



Level 2 (7th -12th grade)

Pre- Field Trip Information

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"Inspiring the Leaders of Tomorrow"

This information has been developed for use in conjunction with the educational program at Quality West Wing Foundation

Bud Gordon, 1999
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Field Trip Overview

During their field trip to Quality West Wing, our goal is to help students understand the basic idea of how U.S. government works and the important responsibility that **all** Americans have in our nation's government. Students are asked to consider their contribution as a citizen of the United States, both now and in the future, as adult voters.

During their field trip, students will view a video in our classroom. The purpose of the video is to demonstrate the significance of compromise in the drafting of the Constitution, as well as, the system of separation of powers and checks and balances.

Students will use an interactive computer program that gives them the opportunity to experience what it is like to be president. Once taking the Oath of Office students will have an opportunity to nominate a Supreme Court Justice, sign or veto a bill, balance the national budget, hold a press conference and run a re-election campaign.

Written activities are available for students as an enrichment exercise. The objectives of these exercises are to reinforce lessons taught in their classroom.

Students will learn interesting facts about former presidents; they will also discuss our nation's capitol and national monuments with a trained docent. The highlight of our program is a tour through a full scale replica of the Oval Office.

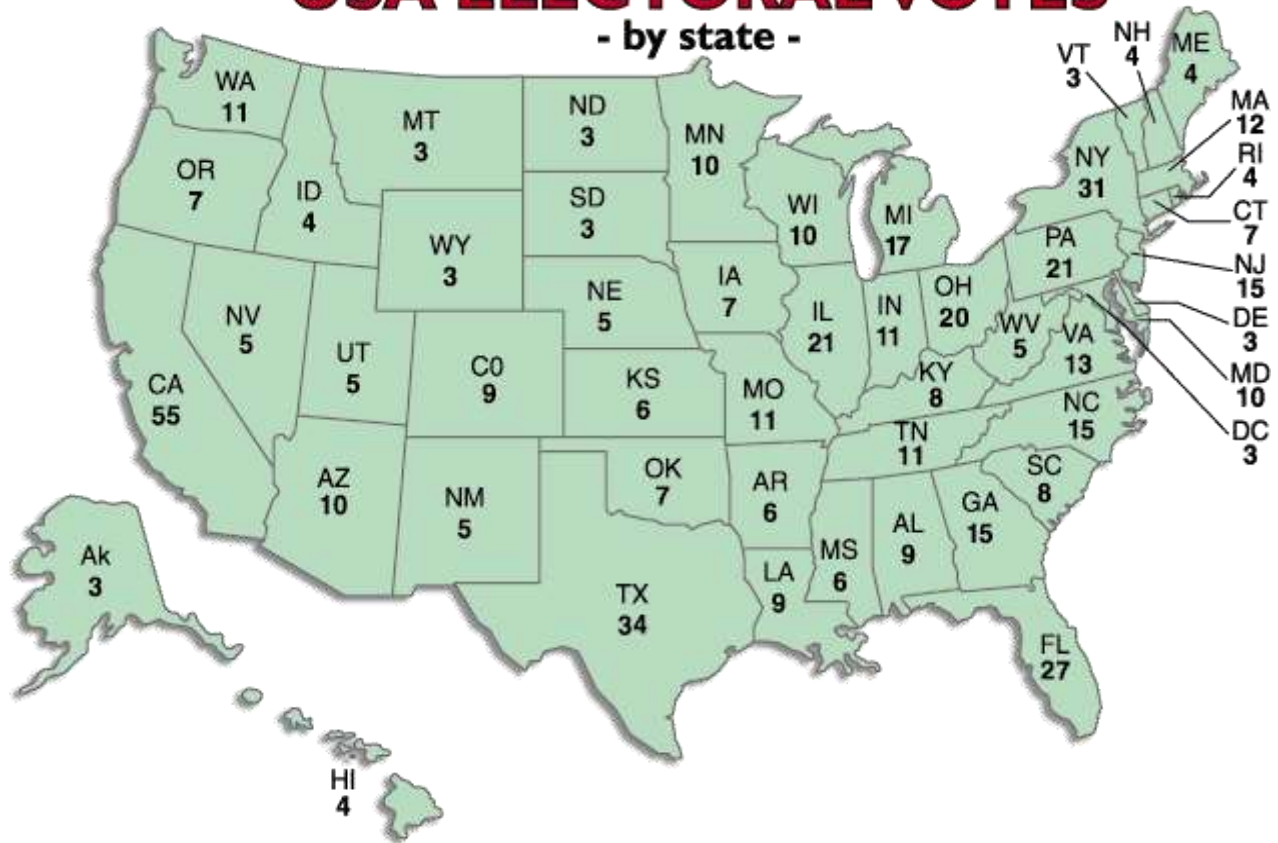
Vocabulary terms used during our program:

We suggest that you familiarize your students with these terms prior to their visit

- **Primary:** Also called primary election, is a preliminary election in which potential candidates from within the same party run against each other to win the nomination as their party's candidate to run for office in the general election
- **Electoral College:** A group of people chosen by voters in each state to elect the President and Vice President of the United States
- **Rights (Human Rights):** The basic rights and freedoms, to which all humans are entitled, including the right to life and liberty, freedom of thought and expression, and equality before the law
- **Democracy:** A form of government where the people make the laws and form the government
- **Republic:** A form of government where the people elect individuals to run a country, on behalf of the people
- **Delegate:** A person chosen to act as representative for another person or group of people
- **Campaign:** An organized effort to win an election
- **Platform:** The position on political and social issues that a person or political party adopts and bases their election campaign on
- **Checks and Balances:** The system of dividing power among the three branches of government (executive, legislative and judicial) to prevent any one person or group from having too much power. Each branch has equal authority to check the power of the others, thereby maintaining a balance among the three
- **Debate:** Discussion or argument where opposing sides discuss their point of view on an issue, topic or political candidate

USA ELECTORAL VOTES

- by state -



While working in our computer lab, students will be asked to focus their campaign on the states with the most Electoral votes. The concept of an Electoral College is often complicated to explain to adults and students alike. Please take time to explain the concept of the Electoral College system and how it impacts elections.

Brief Explanation of Process: The Electoral College is a compromise for the presidential election process, created by the framers of our Constitution (Article II, section 1), who feared that a purely popular vote would be too reckless. The compromise was to allow Electors, to cast their votes for presidential candidates based on the popular vote from each state. Each state has a number of Electors equal to the number of its US Senators (2 per state) plus the number of its US Representatives (varies by population). Currently the Electoral College has 538 members. After a presidential election, on the Monday following the second Wednesday in December Electors from each state meet at their respective state capitols to officially cast their vote for president and vice president. These votes are sealed and sent to the president of the Senate, who on January 6 opens and reads the votes in the presence of both houses of Congress. The winner of the election is the candidate who receives the most electoral votes with no less than 270 of the 538 votes. In the event that there is no candidate with the majority votes the decision will be made by the House of Representatives.

Each political party submits a list of individuals (Electors) to their state's Chief Election Official that have pledged to their candidate for president. In some states the names of Electors are listed on the General Election ballot, however it is not required. Whichever party wins the popular vote in a State is the party whose Electors cast their vote for president and vice president. (Except in Nebraska and Maine).

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Who Can Become an Elector: Electors usually are people who are politically active within their own party or have been connected politically to an individual party. (i.e. activists, party leaders, friends/donors of candidates or parties). These individuals have pledged to vote for the candidate nominated by their political party.

The process of becoming an Elector varies from state to state. In general, the two most common ways are as follows:

- The Elector is nominated by his or her state party committee during their party's National Convention
- The Elector campaigns for a spot as and the decision is made during a vote held at the state's party convention
- The Elector is appointed by his or her state's party leader

There are no outlined requirements to becoming an Elector, (age or training specifications); however the Constitution does specify who cannot be an Elector.

- An Elector cannot be a Representative or Senator
- Electors cannot be a ranking federal US official or in a position of "trust or profit"
- Electors cannot be someone who has "engaged in an insurrection or rebellion" against the US

A good resource/reference guide to the Electoral College can be found at:

<http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/electoral-college/faq.html>

The Need for a Constitution

Please have your students discuss why the thirteen colonies decided to compose a *Constitution* rather than keep the *Articles of Confederation*. Also, ask your students to describe what a constitution is.

Possible answers:

- The leaders of the newly formed nation, America, were reluctant to give the national government too much power. From 1781 to 1789 the U.S. functioned under the Articles of Confederation which gave individual states the power to handle its own affairs independent from the central government of the nation. However the lack of a strong government led to confusion and disagreement among the thirteen states. In order to unify the states as one nation the Constitution was written.
- A constitution is a plan of government. It describes the type of government a nation is to follow and how that government is to be organized. Our constitution also explains the powers given to those in office and lists the system of checks and balances. Citizen's rights are outlined in our constitution as well.

The Bill of Rights

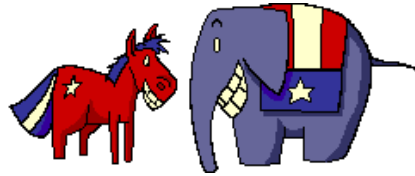
Discuss with your students what the Bills of Rights are and why they are necessary. Also, ask them to state what each Amendment means and how it impacts their lives in general

Possible answers:

- The Bill of Rights became a part of the Constitution on 1791
- They are the first 10 Amendments to the Constitution
- They protect basic liberties and rights

Amendment 1	Guarantees freedom of religion, of speech and of the press, and the right to assemble peaceably to petition the government
Amendment 2	Guarantees the right to organize state militias and bear arms
Amendment 3	Prohibits quartering (housing) soldiers in private homes in peacetime and limits it during times of war
Amendment 4	Prohibits unreasonable search and seizure of private citizens and their property without a valid warrant
Amendment 5	Requires a grand jury for serious criminal charges; prohibits being tried for the same charge twice; protects an accused person from testifying against themselves; guarantees that no one may be deprived of life, liberty or property without due process of law; prohibits government to take private property for public use without just compensation
Amendment 6	Guarantees an accused person the right to a trial by jury; to know all charges against them, to question and obtain witnesses and to have access to counsel (lawyer)
Amendment 7	Guarantees a jury trial in most civil cases
Amendment 8	Prohibits excessive bail and fines; prohibits cruel and unusual punishment
Amendment 9	Assures citizens that they may have other basic rights in addition to those mentioned in the Constitution
Amendment 10	Guarantees that rights not given to the federal government, nor denied to the states, are reserved to the states or to the people

Are You a Democrat or Republican



Quality West Wing maintains a nonpartisan approach to U.S. government; however, we are often asked by students what the difference between the two major political parties are. Explaining the concept of political parties (in an objective manner) to students can be difficult, please review the following information prior to participation in our program in an effort to explain the basic principals of each political party.



Democratic Party (Blue is the color associated with the Democratic Party)

Also known as the “left” has been in existence since Andrew Jackson was elected in 1828. ***In general***, Democrats support a larger federal government whose primary goal is to strengthen the well being of the people regardless of their individual interests. Equality is a main platform for the modern day democrat. Another matter of high significance for Democrats is social justice and community responsibility. Government programs such as healthcare, subsidies for business, schools and hospitals as well as welfare for the poor, mentally ill, and immigrants are of high priority for some Democrats. Their main source of revenue to fund and maintain these programs is to raise taxes. Democratic policies generally emphasize the need for government to provide solutions for social and individual’s issues.



Republican Party (Red is the color associated with the Republican Party)

Also known as the “right” has been in existence since Abraham Lincoln was elected in 1860 as the first Republican president. ***In general***, Republicans support smaller federal government and prefer that states make decisions based on their individual needs. Individual responsibility is a main platform for the Republican Party, as is the free market and lower taxes. A common Republican view is that the government’s role is to provide a better business environment (i.e. lower business taxes, less oversight and competitive capitalism) for private enterprise to create jobs. Republicans tend to take a more conservative view on social issues. Republican policies generally emphasize the need for government to empower individuals to solve their own issues.

Below is a group break down and approximate time table for your students' field trip. Please have your groups prearranged before you arrive.

This table is based on traditional class settings; because home school ratios vary, home school groups will be arranged while on the premises.

1 Group	1-16 Students	2 Hours
2 Groups	17-32 Students	2.5 Hours
3 Groups	33-48 Students	3 Hours
4 Groups	49-64+Students	3.5 Hours

(Add 30 min. For Lunch)

***Note: Quality West Wing reserves the right to make changes to group arrangements based on available staff or time restrictions, we appreciate your flexibility**