

# Teaching Elections in Washington State

Lesson plans & classroom activities



Published by the Office of the Secretary of State

Dear Educator,

Thank you for teaching our youngest Washingtonians their role in the electoral process. Democracy isn't inherited — each new generation must learn their civic rights and responsibilities — and your commitment to civics education is critical to establishing voting habits early on.

Public education was established in America to prepare future citizens for their role in our democracy. It can be challenging to demonstrate to voters of any age how elections impact their daily lives, let alone a student who has just begun learning the basics of our democratic processes.

*Teaching Elections in Washington State* is written in partnership with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. Our hope is that students will graduate with the knowledge and enthusiasm to fully participate in our communities and become lifelong voters.

In addition to this book, your students can get involved in other ways. Students of all ages can vote in our Student Mock Election held in October every year. The Mock Election is a nonpartisan civics education experience designed to teach kids the importance of voting and how to become informed voters. Students can vote on candidates and measures like they will in the future, or an alternate set of items like best dessert. Materials are available at [sos.wa.gov/mockelection](https://sos.wa.gov/mockelection). Students ages 16 or 17 may also sign up to be a Future Voter so they'll be automatically registered to vote when they become eligible. Also, 17-year-olds who will be 18 by the November General Election can vote in a Primary Election. More information is available at [sos.wa.gov/future-voter-program](https://sos.wa.gov/future-voter-program).

We applaud your contributions to helping youth make their voices heard. With your guidance, students will be ready to take their place as our state's future leaders and decision makers.

Sincerely,

Washington State Elections Division

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Olympia, WA 98504-0229

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Website: [sos.wa.gov/elections](https://sos.wa.gov/elections)

# Table of Contents

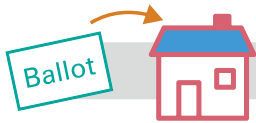
Path of the Ballot in Washington State . . . . .	2
Student Mock Election . . . . .	3
<b>OSPI Civics Assessments . . . . .</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>History of Voting in America . . . . .</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Elementary School. . . . .</b>	<b>8</b>
<i>What can we do to encourage people to vote in elections?</i>	
Who gets to vote? (45 minutes) . . . . .	9
How many people vote in presidential elections? (45 minutes) . . . . .	10
How are people encouraged to vote? (45 minutes) . . . . .	10
<b>Middle School. . . . .</b>	<b>22</b>
<i>How do Washingtonians exercise their political power?</i>	
Do Washington voters have more power than others? (60–75 minutes) . . . . .	24
What power do voters have to change laws? (60–75 minutes). . . . .	24
<b>High School. . . . .</b>	<b>40</b>
<i>Which elected official has the most impact on your day-to-day life?</i>	
What issues are important to our state’s elected officials? (45 minutes) . . . . .	43
How do voters determine credibility or accuracy of information? (45 minutes) . . . . .	44
What are a citizen’s responsibilities before and after elections? (45 minutes) . . . . .	45
<b>Additional materials:</b>	
Classroom Guide to Voter Registration . . . . .	56
Washington Elections crossword puzzle and answer key . . . . .	57
Activity page. . . . .	59
How do I register to vote in Washington? . . . . .	60
How do I vote and return my ballot? . . . . .	61
Why is my signature important? . . . . .	62
How do I register to vote as a . . . . .	63
What is different about voting in Washington? . . . . .	64
Copy-and-cut VoteWA cards . . . . .	65
Elections glossary . . . . .	66

A PDF of *Teaching Elections in Washington State* is available at [sos.wa.gov/elections/civics](https://sos.wa.gov/elections/civics)



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# Path of the Ballot in Washington State



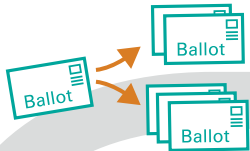
All eligible voters are sent a ballot at least 18 days before election.



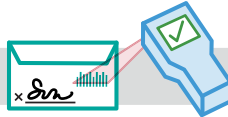
Voter places marked ballot into a secrecy sleeve or envelope.



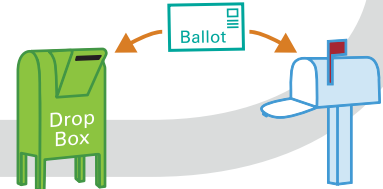
The secrecy sleeve or envelope is put in a return envelope and signed. Voter may add email or phone number in case county needs to contact them.



At processing facility, ballots are sorted into batches. An image of the voter's signature is captured for verification.



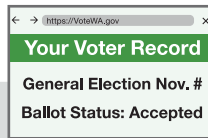
Drop boxes are regularly emptied by teams of trained election staff. Ballots are tracked from collection through processing.



Ballot has pre-paid postage and can be returned by U.S. mail or placed in an official ballot drop box. If mailed, must be postmarked by Election Day. Drop boxes are open until 8 p.m. on Election Day.



Each signature is checked by trained election staff. Voter is contacted if the signature is missing or doesn't match the voter registration record.



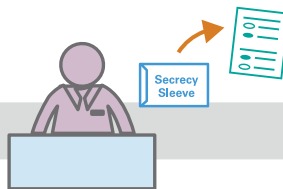
When signature is verified, ballot is marked as "Accepted" in the VoteWA system. The voter is credited for participating, ensuring that if more than one ballot is returned, only one is counted.



Voters can check their ballot status online or sign up for text notifications. Allow 3-4 days for the system to post status updates.



Ballot is reviewed for potential scanning issues like torn corners, then scanned and securely stored.



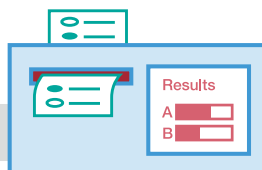
Secrecy sleeve or envelope is opened and ballot is removed for processing.



Return envelope is opened, the secrecy sleeve or envelope is removed, and the two are separated. At this point, the ballot cannot be traced back to the voter.



Scanners are not connected to any form of network or internet.




At 8 p.m. on election night, ballots that have already been scanned are tabulated and unofficial results are reported.



Ballots continue to be processed, signatures verified, and votes tabulated until the election results are officially certified.

**The election is complete, and preparations for the next election cycle begin.**



# Student Mock ELECTION

The Student Mock Election is a non-partisan, educational event that teaches kids to be informed voters. Over 500,000 students have voted in Washington’s annual Student Mock Election since 2004.

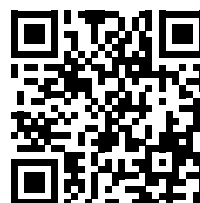
- Students vote on candidates and measures, just like they will in the future.
- Participants learn about the unique vote-by-mail elections process used in our state.
- Non-partisan and free to all public, private, tribal, and homeschool K–12 students.

### Free resources for educators:

- Teacher toolkit includes print-friendly Voters’ Pamphlet, lessons from Teaching Elections in Washington State curriculum book, posters, and coloring sheet.
- Request “I Voted” stickers for your students.

Visit [sos.wa.gov/mockelection](https://sos.wa.gov/mockelection) for more info.

Want to be notified of the next Student Mock Election?  
Scan with your smartphone to sign up.



The Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) regulates candidate and campaign reporting for state and local elections, provides reporting guidance, and enforces state campaign finance and disclosure laws.

There is a wealth of information about who donates to candidates, how much is given, and how the money is spent — all available to the public online at [pdc.wa.gov](https://pdc.wa.gov).

Here is a short history of the PDC: [bit.ly/pdc\\_history](https://bit.ly/pdc_history)

#### Public Disclosure Commission

[pdc@pdc.wa.gov](mailto:pdc@pdc.wa.gov)

[www.pdc.wa.gov](https://www.pdc.wa.gov)

Toll Free 1 (877) 601-2828

# Civics Assessments

Washington state law requires that students complete a civics assessment developed by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). Each lesson in *Teaching Elections* can be used to meet the civics assessment requirement.

## OSPI Civics and Literacy Standards

*Teaching Elections* meets state standards for social studies.

Below is a reference chart of standards covered by each grade level.

Elementary	Middle	High	
●			Social Studies 1.4.1
●			Social Studies 1.5.2
	●		Social Studies 1.6–8.1
		●	Social Studies 2.9–12.2
		●	Social Studies 4.9–12.1
●			Civics 2.5.2
	●		Civics 2.6–8.2
		●	Civics 2.9–10.1
	●		Civics 4.6–8.3
		●	Civics 4.11–12.2

The [Washington Social Studies Learning Standards](#) by the [Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction](#) are available under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#).

## Civics Graduation Requirement

[RCW 28A.230.094](#)

### *High school civics course.*

- (1) (a) Beginning with or before the 2020-21 school year, each school district that operates a high school must provide a mandatory one-half credit stand-alone course in civics for each high school student. Except as provided by (c) of this subsection, civics content and instruction embedded in other social studies courses do not satisfy the requirements of this subsection.
  - (b) Credit awarded to students who complete the civics course must be applied to course credit requirements in social studies that are required for high school graduation.
  - (c) Civics content and instruction required by this section may be embedded in social studies courses that offer students the opportunity to earn both high school and postsecondary credit.
- (2) The content of the civics course must include, but is not limited to:
    - (a) Federal, state, tribal, and local government organization and procedures;
    - (b) Rights and responsibilities of citizens addressed in the Washington state and United States Constitutions;
    - (c) Current issues addressed at each level of government;
    - (d) Electoral issues, including elections, ballot measures, initiatives, and referenda;
    - (e) The study and completion of the civics component of the federally administered naturalization test required of persons seeking to become naturalized United States citizens; and
    - (f) The importance in a free society of living the basic values and character traits specified in [RCW 28A.150.211](#).

## Considerations

As a civics instructor, you must often discuss sensitive subjects.

Here are a few ideas to consider when conducting these lessons:

- Be clear that grades are based on how well students defend their opinions. Students' opinions are never "right" or "wrong."
- Never share your own political views. Turn inquiries back on students. You might ask, "That's an interesting question; what do you think?"
- For every opinion expressed, be sure a rebuttal is given. Direct the conversation with questions like, "Is there another side to that argument?"

Talking about some issues can be tough, but it's important the next generation of voters learns to respectfully discuss the civic choices they will face as adults.

### **Lessons developed by:**

Melissa Webster,  
Everett Public Schools

Josh Parker,  
North Thurston Public Schools

Leslie Heffernan,  
Central Valley School District

With thanks to the Office of  
Superintendent of Public Instruction



Washington Office of Superintendent of  
**PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

# History of Voting in America

## Federal

**1776**

Voting is controlled by individual state legislatures. Only white male landowners over 21 years old can vote.

**1868**

14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution grants full citizenship rights, including voting, to men born or naturalized in the U.S.

**1870**

15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution ends racial barriers to voting, but many states continue practicing voter discrimination. Poll taxes, literacy tests, fraud, and intimidation still prevent many from voting.

**1920**

19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is ratified, giving women the right to vote nationwide.

**1952**

McCarran-Walter Act grants all people of Asian ancestry the right to become citizens.

**1924**

Indian Citizenship Act grants Native Americans citizenship and voting rights.

## Washington

**1910**

Washington voters amend the state Constitution, allowing women to vote and run for office.

**1912**

Washington voters amend the state Constitution, giving citizens the power to propose initiatives and referenda; the first statewide initiative in 1914 bans alcohol sales.

**1923**

Washington voters pass Initiative 40, repealing the poll tax. Poll taxes are used in many states as a way to discriminate against certain voters.



**1964**

The federal Civil Rights Act is passed to ensure that all men and women age 21 and older, regardless of race, religion, or education, have the right to vote. The 24th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is ratified, eliminating poll taxes nationwide.

**1965**

The federal Voting Rights Act suspends literacy tests. Registration and voting rights are now federally enforced.

**1971**

The 26th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution lowers the voting age to 18.

**1975**

The federal Voting Rights Act is renewed, permanently banning literacy tests nationwide. Section 203 is added, requiring translated voting materials in areas with large numbers of citizens with limited English skills.

**1984**

The federal Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act requires polling places to be accessible to people with disabilities.

**1986**

The Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) grants voting rights to United States Military and Uniformed Services, Merchant Marine, and other citizens overseas, living on bases in the United States, abroad, or aboard ship.

**2000**

The U.S. Census reveals that Washington's non-English speaking population has grown large enough that voting materials in some counties must be translated to comply with the 1975 Voting Rights Act.

**2008**

After a U.S. Supreme Court battle, Washington enacts the "Top 2 Primary" that allows voters to choose any candidate regardless of party preference.

**2011**

Washington becomes the second state in the U.S. (after Oregon) to vote entirely by mail.

**2019**

Future Voter, Same Day Registration, and Pre-paid Postage (as funded by legislature) laws go into effect.

**2022**

Law goes into effect allowing 17-year-olds to vote in a Primary Election if they will be 18 by the November General Election.

**2024**

Law goes into effect automatically registering eligible voters who apply for an Enhanced Driver's License or ID with the Department of Licensing.

# Grades 4–5

## Voter Participation

**Total time required:**  
Two to three days

### General Overview

Voting is a clear indication of a healthy democracy. This inquiry builds background knowledge on who is allowed to vote, how to register to vote, and who voted in past presidential elections. Students are asked to take a position and develop a clear argument (opinion) that answers the compelling question: *What can we do to encourage people to vote in elections?*

### Standards and Learning Targets

#### Washington State Social Studies Standards

- SSS1.4.1 Identify the concepts used in documents and sources.
- SSS1.5.2 Construct arguments using claims and evidence from multiple sources.
- C2.5.2 Explain how a democracy relies on people’s responsible participation, and draw implications for how individuals should participate.

#### Learning Targets

- Students will know and understand the qualifications for voter registration and evaluate the ease of registration.
- Students will analyze voter statistics to make predictions about how many people vote in elections.
- Students will study various ways that people are encouraged to vote and create their own product that encourages people to vote.
- Students will craft an argument that includes a claim, evidence, and reasoning and cite specific information from sources.

### Launch

Students will view a poster created by artist Melissa Chang. Share with students that the primary responsibility of a citizen is to vote! People are encouraged to vote in many ways. Ask students: *What do you notice? What does the artist draw? Who is her intended audience? Is this poster designed to encourage people to vote? Does it succeed?* Have a class discussion and introduce the compelling question.

[Launch Handout \(page 11\)](#)

### Focused Inquiry

A focused inquiry is a two to three day lesson that will have students engaging in the C3 Framework’s Inquiry Arc.

#### Compelling Question

What can we do to encourage people to vote in elections?

[Focused Inquiry \(pages 9–21\)](#)

## Focused Inquiry

In this focused inquiry, students will consider the most powerful voice that every citizen has in our democracy: voting. Students will learn who gets to vote, how people register to vote, and the outcomes: who actually winds up voting. Students will finally study some of the ways that people are encouraged to vote. Using all of this learning, students will create a piece that encourages people to vote.

### Standards

- SSS1.4.1 Identify the concepts used in documents and sources.
- SSS1.5.2 Construct arguments using claims and evidence from multiple sources.
- C2.5.2 Explain how a democracy relies on people’s responsible participation, and draw implications for how individuals should participate.

### Learning Goals

1. Students will know and understand voter eligibility and registration in Washington state.
2. Students will analyze data on past presidential election voter turnout to make connections between the number of registered voters and actual voter turnout.
3. Students will study various ways that people are encouraged to vote and create their own product that encourages people to vote.

### Compelling question:

What can we do to encourage people to vote in elections?

### Staging the question:

Distribute the [Launch Handout \(page 11\)](#)

Students will view a poster created by artist Melissa Chang. Share with students that the primary responsibility of a citizen is to vote! People are encouraged to vote in many ways. Ask students: *What do you notice? What does the artist draw? Who is her intended audience? Is this poster designed to encourage people to vote? Does it succeed?* Have a class discussion and introduce the compelling question.

### Supporting question 1:

Who gets to vote?

### Formative Performance Task

Complete [Appendix A \(page 12 and 13\)](#)

#### Notes to teacher:

- Students will read the requirements for voter eligibility (abbreviated from the Secretary of State’s website) and complete the “You Try” portion of Appendix A to test whether the descriptions would allow people to register to vote. (**Answers:** 1. Y, 2. N, 3. Y, 4. Not yet!, 5. Y)
- Print or digitally post copies of the voter registration form using the link. Ask: *what information on this form are people required to provide? Is it easy to register to vote?* Turn and talk, and then add your thinking to the bottom of Appendix A.

Featured sources:

- Source A: Voter Eligibility (edited), <https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/voter-eligibility.aspx>, Office of the Secretary of State, Public Domain.
- Source B: Washington State Voter Registration form, [https://www.sos.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2023-07/VRF\\_OSPI.pdf](https://www.sos.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2023-07/VRF_OSPI.pdf), Office of the Secretary of State, Public Domain.

## Focused Inquiry, cont'd

### Supporting question 2:

How many people vote in presidential elections?

### Formative Performance Task

Complete [Appendix B \(page 14\)](#)

Students will compare two charts: the percentage of Washington state voters in presidential elections and the percentage of Washington state voters in presidential primary elections. Students will answer: *What is the difference between the numbers of people who vote in each type of election?*

#### Notes to teacher:

- These statistics were taken from the most recent elections. Elections are ever changing, so you may need to access the site to update the data.

Featured source:

- Source C: Voter Registration and Voter Turnout in Washington, <https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/vrdb/vrdbfaq.aspx>, Office of the Secretary of State, Public Domain.

### Supporting question 3:

How are people encouraged to vote?

### Formative Performance Task

Complete [Appendix C \(pages 15–21\)](#)

Students will view a number of sources and analyze each source by describing what it says (the message) and reflecting on how it could encourage someone to vote.

Featured sources:

- Source D: Voting Buttons, Smithsonian Museum. All rights reserved. Used pursuant to fair use.
- Source E: Bumper Sticker Collection, Smithsonian Museum. All rights reserved. Used pursuant to fair use.
- Source F: Posters, Office of the Secretary of State, various artists, rights as noted.

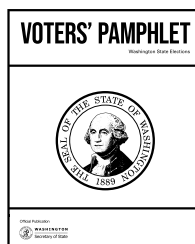
### Argument

After students analyze various sources to answer the supporting question and discuss their thinking with the class, they will write a brief response to the compelling question, ***What can we do to encourage people to vote?*** Responses should include a claim, evidence, and reasoning and cite specific information from sources, including a connection to a key idea (power of government resides within the people; democracy).

### Taking Informed Action:

Students will create an item of their choice (bumper sticker, poster, buttons, stickers, PSA, etc.) to encourage people to vote. Students should consider using any of the data and information learned in the lessons to create their items. These can be posted around the school to encourage awareness of voting. Additionally, student created items can be shared with local officials to develop deeper civic partnerships within the community.

Informational pages from the statewide Voters' Pamphlet are available at the end of this book should you wish to use them to supplement lessons.



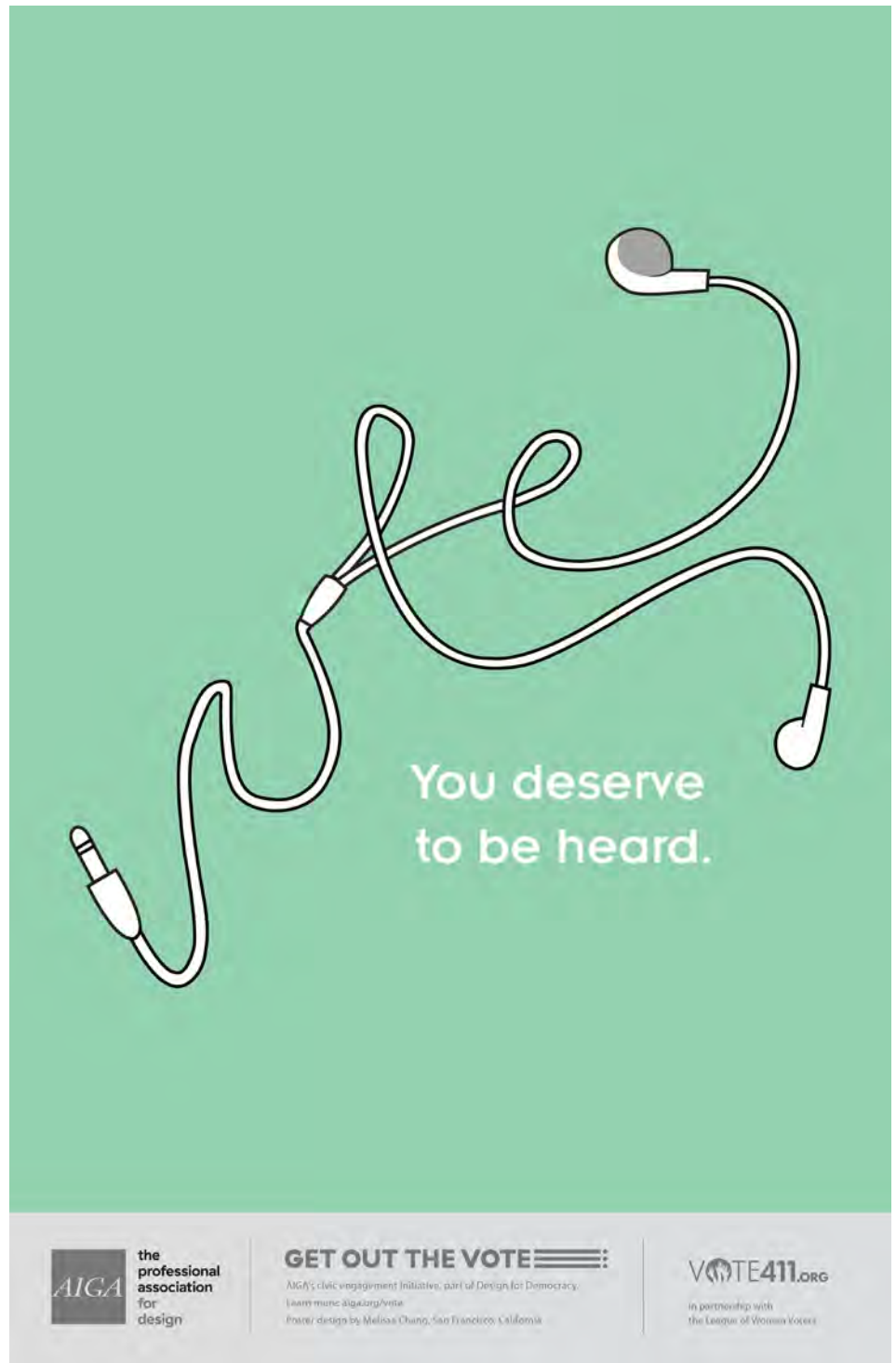
## Poster — Melissa Chang

Look at this poster. It was created in 2016 before a presidential election.

**Think:** What do you notice? What does the artist draw? Who is her intended audience? Is this poster designed to encourage people to vote? Does it succeed?

**Pair:** Discuss your answers with a partner.

**Share:** Share your new thinking with the class.



Get Out the Vote Poster copyright Melissa Chang. All rights reserved. Used with permission. Any use of this graphic without prior approval is strictly prohibited. [https://www.sos.wa.gov/assets/elections/civics/MelissaChang\\_GOTV\\_web.png](https://www.sos.wa.gov/assets/elections/civics/MelissaChang_GOTV_web.png). This work is available under a [Creative Commons Attribution License](#).

# Who gets to vote?

## Voter Eligibility

Washington state encourages every eligible person to register to vote and participate in all elections.

Source A

To vote, you must be:	This means:
A citizen of the United States;	I was born here or became a citizen by going through a process called “naturalization.”
A Washington state resident;	I have a permanent address in the state.
At least 18 years old by Election Day; and	I can sign up when I’m 16 or 17, but can’t vote until I’m 18. However, if I turn 18 by the November General Election, I can vote in a Primary Election.
Not in total confinement for a felony conviction in Washington or currently incarcerated for a federal or out-of-state felony conviction.	I can register and vote if I am not in total confinement in prison for a felony.

### You try:

1. I’m 17 but will be 18 by Election Day. Can I sign up to vote? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No
2. I live in Idaho but I work in Washington. Can I register to vote in Washington? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No
3. I was born in Mexico but became a U.S. Citizen last year. Can I register? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No
4. I was born in Canada and have applied for citizenship. Can I register? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ Not yet!
5. I was born in Omak, Washington, but I lived in Japan for five years. I moved back to Washington three months ago. Can I register? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No

## Voter Registration Form (printout on next page):

What information are people required to write in the form?  
Do you think it is easy to register? Why or why not?

**Instructions**

Use this form to register to vote or update your current registration.

Print all information clearly using a black or blue pen. Your signature will be used to verify your ballot. Mail this completed form to your county elections office (address on back).

**Deadline**

This registration will be in effect for the next election if received by the elections office at least eight days before election day. If it is within seven days of an election, register in person at a voting center. Locations are listed at [www.sos.wa.gov/elections/auditors](http://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/auditors)

**Notice**

You must be a United States citizen in order to register to vote.

If you knowingly provide false information on this voter registration form or knowingly make a false declaration about your qualifications for voter registration you will have committed a class C felony that is punishable by imprisonment for up to five years, a fine of up to ten thousand dollars, or both.

**Future Voters**

If you are at least 16 years old, use this form to sign up as a Future Voter. You'll be automatically registered to vote when you qualify. You may vote if you will be at least 18 years old by the next general election, or are at least 18 years old for special elections.

**Public Information**

Your registration name, address, gender, and year of birth will be public information when you become eligible to vote.

**Voting**

You will receive your ballot in the mail. Contact your county elections office for accessible voting options.

**Public Benefits Offices**

If you received this form from a public benefits office, where you received the form will remain confidential. Registering or declining to register will not affect the assistance provided to you by that agency.

If you believe someone interfered with your right to register, or your right to privacy in deciding whether to register, you may file a complaint with the Washington State Elections Division.

**Contact Information**

If you would like help with this form, contact the Washington State Elections Division.

**web** [www.sos.wa.gov/elections](http://www.sos.wa.gov/elections)  
**call** 1 (800) 448-4881  
**email** [elections@sos.wa.gov](mailto:elections@sos.wa.gov)  
**mail** PO Box 40229  
 Olympia, WA 98504-0229

For official use:

**Washington State Voter Registration Form**

Register online at [www.VoteWA.gov](http://www.VoteWA.gov).

**1 Personal Information**

last name first middle suffix (Sr., Jr., etc.)

date of birth (mm/dd/yyyy) gender (optional)

residential address in Washington state (cannot be a PO Box or PMB) apt/unit #

city ZIP

mailing address, if different from above apt/unit #

city state and ZIP

phone number (optional) email address (optional)

**2 Citizenship**

**I am a citizen of the United States.**

yes  no If you answered *no*, do not complete this form.

**3 Military or Overseas Status**

**I am actively serving in the military.**

Includes National Guard or Reserves, and spouses or dependents away from home due to service.

yes  no

**I currently live outside the country.**

yes  no

**4 Identification — Washington Driver License, Permit, or ID; or SSN**

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

If you do not have a Washington driver license, permit, or ID, you may use the last four digits of your Social Security number to register.

x x x - x x - 

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**5 Previous Name or Address**

This information will be used to update your registration, if applicable.

previous last name first middle

previous residential address city state and ZIP

**6 Declaration and Signature**

I declare that the facts on this voter registration form are true. I am a citizen of the United States, I am a Washington state resident, and I am at least sixteen years old. I am not disqualified from voting due to a court order, and I am not currently serving a sentence of total confinement under the jurisdiction of the department of corrections for a Washington felony conviction, and I am not currently incarcerated for a federal or out-of-state felony conviction.

sign  
here

date  
here

# How many Washington state voters vote in presidential elections?

Source C

## Washington State Voter Data

**Chart 1: Most recent presidential elections (where we choose a president):**

Election date	Number of WA registered voters	Ballots counted	Turnout
11/5/2024	5,017,620	3,961,569	78.95%
11/3/2020	4,892,871	4,116,894	84.14%
11/8/2016	4,270,270	3,363,440	78.76%
11/6/2012	3,904,959	3,172,939	81.25%
11/4/2008	3,630,118	3,071,587	84.61%

**Chart 2: Most recent presidential primary elections (where our state chooses presidential nominees):**

Election date	Number of WA registered voters	Ballots counted	Turnout
3/12/2024	4,845,207	1,708,308	35.26%
3/10/2020	4,553,013	2,256,488	49.56%
5/24/2016	4,088,029	1,421,841	34.78%
2012 Presidential Primary Cancelled			
2/19/2008	3,311,503	1,386,701	41.88%

### Answer using data from each chart:

**Chart 1:** What do you notice about the percentage of voter *turnout* in presidential elections?

**Chart 2:** What do you notice about the percentage of voter *turnout* in presidential primary elections?

**Charts 1 and 2:** What do you notice about the *number of registered voters* each year in all elections?

### Predict after analyzing the data from each chart:

What do you think the voter *turnout* will be for the next presidential election? Why?

What do you think the voter *turnout* will be for the next presidential primary? Why?

Voter Registration Data: <https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/vrdb/vrdbfaq.aspx>, Office of the Secretary of State, Public Domain.

## How are people encouraged to vote?

Source	What do you notice?	What do you wonder?	Who is the intended audience, and do you think the work is successful in getting people to vote?
<p><b>Source D:</b> <i>Voting Buttons, Smithsonian Museum</i></p>			
<p><b>Source E:</b> <i>Bumper Sticker Collection, Smithsonian Museum</i></p>			
<p><b>Source F:</b> <i>Posters; Washington Office of the Secretary of State, various artists</i></p>			



## Source E: Bumper Stickers



“Vote Bumper Sticker”, Smithsonian National Museum of American History. All rights reserved. Used pursuant to fair use. Download original image at: [https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/nmah\\_493666](https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/nmah_493666).



“Su Voto Es Su Voz Bumper Sticker” (Your Vote is Your Voice), Smithsonian National Museum of American History. All rights reserved. Used pursuant to fair use. Download original image at: [https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/nmah\\_533432](https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/nmah_533432).



“League of Women Voters Bumper Sticker”, Smithsonian National Museum of American History. All rights reserved. Used pursuant to fair use. Download original image at: [https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/nmah\\_1074322](https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/nmah_1074322).



“NAACP Vote Bumper Sticker”, Smithsonian National Museum of American History. All rights reserved. Used pursuant to fair use. Download original image at: [https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/nmah\\_1181925](https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/nmah_1181925).

Source F: Poster — Office of the Secretary of State



Register to Vote placard, 1946. Washington State Archives

Register to Vote Poster, Office of the Secretary of State records, Washington State Archives. All rights reserved. Used with permission. Any use of this graphic without prior approval is strictly prohibited. [https://www.sos.wa.gov/assets/elections/civics/AR-SOS-Register-Vote\\_1946\\_web.png](https://www.sos.wa.gov/assets/elections/civics/AR-SOS-Register-Vote_1946_web.png).

Source F: Poster — Elizabeth Hixon



Get Out the Vote Poster copyright Elizabeth Hixon. All rights reserved. Used with permission. Any use of this graphic without prior approval is strictly prohibited.  
[https://www.sos.wa.gov/assets/elections/civics/ElizabethHixon\\_GOTV\\_Hero\\_web.png](https://www.sos.wa.gov/assets/elections/civics/ElizabethHixon_GOTV_Hero_web.png).

Source F: Poster — Elizabeth Hixon



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[https://www.sos.wa.gov/assets/elections/civics/ElizabethHixon\\_GOTV\\_Type\\_web.png](https://www.sos.wa.gov/assets/elections/civics/ElizabethHixon_GOTV_Type_web.png).

## Source F: Poster — Gigi McGee



Get Out the Vote Poster copyright Gigi McGee. All rights reserved. Used with permission.  
Any use of this graphic without prior approval is strictly prohibited.  
[https://www.sos.wa.gov/assets/elections/civics/GigiMcGee\\_GOTV\\_web.png](https://www.sos.wa.gov/assets/elections/civics/GigiMcGee_GOTV_web.png).

# Grades 7–8

## Making The Rules

**Total time required:**  
Two to three days

### General Overview

If Washingtonians are dissatisfied with certain laws or feel new laws are needed, they can petition to place proposed legislation on the ballot. The process is termed "initiative" because the people can initiate new laws. Any registered voter, acting individually or on behalf of an organization, may propose legislation to create a new state law (initiative) or revise an existing state law (referendum).

### Standards and Learning Targets

#### Washington State Social Studies Standards

- SSS1.6–8.1 Analyze positions and evidence supporting an issue or an event.
- C2.6–8.2 Distinguish the structure, organization, powers, and limits of government at the local, state, and tribal levels.
- C4.6–8.3 Employ strategies for civic involvement that address a state or local issue.

#### Learning Targets

- Explain how voting happens in Washington and compare that process with other states.
- Explain ballot measures (questions on the ballot), the voters' pamphlet, and how types of propaganda are used to influence voters to support or oppose measures.
- Use argumentation and the initiative process to exercise political power to change or create laws.

### Launch

Begin this unit with a **Think-Pair-Share** that draws on student interest and prior knowledge about problems in society that they'd like to solve.

[Launch Introductory Activity \(page 26\)](#)

### Focused Inquiry

A focused inquiry is a one- to two-day lesson that will have students engaging in the C3 Framework's Inquiry Arc.

#### Compelling Question

How do Washingtonians exercise their political power?

[Focused Inquiry \(pages 23–39\)](#)

## Focused Inquiry

In this focused inquiry, students consider how Washingtonians can impact government and laws through initiatives, referenda, and voting. They learn that access to all three is facilitated by a vote-by-mail system and information provided through a voters' pamphlet. Using these understandings, students draft an initiative of their choosing that includes arguments for and against the initiative for inclusion in a voters' pamphlet.

### Standards

- SSS1.6–8.1 Analyze positions and evidence supporting an issue or an event.
- C2.6–8.2 Distinguish the structure, organization, powers, and limits of government at the local, state, and tribal levels.
- C4.6–8.3 Employ strategies for civic involvement that address a state or local issue.

### Learning Goals

1. Students will learn how voting happens in Washington and compare that process with other states.
2. Explain ballot measures (questions on the ballot), the voters' pamphlet, and how types of propaganda are used to influence voters to support or oppose measures.
3. Use argumentation and the initiative process to exercise political power to change or create laws.

---

### Compelling question:

How do Washingtonians exercise their political power?

### Staging the question:

Use [Appendix A \(page 27\)](#) for student notes.

Produce copies of the **Vocabulary Share, Share, Trade** handout ([page 28](#)) on cardstock, cut along horizontal lines, and hand each student one term.

#### Step 1: Vocabulary focused share, share, trade

- Each student gets one term, reviews and notes, pairs and teaches other student, trades terms, finds new partner and repeats. Do five to seven rounds (depending on how much time you spend at it), then students get into groups for Step 2.

#### Step 2: Concept Sort/Question Generation activity

- Sort terms into two categories (small groups).
- Draft one question you wonder for each category.
- Share out questions with class.

## Focused Inquiry, cont'd

### Supporting question 1:

Do Washington voters have more power than voters in other states?

### Formative Performance Task

Complete [Appendix B \(pages 29–33\)](#)

#### **Notes to teacher:**

- Direct Students to use Appendix B for Supporting Question 1 to analyze sources 1A, 1B, 1C, and 1D with the lens of what they tell us about voting in WA and in other states and take notes.
- After analyzing and taking notes on all four sources, students should complete the reflection section of the appendix with a focus on the facts and sources that support the ranking they gave Washington.

#### Featured sources:

- 1A: [Vote-By-Mail blog post](#) and [Vote-By-Mail Fact Sheet](#), Office of the Secretary of State, Public Domain.
- 1B: [Voter Wait time map](#), MIT Election Lab. All rights reserved. Used pursuant to fair use.
- 1C: [Ease of Vote Study Visuals](#), Northern Illinois University. All rights reserved. Used pursuant to fair use.
- 1D: [How to Vote! video](#), League of Women Voters. All rights reserved. Used pursuant to fair use.

### Supporting question 2:

What power do voters have to change laws in Washington?

### Formative Performance Task

Complete [Appendix C \(pages 34–38\)](#)

#### **Notes to teacher:**

- Direct Students to use Appendix C for Supporting Question 2 to analyze sources 2A and 2B to understand how initiatives and referenda change laws and are impacted by voters in Washington.
- After getting a baseline understanding of ballot measures, students should use the "7 Types of Propaganda" (2C) that are used to convince people of things to analyze arguments for and against a recent initiative regarding limiting taxation of grocery products (2D). These notes are also completed on Appendix C.

#### Featured sources:

- 2A: [Washington Constitution, Art 2, Sec 1, Am 7](#), Public Domain.
- 2B: Ballot Measures Info Sheet, Office of the Secretary of State, Public Domain.
- 2C: [7 Types of Propaganda](#), Erin Wing. All rights reserved. Used pursuant to fair use.
- 2D: [Washington 2018 Voters' Pamphlet](#), Initiative 1634, Argument For and Argument Against, Office of the Secretary of State, p. 20, Public Domain.

## Focused Inquiry, cont'd

### Argument

After students analyze various sources to answer the supporting questions and discuss their thinking with the class, they get to design an initiative and draft arguments for and arguments against for the voters' pamphlet. Responses should include a claim, evidence, and reasoning for each side as seen in the grocery tax example (students may use the template provided on [page 39](#)).

#### **Note to teacher:**

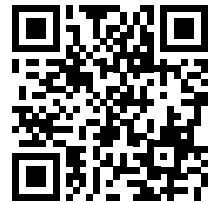
This could be extended into a full simulation in which students draft an initiative, collect signatures from peers who support it being on the ballot (how many needed could be based on the percentage of students in the school. Initiatives require 8% the number of votes cast in the last governor's election), create the arguments as assigned, and then carry out a vote.

### Taking Informed Action:

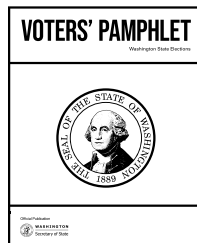
**Option 1:** Analyze current initiative proposals, have a conversation with parents or other voting adult about their opinions and reasons for them. Interview and report back to class.

**Option 2:** Participate in the Secretary of State's Student Mock Election. Content available at [sos.wa.gov/mockelection](https://sos.wa.gov/mockelection).

Want to be notified of the next Student Mock Election? Scan with your smartphone camera to sign up.



Informational pages from the statewide Voters' Pamphlet are available at the end of this book should you wish to use them to supplement lessons.



## Launch: Introductory Activity

Begin this unit with a **Think-Pair-Share** that draws on student interest and prior knowledge related to content.

**Think: (Ask students)** What problem would you like to solve in our community, city, or state? What do you know about the problem and possible ways it could be solved?

*Students may need prompting with possible examples: pollution, homelessness, plastic pollution, big class sizes, cost of medical care, family problems, etc.*

**Pair: (Instruct students)** Talk about the problem you have chosen and what you know about it with a partner. Be encouraging and attentive as your partner shares. Ask questions or offer ideas. Each partner gets two minutes.

**Share: (For teacher)** Elicit volunteers to share problems they'd like to solve or that they heard from partners. List on board and discuss for up to 15 minutes if student interest is piqued. Remember to keep discussions from being politically driven. When appropriate, transition to an intro to this unit: *We will learn and then exercise some powers Washingtonians have for using government as a tool to solve problems.*

## How do Washingtonians exercise their political power?

Term	Notes
Vote-By-Mail	
Voter Registration	
Ballot	
Propaganda	
Ballot Measure	
Initiative	
Referendum	
Election	

Small group: Organize vocabulary terms into two categories, name the categories, and write a question you wonder related to each.

Category	Terms	Question

# Vocab Share-Share-Trade handout (for use with Compelling Question)

**Cut out, one row per student**

	Term	Definition	Notes
1	Vote-By-Mail	System of voting in Washington in which each registered voter is mailed a ballot before every election. Ballots must be postmarked or returned by Election Day.	I understand:
2	Voter Registration	Before voting, a person who meets the requirements must first enroll. When a voter signs up to vote, their home address determines which candidates and questions are printed on their ballot.	I understand:
3	Ballot	The physical document on which the voter's choices are recorded.	I understand:
4	Propaganda	Information used to promote or argue against a particular point of view.	I understand:
5	Ballot Measure	A question that proposes a new rule or law to voters. Examples include initiatives and referenda.	I understand:
6	Initiative	The direct power of voters to enact laws through a signature petition and a vote.	I understand:
7	Referendum	The power of voters to approve or reject laws passed by the state Legislature through a signature petition and a vote.	I understand:
8	Election	Organized process where voters make selections or decisions and abide by the results.	I understand:

## Do Washington voters have more power than others?

Source	Information about voting in WA	Information about voting in other states

**Reflection:** Rank (1-10) how much power Washingtonians have when it comes to voting (10 = lots, 1 = little). Provide three facts from at least two different sources to support the ranking you gave.

**Rank:** \_\_\_\_\_

Fact	Source

## Source 1A: Vote-By-Mail Blog post and Fact Sheet

### Excerpts below, read full blog post online

“ Over the last few decades, utilization and preference for Vote-By-Mail (VBM) elections has substantially increased to the point where in 2018 general elections across the country, over 31 million voters, or 25.8% of participants, cast their ballots by mail. Four states in addition to Washington have VBM as their primary method of voting, with more bipartisan interest growing every day.\* ”

“ In 1991, the permanent absentee law was expanded to allow any voter to join the list by request. Once on the list, they would receive mailed ballots for every election. Absentee ballots grew popular because of their convenience and the opportunity they afforded voters to educate themselves on candidates and issues before marking their ballot. Over half of Washington’s voters signed up. ”

“ ...in 2011, with 38 of 39 counties moved to VBM, the Washington State Legislature enacted VBM for all elections statewide with Governor Gregoire’s signing of Senate Bill 5124, making Washington the nation’s second all VBM state behind Oregon. ”

“ Some voters miss the camaraderie and receipt of an “I Voted” sticker, but more voters appreciate being able to vote on their own schedule with the option of voting in person should they want or need assistance. ”

\*Per the National Conference of State Legislatures, 2024: Eight states and Washington, D.C., allow all elections to be conducted entirely by mail: California, Colorado, Hawaii, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Vermont, and Washington state. <https://www.ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/table-18-states-with-all-mail-elections>

Source 1A: Vote-By-Mail Blog Post, <https://www.sos.wa.gov/about-office/from-our-corner/general/paving-vote-mail-path> and Vote-By-Mail Fact Sheet (next page), [https://www.sos.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/wa\\_vbm.pdf](https://www.sos.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/wa_vbm.pdf), Office of the Secretary of State, Public Domain.

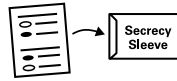
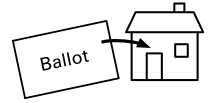
# Washington State Vote-By-Mail (VBM) Fact Sheet

## Timeline

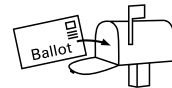
- Pre-1983:** Washington Legislature authorized “permanent absentee” ballots for voters with disabilities and those age 65+, other voters to request absentee ballot for each election in writing.
- 1983:** Special elections allowed to be conducted by mail ballot.
- 1991:** Permanent absentee law expanded to allow any voter to join the list by request; once on the list they receive ballots for every election.
- 1993:** Small precinct VBM law expanded to precincts with under 200 voters, some counties begin splitting precincts and moving to all VBM elections.
- 2005:** Washington Legislature establishes VBM as a permanent option of the election process for all elections, allowing counties to choose.
- 2011:** With 38 of 39 counties switched to VBM, Washington Legislature requires VBM statewide.

## How does VBM work?

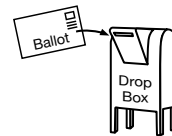
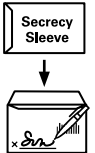
All eligible voters are sent a ballot at least 18 days before election, military and overseas up to 90 days. Mailing address can be anywhere in the world.



Marked ballot is put in a secrecy sleeve or envelope.

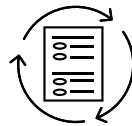


The secrecy sleeve or envelope is put in a return envelope and signed.



Ballots have pre-paid postage and are returned through the mail or at ballot drop boxes. If mailed, must be postmarked by election day. Drop boxes are open until 8 p.m. on election day.

Voters can check their ballot status online or sign up for text notifications. It may take the system 3–4 days for status updates to post.



New ballots can be requested or printed, but will suspend any previously issued ballot and still need to be signature verified.

## Benefits

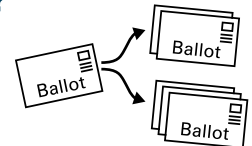
- Fewer pollworkers/sites to coordinate
- Auditable paper trail
- Every eligible registered voter receives a ballot
- Ample time to research and vote
- Higher turnout

## Challenges

- Material prep time for printing and mailing
- Requires high levels of staff expertise
- Vendor and equipment coordination (e.g., mailing houses, sorters, scanners, etc.)
- Length of time to report final results

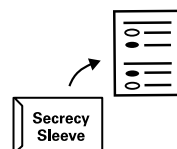
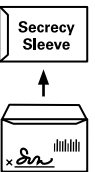
## How does a VBM ballot get processed?

Envelope is scanned and marked as “Received” in the VoteWA system, then sorted into batches.



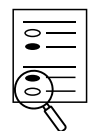
Each signature is checked by trained election staff. Voter is contacted if the signature is missing or doesn't match the voter registration record.

Return envelope is opened, the secrecy sleeve or envelope is removed, and the two are separated. At this point, the ballot cannot be traced back to the voter.



Secrecy sleeve or envelope is opened and ballot is removed for processing.

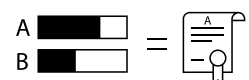
Ballot is reviewed for potential scanning issues like torn corners, then scanned and securely stored.



Scanners are not connected to any form of network or internet.



Ballots continue to be processed, signatures verified, and votes tabulated until the election results are officially certified.



## Contact Washington Office of the Secretary of State Elections Division

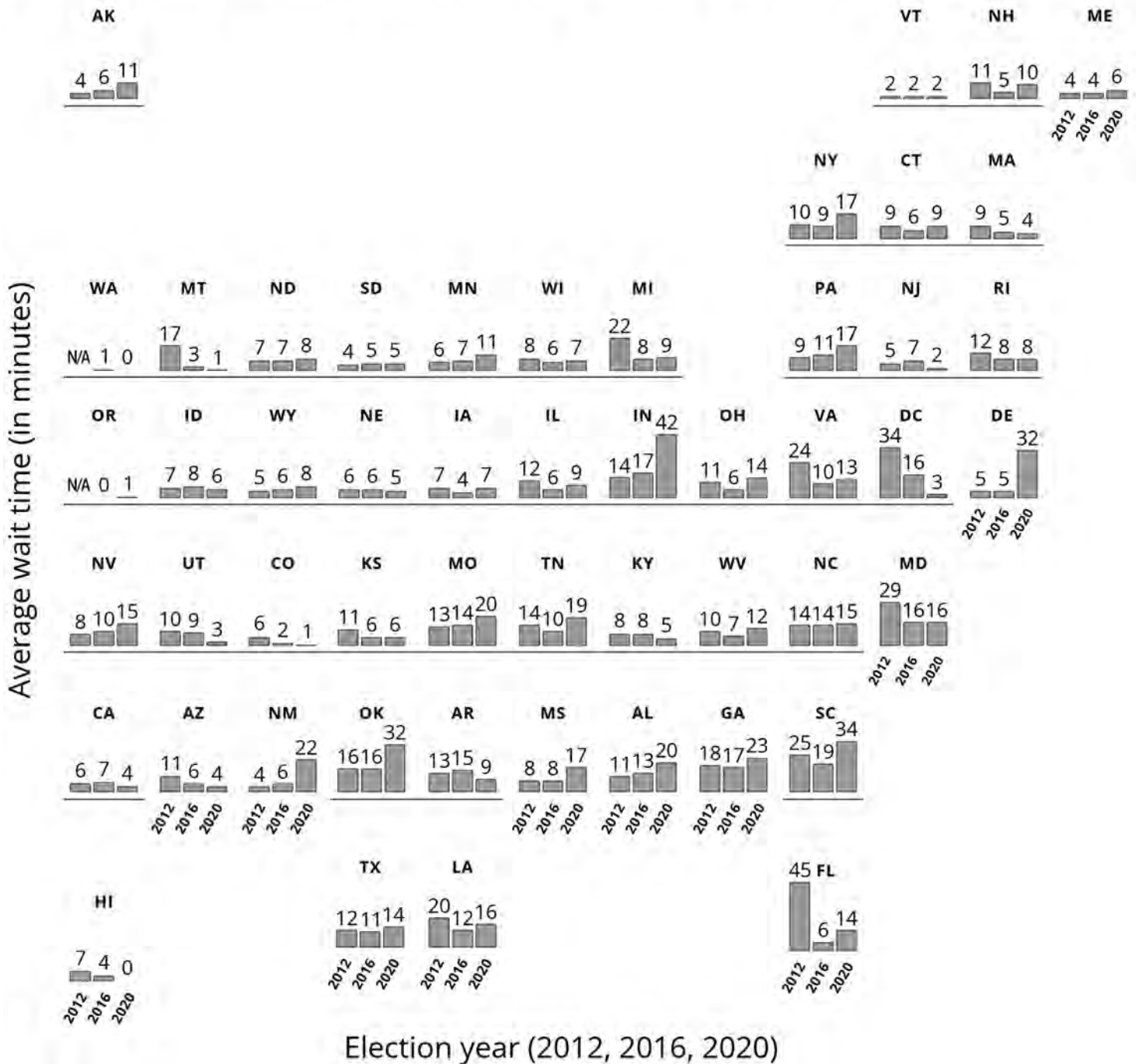
elections@sos.wa.gov  
1 (800) 448-4881  
sos.wa.gov/elections



**WASHINGTON**  
Secretary of State  
Elections Division

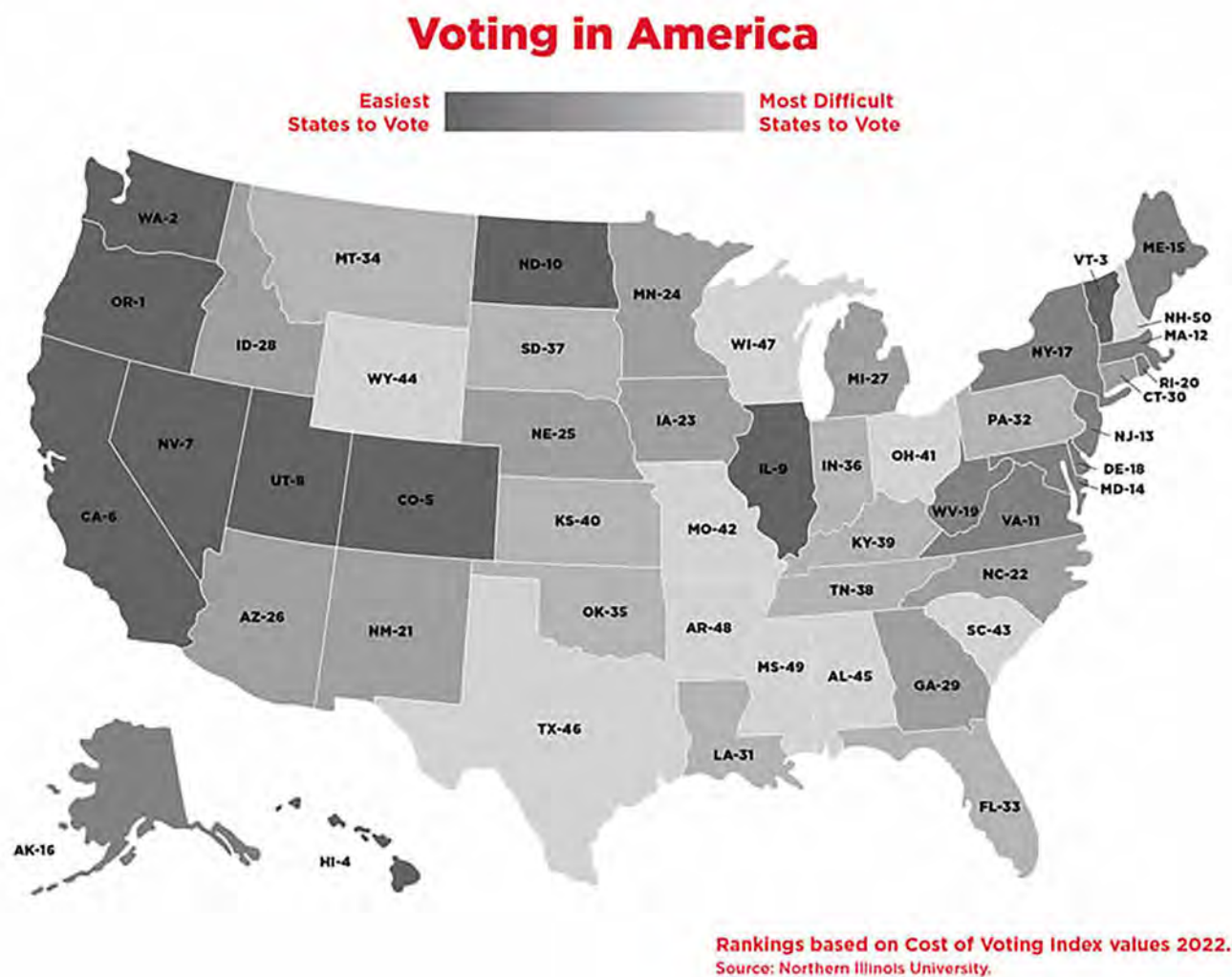
# Source 1B: Voter Wait Time Map

## 2012-2020 General Election Voting Wait Times by State



Source 1B: General Election Voter Wait Time By State, information collected from <https://elections.mit.edu/#/data/map>, MIT Election Lab. All rights reserved. Used pursuant to fair use.

## Source 1C: Ease of Vote Study



Election laws in Washington progressed over the years, moving the state from 11th easiest to vote in 2016 to 2nd in 2020.

Source 1C: Ease of Vote Study: Northern Illinois University, <https://newsroom.niu.edu/study-states-with-all-vote-by-mail-process-make-it-easiest-on-voters/>, Northern Illinois University. All rights reserved. Used pursuant to fair use.

## Source 1D: How to Vote! video



Watch video online at  
<https://youtu.be/8IWHrjjUXJg>

Source 1D: League of Women Voters — How to Vote! video, <https://youtu.be/8IWHrjjUXJg>, League of Women Voters. All rights reserved. Used pursuant to fair use.

# What power do voters have to change laws in Washington?

## Sources 2A + B

Power	How it changes laws	How voters impact it
Initiative		
Referendum		

**Sources 2C + D:** As you read Argument For and Argument Against Initiative 1634, look for and note examples of each type of propaganda (you will not fill in every box, but try to find five examples).

Type of Propaganda	Argument For 1634	Argument Against 1634
Card Stacking		
Testimonial		
Glittering Generalities		
Transfer		
Plain Folks		
Band Wagon		
Name Calling		

## Source 2A: Washington Constitution

### “ Article II

#### Legislative Department

**Section 1 Legislative powers, where vested.** The legislative authority of the state of Washington shall be vested in the legislature, consisting of a senate and house of representatives, which shall be called the legislature of the state of Washington, but the people reserve to themselves the power to propose bills, laws, and to enact or reject the same at the polls, independent of the legislature, and also reserve power, at their own option, to approve or reject at the polls any act, item, section, or part of any bill, act, or law passed by the legislature.

”

## Source 2B: Ballot Measures Info Sheet

### What are ballot measures?

#### Initiatives and referenda are used by the people to create state laws

##### Initiative

Any registered voter may propose an initiative to create a new state law or change an existing law.

**Initiatives to the People** are proposed laws submitted directly to voters.

**Initiatives to the Legislature** are proposed laws submitted to the Legislature.

Before an **Initiative to the People** or an **Initiative to the Legislature** can appear on the ballot, the sponsor must collect...



**308,911**

**registered voters' signatures**

8% of all votes in the last Governor's race

##### Referendum

**Referendum Bills** are proposed laws the Legislature has referred to voters.

**Referendum Measures** are laws recently passed by the Legislature that voters have petitioned be referred to the ballot.

Any registered voter may petition that a law proposed by the Legislature be referred to voters before taking effect.

Before a **Referendum Measure** can appear on the ballot, the sponsor must collect...

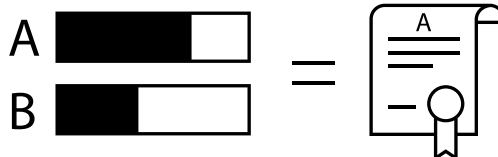


**154,455**

**registered voters' signatures**

4% of all votes in the last Governor's race

Initiatives and referenda  
**become law** with  
**more than 50%**  
of the vote




# Watch for... **7 TYPES OF PROPAGANDA**

## **1. CARD STACKING:**

 FOCUSES ON THE BEST FEATURES AND LEAVES OUT OR LIES ABOUT PROBLEMS.

## **2. TESTIMONIAL:**

 A WELL-KNOWN PERSON ENDORSES THE PRODUCT OR SERVICE.

## **3. GLITTERING GENERALITIES:**

 USES WORDS OR IDEAS THAT EVOKE AN EMOTIONAL RESPONSE.

## **4. TRANSFER:**

 RELATES A PRODUCT TO SOMEONE OR SOMETHING WE LIKE.

## **5. PLAIN FOLKS:**

 USES REGULAR PEOPLE TO SELL A PRODUCT OR A SERVICE.

## **6. BANDWAGON:**

 ASKS PEOPLE TO "JOIN THE CROWD" AND TAKE ACTION BECAUSE "EVERYONE" IS DOING IT.

## **7. NAME-CALLING:**

 CONNECTS A PERSON, PRODUCT OR IDEA TO SOMETHING NEGATIVE.

# Source 2D: Initiative 1634

Initiative Measure No.

# 1634

Initiative Measure No. 1634 concerns taxation of certain items intended for human consumption.

This measure would prohibit new or increased local taxes, fees, or assessments on raw or processed foods or beverages (with exceptions), or ingredients thereof, unless effective by January 15, 2018, or generally applicable.

Should this measure be enacted into law?

Yes

No

**Explanatory Statement . . . . . 19**

**Fiscal Impact Statement . . . . . 19**

**Arguments For and Against . . . . . 20**

## Argument for

### Yes on I-1634 protects working families, farmers, and local businesses.

I-1634 would ensure that our groceries – foods and beverages that we consume every day – are protected from any new or increased local tax, fee, or assessment.

#### Help keep groceries affordable.

The rising cost of living makes it harder for families to afford the basics. Special interest groups across the country, and here in Washington, are proposing taxes on groceries like meats, dairy and juices – basic necessities for all families. I-1634 would prevent local governments from enacting new taxes on groceries. Higher grocery prices don't hurt the wealthy elites but crush the middle class and those on fixed incomes, including the elderly.

#### Take a stand for fairness.

Washington has the most regressive tax system in the country and places a larger tax burden on the backs of middle and fixed-income families than the wealthy. Taxes on groceries make our current tax structure even more unfair for those struggling to make ends meet.

#### Bipartisan and diverse support for I-1634 from citizens, farmers, local businesses, and community organizations.

Organizations that represent Washington farmers (Washington Farm Bureau, Tree Fruit Association, State Dairy Federation), labor (Joint Council of Teamsters, International Association of Machinists, Seattle Building Trades), and business (Washington Beverage Association, Washington Food Industry Association, Washington Retail Association, Korean American Grocers Association) are united in supporting I-1634 to keep our groceries affordable.

By voting yes on I-1634, you can take a stand for affordability and fairness for Washington's working families.

#### Rebuttal of argument against

I-1634 prohibits new, local taxes on groceries, period. It does not prevent voters from raising taxes on anything else to meet local needs. *This is necessary to close a loophole allowing municipalities to tax groceries, even though the state does not.* That's why thousands of Washington workers, farmers, small businesses, and consumers support I-1634. It protects us from taxation of everyday foods and beverages which raises prices, costs jobs and hurts working families.

#### Written by

**Jeff Philipps**, Spokane civic leader, President of Rosauer Supermarkets; **April Clayton**, Farmer, Chelan/Douglas County Farm Bureau Vice President; **Haddia Abbas Nazer**, Yakima small businesswoman, Central Washington Hispanic Chamber President; **Carl Livingston**, Seattle community activist, lawyer, professor, and Pastor; **Heidi Piper Schultz**, Vancouver small businesswoman, Corwin Beverage Company Board President; **Larry Brown**, Auburn City Councilman, Aerospace Machinists 751 Legislative Director

**Contact:** (425) 214-2030; info@yestoaffordablegroceries.com; yestoaffordablegroceries.com

## Argument against

### Initiative 1634 takes away local control and gives it to the state

This confusing measure imposes a one-size-fits-all state law that takes power away from voters and hands it to the state, silencing our voice in local decision-making. Different communities have unique needs and local voters deserve a say in how revenue decisions are made. This initiative is a slippery slope toward greater state control at the expense of our cities, towns, and local communities.

### Corporate special interests are spending millions to strip away voter choices and protect profits

I-1634 has nothing to do with keeping our food affordable. In fact, tax prohibitions on everyday food items – from fruits and vegetables to milk and bread—are already reflected in voter approved state law. Instead, this measure is funded almost exclusively by the multi-billion-dollar soda industry. They are only concerned with their profits and are spending millions on this initiative—and misleading advertisements—that would undermine local control.

### Reject Initiative 1634 to prevent future erosion of local powers by special interests

I-1634 sets a dangerous precedent -- any special interest could spend millions on a misleading initiative to limit our rights as voters and our local autonomy. Voting *no* sends a clear message that we value local control and will not be fooled by the political agenda of wealthy industries or outside groups.

#### Rebuttal of argument for

State law already precludes taxes on groceries. Initiative 1634 is funded by the soda industry to take away local choices from our cities and towns. This confusing measure reduces local options while increasing state control at a time when we are struggling to fund important community programs. Stand with doctors, teachers and community advocates in saying no to this blatant corporate power grab.

#### Written by

**Mary Ann Bauman**, MD, American Heart Association; **Kate Burke**, Spokane City Council; **Jill Mangaliman**, Got Green; **Jim Krieger**, MD, MPH Healthy Food America; **Val Thomas-Matson**, Healthy King County Coalition; **Carolyn Conner**, Nutrition First

**Contact:** (360) 878-2543; vic@wahealthykidscoalition.org; www.wahealthykidscoalition.org

Source 2D: Washington 2018 Voters' Pamphlet, Initiative 1634, Argument For and Argument Against, [https://www.sos.wa.gov/assets/elections/research/2018/-ed10-all\\_low\\_res\\_9.9\\_rev.pdf](https://www.sos.wa.gov/assets/elections/research/2018/-ed10-all_low_res_9.9_rev.pdf), Office of the Secretary of State, p. 20, Public Domain.



# High School Representation/Responsibility

**Total time required:**  
Three to four days

## General Overview

Americans, at birth, are granted unalienable rights while at the same time they are charged with maintaining certain civic responsibilities. Rights are outlined in such documents as the United States Constitution. In the United States, we have a system of government called a “representative democracy” meaning we choose leaders to make decisions on our behalf. The people’s responsibilities include staying informed, analyzing information, voting in elections, and participating in resolving issues at the local, state, tribal, and national level.

---

## Standards and Learning Targets

### Washington State Social Studies Standards

- C2.9-10.1 Explain how citizens and institutions address social and political problems at the local, state, tribal, national, and international level.
- C4.11-12.2 Analyze and evaluate ways of influencing local, state, and national governments and international organizations to establish or preserve individual rights and/or promote the common good.
- SSS4.9-12.1 Evaluate multiple reasons or factors to develop a position paper or presentation.
- SSS2.9-12.2 Evaluate the validity, reliability, and credibility of sources when researching an issue or event.

### Learning Targets

- Identify who are our current elected officials and their positions on current issues.
- Evaluate ways to use media literacy strategies when assessing credibility and reliability of media sources.
- Explain the requirements and process of Future Voter sign up and the registration process to vote in elections.
- Analyze and evaluate how decisions made by our elected representatives impact us daily.
- Explain the responsibilities of being an informed citizen.
- Use argumentation, reasoning, and evidence to defend a claim.

## Overview, cont'd

### Launch

Begin this unit with a **Think-Pair-Share** that draws on student interest and prior knowledge about key issues in our state.

[Launch Handout \(pages 47–51\)](#)

Distribute the [Launch Activity \(pages 47, 50, and 51\)](#) and [Elected Offices \(pages 48 and 49\)](#) handouts to students.

- Guide students in answering the prompts on the handout with a partner.
- Encourage the students to explain their thinking with each other.

### Match activity answer key [\(page 51\)](#)

1. President: C, F, K
2. U.S. Senator: D, G, J
3. U.S. Representative: E, H, J
4. Governor: A, B, J
5. State Attorney General: A, B, J, L
6. State Supreme Court: A, B, J, M
7. State Legislator: A, B, I, J
8. County Executive: see your county
9. Mayor: see your county
10. School Board Member: see your district

### Focused Inquiry

A focused inquiry is a two- to three-day lesson that will have students engaging in the C3 Framework's Inquiry Arc.

[Focused Inquiry \(pages 42–56\)](#)

### Compelling Question

Which of your elected officials has the most impact on your day-to-day life?

## Focused Inquiry

In this focused inquiry, the compelling and supporting questions are designed to lead the students on a journey toward understanding the responsibilities of being an informed citizen, registering and voting in elections, knowing who their elected officials are and their positions on current issues, and how decisions made by elected representatives impact us on a daily basis.

### Standards

- C2.9-10.1 Explain how citizens and institutions address social and political problems at the local, state, tribal, national, and international level.
- C4.11-12.2 Analyze and evaluate ways of influencing local, state, and national governments and international organizations to establish or preserve individual rights and/or promote the common good.
- SSS4.9-12.1 Evaluate multiple reasons or factors to develop a position paper or presentation.
- SSS2.9-12.2 Evaluate the validity, reliability, and credibility of sources when researching an issue or event.

### Learning Goals

- Identify who are our current elected officials and their positions on current issues.
- Evaluate ways to use media literacy strategies when assessing credibility and reliability of media sources.
- Explain the requirements and process of Future Voter sign up and the registration process to vote in elections.
- Analyze and evaluate how decisions made by our elected representatives impact us daily.
- Explain the responsibilities of being an informed citizen.
- Use argumentation, reasoning, and evidence to defend a claim.

## Focused Inquiry, cont'd

### Compelling question:

Which of your elected officials has the most impact on your day-to-day life?

### Staging the question:

1. Drawing on student's prior knowledge, pose the following questions to the class to introduce the components of the lesson.
  - What is the definition for a representative form of government?
  - What does it mean to be an informed citizen?
  - In order to be an informed voter, how does one know what information is real and true?
  - As a future voter, how does one register to vote in Washington state?
  - What issues do you think voters in Washington state are concerned about?
2. Next, in a whole class discussion ask students to brainstorm ways voters can find out about an elected official or candidate's position on key issues.
3. Group the students in small groups for the next steps.

### Supporting question 1:

What key issues are most important to our state's current elected officials?

### Formative Performance Task

Complete [Appendix A \(page 52\)](#)

#### Notes to teacher:

- Help direct students to the websites for the state's elected officials listed on the handout or candidate's websites. Have them research key issues that the elected official has listed as important. For local government positions, have students do an online search for their local representatives. Students may need to first determine their legislative district, which is based on their residential address, by visiting <https://app.leg.wa.gov/DistrictFinder/>.

#### Featured sources:

- Washington State Governor's webpage: <https://www.governor.wa.gov/>.
- Washington State Attorney General's webpage: <https://www.atg.wa.gov/>.

## Focused Inquiry, cont'd

### Supporting question 2:

How do informed voters determine the credibility and accuracy of information from media sources that pertain to key issues in our state?

### Formative Performance Task

Complete [Appendix B \(pages 53 and 54\)](#)

#### Notes to Teacher:

1. Ask students if they've heard of "Deepfake" videos. *What might be the purpose of creating a Deepfake video?* Share with them that Deepfake videos are known more formally as a type of "synthetic media." These altered videos usually show real people doing and saying things they never actually did or said.
2. Show the video: "Deepfakes and Democracy: 4 Things to Know Before You Vote." (8 Minutes)  
<https://youtu.be/OUSworJiRWg>

#### Student Task:

1. After watching the video, have students capture their learning using Appendix B. Have students answer: *What did you see that stuck out to you? What did it make you think about? What advice was given?*

#### Notes to Teacher:

1. Next, ask students what is "confirmation bias"? Share with them that confirmation bias is our brain's tendency to seek out information that confirms things we already think we know.
2. Show the Video: "Why Do So Many People Share and Believe Fake News?" (6 Minutes)  
<https://youtu.be/MYT8IWfKcCA>

#### Student Task:

1. After watching, have students capture their learning using Appendix B. Have students answer: *Why does confirmation bias make us more likely to be fooled by "fake" news?*

#### Notes to Teacher:

1. Next, display to the class the poster titled [Fearless Fact-Finding](#).

#### Student Task:

1. Have students explore on the internet at least three of the Fearless Fact-Finding resources listed on the poster.
2. Using Appendix B, have students capture which of the listed Fearless Fact-Finding resources they think will be most useful for voters.

Featured sources:

- Deepfakes and Democracy: 4 Things to Know Before You Vote video, <https://youtu.be/OUSworJiRWg>, Common Sense Media, All rights reserved. Used pursuant to fair use.
- Why Do So Many People Share and Believe Fake News? video, <https://youtu.be/MYT8IWfKcCA>, SciShow Psych, All rights reserved. Used pursuant to fair use.
- [Common Sense Fearless Fact-Finding](#), All rights reserved. Used pursuant to fair use.

## Focused Inquiry, cont'd

### Supporting question 3:

In a representative democracy, what are a citizen's responsibilities before and after elections?

### Formative Performance Task

Complete [Appendix C \(pages 55 and 56\)](#)

#### Notes to teacher:

1. Have students read the article *What Does "Informed Citizen" Mean Right Now* <https://www.sos.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2025-05/iCivics - What Does Informed Citizen Mean Right Now.pdf>
2. As they read, ask students to find the missing part of each sentence from the article.
  - A. *Research has shown that those who are exposed to engaging civic education are more likely \_\_\_\_\_?*
  - B. *Voting responsibly requires that young people \_\_\_\_\_ about the candidates and the issues.*
3. Have a class discussion about how voters can hold their elected officials accountable for their campaign promises and decisions while in office.
4. Have students share with three classmates why they think it is important to vote and what are possible consequences to not voting?
5. Remember to keep discussions from being politically driven.

#### Student Task:

1. Watch the video #FutureVoter | VoteWA.gov | Register to Vote <https://youtu.be/Ax29EBqeg2Y>
2. Using the following websites, have students research how future voters sign up early to vote in Washington state.  
<https://www.sos.wa.gov/future-voter-program>  
<https://www.sos.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2023-08/ClassroomGuideRegistration.pdf>
3. Using the websites above, have students answer the common questions about registering to vote in Washington state in Appendix C.

#### Featured sources:

- What Does "Informed Citizen" Mean Right Now, <https://www.sos.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2025-05/iCivics - What Does Informed Citizen Mean Right Now.pdf>, iCivics Executive Director, Louise Dubé. All rights reserved. Used pursuant to fair use.
- #FutureVoter | VoteWA.gov | Register to Vote, <https://youtu.be/Ax29EBqeg2Y>, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Public Domain.
- Future Voter Program, <https://www.sos.wa.gov/future-voter-program>, Office of the Secretary of State, Public Domain.
- Classroom Guide to Voter Registration, <https://www.sos.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2023-08/ClassroomGuideRegistration.pdf>, Office of the Secretary of State, Public Domain.

## Focused Inquiry, cont'd

### Argument

After analyzing various sources to answer the supporting questions and discussing their thinking with the class, students will write a brief response to the compelling question.

Drawing from their research on the elected officials who represent them and what their positions are on key issues, students will write a brief response to the compelling question, ***Which of your elected officials has the most impact on your day-to-day life?*** Student responses should include a claim, evidence, reasoning, and cite specific information from sources, including a connection to a key ideal.

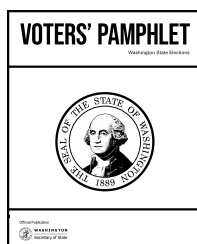
### Taking Informed Action:

**Option 1:** Have each student write a letter to an elected official about a key issue that they have researched and are passionate about. Students should include what action they would like their representative to take on the issue. Students should include supporting evidence, reasoning, and cite specific information from sources.

**Option 2:** Students host a registration drive for future voters at their school and or local community.

**Option 3:** Create a Storyboard to serve as a Public Service Announcement about the importance of being an informed voter, knowing who your elected officials are and their stances on key issues, and early sign up for future voters.

Informational pages from the statewide Voters' Pamphlet are available at the end of this book should you wish to use them to supplement lessons.



## Launch: Elected Offices

For each task and question, write down all your ideas. Be prepared to share and discuss with a partner.

1. Review the Elected Offices handouts. Work in pairs to find the qualifications listed for the federal and state elected offices as stated in the U.S. Constitution and the Washington State Constitution. For local elected offices, search online for your county's Candidate Guide or Candidate Manual.
2. Select from the list on the handout and answer the following question. ***If you could run for any public office, which would you run for and why?*** Select one for each level of government: Federal, State, and Local.

A. Federal: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

B. State: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

C. Local (county, city, town, or school board): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. With your partner, take turns sharing and discussing your answers to each question above. Next, brainstorm and share with your partner three current issues impacting Washingtonians today that you think are important. ***What actions do you want your elected representative to take?*** Make sure to capture below answers from your partner:

## Elected Offices

Candidates for public office, other than federal offices, must be registered voters.

Federal office	Term	Additional qualifications	Office description
<b>President</b>	4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least 35 years old</li> <li>• Natural-born citizen</li> <li>• Permanent U.S. resident for at least 14 years</li> </ul>	<p>The chief duty of the president is to ensure the laws of the nation are faithfully executed. This duty is largely performed through appointments for thousands of federal positions, including secretaries of cabinet-level agencies and federal judges (subject to confirmation by the Senate). The president is the commander-in-chief of the U.S. armed forces, has the power to sign and veto (reject) laws passed by Congress, and makes treaties with foreign governments (with Senate approval).</p>
<b>U.S. Senator</b>	6 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least 30 years old</li> <li>• Resident of the state they represent</li> <li>• U.S. citizen for at least nine years</li> </ul>	<p>The Senate has several exclusive powers, including consenting to treaties, confirming federal appointments made by the president, and trying federal officials impeached by the House of Representatives.</p>
<b>U.S. House Representative</b> (congressperson)	2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least 25 years old</li> <li>• Resident of the state they represent (but not necessarily the district)</li> <li>• U.S. citizen for at least seven years</li> </ul>	<p>The House of Representatives and the Senate have equal responsibility for declaring war, maintaining the armed forces, assessing taxes, borrowing money, minting currency, regulating commerce, and making all laws necessary for the operation of government.</p>

## Elected Offices, cont'd

Candidates for public office, other than federal offices, must be registered voters.

State office	Term	Additional qualifications	Office description
<b>Governor</b>	4 years		The governor is the chief executive officer of the state and makes appointments for hundreds of state positions, including directors of state agencies (subject to confirmation by the Senate). The governor has the power to sign or veto (reject) legislation, and annually submits a budget recommendation and reports on state affairs to the Legislature.
<b>State Attorney General</b>	4 years	Pass the Washington Bar Exam	The attorney general serves as legal counsel to the governor, members of the Legislature, state officials, and more than 230 state agencies, boards, commissions, colleges, and universities. The Office of the Attorney General enforces consumer protection statutes and provides public information about consumer rights and fraudulent business practices.
<b>State Supreme Court Justice</b>	6 years	Licensed to practice law in Washington state	The Supreme Court hears cases from Courts of Appeals and other lower courts.

## Elected Offices Activity

### Research and name your current elected officials below.

Where you live determines which elected officials represent you. Your classmates may or may not have the exact same officials representing them.

President:
U.S. Senator(s), by state. Search at <a href="https://www.senate.gov/">https://www.senate.gov/</a> :
U.S. Representative(s), based on congressional district. Search at <a href="https://www.house.gov/">https://www.house.gov/</a> :
Governor:
State Attorney General:
State Supreme Court Justice(s):
State Legislator(s), based on district. Find yours at <a href="https://app.leg.wa.gov/DistrictFinder/">https://app.leg.wa.gov/DistrictFinder/</a> :
County Executive:
Mayor:
School Board member(s):

## Elected Offices Activity, cont'd

**Match the correct qualifications for each office from the list below. Some qualifications can be used more than once.**

### **Elected Office:**

1. President
2. U.S. Senator
3. U.S. Representative
4. Governor
5. State Attorney General
6. State Supreme Court
7. State Legislator
8. County Executive
9. Mayor
10. School Board member

### **List of Qualifications**

- A. Registered voter
- B. At least 18 years old
- C. At least 35 years old
- D. At least 30 years old
- E. At least 25 years old
- F. Natural-born citizen
- G. Citizen of the U.S. for at least nine years
- H. Citizen of the U.S. for at least seven years
- I. Resident of the district
- J. Resident of the state
- K. Resident of the U.S. for at least 14 years
- L. Pass the Washington Bar Exam
- M. Licensed to practice law in Washington state

## Key Issues

<b>Source</b>	<b>Question 1</b> <i>What key issues are most important to our state's current elected officials? Look up these three: Governor, State Attorney General, and State Legislator.</i>	<b>Question 2</b> <i>Among the elected official's key issues you identified in Question 1, which do you agree with the most? Why?</i>	<b>Question 3</b> <i>How does the elected official's stance on key issues have an impact on you? Since they represent you, do their stances align or match with your position on the issues? Explain.</i>
<b>A: Governor</b> <a href="https://www.governor.wa.gov/">https://www.governor.wa.gov/</a>			
<b>B: State Attorney General</b> <a href="https://www.atg.wa.gov/">https://www.atg.wa.gov/</a>			
<b>C: State Legislator</b> (search online for your State Legislator at <a href="http://leg.wa.gov/">http://leg.wa.gov/</a> , or find campaign websites)			

## How do voters determine the credibility and accuracy of information?

<b>Source</b>	<b>Question 1</b> <i>What did you see that stuck out to you? What did it make you think about? What advice was given?</i>	<b>Question 2</b> <i>Why does confirmation bias make us more likely to be fooled by “fake” news?</i>	<b>Question 3</b> <i>Which of the fearless fact-finding resources do you think will be most useful for voters?</i>
<b>A: Video</b> <a href="#">“Deepfakes and Democracy: 4 Things to Know Before You Vote”</a>			
<b>B: Video</b> <a href="#">"Why Do So Many People Share and Believe Fake News?"</a>			
<b>C: Fearless Fact-Finding</b>			

# FEARLESS FACT-FINDING

A list of trustworthy resources to help you learn what's true (and what isn't!) on the web

Did you find an article, a source, or some other information on the web? Can you tell if it's true, false, or somewhere in-between? Use these trusted fact-checking websites to find more information.

**FactCheck.org** <http://www.factcheck.org>

**Use it when:** You need an *in-depth* article related to American politics.

These ad-free, nonpartisan articles address current political issues. But watch out! The articles aren't written for kids, and the site gets *really* in depth! But they're *really* clear about the truth (or falsehood) of what people are saying.

**PolitiFact** <http://www.politifact.com>

**Use it when:** You need a *quick look* at a political story, quote, or claim.

The Truth-O-Meter gives a quick look at the truth (or falsehood) of claims from politicians and media outlets. The scale goes from True to Pants-on-Fire, with the option to read more.

**Snopes** <http://www.snopes.com>

**Use it when:** You find a myth, meme, or anything else questionable on the web.

This popular fact-checking site is all about internet rumors. From so-called urban legends all the way to politics and news, there's a *lot* here! Be sure to stay focused and don't get distracted.

**OpenSecrets.org** <http://www.opensecrets.org>

**Use it when:** You feel like the phrase "*follow the money*" seems like a good idea.

This site tracks the influence of money in politics. It's definitely aimed at advanced readers, but there's lots of interesting info about who's spending money to influence politicians and voters.

**Internet Archive: Wayback Machine** <https://archive.org>

**Use it when:** You wish you could turn back the clock on the internet.

This one isn't actually a fact-checking site. *Instead*, it's a tool *you* can use yourself, to fact-check things you find online. Like an internet time machine, this site lets you see how a website looked, and what it said, at different points in the past. You won't find *everything* here, but there's still *a lot* to discover.

## Are you a Future Voter?

Visit <https://youtu.be/Ax29EBqeg2Y>, <https://www.sos.wa.gov/future-voter-program>, and <https://www.sos.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2023-08/ClassroomGuideRegistration.pdf>.

Question	Answer
What is the Future Voter program?	
How do I qualify for the Future Voter program?	
How do I sign up for the Future Voter program?	
What if I don't have a driver's license?	
When can I vote or sign a petition?	
What if I turn 18 right before an election?	
What if I move, leave the country, go to college, or join the military?	
Is my information private?	



# Classroom Guide to Voter Registration



## Future Voter Program

In Washington state, 16- and 17-year-olds can sign up as Future Voters and be automatically registered to vote when they become eligible.

## Program Eligibility

Participants must meet all of the following requirements in order to register to vote:

- **Be at least 16 years old**
- **A U.S. Citizen**
- **Legal resident of Washington state**

## How To

### Online



Scan the QR code or visit **VoteWA.gov**. Registrants will need a current Washington state driver's license, permit, state ID, or last four (4) digits of their Social Security number (SSN).

### Paper Registration Form

Visit **sos.wa.gov/future-voter-program** for a downloadable PDF. Registrants will need a current Washington state driver's license, permit, state ID, or last four (4) digits of their SSN. Make sure the registrant signs the declaration and that the signature is clear. The signature will be used to verify their ballot.

## Tips

### Address Types



The residential address (may be traditional or non-traditional) must be in Washington state as it determines which races and measures will be on a voter's ballot. The mailing address is where the ballot will be sent.

### Incomplete Registration



Registrants without a state-issued ID or SSN may leave the section blank but will be asked for alternative ID by their county elections office before registration can be approved.

### Completed Registration Forms



Paper registration forms must be returned to an elections office at least eight (8) days prior to Election Day, and no later than five (5) business days after completion. Paper forms submitted after the eight-day deadline will not take effect until the next election.

**Primary Election**



**November Election**

A 17-year-old who will be 18 by the November Election can vote in the Primary Election.

**Note:** Rewards such as class credit, prizes, or gifts may not be offered in exchange for registering to vote.



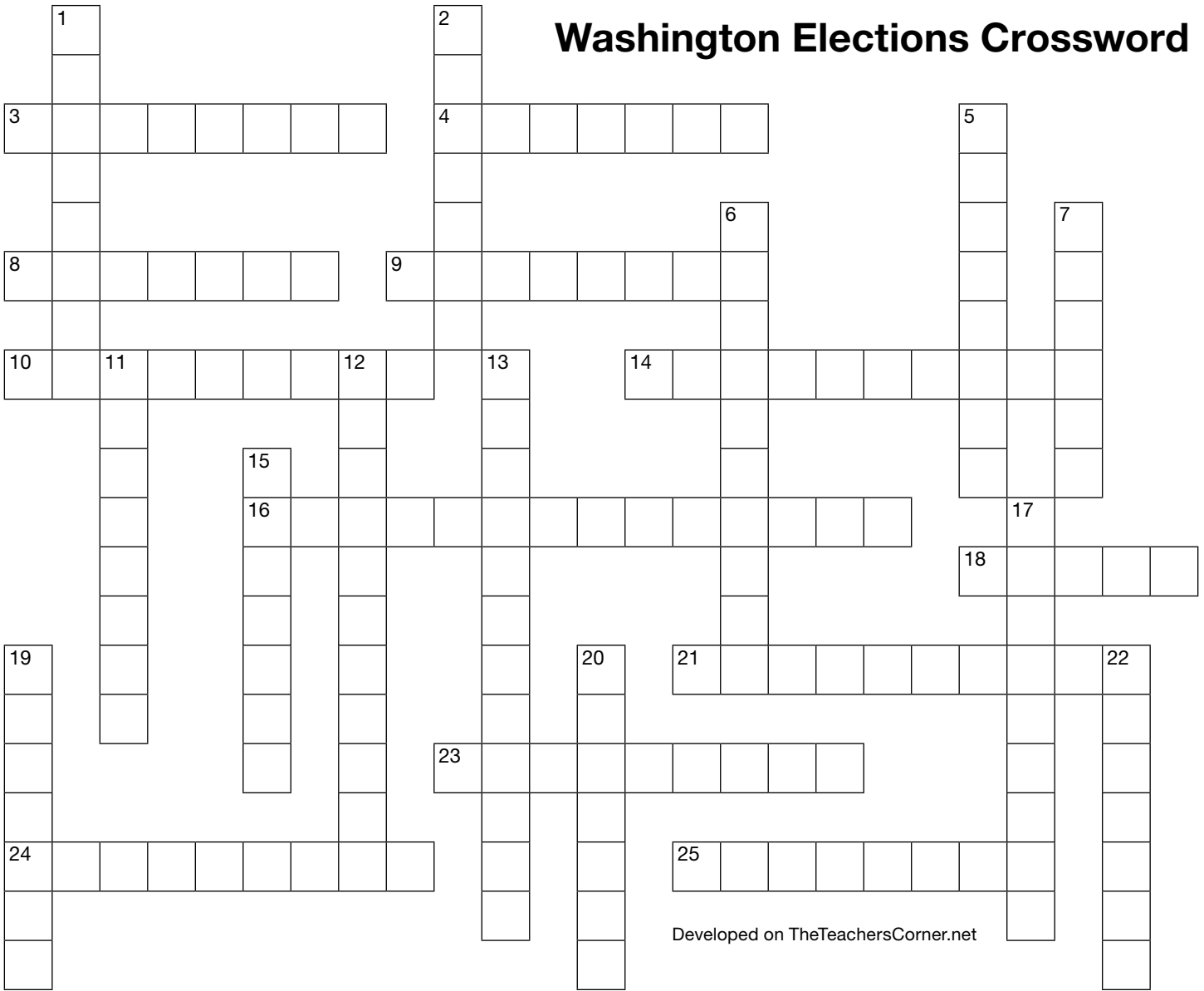
**WASHINGTON**  
Secretary of State  
Elections Division

**Phone**  
(360) 902-4180  
1 (800) 448-4881

**Mailing Address**  
P.O. Box 40229  
Olympia, WA 98504-0229

**Website**  
sos.wa.gov/elections  
**Email**  
elections@sos.wa.gov

# Washington Elections Crossword



Developed on TheTeachersCorner.net

## Across

3. A written request signed by many people demanding an action from an authority or government.
4. The candidate a political party chooses or nominates.
8. A person who is a legal member of the United States.
9. Relating to a particular political party; biased in support of a side; favoring one side of an issue.
10. A person who already holds an office who is running for reelection.
14. System of voting in Washington state in which registered voters are mailed ballots.
16. A member of the House of Representatives (congressperson).
18. Money paid by citizens to fund the government and public services.
21. A piece of legislation (law) that people can directly vote on.
23. A form of government in which people hold power.
24. A change to the U.S. Constitution or the constitution of a state.
25. A district of a city or town marked out for administrative purposes—usually 1000 persons.

## Down

1. Organized process where voters make selections or decisions.
2. An election in which candidates are elected to offices.
5. The right, privilege, or act of voting.
6. A voter-proposed law that voters can place on the ballot.
7. The physical document on which the voter's choices are recorded.
11. The process of gathering public support for a candidate.
12. Free from party affiliation or bias.
13. The voters in an area that an elected official represents.
15. An election to narrow down the selection of candidates for an upcoming election.
17. Person running for elected office.
19. To refuse to exercise the right to vote.
20. Used to submit ballots, must be dropped off by 8 p.m. Election Day.
22. Used to submit ballots, must check pick up times and be postmarked by Election Day.

## Word bank

Abstain Amendment Ballot Campaign Candidate Citizen Constituency Democracy  
 Dropbox Election General Incumbent Initiative Mailbox Nominee Nonpartisan Partisan  
 Petition Precinct Primary Referendum Representative Suffrage Taxes VoteByMail



**WASHINGTON**  
 Secretary of State  
 Elections Division



# Activity page – Voting is fun!

Do the two activities below, then fill in the bubble that corresponds to your favorite one.  
It's never too early to learn about voting!

1

Get Mark the Ballot to the drop box!  
(There's more than one solution)

2

Find the hidden items:

Mark the Ballot	Cake	Pen	Ballot	Pamphlet	Envelope	Postage

**Which one is your favorite? Fill in the bubble!**

1       2

# How do I register to vote in Washington?

## How do I register to vote?

**Online:** Register at [VoteWA.gov](http://VoteWA.gov).

**By mail:** Request a paper form be mailed to you or print your own at [sos.wa.gov/elections](http://sos.wa.gov/elections).

No internet access? Call 1 (800) 448-4881.

**In person:** Visit a county elections office (listed at the end of this pamphlet).

## Registration deadlines

**By mail or online:**

Your application must be received no later than eight days before Election Day.

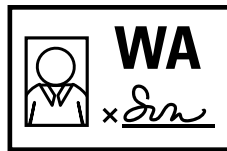
**In person:** Visit a local voting center no later than 8 p.m. on Election Day.

Check your registration info at [VoteWA.gov](http://VoteWA.gov).

## Qualifications

To vote, you must be:

- at least 18 years old,
- a U.S. citizen,
- a resident of Washington, and
- not currently under total confinement in prison for a felony.



## Moved? Update your voting address

Contact a county elections office to request a ballot at your new address.



**By eight days before Election Day:**

Have your application received by mail or updated online.

**Or**

**By Election Day:** Visit a local voting center in person.

## What if I'm not 18 yet?



**If you are 16 or 17, become a Future Voter!**

**# Future Voter**

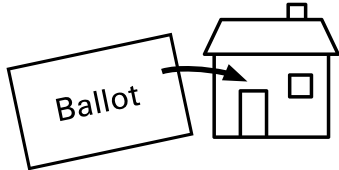
Sign up with your Washington state driver's license, permit, state ID, or last four (4) digits of your Social Security number. You'll be automatically registered to vote when you qualify. If you will be 18 by the November General Election, you can vote in a Primary Election.

Every January on Temperance and Good Citizenship Day, high school students 16 and older have the opportunity to complete a voter registration form in class.

## How do I vote and return my ballot?

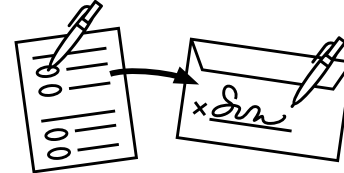
1

Ballots are mailed out by **18 days before Election Day** to all registered voters — no need to request one. If you need a replacement ballot, contact a county elections office.



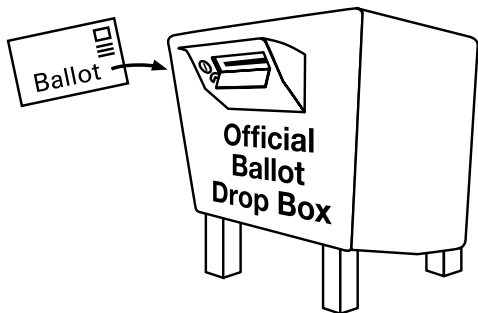
2

Mark your ballot and sign your return envelope. We need your signature to accept your ballot. You are not required to vote every race on your ballot.



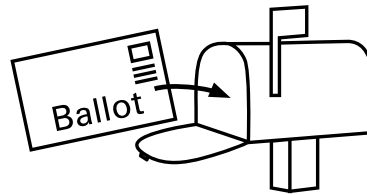
3

Return your ballot to an official ballot drop box. Drop boxes are open until 8 p.m. on **Election Day**. Find drop box locations at **VoteWA.gov**.



Or, return your ballot by mail, no stamp needed. If mailed, your ballot must be postmarked by **Election Day**. Don't let a late postmark disqualify your ballot. The USPS recommends that you mail a week **before** Election Day.

Or



If you cannot personally return your ballot, only let people you trust deliver it for you.

4

Check the status of your ballot on **VoteWA.gov** to see if it has been received by your county elections office.



Election staff will contact you before your ballot is processed if:

- Your signature is missing
- Your signature doesn't match your voter registration record

### View election results online

After 8 p.m. on election night, results from each county are posted at **results.votewa.gov**.

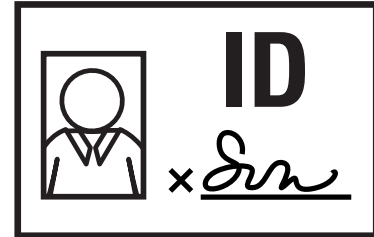
Results are updated as counties report and are unofficial until certification.

## Why is my signature important?

Your signature is needed to make sure your ballot gets counted.

1

Your ballot will only be counted if your signature is verified. If you registered to vote online or through Department of Licensing, the signature from your driver's license, permit, or state ID will be on your voter registration record.



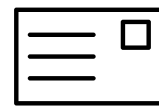
2

The signature on your return envelope is compared to the signature on your voter registration record. Trained election officials are responsible for verifying each and every signature.



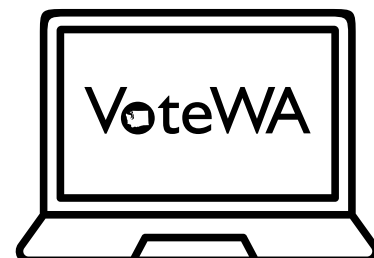
3

If your signature is missing or does not match your voter registration record, **the county elections office will contact you** by mail before results are certified. They may call, text, or email if you gave them this info. Your ballot will only be counted if your signature is verified.



4

You can track and check your ballot status at **VoteWA.gov**.



## How do I register to vote as a...

### New Washington resident

Welcome! Register to vote online, by mail, in person, or when you get your new driver's license, permit, or ID at the Department of Licensing. You may not vote in more than one place, so cancel your previous voter registration.



### Military or overseas voter

Register to vote anytime on or before Election Day. You may receive your ballot by mail, email, or fax. Spouses and dependents also away from home have the same voting rights.



### College student

Register to vote using either your home or school address, but you may not vote in more than one place. Your ballot can be mailed to you anywhere in the world; however, your residential address must remain in Washington.



### Non-traditional address voter

Use any physical location you consider your residence such as a shelter, park, or marina. Your mailing address can be general delivery at a local post office, a PO Box, or an address of a trusted friend or relative. A federally recognized tribe may designate tribal government buildings to serve as residential or mailing addresses for voters living on tribal lands.



### Seasonal resident

Vote in Washington even if you're away during an election. To ensure you receive your ballot, update your mailing address at [VoteWA.gov](http://VoteWA.gov) or with a county elections office. Your ballot can be mailed to you anywhere in the world; however, your residential address must remain in Washington. You may not vote in more than one place.



### Person convicted of a felony

Your right to vote is automatically restored once you're no longer serving a sentence of total confinement in any state or federal prison, including for federal or out-of-state felony convictions. Register to vote upon your release from prison. Even if you were previously registered to vote, or voted before your felony conviction, you will need to re-register to receive a ballot.



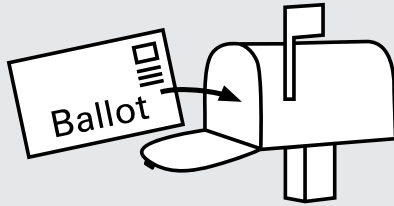
# What is different about voting in Washington?

1

## Vote by mail

Washington votes by mail every election.

We were the second state in the nation to adopt vote by mail and the first to provide all postage paid. A ballot is mailed at least 18 days before each election, ensuring you have time to cast an informed ballot without waiting in line.



2

## Online voter registration

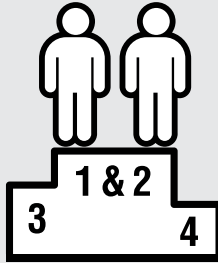
We offer online voter registration. Register to vote or update your address at [VoteWA.gov](http://VoteWA.gov).



3

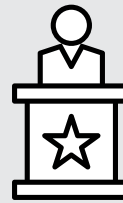
## Top 2 Primary

Washington uses a Top 2 Primary system where the two candidates who receive the most votes in the August Primary Election advance to the November General Election, regardless of their party preference.



4

## No party affiliation

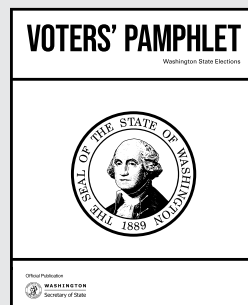


Washington voters do not register by party affiliation. Vote for any candidate regardless of their party preference.

5

## Voters' Pamphlet

Only a few states produce voters' pamphlets. Washington's statewide pamphlets are mailed to every household before each General Election.



6

## Same day registration



Citizens can register and vote a ballot in person during the voting period until 8 p.m. on Election Day by visiting a county elections office.

## Copy-and-cut VoteWA cards

Register online with a valid Washington state driver's license, permit, or state ID.

<p><b>VoteWA</b> The vote starts here</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Register to vote</li><li>• Update your info</li><li>• Track your ballot</li></ul>	 <p><b>VoteWA.gov</b> elections@sos.wa.gov 1 (800) 448-4881</p>	<p><b>VoteWA</b> The vote starts here</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Register to vote</li><li>• Update your info</li><li>• Track your ballot</li></ul>	 <p><b>VoteWA.gov</b> elections@sos.wa.gov 1 (800) 448-4881</p>
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### What does this mean?

**Certification Day**

The date when election results are finalized by state or county officials.

**Logic and Accuracy Test**

A test completed before each election to ensure the accuracy of voting equipment.

**Nonpartisan Office**

An elected position in which candidates do not state a political party preference and candidates for the office are not officially associated with a political group. Office appears on the ballot as “Nonpartisan.”

**Partisan Office**

An elected position in which candidates may state their preferred political party. A candidate may also choose “States No Party Preference.” Their preference is printed on the ballot.

**Postmark**

A postmark indicates the location and date the Postal Service accepted custody of a ballot. Ballots must be postmarked by Election Day to be accepted. Placing your ballot in a mailbox on Election Day does not guarantee a postmark of the same day.

**Post-election Audit**

A test completed before the certification of results to ensure the security and accuracy of the voting system. Counties perform a post-election audit each election.

**Term Type**

How much of a term a candidate will be serving for an office. It is split into regular, unexpired, and short-and-full.

**Voter Registration Database**

The official list of registered voters maintained in every state to conduct safe and secure elections. Our database in Washington is known as VoteWA.

**Voting Center**

A county-run facility where you can receive voting assistance from trained elections staff. Some services include registering or updating voter information, requesting and returning a ballot, or finding an accessible voting unit.

**Voting System**

Ballot counting equipment that must be tested by an independent testing authority and certified by the state of Washington before it can be used.



2026 Edition