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# V O T E

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## *PREPARE TO VOTE!* *ACTIVITY*

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### **OBJECTIVE:**

Students learn the requirements to vote, how to register to vote, and why they need to register. Students will have the opportunity to cast a mock ballot.



Tell the students that the class will have the opportunity to vote in a mock election.

## *GETTING READY*

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Start a discussion with your class about why citizens register to vote. Ask the students the following questions:

- Why is registering necessary?
- Who can register?
- What does it allow you to do?

Explain to your class that there are several reasons why citizens are required to register to vote:

- Registering provides an opportunity before Election Day to guarantee that each voting citizen meets the established requirements. This saves confusion on Election Day.
- Registering ensures that each voting citizen only casts one ballot on Election Day as poll workers check off each voter in registration books.
- Registering allows election offices to provide voters with information about voting times and places in advance of Election Day.
- Registering gives election offices advanced notice of how many voters to expect to accommodate on Election Day.

Explain to your class who **can** register to vote under current law:

- A native born or naturalized United States citizen who is 18 years old by Election Day, and a resident of the State and county for at least 30 days before an election.

Explain to your class who **cannot** register to vote under current law:

- Anyone who is serving a prison sentence, or who is on parole or probation for a charged offense. (Voting rights are restored after the completion of sentence.)

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## REGISTRATION

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Explain the real registration requirements for the election in November:

- They must be a New Jersey resident for at least 30 days.
- They must be a county resident for at least 30 days.
- They must be at least 18 years of age.

Explain the requirement for citizens to re-register:

- Citizen changes name.
- Citizen changes residence.

Explain how and where to register:

- Voter Registration Application Forms are available at many locations. For example:
  - The Municipal Clerk's Office
  - The County Commissioner of Registration
  - Division of Elections
  - Motor Vehicle Offices
  - Public Assistance Offices
  - Department of State Web site  
(<http://www.state.nj.us/state/elections/voting-information-voter-registration-forms.html>)
- When you are 18 years of age and register, send forms to the County Commissioner of Registration for your county.

Students should fill out the Mock Voter Registration Application (following).

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## VOTING

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Before the Election Day for your class, create a registration book.

- Copy and cut the student signatures from the Mock Voter Registration Application.
- Paste them into a book, leaving a blank space next to the signature for each student.

On the Election Day, ask students to sign their names in the registration book before voting. Once the poll staff person (either teacher or student) confirms the signature to be the same, the student can go to the voting area and fill out the ballot.

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## *POLITICAL PARTIES*

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Explain political parties and political party affiliation to the students.

- When registering to vote, citizens have the option of declaring political party affiliations.
- A political party is an organized group of people with common values and goals, who try to get their candidates elected to office.
- There are two main political parties in New Jersey: the Republican Party and the Democratic Party.
- Citizens affiliated with the same political party typically have the same basic beliefs about government. However, that does not mean they always agree.
- Citizens do not have to vote for a candidate simply because they belong to the same political party.
- Citizens can change their party affiliation at any time.
- An “unaffiliated” voter is a term used to describe citizens who register to vote, but do not wish to be associated with any political party. Other terms used to describe unaffiliated voters include “independent” and “undeclared.”
- Citizens may choose to be unaffiliated because they do not wish to be associated with one of the two major political parties, they wish to be part of a third political party that is not listed on voter registration cards, or they wish to keep their preferred party private.

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## *PRIMARY ELECTIONS*

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Define a general election and primary election, and how political affiliation affects each type of election.

- A primary election is an election where the members of the same political party run against each other. The winner runs in the general election against candidates from other political parties.
- Registered Democrats and Republicans can only vote for members of their own party in the primary. A newly registered voter or a voter who has never voted in a primary election can affiliate with a political party on the day of the primary. Unaffiliated voters may also decide which party to vote for at the poll.
- Regardless of political affiliation, voters can only participate in either the Democratic primary election or the Republican primary election. They can not participate in both.
- If a declared voter wishes to change party affiliation, he or she must file a declaration form 50 days before the primary election, in order to vote in the primary election.
- A citizen does not need to be affiliated with a political party to vote in a general election. In addition, voters affiliated with a political party do not have to vote for the party candidate.

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## *ACTIVITY EXTENSION*

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Have the students ask five people who are eligible to vote the following questions:

- Are you registered to vote?
- If not, why?
- If yes, do you plan to vote in the upcoming Gubernatorial and Legislative election?

Ask the student to tabulate and analyze their results.

- What percentage of the eligible voters was registered?
- What percentage of the eligible voters planned to vote?
- Why might an eligible citizen not register to vote? Why might a registered voter not vote?

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## *ACTIVITY EXTENSION*

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After the real election, ask the students about the results:

- Do the mock election results match the real election results?
- Why do you think the results differ?



# STATE OF NEW JERSEY

## MOCK VOTER REGISTRATION APPLICATION

You must be, by the date of the next election, at least 18 years of age and a resident of New Jersey and your county for at least 30 days.

**CHECK ONE:**     New Registration         Address Change         Name Change

Last Name

First Name

Middle Initial

Street Address Where You Live

Apt. #

City or Town

County

Zip Code

Address where you get your mail (if different than above)

Date of Birth (Month, Day, Year)

Telephone Number (optional)

Declaration – I swear or affirm that:

- I live at the above address.
- I will be at least 18 years old on or before the next election.
- I have lived in New Jersey for at least 30 days.
- I have lived in my county for at least 30 days.
- I am a citizen of the United States.

Signature

Date

*Return to your County Commissioner of Registration Office*