

## The Presidential Election Campaign



Many qualified individuals aspire to become President of the United States. Leaders who serve as the vice president, state governor, member of Congress, and high level businesspeople want "to toss their hat into the ring" (an old phrase for wanting to become a candidate) to run for president. It's a complicated process to qualify to become the presidential nominee of the Democratic or Republican Party and begins over two years before the actual presidential election.

A president serves four years in office. About halfway through a presidency the leaders of a political party, the news media and interested citizens start searching for the next candidate. When interviewed, key people will be asked if they intend to seek their party's nomination for president. While the public answer usually is that they haven't decided yet, these potential candidates may be working behind the scenes to see if they can get the support of influential people. Eventually, the potential candidate will hold a news conference and announce that he/she is running for president. At this point, they are seeking the nomination to actually run in the national presidential election.

Candidates assemble a team of advisors, organizers and volunteers and begin raising money to finance a campaign. The first phase of the campaign involves running in primary elections and caucuses in the states. At this time candidates want to introduce themselves to the voters and show their leadership qualities. Candidates especially need the support of party delegates. The Democratic and Republican parties each have their own rules for how their candidate is selected but in both cases, the candidate with the most delegate votes at the national convention becomes the nominee.

Then the election process begins for the presidency. The candidate essentially starts a new campaign with perhaps a new strategy for getting the attention and votes of all the citizens. During the presidential campaign, candidates must pay attention to the number of electoral votes in order to win the presidency. It is a long and grueling campaign process to the White House.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Multiple Choice Questions

Circle the correct answer.

1. Presidential candidates typically are
  - a. A state governor
  - b. A Member of Congress
  - c. The current or former Vice President
  - d. All of the above
  
2. The quest for the presidency typically begins as early as
  - a. Six months before the presidential election
  - b. One year before the presidential election
  - c. Two years before the presidential election
  - d. More than two years before the presidential election
  
3. Potential candidates for the presidential nomination announce their candidacy to the public by
  - a. Mailing a form to the federal government
  - b. Mailing a form to the state government
  - c. Holding a press conference
  - d. None of the above
  
4. An important part of campaigning is
  - a. Getting good advisors
  - b. Organizing volunteers
  - c. Raising money to pay for the campaign
  - d. All of the above
  
5. In order to win their party's nomination candidates
  - a. Run in primary elections
  - b. Run in caucuses
  - c. Both a. and b. above
  - d. None of the above
  
6. During the presidential campaign candidates focus on
  - a. Getting the votes of citizens
  - b. The number of electoral votes
  - c. Both a. and b. above
  - d. None of the above

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Short Answer Questions

1. Define what the phrase "toss your hat into the ring" means.
2. Why is two years before the presidential election the approximate timeframe when a candidate decides to run for president?
3. How does a candidate start organizing a campaign?
4. Young people can actively participate as volunteers in a political campaign. List some activities that young people can do as campaign volunteers.
5. Would you be willing to volunteer to help with the political campaign of a candidate that you liked? Explain why or why not.
6. Presidential campaigns are very expensive. According to the Federal Election Commission, in the 2008 presidential election Democrat Barack Obama spent \$7.39 per vote; Republican John McCain, \$5.78; and third-party candidate Ralph Nader, \$5.67. How is the cost per vote calculated? How does the cost per vote change if the candidate receives more votes?
7. Ask an elected official in your community to discuss their campaign with your class. Based on this discussion, write a short report summarizing how a local campaign is conducted.

## Answer Key

### Multiple Choice

1. d.
2. d.
3. c.
4. d.
5. c.
6. c.

### Short Answer

1. "Toss your hat into the ring" means to become a candidate for political office.
2. A president serves four years in office. About halfway through a presidency the leaders of a political party, the news media and interested citizens start searching for the next candidate.
3. Candidates assemble a team of advisors, organizers and volunteers and begin raising money to finance a campaign.
4. Young people can: stuff envelopes with mailed campaign flyers; deliver campaign materials door-to-door in pairs or threesomes; set up chairs for a meeting; decorate meeting areas; distribute campaign flyers at the mall; etc.
5. Individual response
6. Candidates must disclose how much money they spend on campaigns. The cost per vote is the total spent on the campaign divided by the number of votes received by the candidate. If the candidate receives more votes, the cost per vote decreases.
7. Individual response

## What Is the Electoral College?



The Founding Fathers of the United States crafted an interesting Constitution for the United States that introduced a number of “checks and balances” to ensure that the democracy they envisioned would survive. They were concerned about keeping equal power among the states. That’s why each state elects two U.S. Senators while the number of members of the House of Representatives is based upon a state’s population. The writers of the Constitution were deeply concerned about how the President and Vice President would be selected and used the idea of Electors.

Each state has as many Electors as it has Members of Congress, that is, the number of Senators plus the number of members of the House of Representatives. After Americans vote in the Presidential Election, the Electors in each state cast their ballots for the Presidential and Vice Presidential candidate who received the most votes in their state. This is called “winner-take-all.” With the current number of Electors, the candidate who receives at least 270 electoral votes wins the presidency.

All the Electors as a group are called the Electoral College and this has nothing to do with education. It is simply the name and the Electors never meet together to cast a vote. The concept behind the Electoral College is the same as the House of Representatives, to balance out the impact of large states and small states in selecting the President.

With the Electoral College system it is indeed possible for a presidential candidate to win the highest number of votes from the American people and not win the election based upon the electoral vote. This has happened in the elections of 1876, winner Rutherford Hayes; 1888, winner Benjamin Harrison; and 2000, winner George W. Bush.

Constitutional scholars and political scientists continue to debate the merits of the electoral College system. There are valid arguments on both sides of the debate whether to retain the Electoral College or modify the system in some way. However, the Electoral College is part of our Constitution and it is the way that the President is selected.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Multiple Choice Questions

Circle the correct answer.

1. The concept of "checks and balances" in the Constitution applies to
  - a. How banking is done
  - b. Ensuring the survival of democracy
  - c. Balancing the federal budget
  - d. All of the above
  
2. How many Senators does each state have?
  - a. One
  - b. Two
  - c. The number is based on size of the state.
  - d. The number is based on the population of the state.
  
3. How many Representatives does each state have?
  - a. One
  - b. Two
  - c. The number is based on size of the state.
  - d. The number is based on the population of the state.
  
4. How many members of the Electoral College does each state have?
  - a. One
  - b. Two
  - c. The number is based on size of the state.
  - d. The number is based on the number of Members of Congress.
  
5. Who elects the President of the United States?
  - a. American voters indirectly elect the President through Electors.
  - b. Electors directly elect the President.
  - c. Both a. and b. above
  - d. None of the above
  
6. The popular vote and the Electoral College vote results
  - a. Always elect the same candidate.
  - b. Usually elect the same candidate.
  - c. Sometime select different candidates.
  - d. Never elect the same candidate.

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Short Answer Questions**

1. Describe what determines how many members of Congress each state has.
2. Look up how many Representatives in Congress your state has and compare it to the number of Representatives in Congress your neighboring states have.
3. Explain how the Electors in a state know which presidential candidate to vote for.
4. Do some research and explain what a faithless Elector is. Has any faithless Elector ever changed the outcome of a presidential election?
5. Do some research and write a short report on how Electors are selected.
6. Do some research on the Presidential Election of 2000. Describe what happened in Florida and how the voting problems there influenced the outcome of the election.
7. Select a viewpoint on the Electoral College, either that the system should be modified or retained intact. Develop a persuasive essay on your topic.
8. What role does the Twelfth Amendment to the Constitution play in the electoral process?

## Answer Key

### Multiple Choice

1. b.
2. b.
3. d.
4. d.
5. c.
6. c.

### Short Answer

1. Each state elects two U.S. Senators while the number of members of the House of Representatives is based upon a state's population.
2. Individual response
3. After Americans vote in the Presidential Election, the Electors in each state cast their ballots for the Presidential and Vice Presidential candidate who received the most votes in their state.
4. A faithless elector is an elector who does not vote for the selected candidate. Almost all electors vote properly and no faithless elector has ever changed the outcome of a presidential election
5. Individual response
6. Individual response
7. Individual response
8. The Twelfth Amendment provides for each elector to cast one vote for President and one vote for Vice President. It also specifies how a President and Vice President are elected.