



K-12 Civic Learning Opportunities: Electing a President

ELECTING A PRESIDENT

Announcement - Candidate announces that he or she is entering the race.

Primaries and Caucuses - Members of the same party run against each other, trying to become the party's candidate. Each state holds its elections on specific dates in January-June.

- Primaries: Party members vote for candidates, win delegates to the convention. North Carolina's primary is May 8, 2012.
- Caucuses: Party members select delegates to the convention at meetings.

Conventions – Representatives, or delegates, of each political party meet to talk about the party platform and officially nominate their candidate. This person runs for President of the United States.

2012 conventions:

- Libertarian Party - May 3-6 in Las Vegas, Nevada
- Republican Party – August 27-30 in Tampa, Florida
- Democratic Party – September 3-7 in Charlotte, North Carolina

Fall campaign and debates – Through campaigns, speeches, political ads and debates, the candidates communicate their positions on different issues.

- This is an important time when voters learn about the candidates, think about their positions, and decide who to vote for!

Election Day - Voters vote for president. This is called the “popular vote.”

- Election Day is November 6. In North Carolina, Early Voting begins in late October.

Electoral College – Through the “popular vote”, voters are really voting for electors who are pledged to a candidate. The Electoral College is made up of all of the electors.

- The electors vote in December. A candidate must get at least 270 out of 538 electoral votes to win the election.
- On January 6, Congress officially counts the ballots. If no candidate has at least 270 votes, the U.S. House of Representatives selects the president and the U.S. Senate selects the vice president.

Inauguration Day - The president and vice president are sworn into office on January 20.

In 2013, it is possible that the President will have more than one swearing-in ceremony.

- January 20th is a Sunday. By law, the President must take the Oath of Office before noon. In 1985, when Ronald Reagan was sworn in on a Sunday, it was a private ceremony. A public event took place the following day.
- In 2013, January 21st is Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – a federal holiday. People who plan the Inauguration will decide if the public ceremony should happen on that date, or on Tuesday, January 22. Stay tuned for more information!