter's Lesson Menu



Teacher's Guide

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Expectations & Information

Expectations:

- **What You Can Expect From Us**

- When we visit your class, our team will...
 - Lead an interactive lesson (chosen by you) on key aspects of elections and voting. Lessons typically run 45-50 minutes but can be adjusted based on your needs.
 - Provide all materials needed for the activity.
 - Distribute voter registration forms to eligible students (turning 18 by the next election) and share information about paid Election Worker opportunities for students ages 16 and up.
 - Answer student questions about voting, elections, and civic participation.

- **How You Can Support a Successful Visit**

- To ensure a meaningful and engaging experience for your students, we ask that you...
 - Help prepare students ahead of time by letting them know we're visiting and encouraging them to be ready to participate.
 - Assist with grouping students for interactive activities when needed.
 - Help manage classroom behavior and keep students focused on the lesson.
 - Support class discussions—your encouragement goes a long way in getting students to participate!

Contact Information:

- **Haley Oryell** - Community Engagement Manager
 - (843) 744-8683, ex: 3264
 - horyell@charlestoncounty.org
- **Kirsten Weaver** - Community Engagement Coordinator
 - (843) 744-8683, ex: 3260
 - kbweaver@charlestoncounty.org
- **Virginia Jones** - Community Engagement Specialist
 - (843) 744-8683, ex: 3278
 - vjones@charlestoncounty.org



Who Gets a Say?

Overview:

Students will explore the history and evolution of voting rights in the United States, along with modern challenges associated with voter turnout. This lesson highlights the hard-won privilege of voting and encourages students to recognize their responsibility as future voters.

Length:	45-50 Min.
Age Range:	6th-12th Graders

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students will...

- Learn about historical barriers to voting and their impact on election outcomes.
- Understand state-specific voter regulations.
- Reflect on the importance of voting as a means to amplify their voices in a democracy.

State Standards:

- **8.3.P** Analyze the Civil War Amendments (i.e., 13th, 14th, and 15th) as a turning point in the economic, political, and social structures of South Carolina.
- **USHC.2.CX** Contextualize the perspectives on the role of the federal government in securing natural rights during the period 1830–1877.

Materials:

- Sticky Notes
- Timeline
- Velcro'd events on timeline



Who Gets a Say?

Background Information & Important Terms/Dates:

- **Articles of Confederation (1777-1789)**
 - Served as the first constitution for the U.S. and gave states the power to decide who was a citizen and who could vote. Most states allowed only white, Protestant men who owned property to vote. It also outlined a Congress with representation not based on population - each state would have 1 vote in Congress. It was ratified by all 13 states on March 1, 1781.
- **Voting Expands for Few (1821-1830)**
 - States removed property requirements for white men. Most white men could vote, but women, Black men, and Native Americans were still mostly excluded.
- **15th Amendment (ratified in 1870)**
 - Voting could no longer be denied because of race. Black men and Mexican Americans gained voting rights, but Native and Asian Americans were still excluded as non-citizens.
- **Chinese Exclusion Act (1875-1885)**
 - First significant law meant to restrict immigration into the U.S. People of Chinese descent were not allowed to become U.S. citizens, meaning they couldn't vote.
- **19th Amendment (ratified in 1920)**
 - Voting couldn't be denied based on sex, which meant that white women could vote in all 50 states. Black and Mexican American women had the right to vote too but faced barriers like poll taxes and literacy tests.
- **24th Amendment (ratified in 1964)**
 - Poll taxes were banned. making it free to vote and helping men and women of color in the South. Literacy tests and other unfair voting restrictions still remained until the Voting Rights Act.
- **Voting Rights Act (1965)**
 - Made it illegal to discriminate against voters based on race. States with a history of racist voting laws had to get federal approval before changing voting rules (Section 4(b)).
- **26th Amendment (ratified 1971)**
 - Lowered the voting age to 18 in all states and Washington D.C. which allowed more young people to vote.
- **Voting Rights Expand- Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act (1984)**
 - Required states to make polling places accessible for people with disabilities. States had to provide accommodations so everyone could vote.
- **Shelby County v. Holder (2013)**
 - Supreme Court ruled that Section 4(b) of the Voting Rights Act was unconstitutional because the coverage data was based on data 40 years old.
- **Presidential Election**
 - Election of the President and Vice President of the U.S. held every 4 years.
- **Midterm Election**
 - General elections where voters can vote on all 435 seats in the House of Representatives, 33/34 out of 100 seats in Senate, and 34 out of 50 states can elect their governors for 4-year terms.



What if Nobody Voted?

Overview:

Students will explore the role elected officials play in daily life and the importance of voter participation, particularly in local elections. This activity-driven lesson emphasizes the interconnectedness of government and voting.

Length:	45-50 Min.
Age Range:	6th-12th Graders

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students will...

- Understand how government impacts everyday activities through its three branches (Executive, Judicial, Legislative) and levels (Local, State, Federal).
- Learn about voter participation statistics in local elections and the importance of voting, particularly among young voters.
- Explore the consequences of low voter turnout and develop strategies to improve participation.

State Standards:

- **HG.4.4.PR** Analyze how states spatially organize governance systems, and explain the distribution and patterns of these political systems in various regions.
- **USG.2.ER** Explain the authority, organization, purposes, and responsibilities of the three branches of government as enumerated in Articles I-III in the Constitution.
- **USG.2.CC** Explain how governments in South Carolina are organized and how they function in the American constitutional government.

Materials:

- Sticky Notes
- [The Government's Role in Everyday Life](#) worksheet
- Foam matching board ([Titles of Government Officials and their Duties](#))
- Scenario cards



What if Nobody Voted?

Background Information & Important Terms/Dates:

- As mandated by the Constitution of the United States, the federal government is divided into three branches: Legislative, Executive, & Judicial. This is to ensure that no individual or group has too much power through checks and balances.
- **Legislative Branch**
 - Made up of Congress (i.e. the Senate and House of Representatives) and the special agencies and offices that provide support services to Congress. Their role includes drafting proposed laws, confirming or rejecting presidential nominations for heads of federal agencies, federal judges, and the Supreme Court, and having the authority to declare war.
- **Executive Branch**
 - Made up of the President, Vice president, the Cabinet, and other executive departments. The President is the head of state, leader of the executive branch, and commander in chief of the U.S. armed forces. The Vice president supports the president and presides over the U.S. Senate, as well as breaks ties in Senate votes. If the president is unable to serve, the vice president becomes president. Cabinet members serve as advisors to the president. They include the VP, heads of executive departments and other high-ranking government officials.
- **Judicial Branch**
 - This branch includes the Supreme Court and other federal courts. It evaluates laws by interpreting the meaning of laws, applying laws to individual cases, as well as deciding if laws violate the Constitution.
- **Checks and Balances**
 - This is the system that refers to the ability of each federal branch to respond to the actions of other branches. This means that each branch can change some acts of the other branches. The president can veto legislation created by Congress. They also nominate heads of federal agencies and high court appointees. Congress can confirm or reject the president's nominees and can also remove the president from office in exceptional circumstances. The Justices of the Supreme Court, who are nominated by the president and confirmed by the Senate, can overturn unconstitutional laws.
- **State Government**
 - All state governments are modeled after the federal government and also consists of legislative, executive, and judicial branches- they also have their own constitutions. The executive branch is made up of the Governor and the Lieutenant Governor (i.e. an elected official who presides over the state Senate). The judicial branch is made up of the judicial department (i.e. trial courts, appeal courts, and the SC Supreme Court). The Legislative branch is made up of the House of Representatives and State Senate.
- **Local Government**
 - Typically includes two tiers: counties and municipalities (i.e. cities/towns). Must be granted power by the state. Generally, local governments regulate the following areas that affect citizens on a daily basis: public health, safety, welfare, fire & police protection, emergency medical services, infrastructure, parks & rec, and public education.



What are Free & Fair Elections?

Overview:

Students will explore the meaning of a “free and fair” election and be provided with an opportunity to design their own election rules.

Length:	50 Min.
Age Range:	6th-12th Graders

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students will...

- Understand the concept of a “free and fair” election and what it entails.
- Analyze and evaluate standards that make elections democratic and equitable.
- Develop critical thinking by designing fair election rules in small groups.
- Engage in civil discourse through discussion and debate on fair election practices.
- Recognize the importance of voter turnout and civic responsibility, especially among youth.

State Standard(s):

- **USG.3.IP** Explain how the electoral process works in federal elections and the effects those elections have on U.S. government.

Materials:

- [Election Standards](#) Worksheet
- [Create Your Own Election Rules](#) Worksheet



What are Free & Fair Elections?

Background Information & Important Terms/Dates:

- **Accessibility**
 - the quality of being able to be reached. It ensures that all people, regardless of ability, can interact with information or services we provide.
- **Accessible Voting**
 - Voters with a disability have the right to vote privately and independently at an accessible voting location, on an accessible voting system. There are four federal laws that protect the rights of disabled/elderly voters:
 - Voting Rights Act of 1965
 - Any voter requiring assistance may receive it from a person of their choice, with a few exceptions (employer, union, or someone acting for them).
 - Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act of 1984
 - Requires physical access to polling places used in federal elections. The law also requires states to make registration and voting aids accessible.
 - Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)
 - Prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in the private and government sectors.
 - Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA)
 - Requires jurisdictions responsible for conducting federal elections to provide at least one accessible voting system for individuals with disabilities at each polling place in federal elections. The voting systems must include nonvisual accessibility for the blind and visually impaired while providing the same opportunity for privacy and independence as other voters.
 - In Charleston County, each polling place also has accessibility menus that have a variety of resources/materials that make the voting process easier for those who opt to use them.
- **Election**
 - A formal/organized choice made by votes for a political office or other position.
- **Equitable**
 - Fair and impartial.
- **Democratic Republic**
 - A form of government that operates on the principles adopted from a republic and a democracy. This is the kind of government the United States has.
 - Democracy- A system of government by the whole population or all eligible members of a state, typically through elected representatives.
 - Republic- A state in which supreme power is held by the people and their elected representatives, and which has an elected or nominated president rather than a monarch.
- **Free & Fair Elections**
 - A free election is one in which all citizens are able to vote for the candidate of their choice without any barriers or coercion (i.e. poll taxes, literacy tests, or bullying/violence). While a fair election is one in which all votes have equal power and are counted accurately.



Voting Rights Around the World

Overview:

Students will explore voting systems worldwide, comparing them to the U.S. election process. The activity highlights how elections function in different democracies and emphasizes the unique aspects of the U.S. system.

Length:	50 Min.
Age Range:	6th-12th Graders

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students will...

- Know how voting rights and systems vary worldwide.
- Be able to identify key features of the U.S. election system.
- Be able to compare similarities and differences between voting practices in various countries.

State Standards:

- **6.2.CO:** Compare the political systems within world civilizations.
- **MWH.5.P** Summarize the interconnections between the United States and the world community through major cultural, economic, and political changes.

Materials:

- [Country Cards](#) (e.g., Australia, Germany, India, South Korea) with information about their voting systems, turnout, and eligibility.
- [U.S. Election Overview Card](#) (with simplified details about our system, e.g., voting age, registration, voluntary voting, voting methods, election frequency, voter turnout for federal elections).
- [Venn Diagram Templates](#) (laminated for reuse).
- Map of the world (optional, for visual reference).

Voting Rights Around the World

Background Information & Important Terms/Dates:

- **Absolute Majority Voting System**
 - A candidate must get more than half of all the votes to win the election- at least 50% plus one.
- **Caste**
 - A system in India that divide people into social groups based on birth. Each group had its own rules, jobs, and place in society. Although caste discrimination is now illegal, the system still affects some people's lives today.
- **Compulsory**
 - Something you have to do. It's not a choice. For example, if voting is compulsory, it means you're required by law to vote, as long as you meet eligibility requirements.
- **Constituency**
 - A body of voters in a specified area who elect a representative to a legislative body.
- **Electoral College Voting System**
 - People vote for electors who vote for the president. Each state gets a different number of electors based on its population. A candidate needs at least 270 out of 538 votes to win.
- **First-Past-The-Post Voting System**
 - The country is divided into areas called constituencies, and the candidate who gets the most votes in each constituency wins- even if they don't get more than half the votes total.
- **Mixed Member Proportional Representation Voting System**
 - Voters get two votes: one for a local candidate and one for a political party.
- **Parallel Voting System**
 - Voters cast two votes: one for a candidate in their local district (who wins by getting the most votes), and one for a political party in a larger region (where seats are given based on the percentage of votes the party receives).
- **Party**
 - A group of people who share similar ideas about how the government should work and what laws should be made. They work together to win elections and lead the government.
- **Parliament**
 - The part of government that makes laws. It's usually made up of elected representatives and can have one or two parts, like an upper and lower house.
- **Preferential Voting System**
 - Voters rank candidates in order of preference. If no one gets more than half the votes (a majority), the votes are counted again using next choices until one candidate has a majority and wins.
- **Suffrage**
 - The right to vote in elections.



Campaign Strategy Challenge

Overview:

Students will analyze candidate and district profiles to develop a campaign strategy. They will allocate a set budget to different campaign tactics and present their reasoning. The goal is to maximize their candidate's votes using strategic decision-making.

Length:	50 Min.
Age Range:	6th-12th Graders

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students will...

- Understand different campaign methods/strategies used by candidates.
- Be able to analyze a campaign budget.

State Standards:

- **USG.3.CC** Investigate the role of linkage institutions (i.e. media, interest groups, political parties), and explain how they shape public agenda and opinion.
- **EPF.4.IP** Investigate contemporary economic policies, and analyze how political ideologies influenced their implementation.

Materials:

- [Laminated Candidate Profiles](#) (one per group)
- [Laminated District Profiles](#) (one per group)
- [Campaign Tactic Cost Sheet](#) (one per group)
- Dry-erase markers
- Answer Key for facilitators



Campaign Strategy Challenge

Background Information & Important Terms/Dates:

- **Budget**
 - A detailed financial plan that helps people know how much money they have, as well as allow them to estimate and keep track of how they want to spend that money.
- **Campaign Strategy**
 - Comprehensive plan devised by a political candidate or party to achieve electoral success. Strategies have to consider various elements in order to be effective. This includes targeting a specific audience/voter demographic, determining messages and themes, managing resources effectively, and deciding on the best methods for outreach and engagement. An effective campaign strategy can significantly influence the outcome of an election. Some outreach tactics include:
 - Door-to-door canvassing- Volunteers visit voters at home. Good for strong local connections.
 - Social media ads- Targeted messaging through platforms like Instagram and TikTok. Effective for younger audiences.
 - Town hall meetings- Candidates interact directly with voters and answer questions.
 - TV ads- Expensive but broad reach. Works well in urban areas.
 - Phone banking- Calling potential voters to discuss the candidate's platform.
 - Mailers & flyers- Printed materials sent to homes.
- **Fundraising**
 - The process of gathering financial resources necessary to support campaign activities and outreach efforts.
- **Messaging**
 - Specific themes, slogans, and narratives that a campaign uses to communicate its values and positions to voters.
- **Voting District**
 - A geographical area of a political unit (i.e. country, state, province, city, etc.) that is created to provide the voters therein with representation in a legislature or other polity.
- **Voter Targeting**
 - The practice of identifying and focusing on specific groups of voters who are more likely to support a candidate's campaign.



How Does the Electoral College Work?

Overview:

Students will gain a hands-on understanding of the voting process by designing campaign posters and participating in an Electoral College-style class vote. Through creativity and collaboration, students will learn the mechanics of electoral votes, state-by-state influence, and the role of campaigns in elections.

Length:	45-50 Min.
Age Range:	6th-12th Graders

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students will...

- How the Electoral College works and its role in presidential elections.
- The concept of electoral votes and how state populations influence vote allocation.
- The significance of campaigns and campaign materials in swaying voter decisions.
- The importance of creativity and teamwork in engaging audiences.

State Standards:

- **USG.3.IP** Explain how the electoral process works in federal elections and the effects those elections have on U.S. government.

Materials:

- Poster paper
- Markers, colored, pencils, crayons,
- Examples of campaign posters
- [Electoral Vote Cards](#) for each state
- Prizes for winner



How Does the Electoral College Work?

Background Information & Important Terms/Dates:

- **Congressional District Method**
 - A system used for allocating electoral votes in the U.S. where two electoral votes go to the statewide popular vote winner, and one electoral vote is awarded the popular vote winner in each Congressional district. Only Maine and Nebraska use this method.
- **Electoral College Voting System**
 - People vote for electors who vote for the president. Each state gets as many electors as it has members of Congress (House and Senate). A candidate needs at least 270 out of 538 votes to win.

DISTRIBUTION OF ELECTORAL VOTES

AL: 9	FL: 30	LA: 8	NE: 5	OK: 7	VT: 3
AK: 3	GA: 16	ME: 4	NV: 6	OR: 8	VA: 13
AZ: 10	HI: 4	MD: 10	NH: 4	PA: 19	WA: 12
AR: 6	ID: 4	MA: 11	NJ: 14	RI: 4	WV: 4
CA: 54	IL: 19	MI: 15	NM: 5	SC: 9	WI: 10
CO: 10	IN: 11	MN: 10	NY: 28	SD: 3	WY: 3
CT: 7	IA: 6	MS: 6	NC: 16	TN: 11	
DE: 3	KS: 6	MO: 10	ND: 3	TX: 40	
DC: 3	KY: 8	MT: 4	OH: 17	UT: 6	

Based on 2024 Presidential Election

- This system is only used for Presidential elections.
- The process of using electors comes from the Constitution and was created to work as a compromise between a popular vote by citizens and a vote in Congress (Article II, Section 1, Clauses 2 and 3.)
- 48 out of 50 States award Electoral votes on a winner-takes-all basis (as does D.C.). For example, all 54 of California's electoral votes go to the winner of the state election, even if the margin of victory is 50.1% to 49.9%.
- A projected winner is typically announced on election night in November; however, the Electoral College vote does not take place until mid-December.
- **Plurality Voting System**
 - Voting system where each voter is allowed to vote for only one candidate, and the candidate who polls more votes than any other candidate is elected.
- **Popular Vote**
 - This is determined by the candidate who received the largest total number of votes from all of the American citizens that cast their vote.
 - There are five occurrences where a Presidential candidate has lost the popular vote but won the election: John Adams (1824), Rutherford Hayes (1876), Benjamin Harrison (1888), George W. Bush (2000), and Donald Trump (2016).
- **Winner Takes-All System**
 - An electoral system in which a single political party/ group can win all the seats/representation in an election by securing the plurality of votes.



Additional Resources

- **Accessible Voting in SC**
 - <https://accessiblevoting.net/region/south-carolina>
- **Charleston Voting Districts Map**
 - <https://chascogis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=a0e18ae6377d4b5d9f54872fb67d2021>
- **CHS Votes**
 - <https://vote.charlestoncounty.org/>
- **Distribution of Electoral Votes**
 - <https://www.archives.gov/electoral-college/allocation>
- **Election Integrity in SC**
 - https://scvotes.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/scec_11854_19_Security-Booklet_Jan2024_WEB_01.pdf
- **Poll Managers Handbook (2024 Ed.)**
 - https://scvotes.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/scec_11854_24_2024-Poll-Managers-Handbook_Web_05.pdf
- **SC Code of Laws: Title 7**
 - <https://www.scstatehouse.gov/code/title7.php>
- **South Carolina Election Commission**
 - <https://www.scvotes.gov/>
- **SC Election Law Changes**
 - <https://scvotes.gov/resources/election-law-changes/>
- **SC Legislature Search**
 - <https://www.scstatehouse.gov/legislatorssearch.php>
- **Voting History Timeline**
 - <https://wcl.american.libguides.com/voting/history/timeline>

