

**Additional Resources**



Voting is an essential part of democracy. It is every American citizen's fundamental right – and responsibility – to voice their opinion and take part in how their government works. By voting, people help determine who will represent them and govern their country.

Voting rights have come a long way. Only white males who owned property participated in the first presidential election in 1789. However, after a long struggle for equal rights, today African-Americans, women, and 18-year-old citizens are able to vote and fully participate in government. Nevertheless, challenges remain. In recent presidential elections only about half of the voting population actually voted.

## Voting Facts and Myths

1. You must provide a legitimate reason for requesting an absentee ballot.
2. Absentee ballots and early votes are only counted if the election is close.
3. If there is a discrepancy when voting you may request and cast a provisional ballot.
4. You must vote in the precinct where you live.
5. You can't vote if the address on your ID doesn't match the address on the voter roll.
6. You can't wear campaign buttons, hats, or shirts to the polling site on Election Day.
7. If your family's house is in foreclosure you can't vote.
8. You will be arrested at the polls if you owe back taxes or have an arrest warrant.
9. Election workers get paid.
10. It takes time and money to vote.

## Answers to Learning Activities

### Voting Facts and Myths

1. MYTH – Florida and many other states now have “no fault” absentee ballots.
2. MYTH – All votes are counted.
3. FACT – You have the right to cast a provisional ballot (which will be verified).
4. FACT – Your voter ID card will list your precinct.
5. MYTH – You are still able to vote but must notify election officials of your address.
6. MYTH – Wear what you want but you can’t interfere with the voting process.
7. MYTH – As long as you still reside in the state you can vote.
8. MYTH – Voter rolls do not include any data other than your contact information.
9. FACT – Many communities offer an attractive paycheck for being a poll worker.
10. MYTH – Voting is free and typically takes only a few minutes.

## Election Day Tips

1. In Palm Beach County, the polls are open from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Anyone in line by 7:00 p.m. may still vote.
2. The lines are usually longest from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and again at noon.
3. Know where your precinct is located. On Election Day you must vote in your designated precinct.
4. To locate your precinct, look on your voter information card. The precinct will be near your home. The Palm Beach County Supervisor of Elections website ([www.pbcelections.org](http://www.pbcelections.org)) has information to help you find the precinct.
5. There are often proposed amendments to Florida's Constitution on the ballot. The language is confusing so voters should read the amendments in advance.
6. Bring a valid ID (such as a driver's license or state ID card) to the polls.
7. If there are discrepancies about your address or registration, you may request a provisional ballot.
8. If you observe voting irregularities you can report them to the county election office, the voting official at the polls, or call the U.S. Department of Justice (800-253-3931) or the non-partisan group Election Protection ([www.866ourvote.org](http://www.866ourvote.org)).
9. Bring along reading material in the event the lines are long at the polls. Although, it usually only takes a few minutes to vote.
10. Enjoy being a part of the process during this important election... but don't try to take photos inside the voting site, as it is not permitted.

## REGISTERING TO VOTE

In order to vote, you must complete a voter registration application, which can be found online at the office of your county's Supervisor of Elections or at many government institutions. In Florida, the list of registered voters closes on the 29<sup>th</sup> day before each election and will remain closed until after that election. Therefore, in order to vote you must register at least 29 days before an election. You must also vote in the precinct where you live. This information can be found on the Supervisor of Elections' website and will appear on your voter registration card. Polls in Florida are open from 7:00a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Election Day.

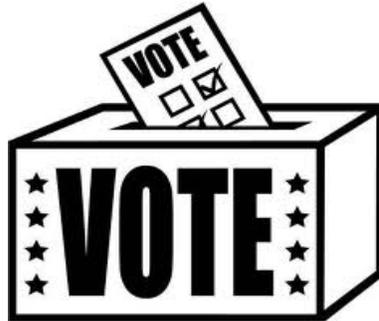
**Register  
to VOTE**

To Register You Must:

- Be a U.S. citizen
- Be a Florida resident
- Be 18 years old (you may pre-register if you are 17)
- Not claim the right to vote in any other county or state
- Not now be adjudicated mentally incapacitated with respect to voting in Florida or any other state
- Not have been convicted of a felony without your civil rights having been restored pursuant to law
- Submit your Florida driver's license number or Florida identification card number (if you do not have either of these you must provide your Social Security number)

Once your Voter Registration Application has been processed, you will be mailed a Voter Registration Identification Card, which will have the location of your voting precinct listed. Florida law requires that you bring a photo ID with signature when you go to the polls to vote. Acceptable forms of ID are: Florida driver's license, Florida identification card, U.S. passport, employment badges, military ID cards, and so on.

If you are out of the county, unable to physically go to the polls, or simply wish to vote in the convenience of your home, you may request an Absentee Ballot to be mailed to you. When requesting an Absentee Ballot, you must provide your name, address, date of birth, and signature. The ballot must be submitted by 7:00 p.m. on Election Day and is not accepted at any poll location.



Susan Bucher, Supervisor of Elections  
Palm Beach County Elections Office  
240 South Military Trail  
West Palm Beach, FL 33415  
Ph. 561-656-6200  
Web: [www.pbcelections.org](http://www.pbcelections.org)

## Ballots and Referenda

Ballots can appear complicated and confusing. However, there are only a few basic components to a ballot and only a few types of voting systems used.

All state constitutions – like the U.S. *Constitution* – are meant to be living documents. As such, many ballots contain constitutional amendments on which the public may vote. If approved by the voters, those amendments will be added to the state constitution.

Citizens are permitted to get an amendment or referendum placed on the ballot by securing enough voter signatures beforehand. There are several steps involved. The first is for the individual or group seeking to propose an amendment to register with the Florida Division of Elections as a political committee. The proposed amendment must then be submitted to the Division of Elections for review to determine if it is written in proper legal format. Any petitions circulated among voters for their signature must be marked as a “Constitution Amendment Petition” and state the name of the sponsoring political committee. State law requires that the title of an amendment on a ballot be no more than 15 words long and the summary description of it not exceed 75 words.

Petitions must include the signee’s name, legal address, date of birth, voter registration number, signature, and date of the signature. Only one voter/signature per page is permitted. Once the petition forms are completed they must be submitted to the Supervisor of Elections in the county where the signee resides along with a fee (approximately 10 cents per signature) to cover the cost of validating the signatures. There is a process to request a waiver of the fee, however. Petitions are due by February 1 of the year of the election. The petitions are also reviewed by the Division of Elections, State Attorney General, and the Florida Supreme Court. In order to get on the ballot, the individual or group must obtain signatures from eight percent of the votes cast in the previous election and the petitions must come from at least half the state’s congressional districts. Once the petition signatures are obtained, they are good for four years from the date signed.

## Voting Timeline

**1789** The first presidential election was held and George Washington won by a unanimous vote.

**1800** Thomas Jefferson tied Aaron Burr for the presidency; the Electoral College was inconclusive so the House of Representatives selected Jefferson after 35 tied ballots. Jefferson's Democratic-Republican Party replaced the Federalists as the ruling party until 1828.

**1804** The 12<sup>th</sup> Amendment, the first reform of the Electoral College, required distinct ballots for president and vice president.

**1824** John Quincy Adams defeated Andrew Jackson for the presidency but without the majority of the Electoral College vote (required by the Constitution to win the office), but other candidates gave their votes to Adams who won the contested race.

**1828** Andrew Jackson defeated John Quincy Adams for the presidency and established the Democratic Party.

**1830** Presidential nominating conventions replaced caucuses as a means of picking party nominees.

**1840** William Henry Harrison became the first Whig Party president.

**1860** Abraham Lincoln became the first president of the new Republican Party.  
Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified. Black males won the right to vote.

**1876** Rutherford B. Hayes failed to win the popular vote but defeated Samuel Tilden by a controversial 185-184 Electoral College margin.

**1877** Northern "Reconstruction" of the South ended and southern states denied blacks full political enfranchisement by using grandfather clauses, literacy tests, poll taxes, and outright violence (which lasted until the Civil Rights Movement and the 1965 Voting Rights Act).

**1886** The first voting machine was invented by Thomas Edison. Congress complained that it worked too fast and refused to use it! A new machine was invented in 1892 and used in Lockport, New York.

**1888** Benjamin Harrison failed to win the popular vote but defeated Grover Cleveland in the Electoral College.

**1890s** The “Progressive Era” began (and ran until 1920) and ushered in voter registration requirements, direct primaries, secret ballots, and other voting reforms.

**1913** The 17<sup>th</sup> Amendment provided for the direct election of U.S. Senators (they were picked by state legislatures).

**1920** Women won the right to vote with the passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

**1933** The 20<sup>th</sup> Amendment established noon on January 20 after an election as the start of the new president’s term (it was March 4).

**1948** Even after the citizenship Act of 1924 made Native Americans citizens of the United States, they were often not allowed to vote but finally secured this right.

**1951** The 22<sup>nd</sup> amendment limited a president to two terms in office (took effect in 1953).

**1961** The 23<sup>rd</sup> Amendment granted electoral votes to the District of Columbia.

**1964** The 24<sup>th</sup> Amendment eliminated poll taxes and other measures to deny voting rights.

**1965** Voting Right Act prohibited states from requiring literacy tests and poll taxes as preconditions to voting. African Americans and other disenfranchised individuals and groups voted in record numbers.

**1971** After youth protests over the Vietnam War, the voting age was lowered from 21 to 18 by the 26<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

**1984** Geraldine Ferraro became the first woman vice presidential nominee on a major party ticket.

**2000** People were able to vote online for the first time in Arizona's Democratic Primary Election; George W. Bush defeated Al Gore in a Controversial Presidential race where Bush lost the popular vote but won the Electoral College after a contested recount in Florida.

## *Women's Voting Rights*

**1848** Led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, women called for equal rights at the Seneca Falls Convention in New York.

**1872** Victoria Woodhull became the first woman to run for president of the United States on an equal rights third-party ticket.

**1887** Susanna Madora Salter of Argonia, Kansas was elected as the first woman mayor in the United States.

**1894** Estelle Reel Meyer was the first woman elected to a state office when she became Superintendent of Public Instruction in Wyoming.

**1912** Juliette Low founded and became the first president of the Girl Scouts USA, one of the first professional organizations for women/girls.

**1916** Jeanette Rankin of Montana was the first woman elected to Congress as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives.

**1918** Anne Martin of Montana was the first woman to run for the U.S. Senate.

**1920** The 19th Amendment was ratified giving women the right to vote in all national and state elections.

**1922** Rebecca Felton was the first female U.S. Senator when she was appointed by the governor to fill a Senate vacancy.

**1924** Nellie Tayloe Ross of Wyoming and Miriam Ferguson of Texas became the first and second women governors in the United States.

**1932** Hattie Wyatt Caraway of Arkansas became the first woman to win an election to the U.S. Senate.

**1933** Frances Perkins became the first woman appointed to a Cabinet position, serving as Franklin D. Roosevelt's Secretary of Labor.

**1944** Dorothy McElroy Vredenburg of Alabama became secretary of the Democratic National Committee, making her the first woman appointed to a leadership position of one of the two main national political parties.

**1960** Sirimavo Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka became the world's first elected woman prime minister.

**1968** Shirley Chisholm of New York was the first African American woman elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.

**1974** Ella Grasso was elected Governor of Connecticut, the first woman elected a state governor in her own right (others had been appointed or ran when their husband's governorships ended).

**1981** Sandra Day O'Connor became the first female justice on the U.S. Supreme Court.

**1984** Geraldine Ferraro was the first woman vice presidential nominee on a major party ticket (she was selected by Democratic presidential nominee Walter Mondale).

**1985** Wilma Mankiller, a Cherokee, became the first female chief of a Native American tribe.

**1988** Susan Estrich was the first woman to run a national presidential campaign (she managed the campaign of Democratic nominee Michael Dukakis).

**1997** Madeleine Albright was appointed as the first female Secretary of State (by President Bill Clinton).

**2001** Condoleezza Rice became the first woman National Security Advisor (appointed by President George W. Bush).

**2008** Hillary Rodham Clinton, a Democrat, was the first woman to nearly win the presidential nomination of a major political party.

**2008** Sarah Palin became the second female vice presidential nominee and first on a Republican ticket when she is selected by John McCain.

## ELECTIONS 101



### Primary and General Elections

A Primary Election is a preliminary election between two or more individuals in one political party. The candidate with the highest number of votes becomes the party's nominee and runs in the General Election.

A General Election is a national, state, or local election featuring nominees from the political parties. National Election Day is the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November.

### Partisan and Nonpartisan Elections

A nonpartisan election is held the same day as the primary election. The candidates do not run as representatives of any political party. A partisan election means that candidates are affiliated with a political party.

## Elected Offices

### I. Federal Government

- a. President and vice president
  - Term is four years
  - Term limit: two terms
  - Election in November; term begins in January
- b. U.S. Senate
  - Term is six years
  - Term limit: none
  - Election in November; term begins in January
- c. U.S. House of Representatives
  - Term is two years
  - Term limit: none
  - Election in November; term begins in January

### II. Florida State Government

Executive officers: governor, lieutenant governor, and three cabinet members: attorney general, chief financial officer, and commission of agriculture.

- a. Executive Officers
  - Term is four years
  - Term limit: two terms
  - Election in November; term begins in January
- b. Florida State Senate
  - Term is four years
  - Term limit: two terms
  - Election in November; term begins next day
- c. Florida House of Representatives
  - Term is two years
  - Term limit: four terms
  - Election in November; term begins next day

### III. Florida Judicial Branch

- a. Supreme Court Justices and Appellate Judges
  - Term is six years
  - Term limit: none
  - Election on Primary Day; term begins in January
- b. Circuit Court and County Court Judges
  - Term is six years
  - Term limit: none
  - Election on Primary Day; term begins in January

### IV. Florida County Government

There are 67 counties in Florida, each with seven constitutional or executive officers: clerk of circuit court, public defender, property appraiser, sheriff, state attorney, supervisor of elections, and tax collector.

- a. County commissioners
  - Term is four Years
  - Term limit: two terms
  - Election in November; term begins two weeks later
- b. County constitutional officers
  - Term is four years
  - Term limit: none
  - Nonpartisan elections on Primary Day

## The Language of Elections

**Apportionment:** The process of reallocating voters within a legislative district on account of changes in the population (also called “redistricting”).

**At-large election:** An election in which candidates for office must compete throughout the jurisdiction as a whole.

**Baker v Carr:** The 1962 Supreme Court decision giving voters the right to use the courts to rectify the mal-apportionment of legislative districts.

**Bandwagon effect:** The tendency of voters to follow the lead of the media, which declares some candidates as perceived winners and others losers.

**Black codes:** Laws passed by southern states after the Civil War that denied legal rights to newly freed slaves (also called “Jim Crow” laws).

**Boll weevils:** Conservative Democrats, mainly from the South, who often vote with the Republican Party.

**Buckley v Valeo:** the 1976 Supreme Court case that upheld limits on campaign contributions but allowed donations to candidates as a form of free speech.

**Chads:** A perforated part of a ballot; the area appearing next to a candidate’s name in a punch-card ballot that is to be punched-out by the voter.

**Closed primary:** A Primary Election restricted to only registered members of a political party.

**Convention:** A gathering of political party delegates to select candidates and set policy.

**Dixiecrat:** A member of a group of southern, segregationist Democrats who advocated state’s rights.

**Electoral College:** Representatives from each state who cast the final ballots for president.

**Exit polls:** Polls on Election Day given to voters as they are leaving the voting precincts.

**FEC:** The Federal Election Commission, created in 1975 as a result of legislation in 1971 and 1974 regulating campaigns, charged with enforcing election law.

**Frontloading:** When states select earlier dates in the presidential primary calendar in order to increase the amount of attention the state gets and the role played by the state in the election.

**Frontrunner:** A candidate leading in the polls or identified by pundits as the likely winner.

**Gerrymandering:** Designing legislative districts for political purposes in order to benefit a candidate or party.

**GOP:** The Grand Old Party or Republican Party, founded in 1856.

**Incumbent:** The candidate for office currently serving in office.

**Lame duck:** An officeholder that lost an election or is unable to serve another term but still holds power for a limited time.

**Open primary:** A primary election in which party members, independents, and members of other parties are allowed to vote.

**Platform:** A statement of a political party's positions on the issues.

**Plebiscite:** A direct vote by all the people on a certain measure.

**Primary election:** An election in which voters decide which of the candidates within a party will represent the party in the general election.

**Referendum:** A procedure whereby a legislature submits proposed legislation to the voters for approval.

**Straw poll:** An unscientific survey to gauge public opinion in a convenient manner.

**Tracking poll:** A continuous survey that enables the public or a campaign to chart rises or falls in support over time.

# PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS AND ELECTIONS



## Presidential Debates

The presidential debates are surrounded by suspense and drama, as millions of Americans tune in to watch the next leader of the free world. But do the debates influence the way we vote? Have presidential candidates always participated in debates? And, what are the keys to winning debates?

### *Debate Q&A...*

#### **Have there always been presidential debates?**

No. There were no presidential debates, as we now know them, until recently. Candidates avoided debating by claiming that such debates would diminish the image of the office. Nor did the media believe it was necessary to demand debates.

#### **Why?**

Historically, one of the reasons for not having debates was the 1934 Communication Act. This well-intentioned piece of legislation required all candidates for office be given “equal time” by the press. Accordingly, if the two major party candidates debated, all third-party candidates would have to be invited. At times, there were many third parties promoting candidates.

#### **What about the candidates themselves?**

Incumbents and frontrunners typically refused to debate their underdog challengers, reasoning that they had nothing to gain but much to lose by sharing the stage with their opponents. Now, however, a candidate would be hard-pressed to refuse to debate and would come across as looking weak if he or she did so.

#### **When was the first debate?**

The first formal debate among the party nominees in modern times was in 1960 and featured John F. Kennedy against Richard Nixon. However, there

were no General Election presidential debates in 1964, 1968, and 1972. Debates resumed in 1976 and have been held every four years since then.

**What about primary election debates?**

The Republican candidates participated in a primary debate in 1948. Thomas Dewey eventually won the Republican nomination that year but did not debate Harry Truman, the incumbent president. In 1956, the role was reversed. The Democrats had a debate in the primary race but there was no debate between Adlai Stevenson and the incumbent president, Dwight Eisenhower. In 2007 and 2008, the Democratic candidates had over 20 debates, which was a record and is the approximate number of primary debates scheduled for the Republicans in 2011 and 2012.

**When are the debates?**

There are three presidential debates and one vice presidential debate scheduled for 2012. The presidential debates will be held on October 3 at the University of Denver, October 16 at Hofstra University, and October 22 at Lynn University, and the vice presidential debate will be held at Centre College on October 11.

**What is the format of the debates?**

There are typically three presidential and one vice presidential debates. Some recent elections have featured a debate that has focused on foreign policy questions and there is usually now a town hall-style debate (which will be the second presidential debate in 2012), where audience members ask the candidates questions.

**Who determines the format and location of the debates?**

Ever since 1988, the non-profit Commission on Presidential Debates has sponsored and organized the General Election debates. Prior to 1987, the League of Women Voters assumed that role.

**Do third-party nominees participate?**

Some "minor" or third-party nominees have participated. For instance, in 1980, John Anderson debated Ronald Reagan, the Republican nominee, and in 1992 the Reform Party nominee, Ross Perot, participated in all three debates with his Democratic and Republican rivals. Likewise, Perot's vice presidential nominee, James Stockdale, participated in the vice presidential debate.

**Why don't more third-party nominees participate?**

The rules now require that, to be eligible to debate, third-party candidates must pass the threshold of 15 percent in opinion polls and must appear on the ballots in enough states to be able, hypothetically, to win the Electoral College.



*Did you know...*

**Looks matter!**

The 1960 debate between John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon was nationally televised. Interestingly, those who watched the debate on television felt that Kennedy had won; whereas, those listening on the radio gave the debate to Nixon. What explains the difference? The visual image. Kennedy wore a tailored suit and was a natural in front of the camera, coming across as calm and collected. Nixon, on the other hand, looked uncomfortable, had beard stubble, and under the hot studio lights looked pasty and sweaty.

**He said WHAT?**

President Gerald Ford uttered one of the most infamous gaffes during his 1976 debate against Jimmy Carter. In response to a question about the Cold War, Ford stated, "There is no Soviet domination of Eastern Europe, and there never will be under a Ford Administration." Of course, the statement was the exact opposite of the truth. The audience was shocked by Ford's mistake and in November he lost a very tight election.

**Saved by the zinger**

Ronald Reagan was anything but impressive in the first debate in 1984. Press coverage of the debate described the President as tired and confused. Not surprisingly, the oldest president in history was asked during the next debate whether his age was a factor. Reagan skillfully turned the question to his favor when he chuckled, "I want you to know that also I will not make age an issue of this campaign. I am not going to exploit, for political purposes, my opponent's youth and inexperience." The audience and public responded very favorably to the zinger.

**The smack down!**

George Bush's selection of Dan Quayle as his running mate in 1988 was immediately seen as a mistake. The tongue-tied Senator became a liability for Bush, especially during the vice presidential debate. During the debate, Quayle tried to quiet criticism that he was not ready for prime time, boasting "I have far more experience than many who sought the office of vice president. I have as much experience in Congress as John Kennedy

when he sought the presidency.” However, Quayle’s opponent, Lloyd Bensten, shot back, “Senator, I served with Jack Kennedy. Jack Kennedy was a friend of mine. Senator, you’re no Jack Kennedy!” A shell-shocked Quayle did not know what to say and then muttered, “That was really uncalled for, Senator.” But, Bensten pointed out, “You’re the one who was making the comparison, Senator.” The exchange proved embarrassing for Quayle.

### **Striking out**

The 1988 Democratic nominee, Michael Dukakis, despite being a very successful governor of Massachusetts, was dogged by criticism that he was an unemotional “ice man.” Dukakis missed a golden opportunity to appear passionate during the debate when he was asked a question involving the case of an African American inmate in his state who, after being paroled, went on a violent crime spree. The matter was well known, because it was used as a negative, attack ad against Dukakis during the campaign and the Governor’s opponent, Vice President George Bush, alleged that it was an example of Dukakis being “soft on crime.” So, during the debates the question was asked, “Governor, if [your wife] were raped and murdered would you favor an irrevocable death penalty for the killer?” Rather than responding with an emotional defense of his wife, which was what the public desired, Dukakis stated blandly, “No, I don’t... And I think you know that I’ve opposed the death penalty during all my life...” Dukakis offered a technically correct but technocratic answer.

## Previous Presidential Debates

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Debates</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Republican</u>
1960	4 pres. & 0 vice pres.	John F. Kennedy	Richard Nixon
1964	No debates	Lyndon B. Johnson	Barry Goldwater
1968	No debates	Hubert Humphrey	Richard Nixon
1972	No debates	George McGovern	Richard Nixon
1976	3 pres. & 1 vice pres.	Jimmy Carter	Gerald Ford
1980	2 pres. & 0 vice pres.	Jimmy Carter	Ronald Reagan
1984	2 pres. & 1 vice pres.	Walter Mondale	Ronald Reagan
1988	2 pres. & 1 vice pres.	Michael Dukakis	George Bush
1992	3 pres. & 1 vice pres.	Bill Clinton	George Bush
1996	2 pres. & 1 vice pres.	Bill Clinton	Bob Dole
2000	3 pres. & 1 vice pres.	Al Gore	George W. Bush
2004	3 pres. & 1 vice pres.	John Kerry	George W. Bush
2008	3 pres. & 1 vice pres.	Barack Obama	John McCain
2012	3 pres. & 1 vice pres.		

## National Party Conventions

### *Convention Q&A...*

#### **What is a national party convention?**

The convention is a meeting of party leaders and delegates who gather every four years to select the party's presidential nominees, establish party rules, develop a platform on the issues, and unite the party.

#### **How long have the parties been having conventions?**

Since 1832 the parties have been hosting conventions. Prior to the 1830s, presidential nominees were selected by a few party leaders and members of Congress in backroom meetings called caucuses.

#### **How do the parties pick a city for their conventions?**

A year or two before the convention date, the national parties begin raising money and accepting proposals from prospective cities. The political parties select a city based on its ability to host a convention and the strategic importance of the state in the upcoming election. Being selected offers the host city a lot of publicity and, because of the number of people who attend a convention, an economic boost as well.

#### **When are the conventions?**

The conventions are generally four days in length and occur in July, August, or September. In 2012, the Republican convention will be in Tampa in late August and the Democrats will meet in Charlotte in early September. The party controlling the White House generally gets to have its convention last.

#### **What happens at the conventions?**

A few thousand people gather to have a good time but some serious business also occurs at conventions. The delegates participate in the formal act of voting for the nominee and drafting the party's official platform on the issues. Party leaders and the presidential and vice presidential nominees (as well as their spouses) give speeches.

#### **Are they still necessary?**

Since 1972 the conventions have become largely ceremonial affairs. The suspense of the announcement of the nominee has been replaced by what are essentially scripted, four-day infomercials with a red, white, and blue balloon drop. But they still serve to unite the party, build support for the nominee, and iron out discrepancies between leaders and factions within the party.

#### **Did any surprise candidates end up winning the nominations?**

Yes. Sometimes a compromise candidate emerged to win the nomination, such as in 1860 with Abraham Lincoln, who positioned himself as an alternative to the main three candidates. More recently, Warren Harding

was selected in 1920 by party leaders who met in a hotel room to find a compromise candidate. If no candidate has a majority of the party's delegates what is called a "brokered convention" could occur.

**Any memorable moments at conventions?**

Plenty. Conventions used to feature serious debates on the main issues. For instance, the conventions of 1856 and 1860 contained debate on slavery and disunion, while the Democratic convention of 1948 was deeply divided over civil rights. Violence erupted at the Democratic convention of 1968 because of the Vietnam War. More recently, Barack Obama went from being an unknown to a party star because of his memorable keynote address at the Democrat's 2004 convention.

## Previous Convention Sites

DEMOCRATS		REPUBLICANS		
<u>Year</u>	<u>Host City</u>	<u>Nominee</u>	<u>Host City</u>	<u>Nominee</u>
1900	Kansas City	Bryan	Philadelphia	McKinley
1904	St. Louis	Parker	Chicago	Roosevelt
1908	Denver	Bryan	Chicago	Taft
1912	Baltimore	Wilson	Chicago	Taft
1916	St. Louis	Wilson	New York	Hughes
1920	San Fran.	Cox	Chicago	Harding
1924	New York	Davis	Cleveland	Coolidge
1928	Houston	Smith	Kansas City	Hoover
1932	Chicago	Roosevelt	Chicago	Hoover
1936	Philadelphia	Roosevelt	Cleveland	Landon
1940	Chicago	Roosevelt	Philadelphia	Wilkie
1944	Chicago	Roosevelt	Chicago	Dewey
1948	Philadelphia	Truman	Philadelphia	Dewey
1952	Chicago	Stevenson	Chicago	Eisenhower
1956	Chicago	Stevenson	San Fran.	Eisenhower
1960	Los Angeles	Kennedy	Chicago	Nixon
1964	Atlantic City	Johnson	San Fran.	Goldwater
1968	Chicago	Humphrey	Miami	Nixon
1972	Miami	McGovern	Miami	Nixon
1976	New York	Carter	Kansas City	Ford
1980	New York	Carter	Detroit	Reagan
1984	San Fran.	Mondale	Dallas	Reagan
1988	Atlanta	Dukakis	New Orleans	Bush
1992	New York	Clinton	Houston	Bush
1996	Chicago	Clinton	San Diego	Dole
2000	Los Angeles	Gore	Philadelphia	Bush
2004	Boston	Kerry	New York	Bush
2008	Denver	Obama	St. Paul	McCain
2012	Charlotte	Tampa		

*Did you know...***First convention**

The first national party convention was held in September of 1831 by the Anti-Mason Party.

**Television coverage**

The first telecast of a national party convention occurred when an NBC affiliate covered the 1940 Republican Convention in Philadelphia.

**Copycats**

The same city has hosted both the Democratic and Republican conventions a few times. For instance, both parties held their conventions in Chicago in 1932, 1944, and 1952, in Philadelphia in 1948, and in Miami in 1972.

**Unusual hosts**

Major cities have hosted conventions, but a few unlikely cities have hosted national conventions, including Harrisburg, Atlantic City, and St. Paul. Both host cities for 2012 are outside the normal choices.

**Deja-vu**

The same two nominees faced one another in back-to-back conventions. In 1952 and 1956, Dwight Eisenhower and Adlai Stevenson squared off. Also, the Democrats held their national convention in the same city from 1832 to 1852 (Baltimore). The Whig Party also held their convention in Baltimore from 1844 to 1860 (after holding their first convention in Harrisburg).

**If at first you don't succeed...**

John Davis did not secure the Democratic nomination in 1924 until the 103<sup>rd</sup> ballot.

## Presidential Inaugurations

The inauguration celebrates the coronation of the President of the United States and is an important part of the pageantry of American democracy, marking the transition of one government to another.

### *Inaugural Q&A...*

#### **When was the first inauguration?**

The first inauguration celebrated both the *Constitution* taking effect and George Washington's presidency. Although the *Constitution* officially commenced on March 4, 1789, a harsh winter delayed members of Congress from convening to count the balloting for president until April. Allowing General Washington ample time to travel to the event, the first inaugural did not occur until April 30, 1789.

#### **Is there a required date for the event?**

Because the *Constitution* is silent on the matter of when presidents are to be inaugurated, the date the *Constitution* took effect (March 4) was designated as inauguration day. However, Franklin D. Roosevelt was concerned about the lengthy period between the election and inauguration, especially when he took office in 1933 because of the crisis of the Great Depression. So, the inauguration was moved to noon on January 20 by constitutional amendment (the 20<sup>th</sup>), and this has been the date ever since 1937.

#### **Are inaugurations always held in Washington, DC?**

Most presidents are inaugurated in front of the Capitol Building in Washington. However, because the capital city was still under construction in 1789, George Washington was inaugurated at Federal Hall in New York City. John Adams, the second president, was inaugurated in the temporary capital in Philadelphia in 1797. Some presidents assumed office on the assassination or death of their predecessor and were thus sworn in at another location. For instance, after John F. Kennedy's assassination in 1963 in Dallas, Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson was sworn in on the flight from Dallas back to Washington.

#### **Is there a secret ceremony?**

There is no secret ceremony, despite the conspiracy theories (or so I am told!). However, if inaugural day falls on a Sunday, the president-elect takes the oath in a private ceremony that day. The public swearing-in and festivities occur the next day.

#### **Are presidents required to say the oath?**

Yes, all presidents take the oath of office, as called for in Article II of the *Constitution*. All but Teddy Roosevelt took it with their hand on a *Bible*, a custom George Washington preferred and other presidents have adopted.

Roosevelt became president in 1901 on the assassination of President William McKinley and he did not use a *Bible* in the ad hoc ceremony in Buffalo, New York.

**What is the oath?**

“I do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the office of the President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and defend the *Constitution* of the United States.”

**Can a president change the oath?**

Franklin Pierce (1853) and Herbert Hoover (1929) both used the word “affirm” in place of “swear” in their oaths, which is permissible.

**Does the outgoing president attend the new president’s inauguration?**

Most outgoing presidents attend the inauguration of the incoming president but there is nothing in the Constitution mandating this. Nearly all do out of respect for the office and peaceful transition of government. Aside from the incidents of deaths in the office, there were four notable exceptions. John Adams skipped Thomas Jefferson’s inauguration in 1801 because he was sour over his loss to his former friend. John Quincy Adams did the same thing with Andrew Jackson’s inauguration in 1829 because of the bitter tone of their campaigns. Andrew Johnson was a no-show for U.S. Grant’s 1869 inauguration, also because of bad blood between the men. Richard Nixon, who had just resigned in disgrace from the office in 1974, did not attend Gerald Ford’s inauguration.



### *Did you know...*

#### **The address**

The inaugural address, along with the actual swearing-in ceremony, is one of the highlights of the festivities. In the address, presidents typically thank their supporters, bestow blessings on the nation, call for God's help, and lay out their vision for the country. Surprisingly, most inaugural addresses have been uninspiring. Notable exceptions are Franklin D. Roosevelt's first inaugural (1933) which stated, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself" and John F. Kennedy's inaugural (1961) with its famous line, "Ask not what your country can do for you..."

#### **The greatest?**

Most historians agree that the FDR and JFK inaugurals are among the best but that Abraham Lincoln's second inaugural address might be the greatest. Even Lincoln thought it surpassed both his first inaugural address and famous Gettysburg Address. In his second inaugural, Lincoln challenged the nation to patch up the wounds of the Civil War and move forward "with malice toward none, with charity for all."

#### **Brevity is best**

The shortest inaugural address was George Washington's second which was only 135 words. Among the briefest addresses were those by Abraham Lincoln (1865) and Zachary Taylor (1849), which were 698 and 995 words, respectively. Interestingly, these two were perhaps the best and worst, respectively, in history!

#### **Long winded**

The longest inaugural address was delivered by William Henry Harrison in 1841 and was a whopping 4445 words. Ironically, Harrison, in an effort to show he was a tough frontiersman and still up for the job despite his advanced age, chose not to wear his overcoat, gloves, or hat even though the weather was bad. The new president caught pneumonia and was dead one month later.

**Hot and cold**

The coldest recorded inauguration day was a chilly 7 degrees (f) in 1985 for Ronald Reagan's second inauguration. Reagan also enjoyed the warmest day on record at a comfortable 55 degrees (f) for his first inaugural in 1981.

**Chief justice**

Presidents are typically sworn in by the Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. Upon the death of Warren G. Harding in 1923, however, officials had difficulty locating Vice President Calvin Coolidge, who was in his hometown of Plymouth Notch, Vermont. When officials arrived in the remote, sparsely populated village, Coolidge took the oath from his father, who was the town's justice of the peace. Another noteworthy moment was in 2009 when Chief Justice John Roberts botched the words to the oath.

**Somber affair**

President Franklin Pierce had lost two of his three children in infancy. When his only remaining child, Benjamin, was killed in a train wreck just prior to the inauguration of 1853, the ceremony was cloaked in mourning. Mrs. Pierce was so emotional she could not attend her husband's inaugural. The outgoing first lady, Abigail Fillmore, presided over Pierce's inaugural events but caught pneumonia during the ceremony. She died a few days later.

**Inaugural parade**

In addition to a series of inaugural balls and galas, the inaugural festivities include a parade down Pennsylvania Avenue. The first official parade was held in 1889 for Benjamin Harrison but there is a long history of ceremonies lining the roads to the White House. Thomas Jefferson decided to walk to and from his inaugural and some recent presidents, beginning with Jimmy Carter, stopped their motorcade in order to walk down Pennsylvania Avenue. Abraham Lincoln invited black citizens to walk in his inaugural parade as a gesture of support for abolition and rights.

**Poetry**

A handful of presidents have asked poets to address the inaugurations. John F. Kennedy's 1961 ceremony benefitted by the words of poet laureate Robert Frost, as did Bill Clinton's inauguration in 1993, which featured a reading by Maya Angelou. Barack Obama in 2008 had a variety of cultural performances as part of his inauguration.

**Inaugural mess**

In 1829, Andrew Jackson, a man from the frontier, opened the White House to his guests, many of whom were attired in buckskin and hailed from the frontier. Some 20,000 people crashed the party, drinking massive amounts of alcohol and wrecking the building. The new president had to flee the mansion for his safety and spent his inaugural in a hotel.

## UNDERSTANDING THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE



### An Electoral System like No Other

Every fourth November, after almost two years of campaign hype and money, millions of Americans vote for a president. Even though the results of the vote are eagerly and immediately reported by media outlets, the vote is technically only an unofficial vote. The official vote for the president comes on the first Monday after the second Wednesday in December when “electors” from the states gather in state capitals and cast their votes for president. The electors are known as the Electoral College. Confused? It is, indeed, an electoral system like no other. The Electoral College system was established in Article II of the Constitution and amended by the 12th Amendment in 1804. It needs some explaining!

When you vote for a presidential candidate you are really voting to instruct the electors from your state to cast their votes for the same candidate. For example, if you vote for the Republican nominee, you are really voting for an elector who generally is supposed to be "pledged" to vote for the same person. The nominee who wins each particular state gets all of that state’s electoral votes (except for Maine and Nebraska, which award one electoral vote per congressional district).

Each state gets a number of electors equal to its number of members in the U.S. House of Representatives plus one for each of its two U.S. Senators. So, if Florida sends 25 individuals to the U.S. House, it gets 25 House + 2 Senate votes, for a total of 27 electoral votes. (In 2012, Florida will receive two more

congressional districts/electoral votes because of reapportionment and population growth.) The District of Columbia also gets electors but cannot have more than the smallest state. So, DC gets three electors. While state laws determine how electors are chosen, they are generally selected by the political party committees within the states. Since Electoral College representation is based on congressional representation, states with larger populations get more Electoral College votes and have more influence in picking a president.

When the Electoral College meets in December after the election, each elector gets one vote. Thus, a state with eight electors would cast eight votes. There are 538 electors (435 in the House, 100 in the Senate, and 3 for DC) in total and for a president to win the Electoral College the Constitution requires that he or she receive a majority, which is 270 electoral votes.

Should none of the candidates win 270 electoral votes, the 12th Amendment specifies that the U.S. House of Representatives select the winner from among the top three vote getters. The combined representatives of each state get one vote (so Florida would cast one vote depending on which of the candidates received a majority of the votes from its electors) and a simple majority of states is required to win. This scenario has happened twice. Thomas Jefferson and John Quincy Adams were elected by the House of Representatives in 1800 and 1824, respectively.

While the state electors are typically "pledged" to vote for the candidate of the party that chose them, nothing in the *Constitution* requires them to do so. In rare instances, an elector will defect and not vote for his or her party's candidate. Such "faithless" votes rarely change the outcome of the election and laws of some states prohibit electors from voting their own preference.

Because the Electoral College is generally a "winner-take-all" system in terms of allocating each state's electoral votes, it is possible that one candidate will win the Electoral College even though he or she lost the popular vote. This has happened with Rutherford Hayes, Benjamin Harrison, and George W. Bush in 1876, 1888, and 2000, respectively.

So we will all go vote on Tuesday, November 6 and before the sun sets in California at least one of the TV networks will have declared a winner. By midnight, one of the candidates will have

probably claimed victory and another will have conceded defeat. But not until the first Monday after the second Wednesday in December will the electors really determine the next president! Why the six-week delay between the General Election and the Electoral College meetings? Back in the 1800s, it simply took that long to count the popular votes and for all the electors to travel to the state capitals. Today, the time is more likely to be used for settling any protests due to election code violations and for vote recounts.

After the controversial presidential election in 2000, just about everybody in the United States was talking about the Electoral College. In the end, of course, Gore won the popular vote (more Americans voted for him), but Bush actually won the presidency, because he was awarded the majority of the votes in the Electoral College.

## Students who make a Difference



**SADD** ([www.sadd.org](http://www.sadd.org)), which stands for Students Against Destructive Decisions (founded as Students Against Drunk Driving), make students and adults aware of the dangers behind driving drunk. They promote saving lives by making sure people do not drive drunk.

The **National Campaign to Stop Bullying** ([www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov)) and the organization **Hey UGLY** ([www.heyugly.org](http://www.heyugly.org)), along with numerous national organizations such as the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Maternal and Child Health Bureau are working to raise awareness about the problem of bullying. Likewise, a number of schools in Palm Beach County and Florida are addressing the issue.

**Students Helping Students** ([www.studentshelpingstudents.com](http://www.studentshelpingstudents.com)) is an organization started by two college graduates who shared personal insights on actual life experiences to help other students. They publish books students can read to get advice about high school and college topics such as how to choose the right college, getting money for college, and writing quality high school term papers. In addition they hold annual scholarship contests, where students write about making a difference.

The **Student Conservation Association** ([www.thesca.org](http://www.thesca.org)) donates their time and efforts to conserving natural resources. Students volunteer at national parks, forests, and other public lands to make a difference in how they are maintained for future generations. The organization also provides workshops and travel opportunities for students.

**What kids Can Do** ([whatkidscando.org](http://whatkidscando.org)) is an organization that encourages students to make a difference in their communities. They offer an array of projects and programs for kids to get involved in politics and campaigns, educational and learning projects, food banks and food kitchens, and more.

## Elections and Voting Resources

### **Civics and Voting Issues for Kids and Teens**

Campaign for Young Voters (<http://www.campaignforyoungvoters.com>)

CNN Student News (<http://www.cnn.com/studentnews>)

Kids Voting (<http://kidsvoting.org>)

Rock the Vote (<http://www.rockthevote.com>)

Time for Kids (<http://timeforkids.com>)

### **The American Presidency**

C-SPAN's American Presidents (<http://americanpresidents.org>)

The White House (<http://www.whitehouse.gov>)

### **American Politics and Voting**

League of Women Voters (<http://lwvpbc.org> or <http://thefloridavoter.org>)

Living Room Candidate (<http://thelivingroomcandidate.org>)

Politics1 (<http://www.politics1.com>)

Project Vote Smart (<http://www.votesmart.org>)