

# Political Campaigns and Elections

## ***Elections and voting: Why should they matter to you?***

### Vocabulary Terms

As you complete the Reading Notes, use these terms in your answers:

- |                        |                 |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| plurality              | caucus          |
| winner-take-all system | party base      |
| primary election       | stump speech    |
| general election       | coattail effect |

### PREVIEW

Each event listed below is a step in the process of running for president. Based on what you know about elections, record the steps in the most logical order in your notebook. Then answer this question: *Do you think this process helps or hinders us in electing the best individual as president?*

- form a campaign organization
- run in primaries and caucuses
- participate in televised debates
- announce candidacy
- conduct electoral vote
- attend national convention
- raise funds
- hold popular vote
- build a coalition of supporters
- develop a campaign strategy

### READING NOTES

#### Section 1

Create the table below in your notebook. Record any applicable dates when each group gained voting rights, and briefly explain what rights were gained at that time. Then, answer the questions that follow.

| Group                    | Voting Rights Gained |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>White males</b>       |                      |
| <b>African Americans</b> |                      |
| <b>Women</b>             |                      |
| <b>American Indians</b>  |                      |
| <b>18-year-olds</b>      |                      |

1. Do you think Americans take voting for granted today? Why or why not?
2. What steps have been taken to increase voter turnout?

**Section 2**

Create a campaign to-do list for a presidential candidate trying to secure the party’s nomination. Your list should have eight steps: *form an exploratory committee, join the race, set up a campaign organization, raise funds, develop a campaign strategy, campaign, run in primaries and caucuses, and attend the national convention.* Record the steps in your notebook, and note what needs to be done to accomplish each one. See the example below.

| Step                           | To Do   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Form an exploratory committee. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gather a group of advisers to evaluate chances for election.</li> <li>• Test the waters to determine the level of public support.</li> </ul> |
| Join the race.                 |   |

**Section 3**

Create a list of important campaign terms. The list must include a brief description of each of these terms: *presidential election, midterm election, off-year election, term limits, stump speech, polling place, battleground states, and electoral vote.*

**Section 4**

Answer these questions:

1. How is money raised in political campaigns?
2. Do you see this as a problem? Why or why not?
3. What is one suggestion you would make for changing the role of money in political campaigns?

**Section 5**

Make a very simple sketch of an American voter. Around the body, draw spokes with explanations of how each of these factors influences whether a person is likely to vote: *age, education, and income.* Then, add spokes with explanations of how each of these factors influences whom Americans vote for: *party affiliation, issues, and candidate characteristics.*

**PROCESSING**

Imagine that you have been hired by the Federal Election Commission to suggest one way to improve the U.S. electoral system. What would you suggest? Include the following information in your response:

- What changes would be involved?
- How would your suggestion change the electoral system?
- Why would your suggested change improve the electoral system?