

3rd Annual Visual Arts Competition: Why Does Voting Matter?

1. What is voting? Exercise

What is your favorite flavor/color fruit candy?

1. Orange
2. Lemon
3. Lime
4. Raspberry
5. Pink grapefruit

They vote and winning flavor is given to group.

2. Although you aren't old enough to vote in government elections (federal, state, and local) you probably already vote.

1. In school vote for class president
2. At home you vote when you are asked what you want for dinner
3. Other examples clubs hold elections for officers.

3. Who has the right to vote in elections for government officials like the President?

- All citizens over the age of 18 can and should vote.
- You must be a resident of the state, county, city, and ward. What determines your residency? Your permanent address. In WA you can vote if you have lived here for 30 days. You can still vote if you are homeless. You should always check with your local election office for details.

4. Who is a citizen?

- A citizen is anyone born in the United States, has at least one parent who is a citizen, or is a naturalized citizen (a person who was born outside the United States and obtained citizenship).
- Immigrants to this country can become citizens, but it's hard. There are forms to apply for citizenship, interviews, and a citizenship test. This (naturalization) test has two parts, one is an English test (demonstrate the ability to read, write, and speak basic English and a civics test on American government and history).
- Here are some sample questions:
 1. What is the supreme law of the land? The US Constitution
 2. How many amendments does the Constitution have? 27
 3. When was the Declaration of Independence Adopted? July 4 1776
 4. Who was the first President? George Washington
 5. How many stars are on the US flag and what do stand for? 50 for the 50 states

5. Is voting the same in every state?

Believe it or not, when the Founding Fathers were writing the Constitution, they did not mention the act of voting. Who got the vote and how the vote was conducted was left to individual states.

This is both good and bad. The fact that each state is separate means elections cannot be stolen. The fact that elections, who gets to vote, when and where, is controlled by states means laws and policies can be made to exclude people from voting or make it so difficult they do not vote. In other states that do not vote by mail, closing election polls (places where people vote) can make it difficult for people without transportation to get to the polls.

6. Why vote?

Our government is a representative democracy. Ideally, we elect people to represent us and make laws or policies we want. What are some of the issues you care about? People don't always agree so sometimes people we don't like are elected. But there is always another election.

- We elect presidents for 4 years
- We elect senators for 6 years
- We elect legislators house of representatives for 2 years.

7. What are some of the excuses people use to NOT vote? **Textbook page 32 picture**

- One of the most common is: "My vote doesn't count so why bother."
- Last year (2023) in Endicott, one of the town council positions was decided by only three votes.
- Historically, the 19th Amendment (giving women the right to vote) was ratified in Tennessee (the last state needed to make it law) by a single vote.

8. What do you have to do to Vote?

The first thing you must do is register to Vote. Screen shot Voter Registration form.

In Washington, when you get your driver's license at the age of 16, you will be asked if you want to register to vote. If you do pre-register, you can vote when you turn 18. If your address changes it is IMPORTANT to file an address change. (You can use the same cite to registration to vote and check your status, www.voteWA.gov).

Very Important!!! The signature you put on your license follows you throughout your life when you register electronically. This is the signature that will be examined on your ballot. Problems with signatures, including forgetting to sign your ballot, are the main reason ballots are rejected. Election Office will contact you to "cure" your ballot before the election is certified.

9. How do we vote in the State of WA? What does a ballot look like? What happens to your ballot?

- WA is a vote-by-mail and you do not even need a stamp. There is an 18-day voting window.
- The ballot arrives in the mail. There are three parts: the ballot, the security envelope and the return envelope. **[Picture of old ballot]** The return envelope is the only place with your name, your signature. Your signature is verified and should match the one on your driver's license. It is very important to sign. A ballot does not count without a valid signature.
- Return your ballot by mail or by placing in an official secure drop box.
- Only after verification is ballot opened; security envelope with ballot is then separated from return envelope; and your votes are secret (unless you tell someone how you voted). There are checks all along the system to make sure no ballots are lost and ballots are kept locked up until counted.
- You can track your ballot to see if it has been received, verified, and counted) on the Secretary of State website, www.myvote.wa.

10. What is on a ballot?

- We can vote at the Federal Level: President, Senator (2 for each state), and Representative (Congressperson)
- What US Congressional District is Whitman County in? The 5th and there are 10 in WA.
- We vote at the State level: Executive branch (9 offices), legislative branch (senate 1 and representative 2 for each district), judicial (some judges).

- What State Legislative District is Whitman County in? The 9th There are 49 districts in the state.
- We vote at the Local level: Local government (County officials, city council, mayors, school board and other boards).

11. What else do we vote on?

- Initiatives are from the people and bypass the legislature. A group proposes legislation. And this legislation is put on the ballot if enough signatures are collected by petition. This number is a percentage (8%) of all the people who voted in the last election. The legislature can adopt as written or propose an alternative to be sent back to be voted on or do nothing. The proposed legislation is then on the ballot next year and voted on again and if approved by a majority it becomes law. State Supreme Court can reject as unconstitutional (WA state constitutional).
- Referendums are laws passed by the legislature but referred the voters to review, reject or approve. Sometimes citizens don't like a law and can petition to have it placed on the ballot if enough signatures are collected (4% of the people who voted in the last election).
- Special Election are held throughout the year to raise money for projects such new schools or hospitals (Bonds) or Tax levies. This February, a special election for several school tax levies was held.

History of Voting: A timeline of who could vote.

1788 The Constitution of the US is adopted, and grants States the power to establish standards for voting rights. No right to Vote is mentioned. Almost universally that is White males at least 21 years old who own property. In some states you have to belong to the right religion. Free black men could Vote in New Jersey, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania. In New Jersey unmarried and widowed women could vote until 1807.

1828 state laws universal white male suffrage. Last state to remove religious restriction Maryland allow Jews to Vote.

1848 By treaty that ended Mexican-American War, Mexicans in US becomes citizens but mostly not allowed to vote.

1856 white male at least 21 years old. Land ownership requirement dropped.

1868 14th Amendment grants citizenship to all people born or naturalized in US and equal protection under the law.

1870 15th Amendment. Right to vote to all males, regardless of race BUT excludes Native Americans and Asians. Soon after the right to vote for Blacks was suppressed by literacy tests and poll taxes.

1913 17th Amendment give voters to directly elect Senators (Electoral College before).

1920 19th Amendment. Gives universal suffrage to Women in all states. But racial restrictions still in force.

Women given right to Vote by individual state before this: Wyoming 1869; Utah 1870 taken away 1887, given back 1896; Washington Territory 1883 revoked 1887 given back 1910; Colorado 1893; Idaho 1896; 1911 California and Oregon; 1914 Nevada and Montana; 1917 New York, Oklahoma and South Dakota.

1924 Indian Citizen Act grant citizenship and the right to vote to Native Americans. Restricted in most states until 1957 and even later for Indians who live on reservations.

1943 Chinese Exclusion Act repealed Chinese-Americans become citizens.

1952 All Asian Americans allowed to vote.

1961 23rd Amendment gives citizens of District of Columbia the right to vote for President and Vice president. District of Columbia can still not vote for representation in Congress.

1964 24th Amendment outlaws poll taxes.

1965 Voting Rights Act protects minority rights to register and vote. Outlaws' literacy tests.

1970 26th Amendment lowers voting age to 18.

1973 Citizens of DC allowed to vote for mayor and council

1975 Voting Rights Act expanded provide information non-English-speaking citizens.

1982 Voting Rights Act expanded provide assistance for blind, disabled, or illiterate voters.

1986 Overseas military and citizens allowed to vote.

2000- voting rights expand state by state allow felony the right to vote. WA 2009

2013 Shelby County v Holder Supreme Court declares part of the Voting rights act unconstitutional. The article made state apply to the US Attorney General to change voting laws. Since then, without federal oversight, states have passed laws restricting the right to vote.

Dates in red are Key dates.