

*Election* 2012



**U.S. Embassy Nassau**

**The Bahamas**

# Every Vote Counts

Everyone has a civic responsibility to vote. All citizens within the United States over the age of 18 who meet certain state requirements may vote in Federal elections. It has taken some time for this right to be available to all people. When the United State was first formed, only white male landowners over the age of 21 could vote in some states.

The 15<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> Amendments to the Constitution have granted voting privileges to more citizens.

**The 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution granted African American men the right to vote by declaring that the "right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude."**

**The 17<sup>th</sup> Amendment established the direct election of United States Senators by popular vote**

**The 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment established women's suffrage**

**The 26<sup>th</sup> Amendment established the official voting age to be 18 years old.**

People are often heard to say, "Why should I vote? I'm only one vote; I can't really make a difference."

## What is the Electoral College?

Voters in the United States do not directly elect the President or the Vice-President. Instead, they actually choose electors who support a candidate. The winning electors meet in their state capitals in December after the November presidential election and cast their votes for President and Vice President. A candidate must receive a majority of the 538 total electoral votes in order to win the election. This means a candidate needs at least 270 electoral votes to win the election. What if no one gets a majority of votes? This could result if there is a popular third-party candidate to challenge the candidates from the two major political parties. If this happens, the House of Representatives chooses the President from among the top three candidates, with each state delegation receiving one vote.

## **How did the Framers (writers) of the U.S. Constitution create the Executive Branch?**

The executive branch of our government carries out and enforces the laws passed by Congress. For example, Congress might pass a law to build a highway across the country. The executive branch has to carry out the law. The President of the United States is the head of the executive branch. The Framers had many discussions about how much power to give to the president. They did not want to make the executive branch too weak or too strong. The Framers wanted to do two things. They wanted to give the president enough power to carry out and enforce the laws. But, they did not want to give the president too much power. If they did, a president might be able to gain unlimited power. With unlimited power, the president might become a dictator.

### **Qualifications and Powers Presidential Qualifications:**

- Must be a natural-born citizen of the United States (can be born abroad of parents who are American citizens)
- Must be at least 35 years of age
- Must be a resident of the United States for at least 14 years (but not necessarily the 14 years preceding the election)

### **The Powers of the President:**

According to Article II of the Constitution, the president has the following powers:

- Serve as commander and chief of the armed forces
- Conduct foreign policy
- Make treaties
- Grant reprieves and pardons for federal offenses (except impeachment)
- Convene Congress in special sessions
- Receive ambassadors
- Ensure that the laws be faithfully executed
- Veto bills
- Approve legislation
- Appoint ambassadors, judges, and high officials
- Appoint officials to lesser offices
- Maintain order in the country
- Address Congress and the nation

## Who Can Run?

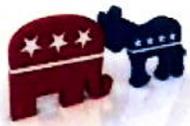
The President and Vice-President are elected every four years. They must be at least 35 years of age, they must be native-born citizens of the United States, and they must have been residents of the U.S. for at least 14 years. A president can only serve two terms (eight years) in office.

## How Do the Political Parties Choose Their Candidates?

That's up to the political parties. Most political parties hold conventions, which are large meetings attended by "delegates." Some delegates are selected by state "primary" elections, some are selected by state caucuses (very much like primaries, except with public voting instead of secret ballots), and some are chosen for their prominence in the party. A majority of delegate votes is needed to win the party's nomination. In most cases, the delegates let their chosen presidential candidate select a vice-presidential candidate.

## Five Functions of Political Parties

1. Nominating candidates
2. Informing/Activating supporters
3. Bonding agent function
4. Governing
5. Keeping an eye on the other political party



## Candidates for President and Vice-President Run Together

In the general election, each candidate for President runs together with a candidate for Vice-President on a "ticket." Voters select one ticket to vote for; they can't choose a presidential candidate from one ticket and a vice-presidential candidate from another ticket.

USA  
ELECTIONS



# Election Vocabulary

**Apathy:** Lack of interest or concern

**Ballot:** Printed form or other item used in voting

**Campaign:** A series of actions to achieve a certain goal; in an election, actions designed to influence voters

**Candidate:** Person who seeks or is nominated by others for political office

**Caucus:** A closed meeting of political party members to make policy decisions and choose candidates for election

**Citizen:** Person who is a member of a country, either by birth or by choice

**Convention:** A formal meeting of a group of people for a certain purpose

**Delegate:** A person chosen to speak and act for another person or group

**Democrat:** A person who is a member of the Democratic Party

**Elect:** To choose by voting

**Electoral College:** A group of persons called "electors," selected by the voters in each state, that officially elect the president and vice president. The number of electors in each state is equal to its number of representatives in both houses of Congress.

**Inauguration:** The formal ceremony placing someone in office

**Incumbent:** A person currently holding office

**Initiative:** An electoral procedure whereby citizens can propose legislation or constitutional amendments and refer the decision to a popular vote by obtaining the required number of signatures on a petition

**Issues:** Problems and ideas to decide and vote upon

**Office:** A position of trust or responsibility; a political position

**Party:** A group organized for political activity

**Platform:** A statement of beliefs

**Politician:** Someone who runs for or holds a government office

**Poll:** To collect opinions about issues and candidates

**Polls (or Polling Place):** A place where votes are cast

**Precinct:** Divisions within cities or towns for voting purposes

**Primary Election:** An early election to choose a political party's candidate

**Register:** The process by which a person's name is added to a list of those eligible to vote

**Republican:** A person who is a member of the Republican Party

**Returns:** The results of a vote

**Slogans:** Phrases that express the goal or spirit of an organization or group

**Suffrage:** The right or privilege of voting

**Vote:** A method by which citizens choose their leaders and decide upon public issues

# **The Path to the White House: The Election of the President & Vice President**

According to the United States Constitution, a presidential election is to be held once every fourth year. The process of electing a President and Vice-President begins long before Election Day. Candidates from both major and minor political parties and independent candidates begin to raise money and campaign at least one year in advance of the general presidential election. In order to officially represent a political party, a candidate must be nominated by that party.

The nominating process officially begins with the first state primaries and caucuses, which usually occur in the month of February of the election year. It is at these local events that voters are given their first chance to participate in electing the nation's next President.

There are many factors that influence who will ultimately become the candidate for a party. The public's perception of the candidates is influenced by such things as media reports, public opinion polls, candidate preference surveys, and advertising.

The spring of an election year is characterized by intense campaigning for primaries and caucuses all over the nation. This process reaches its peak at the national conventions of the political parties. Once at the national party conventions, the delegates from the states cast votes for the person who will represent the political party in the November general election. In order to secure a party's nomination, a candidate must receive a majority of the votes from the delegates. It is not unusual for delegates to vote several times before one candidate secures the majority of the votes and officially becomes that party's candidate for the election to determine the next President of the United States. The candidate for President then must choose a vice-presidential candidate.

If a President is running for re-election, this nomination process must be completed. Even if the President does not have any opponents from within his own political party, the national convention will still occur. The conventions are extravaganzas, full of pageantry and showmanship. They serve to help jump start the general election campaign for the presidential candidates.

The primary election process ends with the national conventions of the political parties. Once the national conventions have been held, and the candidates from the political parties have been nominated and chosen, the presidential election begins in earnest as a contest between the candidates from the political parties.

Some people choose to run for president without being affiliated with a political party. Such independent candidates need not concern themselves with getting nominated by a party, but must meet other requirements. For example, such candidates are required to collect a large number of signatures to support their nominations. The source of funding used by independent candidates may come from personal funds, loans and fundraising campaigns.

The candidates campaign right up until Election Day, when the nation finally votes for its President. The candidates travel throughout the country, making public appearance and giving speeches. The parties and the candidates use media advertising, direct mailings, telephone campaigns, and other means to persuade the voters to choose one candidate over the other(s). Often, these measures also serve to point out the weaknesses of the candidates from the other parties involved in the general election.

In this national presidential election, every citizen of legal age (who has taken the steps necessary in his/her state to meet the voting requirements, such as registering to vote) has an opportunity to vote. However, the President is not chosen by direct popular vote. The Constitution requires that a process known as the Electoral College ultimately decides who will win the general election.

The Electoral College is a method of indirect popular election of the President of the United States. The authors of the Constitution put this system in place so that careful and calm deliberation would lead to the selection of the best-qualified candidate. Voters in each state actually cast a vote for a block of electors who are pledged to vote for a particular candidate. These electors, in turn, vote for the presidential candidate. The number of electors for each state equals its Congressional representation.

After Election Day, on the first Monday after the second Wednesday in December, these electors assemble in their state capitals, cast their ballots, and officially select the next President of the United States. Legally, the

electors may vote for someone other than the candidate for whom they were pledged to vote. This phenomenon is known as the "unfaithful" or "faithless" elector. Generally, this does not happen. Therefore, the candidate who receives the most votes in a state at the general election will be the candidate for whom the electors later cast their votes. The candidate who wins in a state is awarded all of that state's Electoral College votes. Maine and Nebraska are exceptions to this winner-take-all rule.

The votes of the electors are then sent to Congress where the President of the Senate opens the certificates, and counts the votes. This takes place on January 6, unless that date falls on a Sunday. In that case, the votes are counted on the next day. An absolute majority is necessary to prevail in the presidential and the vice presidential elections, that is, half the total plus one electoral votes are required. With 538 Electors, a candidate must receive at least 270 votes to be elected to the office of President or Vice President.

Should no presidential candidate receive an absolute majority, the House of Representatives determines who the next president will be. Each state may cast one vote and an absolute majority is needed to win. Similarly, the Senate decides who the next Vice President will be if there is no absolute majority after the Electoral College vote.

Elections have been decided by Congress in the past. The House of Representatives elected Thomas Jefferson president in the election of 1800 when the Electoral College vote resulted in a tie. The Electoral College vote was so split that none of the candidates received an absolute majority in the election of 1824, the House elected John Quincy Adams President. Richard Johnson was elected Vice President by the Senate when he failed to receive an absolute majority of electoral votes in the election of 1836.

The President-elect and Vice President-elect take the oath of office and are inaugurated two weeks later, on January 20<sup>th</sup>.

# Road to the Presidency

**Candidates** announce that they are entering the presidential race at least one year before the general election.

**Primary Elections** provide voters within a political party an opportunity to state a preference of candidate and choose delegates for the convention. Iowa and New Hampshire hold the first primaries. Primaries can be held anytime after the first Tuesday in February.

**Caucuses** permit party members to select delegates to the convention. The first caucuses take place in Iowa at the beginning of January during the election year.

**National Conventions** are held a few months before the election.

The purposes of a National Convention are to:

- Select a presidential candidate
- Select a vice-presidential candidate
- Decide upon a "party platform"

**Election Day** is the Tuesday following the first Monday in November. Voters choose a candidate. They are really choosing electors. In most states, all of the state's electoral votes go to the candidate winning the "popular vote".

The **Electoral College**, made up of each state's electors, meets in December to cast state votes.

On January 6, Congress officially counts the votes and declares the winner.

**Inauguration Day** is January 20<sup>th</sup>.

At noon, the President and Vice President are sworn into office by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court on the steps of the Capital building.



## President Barack Obama's Timeline

- 1961** Barack Hussein Obama II was born August 4, 1961 in Honolulu, Hawaii
- 1967-1971** Attended schools in Indonesia
- 1971-1979** Attended school in Honolulu
- 1979-1981** Studied at Occidental College for two years
- 1983** Graduated from Columbia University
- 1985-1988** Obama worked as Director of the Developing Communities Project
- 1988** Entered Harvard Law School
- 1991** Obama graduates Juris Doctor (J.D.) magna cum laude from Harvard Law School and returns to Chicago
- 1992** Married Michelle Robinson
- 1992-2004** Obama served as a professor at the University of Chicago Law School
- 1995** Obama publishes his manuscript "Dreams from My Father"
- 1998** Daughter Malia Ann was born
- 2001** Daughter Sasha was born
- 1997-2004** Member of the Illinois Senate from the 13<sup>th</sup> District
- 2005-2008** United States Senator from Illinois
- 2009** Sworn in as the 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States on January 20<sup>th</sup>
- 2012** Officially accepts the nomination for President of the United States from the Democratic Party



## **Governor Mitt Romney's Timeline**

- 1947** Mitt Romney was born on March 12, in Detroit, Michigan
- 1963** Father George W. Romney becomes Governor of Michigan
- 1965** Romney attends Stanford University
- 1968** Father George W. Romney runs for President of the United States unsuccessfully
- 1969** Romney marries high school Sweetheart Ann Davies on March 21
- 1970** Son Taggart is born on March 21, mother Lenore Romney unsuccessfully runs for the United States Senate in the State of Michigan
- 1971** Romney receives a B.A. from Brigham Young University of Utah on October 12 and son Mathew is born on October 27
- 1975** Romney received M.B.A. & J.D. degrees from Harvard University; Son Joshua is born on August 13<sup>th</sup>
- 1977** Starts his career at Bain & Company
- 1978** Son Benjamin is born on June 5
- 1981** Son Benjamin is born on May 4
- 1984** Starts an investment firm called Bain Capitol
- 1994** Unsuccessfully runs for the United States Senate against Democratic incumbent Ted Kennedy
- 1998** Wife Anne Romney is stricken with Multiple Sclerosis
- 1999** Takes over the struggling 2002 Salt Lake City winter Olympics on February 11, turning it around a making it a huge success
- 2002** Romney becomes Governor of Massachusetts
- 2004** Publishes his book "Turnaround: Crisis, Leadership and the Olympic Games"
- 2006** Signs major health care legislation into law, requiring every citizen of Massachusetts to have health insurance
- 2007** Unsuccessfully runs for the Presidential Republican nomination, losing to Arizona Senator John McCain
- 2009** Romney publishes his book "No apology: The case for American Greatness"
- 2011** Officially announces his candidacy for the 2012 Presidential Republican nomination
- 2012** Officially becomes President-elect for the Republican Party



## Vice President Joe Biden's Timeline

- 1942** Joseph Robinette Biden Jr was born in Scranton, Pa. on November 20, 1942
- 1947** Began kindergarten and saw a speech specialist for stuttering
- 1961** Graduated from Archmere High School
- 1961** Attended college at the University of Delaware to study Political Science and History
- 1965** Graduated from the University of Delaware with a bachelor's degree
- 1966** Married Neilia Hunter in New York
- 1968** Graduated from Syracuse University with a law degree
- 1970** Won election of County Councilman for the Democratic Party
- 1972** Wife Neilia and daughter Naomi were killed in a car accident
- 1973** Sworn in as United States Senator
- 1975** Became a member of Senate Foreign Relations Committee
- 1977** Became a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee
- 1977** Marries Jill Tracy Jacob (2<sup>nd</sup> marriage) in New York City
- 1988** Undergoes successful brain surgery to remove two aneurysms
- 1994** Helped create crime bills such as Violent Crime Control, Law Enforcement Act and Violence Against Women Act
- 1996** Helped pass and create the National Registry of Sex Offenders
- 1999** Cast 10,000<sup>th</sup> vote in the Senate
- 2007** Wrote a book *Promises to Keep*, it was a New York Times best seller
- 2008** Sworn in as a United States Senator and became Vice-President Elect
- 2009** Resigned from the Senate on January 15, 2009 after serving 36 years
- 2009** Joseph Robinette Biden Jr. becomes the 47th Vice President
- 2012** Accepts the nomination from the Democratic Party for another term as Vice-President



## Senator Paul Ryan's Timeline

- 1970** Paul Ryan was born on January 29th, 1970 in Janesville, Wisconsin
- 1988** Began attending Miami University in Ohio. He graduated in 1992 with a degree in political science and economics
- 1992** Paul Ryan went directly into politics after graduation, working on the staffs of Senator Bob Kasten of Wisconsin and Sam Brownback of Kansas
- 1998** Elected to Congress from Wisconsin's First District, reelected six times, most recently 2010
- 2000** Married the former Janna Little. They have a daughter, Elizabeth (born 2002) and sons Samuel (b. 2004) and Charles (b. 2009)
- 2010** Released the Roadmap for America's Future, a budget-balancing plan calling for major changes to Medicare and Social Security
- 2011** Became head of the powerful Congressional Budget Committee
- 2012** Chosen by Mitt Romney to be his vice-presidential nominee and accepts the nomination during the Republican National Convention

# 2012 Presidential Election Word Search

L U N I T Y A E U N J S Z M Y B  
D A L C Q C T G O O T R R C C E  
S S R B O H A I E N H E C H N O  
A P P O I N T M E N T Z A A E C  
M J M C T I T U P R D L U R U A  
T S S U T C T R O A L A C I T N  
N L I E R I E P O E I P U S I D  
E L P T T O P L N V L G S M T I  
B O H S A U U G E C E L N A S D  
M P N D S V E Q Y T A R A S N A  
U O A D V E R S E O A N S B O T  
C P S E T A G E L E D N V Y C E  
N E R A L C E D S Y D O I A O E  
I A U D I E N C E N T S K M S C  
T N E U Q O L E T E O V E T O S  
P R I M A R Y V R T C C T B U N

**ADVERSE, AGENDA, APPOINTMENT, AUDIENCE, BALLOT, CAMPAIGN, CANDIDATE, CANVASS, CAUCUS, CHALLENGE, CHARISMA, CONSERVATISM, CONSTITUENCY, CONSTITUENTS, CONTROVERSY, DECLARE, DELEGATES, ELECTORAL, ELOQUENT, ETHICS, INCUMBENT, ISSUES, NOMINATE, PETITION, POLL, PRIMARY, QUORUM, SUPPORTER, TERM, UNITY, VETO, VOTER**

