

What Determines Election Outcomes?



POOL PHOTO BY JOE CAVARETTA—REUTERS

Democratic presidential nominee John F. Kerry, right, and President George W. Bush respond to questions from moderator Bob Schieffer during their third and final debate at Arizona State University in Tempe, Ariz., Oct 13.

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An Integrated Curriculum For The Washington Post Newspaper In Education Program

What determines election outcomes

Lesson: What determines the outcome of an election—political parties, issues, the candidates' personalities or campaign advertising?

Level: Middle to high

Subjects: Government, civics, history, journalism

Related Activity: Language arts, mathematics

National, state and local elections lend themselves to a look at the requirements, process and impact of elections. This is the second of five online guides that focus on the broad question: Whose vote really counts? In this guide, we examine the influence of political parties, issues and campaign advertising.

Activities in this online guide encourage students to study the issues of this campaign and to determine each candidate's stand. How much is a candidate's position determined by his or her party affiliation, poll results and public opinion, and personal conviction? What role do third parties play in defining one or more important issues? And why do candidates and other groups spend so much money to produce campaign advertising and to target audiences?

If there are 18 battleground states that "count"—What about the citizens in the other states and D.C. that are a "given as to how citizens will vote"? Does reporting of swing states encourage or discourage voting?

Check out Capitalization

Teachers and students may wonder about the capitalization used in this guide and The Washington Post. When "president" stands alone it is not capitalized, and when "President" is used with

the name of the president as a title, it is capitalized: "in case the president and Congress agree," "the crowd gathered around President Bush," "patient diplomacy started in the Clinton administration." This is consistent with Associated Press style. Some usage and style manuals will state that the special regard for the office of the President of the United States makes it an exception to the rule of handling titles used for classification; therefore, your students will see "president" both capitalized and not. You may wish to use this capitalization guide to call attention to style manuals and variations on usage rules.

It is Post style to capitalize the sobriquet First Lady. Journalism students will note that Associated Press style does not consider "first lady" or "first family" as formal titles. The AP style is to always use lower case with those informal titles.

Party On

"Origin of Species," an excerpt from David Von Drehle's study of the major political parties is provided to begin discussion of past and current political parties, their differences and impact. The Democrats and Republicans aren't what they used to be—see if students can distinguish them today by platform, positions and politicians' messages. Who selects the candidates that represent each party?

Compare the Candidates

Where do the major candidates stand on important issues? For a week or more have students compile the presidential candidates'

Official Word

<http://www.georgewbush.com/>

Bush-Cheney '04

Official Web site of the Republican ticket: George W. Bush and Richard Cheney

<http://www.johnkerry.com/index.html>

Kerry-Edwards

Official Web site of the Democratic ticket: John F. Kerry and John Edwards

<http://www.votener.org/>

Nader/Comejo 2004

Official Web site of the Independent ticket: Ralph Nader and Peter M. Camejo

<http://www.votecobb.org>

Cobb/LaMarche 2004

Official Web site of the Green ticket: David Cobb and Pat LaMarche

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

Annenberg Political Fact Check

The mission of the Annenberg program is to "monitor the factual accuracy of what is said by major U.S. political players in the form of TV ads, debates, speeches, interviews and news releases."

http://www.tray.com/cgi-win/pml1_sql_PRESIDENTIAL.exe?DoFn=2004

Political MoneyLine

Contributors, financial picture of 2004 candidates. Also has 2000 and 1996 election finance data.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/politics/elections/2004/>

Politics 2004

Current and archived Post articles

<http://www.nytimes.com/pages/politics/campaign/index.html?th>

New York Times Election 2004 coverage

<http://www.npr.org/templates/topics/topic.php?topicId=12>

Politics & Society

NPR campaign, national and international coverage

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positions on the issues. Listen to the candidates, read Post coverage, check official Web sites and chart the facts. Visit Campaign 2004 (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/politics/>) and select "Comparing the Candidates." The candidates are compared on eight issues (abortion, civil liberties, economy, education, energy/resources, health coverage, national security and foreign affairs). In addition, select "Special Reports" for "Issues in the News." For younger students, use KidsPost's five-week series on the two major candidates and the issues.

Give students "Where They Stand" on which to record the information they find and to state the main contrast they find between positions. Information from these charts may be used to produce a Venn diagram of shared positions and those that are distinct.

A more in-depth study might result by dividing students into pairs or groups with each group selecting a different issue to research. Candidates' positions, statements of appropriate federal agencies and private companies, material produced by organizations (for example, "America@work" produced by the AFL-CIO), independent sources and fact checking groups should be reviewed.

Analyze Campaign Advertisements

Some campaign television advertisements are classics (for example, Johnson's 1964 "Merely Another Weapon" and his "Peace Little Girl" or "Daisy") while others are being churned out on a weekly basis in response to an opponent's ad or statement. A study of campaigns or the election process is not complete without examining the impact of

advertisements and the role the media plays in disseminating them. In addition to The Post's occasional analyses of campaign advertisements, there are many excellent online sources. See "Political Ads" sidebar for suggested starting points. A study of campaign advertising might begin with a review of the techniques of persuasion and/or editorial organization.

On Oct. 11, Paul Farhi reported ["Toledo Tube Wars"] "between March and late September, 14,273 commercials about the presidential race aired on Toledo's four leading TV stations. ... That number makes this smokestack city at the western tip of Lake Erie the epicenter of the presidential air wars." How would students like to live in such an ad-saturated area? Do voters cease to listen when they are bombarded daily?

Give students a copy of "Analysis of Campaign Advertisements." This activity can be completed individually or in groups. As a warm-up exercise, one ad could be studied with one third of the class focusing on each segment.

Get an Outlook

Elie Wiesel, author and college professor, in "Mean Season" comments on the tenor of the campaign. After reading his commentary that appeared on the Post's September 27, 2004, op-ed page, the following questions might be asked:

- Why does the current campaign disappoint and depress Wiesel?
- What happens when the rhetoric becomes hateful and the attacks ad hominem?
- Are the political advertisements attacks rather than providers of positions on issues?

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Read About It

Gormley, Beatrice. *First Ladies: Women Who Called the White House Home* Describes the type of women (among them athletes, pioneers, sophisticates and independent thinkers) who've been married to U.S. presidents

Gould, Lewis, ed. *American First Ladies: Their Lives and Their Legacy* At 712 pages, this is an important and comprehensive reference with essays written by leading historians and political scientists describing contributions of each First Lady.

Kramer, Sydelle A. *Look-It-Up Book of First Ladies* Easy-to-use format of lively biographical sketches

Mayo, Edith. *Smithsonian Book of the First Ladies: Their Lives, Times, and Issues* Highlights how the public's expectations formed the course of each woman's life

Truman, Margaret. *First Ladies: An Intimate Group Portrait of the White House Wives* Ingenious clusters of First Ladies show their public vs. private lives and the incredible demands of the First Lady's job

Pasten, Amy. *First Ladies* Photo-filled guide to extraordinary women who've left their mark on the White House

Thimmesh, Catherine. *Madam President, the Extraordinary, True (and Evolving) Story of Women in Politics* Captivating book illuminating the tenacity of First Ladies and other women who've paved the way for young women leaders of tomorrow to ask the question: "Well, why not the presidency?"

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- Do students agree that debates and stump speeches provide insults instead of information and insight?

- Wiesel concludes that “what’s at stake is the kind of world that will be shaped by the vote of the American people in November.” Agree with, disagree with or modify his position in a short essay.

Test Your Knowledge of First Ladies

“America’s First Ladies” may be given as a pre-test before assigning research on the presidents and their families, as an incentive to read about America’s First Ladies or as a quiz after reading the whitehouse.gov section on the presidential wives. If you visit the First Ladies exhibit at the Smithsonian Museum of American History, this reproducible may be used to focus on the individuals who have served as First Lady.

Most of the answers to the quiz may be found in the First Ladies section at www.whitehouse.gov/history. “Answers: American First Ladies” is provided for your convenience.

Read an Editorial Cartoon

Give students a copy of “The Country Where Every Vote Counts.” The questions at the bottom are suggestions to stimulate discussion. Place the cartoon into the context of three presidential debates and one vice-presidential debate having been completed, polls continuing to show undecided voters and the candidates focusing their personal appearances and advertisements on a small segment of the country.

You might compare the states that Toles selected with the ones the pundits have selected as the hottest races and the most visited states (<http://www.washington->

post.com/wp-srv/politics/elections/2004/charting.html).

On Oct. 18, Florida, Ohio and Pennsylvania were the three most visited states of both President Bush and Senator Kerry.

Study Rights

A Marshall-Brennan Fellow prepared the background paper and activity in this section. The focus is on factors that influence election outcome predictions. Students will:

- Articulate current issues of national and local concern to voters and themselves;
- Recognize and analyze voting trends in the various states and the District of Columbia;
- Predict which states will be key or battleground states for the 2008 election based on the results of the 2004 election;
- Discuss the possible factors that resulted in a candidate receiving a state’s electoral votes;
- Assess the value of concentrated campaigning only in a few states;
- Understand the importance of voting.

Discuss the issues of the 2004 campaign. See “Compare the Candidates” for suggested activities. Vote on the top five issues that students believe will influence how citizens will vote on Election Day.

Before Election Day, students should predict the candidate for which each state’s voters are likely to cast their ballots. They may use The Washington Post news reports and analyses; radio, television or Web political commentators; Web sites that provide the voting patterns of the 2000 and 2002 elections; and interviews with family and informed sources to determine which states

Political Ads

<http://livingroomcandidate.movingimage.us/index.php>

The Living Room Candidate

Study presidential campaign commercials, 1952-2004. Reflecting the use of the Internet as a campaign tool, this Web site also has a section, “The Desktop Candidate,” to view Internet commercials. Another section, “Shadow Campaign,” addresses ads by partisan groups not affiliated with the major parties. “Candidate Web Sites, 1996-2004” provide another perspective — how the candidate wants to be perceived and how he wants viewers to see his opponent. If you have any time after viewing this comprehensive site, check the “Online Resources” section.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/campaigns/adwatch2000.htm>

Ad Watch

The Post’s Media reporter Howard Kurtz evaluates the accuracy of political advertising. RealVideo presentation and text formats of ads allow visitors to view/read, make own evaluation and compare to that of Kurtz —and classmates.

<http://www.pbs.org/30secondcandidate/front.html>

The :30-second Candidate

This PBS Democracy Project includes “Historical Timeline,” “From Idea to Ad” and “Tricks of the Trade” (hands-on opportunity for students). The online material (based on 1999 Emmy Award-winning program) provides excellent study of tv-driven political campaigns.

http://www.uiowa.edu/~commstud/resources/pol_ads.html

Political Advertising

The University of Iowa provides a comprehensive source of political advertising, analysis and commentary.

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will vote for the Republican or Democratic candidate. Have them indicate their sources.

Give students “Who Determines Election Outcomes?” Identify the battleground states.

- What makes them key states?
- What criteria are used

to determine how a state’s citizens will vote?

- Where do Maryland, Virginia and D.C. fit in voting patterns?

• Does the media do any service to voters by promoting/covering these swing states more than other states?

Give students “Whose Vote Really Counts?” Use the data from the 2000 presidential vote to determine the margin of victory (in percentage) in the closest states. Show the margin on the chart under “Margin of victory.”

Have students record their predictions in the appropriate column. As students complete their charts, they should provide an explanation of why voters in each state will choose the selected candidate. Students might engage in the discussion from the third-person perspective (political commentator, news anchor, party official, pollster). Discourage students from engaging in arguments or dismissing others’ views. Emphasize the importance of being an informed and active citizen.

Discuss with students the importance of voting, even in a “non-battleground” state. Ask if they think the nationwide voter registration campaign might affect the election. For example, if the more than 43,000 newly registered voters in Virginia are primarily Democrats, might they change the result from the red to the blue column?

Discuss the amount of money that has been spent on campaign

advertisements. To what extent do these ads influence voters?

On November 3, the day after Election Day, or soon after, have students color in the map with the color of the political party for whom the majority of voters voted. Teachers of younger students may use an enlarged map and have students who correctly chose the winning political party color in the state. A reward might be given for the student(s) with the most predictions correct.

Compare the “Presidential Battlegrounds” with the actual election results. Washington Post articles, graphs and maps that detail the results of the election by state should be used. Were the majority of states predictable? How many of the states voted in an unexpected manner? What factors influenced voters in the week before the election?

Do students think the candidates made a productive decision when they concentrated campaign advertising in certain states, pulled it from others and broadcast very little in others? Why do campaigns focus more on television than on print advertising?

Students should pay particular attention to states in which the vote was close—these will likely be the battleground or key states for the 2008 election. Ask each student to predict the names of battleground states for the 2008 election. If students have portfolios that advance with them, put the predictions in there for reference four years from now.

Discuss the importance of being involved in the political process as a voter in the future and as an informed citizen at any age.

Count on It

Ever wonder how eligible citizens voted for George Washington or Abraham Lincoln—or Thomas Dewey, for that matter? Go to the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History. “Vote: The Machinery of Democracy” presents the history of voting methods in the United States.

Even though a wooden box in which marbles were placed was never used in a U.S. election, you can see the origin of “ballot.” The term is Italian in origin. *Ballotta* means “little ball.” From paper ballots to Stuffer’s ballot boxes and hanging chads, to gear-and-lever and electronic voting machines, the “patchwork of manual, mechanical, and electronic balloting” can be explored.

If you can’t get to the museum to see the exhibit in person, go online at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/vote/index.html>. Short commentary, illustrations and photographs give you the basics. Go to the “Resources” section for recommended books, articles and Web links that can add depth to a study of the mechanics of running an election.

The four posters (1948, 1956, 1964, and 1992) in the “Credits” section could stimulate an art project. Have students create posters to get out the vote.

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Does the D.C. Vote Count?

Discuss the enfranchisement of D.C. residents. Give students “D.C. Vote” for background. Why should non-D.C. residents care about the voting rights of D.C. residents? Additional resources to study this topic are found in “Extension” and at “A History of Democracy Denied” (<http://www.dcvote.org/rights/history.cfm>).

Extension

1. Study the First Amendment right to petition the government for grievances. This Freedom Forum First Amendment Center lesson uses the D.C. right to vote issue to explain this First

Amendment guaranteed right. Visit lesson plans (<http://www.freedomforum.org/templates/document.asp?documentID=13588>) and select lesson 7, “Will You Sign this Petition?” The files include “D.C. Vote: Pro & Con” and “Which Petition Would You Sign?” as well as historic study of the Magna Carta.

2. Online at www.washpost.com/nie, you will find Control of Congress, a guide to the 2002 campaign and election results. The guide includes the law-making process, the power and influence that come with control of Congress and different approaches to a study of the Congress as a legislative body.

Ads Push the Factual Envelope

By Howard Kurtz
Washington Post Staff Writer

As the presidential campaign careens toward the finish line, John F. Kerry is denouncing deep Social Security cutbacks that President Bush has not proposed. And Bush is slamming “government-run” health care that Kerry has refused to embrace.

Kerry says the president could bring back a military draft, despite Bush’s vociferous denials. Bush suggests Kerry regards terrorism as a “nuisance” when the senator merely said his goal is to reduce it to that level.

In their stump speeches and attack ads, the candidates have moved beyond assailing—critics would say distorting—their opponents’ positions and are

setting up straw men that they enthusiastically knock down. They are, some analysts say, campaigning against caricatures. ...

Exaggerations are as old as television advertising itself. The particularly bitter tone of the candidates’ ads in 2004—amplified by even tougher language by some independent “527” groups—has been building for months.

From March through August, Bush tried to bury Kerry under a blizzard of attack ads, some of them based on misleading charges, while the Massachusetts senator aired mainly positive ads. Even after turning negative in September, Kerry has pushed the factual envelope less often than the president—until recently. ...

Wednesday, October 20, 2004, A1

Every Four Years

<http://www.newseum.org/everyfour-years/>

Every Four Years

Newseum online exhibit takes a look at campaign coverage from the front porch to the caboose and America’s living rooms and virtual front porches. Look at 100 years of campaigning through technological developments: 1896 to 1924, The Rise of America’s Newspapers; 1828-1948, Network Radio Era; 1952-1976, Network Television Era; 1980-2000, 24-Hour News Era.

<http://www.trumanlibrary.org/museum/4years/>

Every Four Years: Electing a President

Provides online teasers for the Truman Library special exhibit. Lesson plans include “1948 Whistle Stop Tour,” “Analyzing a Political Comic Book Prepared from the 1948 Campaign,” and “Political Cartoons.” Also check out Kids Page material.

<http://www.wrhs.org/template.asp?id=507>

Every Four Years: Ohio’s Role in Making of the American President

If going through Ohio on a family trip, Sept. 25, 2004-Feb. 27, 2005, stop at Western Reserve Historical Society for this exhibit featuring the eight presidents who were from Ohio, the “Mother of Presidents”: William Henry Harrison, Ulysses S. Grant, Rutherford B. Hayes, James Garfield, Benjamin Harrison, William Howard Taft, Warren Harding (who ran against fellow Ohioan James Cox in 1920) and William McKinley.

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Analysis of Campaign Advertising

Select a political television commercial of at least 30 seconds. View it one to four times to complete the analysis that follows. Watch and listen carefully.

STEP ONE: WORDS, SIGHTS AND SOUNDS

Divide your paper into three lengthwise columns. Title one WORDS for those of the narrator and other vocalizations; title a second column SIGHTS for the visual images presented; title a third column SOUNDS for any sounds other than the human voice.

Note those that take place in the first five to seven seconds, those that take place in the middle section, those that take place in the final five to seven seconds.

STEP TWO: ANALYSIS OF THE FIRST TIME SEGMENT

What mood has been created in the first five to seven seconds?

Do we hear the voice of the candidate? A generic voice—male or female, that of a child or older adult?

Does the candidate appear immediately? If not, what mood is created before he or she appears?

If the candidate does not appear, what is seen? What do you believe to be the visual intent?

Is there music? If not, what is heard and what is its emotional impact? Identify the music if you can.

Does the background music appeal to an older or younger generation?

STEP THREE: ANALYSIS OF THE MIDDLE TIME SEGMENT

What was the pace of words, sights and sounds in this section? Slow and introspective? Fast with a barrage of visual and aural stimuli? Conversational? Describe the colors in the ad. What image are they designed to convey?

Is the appeal to common sense or to your five senses? Is the appeal to reason or to emotion?

Has the candidate appeared or do others speak about and for the candidate? If it is others, who are they? Note their clothes, their accent, their race and where they are filmed.

If the candidate does appear, is the first image positive or negative in its impact on you? Why? What image is the clothing worn by the candidate designed to convey? Is the candidate presented as sincere, vigorous, knowledgeable, glamorous, trustworthy or what other quality of character? Does the candidate project as one who is experienced, innovative, a mediator or a leader?

Is the message of the advertisement apparent? Does it focus on one issue?

STEP FOUR: ANALYSIS OF THE LAST TIME SEGMENT

Has the political commercial employed any of the advertising strategies used to sell other products—sex appeal, testimonials, humor, name-calling, identification with a famous or well-known person?

The objective of the commercial is to persuade voters. How is this objective punctuated or highlighted in the last five to seven seconds? Has this been done through emotion, facts or slogans? Has the commercial presented what is right or what must change?

Do you note any change in the demographic profile to whom this ad is designed to appeal? Did music change? Were many ages represented by the end? Races? Sector of society?

STEP FIVE: FINAL ANALYSIS

Write a 150- to 250-word analysis of the entire 30-second political commercial. This may include as many of the steps one through four considerations as you find pertinent to the particular advertisement.

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Origin of the Species

Up from the Ooze, Into the Mud—a Brief History of American Political Evolution

By DAVID VON DREHLE
Washington Post Staff Writer

An excerpt from Von Drehle's July 25 The Washington Post Magazine article in which he relates the history of America's major political parties.

Once upon a time in America, there was a political party that believed in a strong central government, high taxes and bold public works projects. This party was popular on the college campuses of New England and was the overwhelming choice of African American voters.

It was the Republican Party.

The Republicans got started as a counterweight to the other party: the party of low taxes and limited government, the party suspicious of Eastern elites, the party that thought Washington should butt out of the affairs of private property owners.

The Democrats.

The fact that our two parties have swapped platforms, rhetoric and core ideals so completely might be spun, by some people, as a shortcoming. Some people might paint the stark soullessness of our parties—which appear happy to argue the opposite tomorrow of what they argued yesterday, if that's what it takes to keep the argument going—as somehow a bad thing. After all, party-bashing is a surefire crowd pleaser.

In good times and bad, through crisis and calm, Americans have hated the parties. George Washington himself called them “truly [the] worst enemy” of popular government; his sensible veep, John Adams, lamented them, too. “There is nothing I dread so much as a division of the Republic into two great parties, each arranged under its leader and converting measures into opposition

to each other,” Adams wrote, even before the Revolutionary War had been won.

Roughly a century later, Theodore Roosevelt was sounding the theme, heaping scorn on Republicans and Democrats alike. “The old parties are husks,” he declared, “with no real soul within either, divided on artificial lines, boss-ridden and privilege-controlled, each a jumble of incongruous elements, and neither daring to speak out wisely and fearlessly on what should be said on the vital issues of the day.”

These days, Americans hate the parties because they are too polarized. Texas billionaire Ross Perot based his impressive independent 1992 presidential bid on a promise to end party squabbling. We also hate them because they are not polarized enough. In 2000, consumer advocate Ralph Nader justified his race for president by saying that Democrat and Republican were just two names for the same old thing.

But I'm here to say: Let's not go overboard. True, our feuding parties may be to blame for the gridlock, ill will, finger-pointing and score-settling that besmirches our current civic life. Also for the failure to project a clear foreign policy, the inability to control spending in an economic downturn and the frittering away of precious years as the ticking time bomb of health care and retirement costs threatens the prosperity of future generations.

Also for the heedless destruction of reputations, the facile reduction of genuine crises to mere debating points, the equally facile inflation of mere debating points into alleged crises and the subversion of national priorities to base factionalism and personal greed.

Who among us is without a flaw or two? ...

Unlike Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson lived long enough to see that the partisanship of their youth meant little compared with the values that endure: concord, trust and mutual respect. In his retirement years, Jefferson renewed his friendship with Federalist John Adams. The old rifts were repaired as the two men traded warm and wise letters, reflecting on all that had happened since they had worked together on the Declaration of Independence. In one of those unbelievable strokes by history's screenwriter, Adams died in Massachusetts precisely 50 years after he had signed that crucial document. It was July 4, 1826. They say his last words were, “Thomas Jefferson lives.” The spirit was correct, though the words were wrong, for Jefferson had died that same morning in Virginia.

“We acted in perfect harmony thro' a long and perilous contest for our liberty and independence,” Jefferson wrote to Adams in 1813. “A constitution has been acquired which, tho' neither of us think perfect, yet both consider as competent to render our fellow-citizens the happiest and the securest on whom the sun has ever shone. If we do not think exactly alike as to its imperfections, it matters little to our country which, after devoting to it long lives of disinterested labor, we have delivered over to our successors in life, who will be able to take care of it, and of themselves.”

If we do not think exactly alike ... it matters little. Such brilliance! It reminds me of one more thing to be said in favor of our much-maligned parties. Now and then, they produce such leaders. Not as often as we would like, surely. But, so far, often enough.

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Where They Stand

As voters decide for whom they will cast their ballots on November 2, they will be comparing the records of the candidates and their stands on issues. What issues do you consider to be the most important?

- State the stand taken by each candidate.
- What is the most significant difference in the positions taken?

| ISSUE | GEORGE W. BUSH | JOHN F. KERRY | THIRD-PARTY CANDIDATE |
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Outlook: Mean Season; Why the Rage, and Not Real Debate

Elie Wiesel

This clamorous and alarming election campaign, which should inspire and mobilize—on both sides—all that America has to offer in the way of political courage, open mindedness and vision for a bright future . . . well, I must sadly admit that it disappoints and depresses me.

Has it always been this way? Have we always had adversaries hurling insults at each other rather than allowing debate and analysis to influence undecided voters? Should we be afraid to trust the public to comprehend the issues in depth? One could almost say that the goal is not to inspire but to incite, not to inform but to dumb down.

I'm not talking about the candidates themselves. I have deep esteem for one and great respect for the other. They represent two political ideologies, two philosophies for this society, and each of us is free to choose the one with whom we identify.

But why the disagreeable, offensive tone that emanates from this event?

I've been living in this magnificent democracy since 1956. As a foreign correspondent for some time, I had the opportunity to watch the two parties campaign in a number of presidential races: John Kennedy vs. Richard Nixon, Lyndon Johnson vs. Barry Goldwater, Jimmy Carter vs. Gerald Ford. I have watched the elections of Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton.

In every case, the supporters and spokesmen of both the incumbent and the opposition expressed themselves with ardor, conviction and dedication.

But never with such violence as we see today.

Too many Democrats feel hatred—yes, hatred—for President Bush, and too many Republicans fail to hide their contempt for Sen. John Kerry. These two sentiments should be excluded during electoral contests.

Once upon a time, politics was a noble pursuit. Working for the polis, the city, the republic or the community signified a desire to give back what one had received. One had to be worthy of this honor. And many leaders were.

Nowadays the word "politics" evokes at best a contemptuous smile. We usually say it with a smirk. We instinctively suspect politicians of every sin, of any kind of scheme, of all sorts of manipulation. We consider them somewhat deceitful, a bit hypocritical, more than a little egotistical and certainly consumed with ambition. We watch them as though we expect to surprise them at any moment in flagrante delicto.

But politics is like money or love: Everything depends on what you make of it. For some, it's a matter of arrogance and power. For others it's more of a passion for justice, sacrifice and generosity.

Why this need, among people on both sides, to let the discussion be dominated by nastiness and ugliness? And why don't they listen to the voices calling for an end to this slide into the gutter? Do we care about what our children think as they watch this on television? What are they to make of the exchanges, insults and attacks among politicians? Why, once they finish school, should they choose public service, which not so long ago was a praiseworthy endeavor?

Of course political campaigns in the past had their share of verbal onslaughts, unfortunate remarks, and regrettable, simple and even crude comments. Politicians talk a lot, often too much; they say things that they later regret. But these were the exceptions, not the rule. Abiding by unwritten laws, the candidates and their colleagues sought to appeal to all that was decent, civilized and cultured in their rivals, and not to that which made them ugly.

We don't ask that they be prophetic orators, linguistic goldsmiths or inspired moralists; we simply ask that they not take voters to be ignorant or barely civilized.

Why do they address us as though we are children or dimwits? To get us to reject this or that candidate and his political positions, it would suffice to show us their flaws and weaknesses. Why, in personalizing the conflict, do they try to shame one another? For that matter, why do they all but deny the past of one candidate and negate the honor of the other?

This presidential campaign is full of verbal violence. In fact, it's bursting with it. Instead of elevating the debate, this campaign is debasing it. Instead of examining the serious problems of a society in crisis, it's treating them in a superficial way. Rather than comparing one philosophical doctrine with its counterpart, the campaigns are succumbing to propaganda—propaganda that is striking for its excessive anger and its lack of elegance, generosity and even simple courtesy.

Nonetheless, the two candidates are right to call this election one of the most, perhaps even the most, important in recent American history. What's at stake is more than the victory of one party, and even more than the resolution of the situation in Iraq. What's at stake is the kind of world that will be shaped by the vote of the American people in November.

So many questions await their response, so many wounds must be healed, so much anguish weighs upon humanity. The whole world agrees that international terrorism represents a mortal menace for many countries and cultures. How do we proceed to uncover it, isolate it and conquer it? How do we understand its roots? Is poverty the cause? Is it nationalist or religious fanaticism?

America is waiting for an authentic and superior national debate on all these points.

How long must we wait?

The writer is a humanities professor at Boston University. This article was translated from French by Zofia Smardz.

American First Ladies

Every First Lady since Martha Washington has defined the role. Whether reclusive or gregarious, homespun or sophisticated, each woman brings experience, expectation and energy to an increasingly demanding position. See what you know about these exceptional First Ladies.

_____ 1. First woman to receive a degree in geology from Stanford University was
a. Hilary Rodham Clinton
b. Lucretia Rudolph Garfield
c. Lou Henry Hoover
d. Patricia Ryan Nixon

_____ 2. Which First Lady sent the first personal message using the Morse telegraph?
a. Abigail Adams
b. Eliza McCardle Johnson
c. Jane Pierce
d. Dolley Madison

_____ 3. Which future First Lady had a part in saving the life of Lafayette's wife?
a. Elizabeth Kortright Monroe
b. Martha Washington
c. Rachel Jackson
d. Letitia Christian Tyler

_____ 4. Which First Lady is *least* likely to be given an award for best parties?
a. Sarah Polk
b. Lou Hoover
c. Julia Dent Grant
d. Edith Kermit Carow Roosevelt

_____ 5. Who is the first First Lady to host the annual White House Thanksgiving dinner?
a. Mary Todd Lincoln
b. Sarah Polk
c. Lucy Ware Webb Hayes
d. Elizabeth Virginia Wallace Truman

_____ 6. Who is the only First Lady to be born outside the United States?
a. Jacqueline Lee Bouvier Kennedy
b. Eliza McCardle Johnson
c. Louisa Catherine Johnson Adams
d. Laura Welch Bush

_____ 7. Which First Lady began the custom of playing "Hail to the Chief" whenever the president appears at a state function?
a. Frances Folsom Cleveland
b. Harriet Lane
c. Hannah Van Buren
d. Julia Gardiner Tyler

_____ 8. Which of the following is *not* a widow who married a future president?
a. Abigail Fillmore
b. Martha Jefferson
c. Dolley Madison
d. Martha Washington

_____ 9. How many First Ladies became widows during their husband's term of office?
a. Four
b. Five
c. Seven
d. Nine

_____ 10. Having traveled with her husband and children to the Philippines, China and Japan before he became president, this First Lady requested Japanese cherry trees be planted around the Tidal Basin.
a. Helen Herron Taft
b. Ida McKinley
c. Mamie Geneva Doud Eisenhower
d. Anna T. S. Harrison

11. Pair the First Lady with a project she promoted.

- | | |
|--|---|
| _____ 1. Barbara Pierce Bush, 1925- | a. Improve housing in D.C.'s "slums" |
| _____ 2. Rosalynn Smith Carter, 1927- | b. Nature, wildflowers, environment |
| _____ 3. Elizabeth Bloomer Ford, 1918- | c. Family literacy, volunteerism |
| _____ 4. Lady Bird Johnson, 1912- | d. White House as museum of American history, arts |
| _____ 5. Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy, 1929-1994 | e. Breast cancer awareness, treatment for drug and alcohol dependency |
| _____ 6. Ellen Axson Wilson, 1860-1914 | f. Performing arts; aid mental health |

12. Recent First Ladies received a more formal education and had a career. Pair the First Lady with her career.

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| _____ 1. Laura Welch Bush, 1946- | a. Lawyer |
| _____ 2. Hilary Rodham Clinton, 1947- | b. Actress |
| _____ 3. Grace Anna Goodhue Coolidge, 1879-1957 | c. Newspaper photographer |
| _____ 4. Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy, 1929-1994 | d. Teacher and librarian |
| _____ 5. Patricia Ryan Nixon, 1912-1993 | e. High school teacher |
| _____ 6. Nancy Davis Reagan, 1921- | f. Educator of hearing impaired |

Answers: American First Ladies

1. C. Lou Henry (1874-1944) graduated from Leland Stanford University before marrying Herbert Hoover in 1899. She then traveled the world with her mining engineer husband and two sons. [<http://www.whitehouse.gov/history/firstladies/lh31.html>]

2. D. Dolley Madison (1768-1849) sent her message in 1844.

3. A. Elizabeth Kortright Monroe (1768-1830). President Washington appointed James Monroe United States Minister to France in 1794. France was in the midst of revolution. With only her servants in her carriage, Mrs. Monroe visited Madame Lafayette in prison. Madame Lafayette, expecting death on the guillotine, was set free when the American interest in her was known. Popular in France, Elizabeth Monroe became known as la belle Americaine.

4. A. Sarah Polk, a devout Presbyterian, banned dancing, card playing and alcoholic beverage from the White House.

b. No. Lou Hoover loved to entertain. She and Herbert often gave dinner parties.

c. No. Julia Dent Grant, after years of hardship due to her husband's failures in business, farming and military service postings, entertained often and lavishly.

d. No. When her husband was president, she aided him in making the White House the "social center" of the land. Edith and Theodore Roosevelt presided over formal occasions and small dinner parties.

5. B. Sarah Polk (James Polk served 1845-1849)

a. No, but Abraham Lincoln and subsequent presidents intermittently received Thanksgiving turkeys.

c. No. Affectionately known as "Mother Lucy," Lucy Hayes did minister to the wounded and comfort the dying men under her husband's command in the 23rd Ohio Volunteer Infantry. She was

later called "Lemonade Lucy" for her stand on temperance.

d. No, but the first National Thanksgiving Turkey was presented in 1947 to President Harry Truman.

6. C. Louisa Catherine Johnson Adams. Louisa was born in England. Her mother was English and her father an American. She did not come to the United States until four years after marrying John Quincy Adams. [<http://www.whitehouse.gov/WH/glimpse/firstladies/html/la6.html>]

7. D. Julia Gardiner Tyler, the second wife of John Tyler, 10th president of the United States, April 6, 1841-March 3, 1845.

a. No. The earliest extant recording of "Hail to the Chief" [<http://www.lib.msu.edu/vincent/president/cleveland.htm>] was performed at a 1892 campaign speech by Grover Cleveland.

b. No. The niece and ward of the only bachelor president brought liveliness and discretion to the White House. While serving as Buchanan's hostess when he was minister to the Court of St. James she had learned about pomp, but the times called for warmth and diplomacy.

c. No. "Hail to the Chief" [<http://gi.grolier.com/presidents/gallery/hail.html>] was first played at the inauguration of Martin Van Buren, March 4, 1837.

8. A. Abigail Powers Fillmore (1798-1853) was 21 when she met 19-year-old Millard Fillmore in frontier New York.

They married seven years later when he had established his law practice.

b. No. Martha Wayles Skelton was a 22-year-old widow, heiress and mother when Thomas Jefferson courted and married her.

c. No. John Todd, Jr., died of yellow fever, leaving his wife and young son. Four years later, Dolley married Representative James Madison from Virginia even though he was 17 years older.

d. No. When wealthy Daniel Park Custis died, his wife Martha had two young children to raise; she married George Washington two years later.

9. C. Four presidents were assassinated (Lincoln, Garfield, McKinley, Kennedy) and three died while in office (William Henry Harrison, Taylor, FDR).

10. A. In 1900, Helen "Nellie" Taft, William Taft and their three children lived in the Philippines when he took charge of the American civil government there. She enjoyed travel to Japan, China and other international destinations. Read Recollections of Full Years, her autobiography.

c. No. Although Mamie loved pink and had many postings as an Army wife, the cherry trees were well established when "Ike" Eisenhower was inaugurated in 1953.

11. 1. c, 2. f, 3. e, 4. b, 5. d, 6. a.

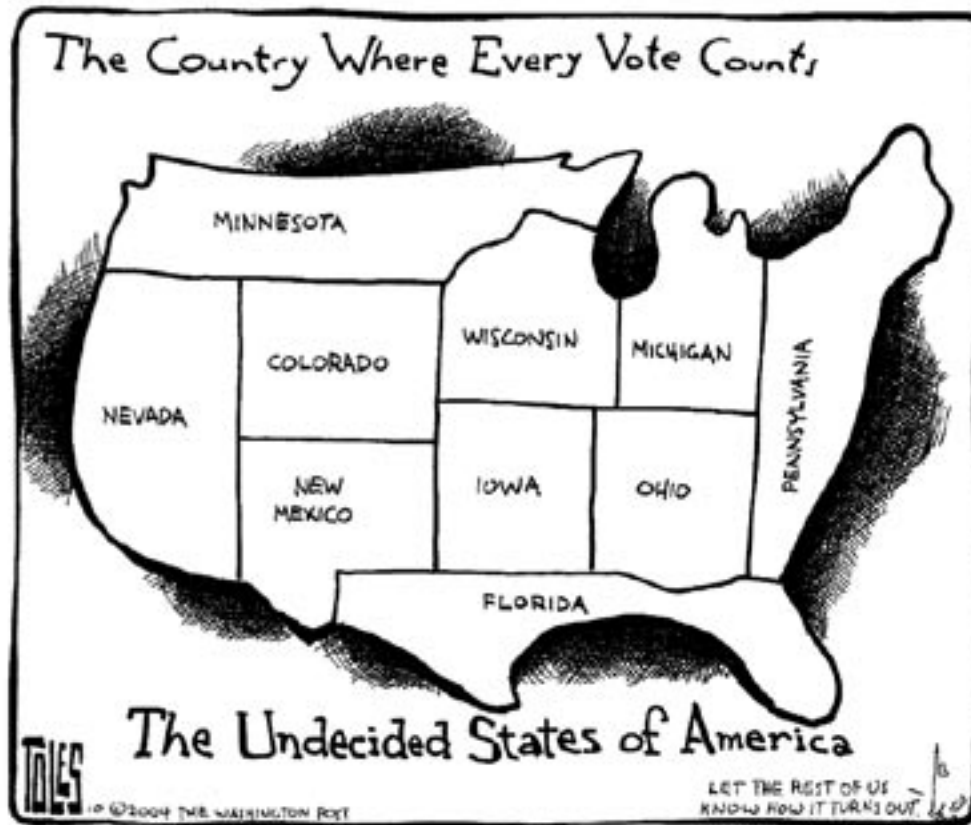
12. 1. d, 2. a, 3. f, 4. c, 5. e, 6. b.



First Lady Laura Bush responds to applause at the United Jewish Communities 2004 International Lion of Judah Conference Oct. 18, 2004, in Washington, D.C.

An Integrated Curriculum For The Washington Post Newspaper In Education Program

The Country Where Every Vote Counts



There are 50 states and the District of Columbia with registered voters and electoral votes to be cast. Most political commentators mention 18 battleground states. In “The Country Where Every Vote Counts,” which appeared in the October 18, 2004, Washington Post, Toles has reduced the number to ten.

1. Why do you think Toles has highlighted ten states?
2. Does the size of the state have any relationship to the number of electoral votes it has? To money spent on campaign advertisements? To visits by the candidates? Something else?
3. What is the significance of each state that is selected?
4. Editorial cartoonists use few words. What concept is communicated through the title?
5. Does the sub-title counter that idea, re-enforce it, or add an additional layer of irony?
6. In the lower right corner is the cartoonist (or his alter ego). Who are “the rest of us”?
7. In a paragraph, state the message that Toles conveys in this cartoon.
8. In the following paragraph tell why you agree, disagree or partially agree with Toles.

Whose Vote Really Counts

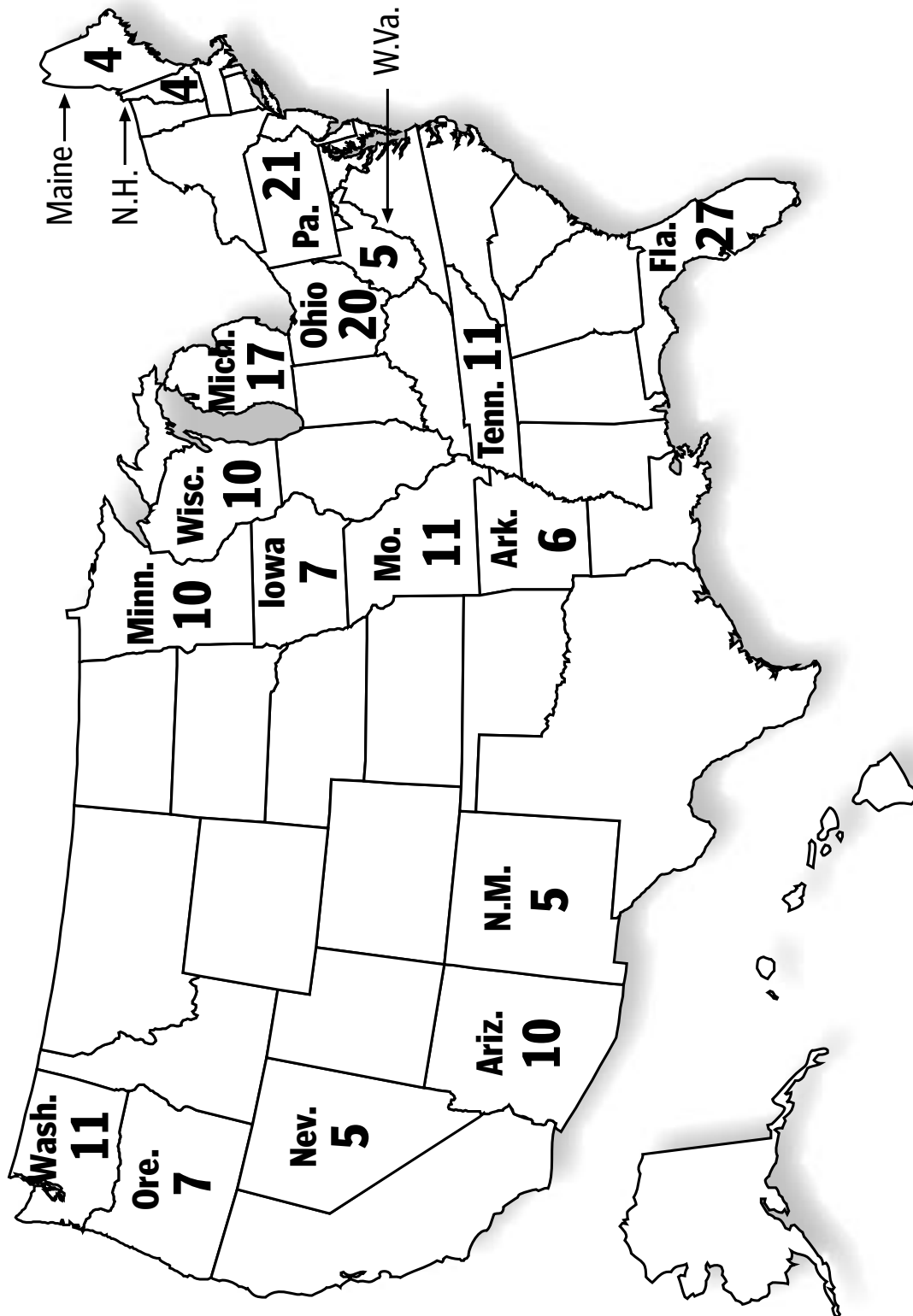
| 2000 PRESIDENTIAL VOTE | Margin of victory | | | |
|------------------------|-------------------|-----------|----------|------------|
| | Closest states | | Democrat | Republican |
| Florida | 2,912,253 | 2,912,790 | | |
| New Mexico | 286,783 | 286,418 | | |
| Wisconsin | 1,242,987 | 1,237,279 | | |
| Iowa | 638,517 | 634,373 | | |
| Oregon | 720,342 | 713,577 | | |
| New Hampshire | 266,348 | 273,559 | | |
| Minnesota | 1,168,266 | 1,109,659 | | |
| Missouri | 1,111,138 | 1,189,924 | | |
| Nevada | 279,978 | 301,575 | | |
| Ohio | 2,183,628 | 2,350,363 | | |
| Tennessee | 981,720 | 1,061,949 | | |
| Pennsylvania | 2,485,967 | 2,281,127 | | |
| Maine | 319,951 | 286,616 | | |
| Michigan | 2,170,418 | 1,953,139 | | |
| Arkansas | 422,768 | 472,940 | | |
| Washington | 1,247,652 | 1,108,864 | | |
| Arizona | 685,341 | 781,652 | | |
| West Virginia | 295,497 | 336,475 | | |

2004 PRESIDENTIAL VOTE

| State | Prediction | Outcome | State | Prediction | Outcome |
|--|----------------------|---------|-------|----------------------|---------|
| AL | | | MT | | |
| AK | | | NE | | |
| AZ | | | NV | | |
| AR | | | NH | | |
| CA | | | NJ | | |
| CO | | | NM | | |
| CT | | | NY | | |
| DE | | | NC | | |
| DC | | | ND | | |
| FL | | | OH | | |
| GA | | | OK | | |
| HI | | | OR | | |
| ID | | | PA | | |
| IL | | | RI | | |
| IN | | | SC | | |
| IA | | | SD | | |
| KS | | | TN | | |
| KY | | | TX | | |
| LA | | | UT | | |
| ME | | | VT | | |
| MD | | | VA | | |
| MA | | | WA | | |
| MI | | | WV | | |
| MN | | | WI | | |
| MS | | | WY | | |
| MO | | | | | |
| | Total Correct | | | Total Correct | |
| Legend: D = Democrat (Blue) R = Republican (Red) | | | | | |

An Integrated Curriculum For The Washington Post Newspaper In Education Program

Electoral Votes



Who Determines Election Outcomes?

Are President George W. Bush and Senator John F. Kerry campaigning for your vote? Not if you live in one of the 32 states considered an invisible state or the District of Columbia. What makes a state “invisible”?

The Red, Swing and Blue

Based on the results of the 2000 presidential election, states have been categorized as either a Republican (red) or Democrat (blue) state depending on which candidate won the states’ electoral votes. Of the fifty states and the District of Columbia, thirty-two states and D.C. were clearly dominated by the Republican candidate, George

Bush, or the Democratic candidate, Albert Gore. The winning

YOU AND YOUR RIGHTS

political party in each of these states won well over 6% of the total popular vote. For example, D.C. and Maryland voted 90% and 58%, respectively, for Gore (Democrat), while Virginia voted 54% for Bush (Republican) of the total votes cast for these candidates. The 2004 winner of these states is predicted to be the same as in the 2000 election. Efforts to campaign for votes in these states are minimal, money spent on advertising is reduced or eliminated, and the states receive little to no attention by political commentators, making them essentially “invisible.”

The eighteen remaining states had voter margins of less than 6% in the 2000 presidential election. In some states, the difference was a matter of a few hundred votes. For instance, in Florida, Bush only had 537 more votes than Gore of the 5,825,043 total votes cast for them. Narrow margins between the winner and loser make a prediction of the 2004 vote winner in these states

almost impossible. In these eighteen “swing” states, either candidate could be the victor. The swing states are important to both Bush and Kerry because they will ultimately determine who will be the president of the United States for the next four years, unless by some miracle voters in the predictable states have a change of heart. Key states are also called “battleground” states because winning the vote in them will not be easy. Bush and Kerry will have to fight for the votes.

The Battleground States

The eighteen key states were evenly divided between Bush and Gore. The Republican nine resulted in 95 electoral votes: Arkansas (6), Arizona (8), Florida (25), Missouri (11), New Hampshire (4), Nevada (4), Ohio (21), Tennessee (11) and West Virginia (5). The Democratic nine resulted in 96 electoral votes: Iowa (7), Maine (4), Michigan (18), Minnesota (10), New Mexico (5), Oregon (7), Pennsylvania (23), Washington (11) and Wisconsin (11).

Since the last election some changes have taken place in electoral vote distribution. The 2000 decennial census resulted in a recalculation of the electoral votes for the following battleground states: Arizona (10), Florida (27), Michigan (17), Nevada (5), Ohio (20), Pennsylvania (21), and Wisconsin (10). If each political party wins these same states in the 2004 election, the total electoral votes would be 99 and 92, respectively.

The battleground states are the focus of the 2004 campaign for the White House until November 2, 2004, Election Day. Because thirty-two states and the District are already predetermined Republican or

Democrat, extensive media coverage is devoted to the candidates’ efforts to sway the voters in their favor in the key states and to political commentators’ debates about how voters will cast their ballots on Election Day. Kerry and Bush are spending millions of dollars on advertisements that promote their respective campaigns for the presidency and attack the opponent’s positions. Countless hours are spent traveling to and from the key states to rally with voters, calling voters, passing out campaign literature and even knocking on doors.

The Electoral Votes

In the race for the presidency, Bush and Kerry are focusing on obtaining 270 of the 538 total electoral votes. In a majority of states, the winner of the popular vote determines the winner of the electoral votes. No federal law requires an elector to cast an electoral vote in line with the popular vote; however, most states impose penalties for electors whose vote is inconsistent with the will of the people.

The focus on the battleground states emphasizes the importance of voting and how close the presidential race is this year. The lack of attention paid to other states only reflects the candidates’ confidence in voters’ support of a candidate. All votes count.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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An Integrated Curriculum For The Washington Post Newspaper In Education Program

D.C. Voting Rights

The history of voting rights in the District of Columbia is unique. Citizens who resided in the seat of national government, formed from parts of Maryland and Virginia, initially voted as citizens of either state. After the relocation of the nation's capital from Philadelphia to Washington, D.C., in 1800, Congress immediately passed the Organic Acts of 1801, stripping D.C. residents of the right to vote and giving Congress full control over the District. This move ensured the autonomy of the federal government by preventing the control or influence of any one state.

In 1961, the adoption of the 23rd Amendment to the United States Constitution returned the right to vote for president and vice president to D.C. residents. Even this right is still restricted. Residents are allowed to choose electors to vote for the office of president and vice president as if D.C. were a state, but D.C. may never have more electors than the state with the lowest population. D.C. has never had more than three electoral votes despite its population growth.

D.C. residents are allowed only to send a non-voting delegate to Congress, further preventing full representation in government. American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands also have a nonvoting delegate in the House of Representatives, but only D.C. residents pay federal taxes. Full representation was approved by Congress in the Voting Rights Amendment of 1978, but the Amendment failed to win enough support from the several states by the 1985 deadline. Legislation is routinely introduced promoting voting representation for the District like the No Taxation Without Representation Act of 2003 (S.617,

H.R.1285), the District of Columbia-Maryland Reunion Act (H.R. 381), the District of Columbia Fairness in Representation Act (H.R. 4640), and the District of Columbia Voting Rights Restoration Act of 2004.

Currently, the District's nonvoting delegate to the House of Representatives is Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton. Lack of a vote on the House floor limits her to garnering support for the interests of D.C. residents from her colleagues in the House and Senate. In addition, lack of representation in the Senate prevents the District from participating in impeachment trials, the ratification of treaties, and the confirmation of presidential appointments for ambassadorships, Cabinet offices and federal judgeships. Although Congresswoman Norton can introduce bills, be heard at hearings and can vote in committee, the fate of D.C. residents is ultimately in the hands of representatives from other states. For example, congressional control over the District recently allowed Representative Mark Souder from Indiana to introduce the D.C. Personal Protection Act that proposed lifting the handgun ban in the District, removing certain criminal penalties for handgun possession and even preventing D.C.'s elected officials from enacting laws or regulations contrary to the Act. Despite these limitations, Norton remains dedicated and optimistic.

"There is almost nothing I can't do in the House, particularly given my voting rights in committee where all of the action is. The District's fundamental disempowerment lies in the Senate," stated Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton at a hearing on the four D.C. voting rights bills on June 23, 2004.

In the Know

Battleground state: See swing state.

Census: A count of people

Decennial: Every ten years

Delegate: One who represents or acts for another person or group

Election or electoral process: Method by which a person is elected to public office

Elector: A member of the Electoral College chosen to elect the president and vice president. Each elector casts one vote.

Electoral College: The body of electors chosen from each state to formally elect the president and vice president by casting votes based on the popular vote

Electoral vote: An elector's selection for president or vice president. Each state gets one electoral vote for each of its representatives in the House, and one electoral vote for each of its two senators. The number of representatives in the House is based on the census.

Invisible state: A state whose future voting pattern can be predicted by looking at the immediate past election; a state that is not the focus on intense campaigning

Political commentator: An individual who offers an opinion or comments on politics

Political party: Group of individuals who agree on certain issues

Popular vote: Vote of the population as a whole

Swing state: State in which no political party has a majority of the votes

Vote: An expression of an individual's will, opinion or choice

An Integrated Curriculum For The Washington Post Newspaper In Education Program

Academic Content Standards

This lesson addresses academic content standards of Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia.

Maryland

*Social Studies, Grade 5,
Political Science.*

Students will explain the importance of civic participation as a citizen of the United States:

- Analyze the usefulness of various sources of information used to make political decisions;
- Describe the ways people can participate in the political process including voting, petitioning elected officials, and volunteering.

*Social Studies, Grade 8,
Political Science.*

Students will describe the development of political parties and their effects on elections and political life.

A complete list of State Content Standards of Maryland can be found at <http://www.mdk12.org/mspp/standards/>.

Virginia

Civics and Economics.

The student will demonstrate knowledge of the political process at the local, state, and national levels of government by

- describing the functions of political parties;
- comparing the similarities and differences of political parties;
- analyzing campaigns for elective office, with emphasis on the role of the media.

Virginia and U.S. Government.

The student will demonstrate knowledge of local, state, and national elections by

- describing the organization, role, and constituencies of political parties;
- describing the nomination and election process;
- examining campaign funding and spending;
- analyzing the influence of media coverage, campaign advertising, and public opinion polls;
- identifying how amendments extend the right to vote;

A complete list of Standards of Learning of Virginia can be found on the Web at <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/>.

Washington, D.C.

Reading/English Language Arts, Grade 4, Language for Social Communication.

The student evaluates the role of the media in focusing attention and in forming an opinion.

*Social Studies, Grade 8,
Political Ideas, Turning Points, and Institutions.*

The student analyzes the impact of the media on the behavior of individuals and groups.

Reading/English Language Arts, Grade 9, Language for Social Communication.

The student understands the role of the media in disseminating information; evaluates the overall effectiveness of the media in shaping public opinion.

*Social Studies, Grade 11,
Cultural History: Tradition, Creativity, and Diversity.*

The student debates U.S. society—multicultural or cultural—by analyzing the effects of mass advertising, mass media, consumption, and entertainment.

American Government.

The student explains the origins, functions and platforms of the major political parties in the United States.

A complete list of Standards for Teaching and Learning of the District of Columbia Public Schools can be found at <http://www.k12.dc.us>.