

Got Ballot?

Time Needed: One class period

Materials Needed:

Student worksheets

Overhead copies of ballot styles

Copy Instructions:

Student packet (*4 pages double-sided; class set*)

Learning Objectives. Students will be able to:

- Explain how initiative, referendum, and recall are all opportunities for individuals and groups to initiate change in state and local government policy
- Identify representation in federal, state and local offices.
- Distinguish between different types of ballots.

STEP BY STEP

- ANTICIPATE** by asking students to share what they know about voting. Use prompts like, "When are the elections?" "Who is allowed to vote?" "Why is voting important?"
- DISTRIBUTE** one *Got Ballot?* reading to each student.
- READ** the material on *Reading p. 1* with the class, pausing to discuss as appropriate.
- ASK** students to brainstorm what they would expect to find on a ballot.
- SHOW** the party-column ballot and office-block ballot transparencies, noting the differences and similarities. Keep these handy, as you will want to show the ballot questions later in the lesson.
- READ** through *Reading p.2* with the class. You may use the office-block ballot transparency to point out how referendums like these two state constitutional amendments are shown to the voter.
- DISTRIBUTE** the *Got Ballot?* worksheet pages to each student.
- READ** the directions for "Initiative Details" with the class. This ordering exercise will help them arrange the tasks involved with putting an initiative on the ballot. Allow a few minutes for students to try, then review the correct order with the class.
- CONTINUE** by asking the students to complete the rest of the activities on the worksheet pages.
- REVIEW** the answers to the remaining activities.
- OPTIONAL** Visit your local or state board of elections for more information on ballot measures, candidates, and election dates and locations.

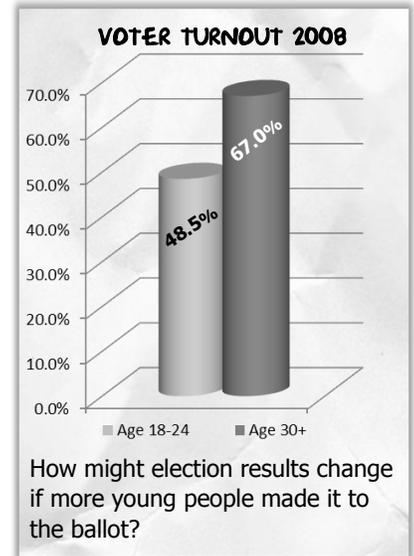
Websites like www.votesmart.org show you information about your local elected officials based on your zip code.

Democracies Need Voters

Ask anyone what it means to live in a democracy, and you're likely to hear something about voting. There's more to a democracy than voting, but the citizens' right to determine their own government is a basic democratic concept. But here's the thing: It's not really "the citizens" who choose our leaders. It's the people who show up at the polls on election day. So yes, your vote may be just one in millions — but if you don't use it, you're letting all those other people decide how you're going to be governed. You may not be old enough to vote yet, but it probably won't be long. When that day comes, will you know what to do?

Get Registered

You don't magically become a voter. You have to register first. Each state has its own set of requirements, but all require at least three things: you must be a citizen of the United States, you must be 18 years old by election day, and you must live in the state where you will be voting. In many states, you can register to vote online or when you renew your driver's license. Once you have registered, you'll receive a voter registration card. You're all set to vote!



A lever voting machine

The Mechanics of Voting

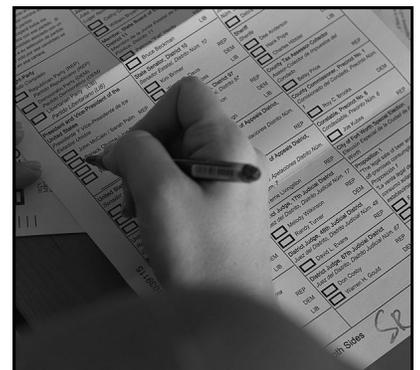
It's election day, and you're on your way to the polling place — but wait. Are you? Many states make it even easier than that by letting you sign up to vote by mail. They'll send your ballot early; you just fill it out and send it back. Done.

But maybe that's not an option, or maybe you just want to vote in person. You want the excitement of seeing your vote get submitted first hand. And you want your "I Voted!" sticker. When you arrive at the polling place, what you see depends on where you live. Voting procedures can vary from county to county. In the old days, it was common to vote on a machine where you turned small levers to register your choices. (Those are still used in some places.) Today you will usually see paper ballots or electronic touch screens.

Ballot Format

You're standing in the voting booth with your ballot in front of you. What will it look like? Just as voting methods vary from place to place, so do the actual ballots. Most places use an *office-block ballot* that lists all the candidates for president together, all the candidates for senator, all the candidates for mayor... You get the idea. A few places still use a *party-column ballot* that lists all the Republican candidates together, all the Democrats together, all the Libertarians, and so on.

Don't worry about not knowing what to do when you see your ballot. In most places, you'll receive a sample ballot in the mail beforehand or you can download one online. You can fill out the sample ballot at home and bring it with you when you vote.



A voter fills out a paper office-block ballot.

Candidates, Candidates, and More Candidates!



When it's election season, you'll see candidates' campaign signs everywhere.

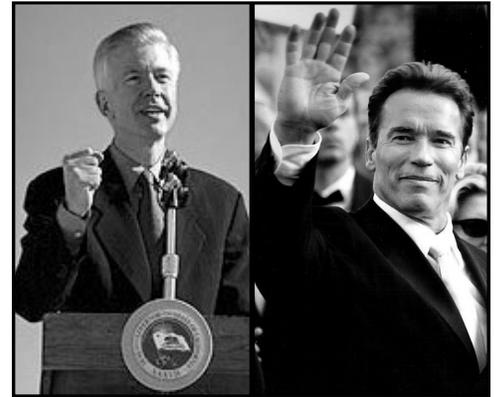
You may already know that we elect the president every four years in November. Those are the elections that get the most attention. But elections happen *every* November—and at the local level, sometimes in other months. There are lots of government positions that require people to run for election. So even when you're not voting for president, you'll be choosing people to become members of Congress, state representatives and senators, county and city leaders, and even school board members. In some states, such as Maryland, you'll also see judges on your ballot.

So, what positions will be on the ballot in the next election? That depends on how long a person gets to stay in that position once they've been elected to office. Common terms of office are two, four, or six years.

Recall Elections: Out with the Old, In with the New

A ballot isn't just for electing people to office. Sometimes it's for booting someone *out* of office. Politicians don't always do things the way the public wants them to. Sometimes they even commit crimes or do other things that makes them unfit for public office. In some states, if voters want someone out, they can try to **recall** that politician by voting to replace him or her. First, a certain number of voters must agree that the politician should be replaced. This usually involves gathering voters' signatures on a petition. After that, it's time for the big fight: One or more **challengers** run against the disfavored politician in a **recall election**. Voters decide whether to keep the current politician or elect someone new.

As many as 36 states allow voters to recall politicians at least at the local level. Some states, such as Maryland, don't allow recall elections at all.

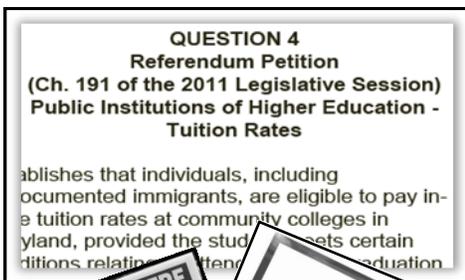


In 2003, California voters decided to "dump" Gov. Gray Davis (left) and replace him with Arnold Schwarzenegger (right).

Voting for Laws: Referendums and Initiatives

Your ballot won't just be a list of people running for office. Depending on your state's rules, you may be asked to approve new laws for the state. Some laws get on the ballot through the **initiative** process that lets citizens propose laws directly. If citizens gather enough voter signatures, the law goes on the ballot for voters to approve or reject. (Your state may have other requirements, too.)

You might also see a proposed law called a **referendum**. This law has been proposed by the state's legislature but can't actually become a law until the voters have approved it. States have different rules about when lawmakers must seek voter approval for a new law. Often, amendments to a state's constitution require a referendum. Many laws do not require voter approval. Even so, sometimes citizens can petition to have a new law put on the ballot for voters to approve or reject. This is called a **popular referendum**.



A Maryland referendum relating to college tuition rates.

PARTY-COLUMN BALLOT

| OFFICE | 1 GOVERNOR AND VICE GOVERNOR (Vote One) | 2 COMPTROLLER (Vote One) | 3 ATTORNEY GENERAL (Vote For One) | 4 UNITED STATES SENATE 6 YEAR TERM (Vote For One) | 5 UNITED STATES SENATE 2 YEAR TERM (Vote For One) | 6 REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS (Vote For One) | 7 STATE SENATOR (Vote For One) | 8 MEMBER OF THE ASSEMBLY (Vote For One) |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| PROSECUTOR A * | REPUBLICAN Andrew M. Cuomo Robert J. Duffy | DEMOCRATIC Thomas P. DiNapoli | DEMOCRATIC Eric T. Schneiderman | DEMOCRATIC Charles E. Schumer | DEMOCRATIC Kristen E. Gillibrand | DEMOCRATIC William L. Owens | DEMOCRATIC Michael J. Hennessey | DEMOCRATIC Brian S. McCann |
| REPUBLICAN B * | REPUBLICAN Carl P. Paladino Gregory J. Evers | DEMOCRATIC Harry Wilson | DEMOCRATIC Dan Donovan | DEMOCRATIC Jay Townsend | DEMOCRATIC Joseph J. DiGuardi | DEMOCRATIC Matthew A. Doherty | DEMOCRATIC Joseph A. Grifo | DEMOCRATIC Kenneth D. Blunkhoush |
| INDEPENDENCE C * | INDEPENDENCE Andrew M. Cuomo Robert J. Duffy | INDEPENDENCE Harry Wilson | INDEPENDENCE Eric T. Schneiderman | INDEPENDENCE Charles E. Schumer | INDEPENDENCE Kristen E. Gillibrand | INDEPENDENCE Matthew A. Doherty | INDEPENDENCE Joseph A. Grifo | INDEPENDENCE Brian S. McCann |
| CONSERVATIVE D * | CONSERVATIVE Carl P. Paladino Gregory J. Evers | CONSERVATIVE Harry Wilson | CONSERVATIVE Dan Donovan | CONSERVATIVE Jay Townsend | CONSERVATIVE Joseph J. DiGuardi | CONSERVATIVE Douglas L. Hoffman | CONSERVATIVE Joseph A. Grifo | CONSERVATIVE Kenneth D. Blunkhoush |
| WORKING FAMILIES E * | WORKING FAMILIES Andrew M. Cuomo Robert J. Duffy | WORKING FAMILIES Thomas P. DiNapoli | WORKING FAMILIES Eric T. Schneiderman | WORKING FAMILIES Charles E. Schumer | WORKING FAMILIES Kristen E. Gillibrand | WORKING FAMILIES William L. Owens | | |
| GREENS F * | GREENS Honalie Hawkins Gora Malgara | GREENS Julia A. Wilebrand | | GREENS Celia Clark | GREENS Cecile A. Lawrence | | | |
| UNITED STATES SENATOR G * | UNITED STATES SENATOR JERRY MULLIKEN | | | UNITED STATES SENATOR Joseph Huff | | | | |
| LEGISLATOR H 1 * | LEGISLATOR Walter Riedrich Adam Lutz | LEGISLATOR John Gaidari | LEGISLATOR Carl E. Person | LEGISLATOR Randy A. Ciccio | LEGISLATOR John Clifton | | | |
| LEGISLATOR I 2 * | LEGISLATOR Carl P. Paladino Gregory J. Evers | LEGISLATOR Joseph M. Davis Lynne Gendron | LEGISLATOR Ramon J. Jimenez | LEGISLATOR Vina Morgan | LEGISLATOR Bruce Blakeman | | | |
| PRO ALBANY J * | | | | | | | PRO ALBANY Michael J. Hennessey | |
| WRITE-IN | WRITE-IN | WRITE-IN | WRITE-IN | WRITE-IN | WRITE-IN | WRITE-IN | WRITE-IN | WRITE-IN |

OFFICIAL BALLOT FOR THE GENERAL ELECTION - NOVEMBER 2, 2010

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Mark only with pen provided at polling site.
- To vote for a candidate whose name is printed on this ballot fill in the square to the right of the candidate's name. **Do not** attempt to connect, mistake, or otherwise mark this ballot, return it and obtain another. Do not attempt to correct mistakes on the ballot by making erasures or cross-outs. Erasures or cross-outs may invalidate all or part of your ballot. Prior to submitting your ballot, if you make a mistake in completing the ballot or wish to change your ballot choices, you may obtain and complete a new ballot. You have a right to a replacement ballot upon return of the original ballot.
- To vote for a person whose name is not printed on this ballot write or stamp his or her name on a blank "Write-In" area under the names of the candidates for the office.
- Write-in names must be printed in block letters and must be legible.
- Any other mark, or writing, or any erasure made on this ballot except the voting square, or blank spaces provided for voting will void this entire ballot.
- Do not overvote. If you selected a greater number of candidates than there are vacancies to be filled, your ballot will be void for that public office or ballot position.

STATE OF NEW YORK, COUNTY OF LEWIS

Ballot ID: 2016

OFFICE-BLOCK BALLOT

| | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| <p>OFFICIAL BALLOT PRESIDENTIAL GENERAL ELECTION NOVEMBER 6, 2012</p> | | <p>PAGE 1</p> |
| <p>STATE OF MARYLAND, HOWARD COUNTY</p> | | |
| <p>INSTRUCTIONS</p> | | |
| <p>To vote, completely fill in the oval <input type="radio"/> to the left of your choice(s). Mark only with a #2 pencil. DO NOT ERASE. If you make a mistake you may request a new ballot. If your vote for a candidate or question is marked in such a manner that your intent is not clearly demonstrated, your vote for that office may not be counted. To protect the secrecy of your vote, do not put your name, initials, or any identifying mark on your official ballot.</p> | | |
| <p>To vote for a candidate whose name is not printed on the ballot, write in the name of the candidate on the designated write-in line under that office title and completely fill in the oval <input type="radio"/> to the left of the write-in candidate's name.</p> | | |
| <p style="text-align: center;">PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES Vote for One</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Barack Obama Democratic Illinois And Joe Biden Delaware</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Mitt Romney Republican Massachusetts And Paul Ryan Wisconsin</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Gary Johnson Libertarian New Mexico And James P. Gray California</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Jill Stein Green Massachusetts And Cheri Honkala Pennsylvania</p> <p><input type="radio"/> _____ Write-in</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">JUDGE, COURT OF SPECIAL APPEALS AT LARGE Stuart R. Berger Vote Yes or No For Continuance in Office</p> <p><input type="radio"/> YES <input type="radio"/> NO</p> | |
| <p style="text-align: center;">U.S. SENATOR Vote for One</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Ben Cardin Democratic</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Daniel John Bongino Republican</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Dean Ahmad Libertarian</p> <p><input type="radio"/> S. Rob Sobhani Unaffiliated</p> <p><input type="radio"/> _____ Write-in</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">BOARD OF EDUCATION Vote for No More Than Three</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Bob Ballinger</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Ann DeLacy</p> <p><input type="radio"/> David Gertler</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Ellen Flynn Giles</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Jackie Scott</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Janet Siddiqui</p> <p><input type="radio"/> _____ Write-in</p> <p><input type="radio"/> _____ Write-in</p> <p><input type="radio"/> _____ Write-in</p> | |
| <p style="text-align: center;">REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 7 Vote for One</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Elijah Cummings Democratic</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Frank C. Mirabile Republican</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Ronald M. Owens-Bey Libertarian</p> <p><input type="radio"/> _____ Write-in</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">QUESTION 1 Constitutional Amendment (Ch. 394 of the 2011 Legislative Session) Qualifications for Prince George's County Orphans' Court Judges</p> <p>(Amending Article IV, Section 40 of the Maryland Constitution)</p> <p>Requires judges of the Orphans' Court for Prince George's County to be admitted to practice law in this State and to be a member in good standing of the Maryland Bar.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> For the Constitutional Amendment</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Against the Constitutional Amendment</p> | |
| <p style="text-align: center;">JUDGE OF THE CIRCUIT COURT JUDICIAL CIRCUIT 5 Vote for No More Than Two</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Lenore R. Gelfman</p> <p><input type="radio"/> William V. Tucker</p> <p><input type="radio"/> _____ Write-in</p> <p><input type="radio"/> _____ Write-in</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">QUESTION 2 Constitutional Amendment (Ch. 146 of the 2012 Legislative Session) Qualifications for Baltimore County Orphans' Court Judges</p> <p>(Amending Article IV, Section 40 of the Maryland Constitution)</p> <p>Requires judges of the Orphans' Court for Baltimore County to be admitted to practice law in this State and to be a member in good standing of the Maryland Bar.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> For the Constitutional Amendment</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Against the Constitutional Amendment</p> | |
| <p style="text-align: center;">JUDGE, COURT OF APPEALS APPELLATE CIRCUIT 3 Lynne A. Battaglia Vote Yes or No For Continuance in Office</p> <p><input type="radio"/> YES <input type="radio"/> NO</p> | <p>TURN BALLOT OVER</p> | |

Source: Howard County, Maryland (2012 general election)

Got Ballot?

Name: _____

C. Sentence Sense. Use information from the reading to create your own sentences using the sentence starters provided. There is no single correct answer for these. Write something that makes sense and shows what you have learned about voting.

Example:

A. (Even if _____, you still have to _____.)

Even if you are 18 years old, you still have to register before you can vote.

Use information from **Page 1** of the reading to complete these sentences:

1. (Even though _____, many young people _____.)

2. (In order to _____, you have to _____.)

3. (Before you _____, you should _____.)

4. (You might want to _____ because _____.)

5. (Your ballot will have _____ if _____.)

Use information from **Page 2** of the reading to complete these sentences:

1. (Although presidential elections _____ there are also _____.)

2. (Even though some states _____, other states _____.)

3. (As long as a politician _____, he or she probably won't _____.)

4. (An initiative won't _____, unless _____.)

5. (Sometimes new laws can't _____ until _____.)

A. Initiative Details. The specific rules for initiatives vary from state to state, but most have certain procedures in common. Read the steps you would have to take to get an initiative on the ballot and put them in order by numbering them 1 to 10.

Steps One to Five

4 Now that the state approved my application, it's time to print out a bunch of petition sheets. I'm going to need a ton of paper!

1 Hey! I've got an idea for a new law. Oh, yes — This is a good one. If people saw this on the ballot, they would definitely vote for it.

3 The application says the law must be written down. I'd better hire some lawyers to help me draft it with exactly the right words.

5 Getting these petitions signed is going to be a lot of work. I'd better recruit a whole bunch of volunteers to circulate these petitions.

2 Before I take action, I'll make sure I'm a registered voter in this state. Otherwise I'll be wasting my time. There's probably paperwork too.

Steps Six to Ten

8 The law is finished and petitions signed. Now I'll submit it to the Secretary of State along with my application to put an initiative on the ballot.

7 Success! We've got the required number of voter signatures. I'd better return these petitions to the state before the deadline.

9 Look what just arrived! It's a serial number for the new initiative. Looks like the application was approved!

6 Whew! I've been standing outside the library with this petition all day. I wonder how many signatures the other volunteers have collected?

10 Yippee! The votes have been tallied, and the initiative won by a landslide! My great idea is now a law!

B. Recalls: A Good Idea? There is a lot of debate about whether voters should be able to recall elected officials. What do you think? Read the recall pros and cons, then let them help you make an argument for or against recall elections. Just put the reasons in your own words.

Pros: Recalls are helpful because...

- Elected officials will do a better job.
- Voters have a way to get rid of elected officials who aren't doing a good job.
- More people pay attention to important issues during a recall election.
- Elected officials will pay more attention to what voters want.

Cons: Recalls are harmful because...

- Elected officials may be afraid to take a necessary action that is unpopular.
- People in one political party might use a recall election to get rid of a politician from the other party.
- Wealthy interest groups can stir up voter anger when there isn't really a problem.
- Elections are expensive.

FYI- Most states also have an *impeachment* process, where an elected official who has done wrong can be put on trial and removed.

I think that recalls are good or harmful because...

