

GLOSSARY

There are many words which would help students better understand the democratic process. Reviewing the following words and their definitions will be a good start.

ABSENTEE BALLOT – ballot marked in advance of the election day by a voter who will be away from the place where he or she is registered.

AMENDMENT – a change in or addition to a document.

ARTICLES – the major parts of the Constitution.

BALLOT – a paper used for recording a vote.

BILL OF RIGHTS – the first ten amendments to the Constitution. It contains the basic rights which the federal government may not interfere with.

CAMPAIGN – a plan of action aimed at the election of a particular candidate.

CANDIDATE – one who is running for office.

CANDIDATE DEBATE – a public forum between candidates for the same political office to address issues and supported positions by each candidate.

CAUCUS – a meeting of members of a political party or group to discuss campaign plans, proposed candidates, and policy.

CHECKS AND BALANCES – the sharing and balancing of power among different branches of government so no one branch can completely control others.

CITIZEN – a member of a nation or an inhabitant of a town or city.

CITIZENSHIP – the duties, rights, and privileges of a citizen.

COMPETITION – a contest, rivalry, skill

CONSTITUENTS – citizens within a voting district who are represented by an official elected from the district.

CONSTITUTION – a set of rules and laws that tells how a government is organized and run.

CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT – a government in which the powers of the ruler or rulers are limited by a Constitution. The rulers must obey the Constitution.

CONVENTION – a meeting of members of a political party to name candidates for an election campaign.

DELEGATE – a person authorized to represent others in government or a political convention.

DEMOCRACY – a form of government in which power is held by the people. The people exercise their power either directly or through elected representatives.

DEMOCRAT – one of the two main political parties of the United States.

ELECTORAL COLLEGE – popularly elected body of electors chosen by the states and District of Columbia to elect the President and Vice President of the United States.

ELECTORAL VOTE – the votes of the electors of the Electoral College as they are cast by each state's electors.

INCUMBENT – person who already holds an office and seeks to keep the elected position.

INDEPENDENT – person who claims not to belong to any political party; one who decides at each election which candidates to vote for on his or her merits.

ISSUE – a point or matter about which people have different opinions.

LAME DUCK – person who will not serve another term in his or her political office but is serving out an elected term before the newly-elected person takes over.

LITERACY TESTS – required examinations of ability to read and write before registering to vote.

MAJORITY – more than half.

MEDIA – communications by television, newspapers, radio, and magazines to large audiences.

MOCK – to mimic or copy.

NOMINATE – to name or appoint to an office or to propose as a candidate.

OPINION POLL – an informal survey of people’s feelings on an issue or candidate.

PETITION – a written request for action often signed by many people.

PLATFORM – the program or political policies of a party or candidate.

PLURALITY – in an election when the final result is not a majority of the votes cast but one candidate receives a greater number of the votes cast than any other candidate.

POLITICAL PARTY – an organization that attempts to influence the course of government by running its candidates for election.

POLLS – the place where votes are cast and recorded.

POLL TAX – required payment of a fee before being allowed to vote.

POPULAR VOTE – the votes of the people, that is, votes cast by qualified voters.

PRIMARY – an election in which a political party chooses its candidate to run against candidates of other parties or in which delegates are selected for a convention.

PROPAGANDA – a technique used to influence and persuade others to one’s point of view.

PUBLIC OFFICE – an office relating to people collectively, for the use of all; not private.

REFERENDUM – the submission of a proposed law to a direct vote of the people.

REGISTRATION – the act of entering one’s name on a list as a voter.

REPRESENTATIVE – a member of his or her legislative branch of government who is elected by people in his or her district to voice their needs and concerns in the House of Representatives or our government. (Legislators elected to represent their voters of a State in the Senate are called Senators.)

REPUBLICAN – one of the two major political parties in the U.S., founded in 1854. At its beginning, its major purpose was to oppose slavery.

REPUBLICAN GOVERNMENT – a government in which power is held by the people who elect representatives to run the government for the common welfare.

SECRET BALLOT – ballot in which there is no way to tell a voter's identity. All U.S. elections are conducted by secret ballot.

SEPARATION OF POWERS – the division of power among the different branches of government. In the United States, powers are divided among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches.

SPLIT-TICKET VOTING – voting for candidates from more than one political party in the same election.

STRAIGHT TICKET VOTING – voting for candidates of only one party in an election.

SUFFRAGE – right to vote.

TALLY – record of the number of votes cast and totals of each candidate.

TERM – length of time for which an elected official holds a political office after each election.

TICKET – list of candidates belonging to one political party.

TURNOUT – the number of voters who cast a ballot in an election.

UNCOMMITTED DELEGATE – official delegate to a political convention who is not required by law to vote for a certain candidate on the first ballot.