



Girl Scout Council of the Nation's Capital Election Connection Patch Program

An informed and active electorate is essential to the success of a democracy. Service to country is an integral part of the Girl Scout Promise. Girl Scouts of the USA helps girls develop into resourceful and active citizens through education on civic responsibility.

There are many types of elections and voting methods. Every four years, eligible people who have registered to vote have the opportunity to cast a ballot for the person they think should be president of the United States for the next four-year term.

For the 2004 presidential election, 74 percent of female citizens were registered to vote, compared with 71 percent of male citizens, with women (65 percent) being more likely than men

(62 percent) to vote.

More people took part in the November 2004 election than in any previous presidential election year, with 126 million casting a vote. The registration rate of the voting-age citizen population for that election was 72 percent, the highest it has been since the 1992 election when it was at 75 percent.

The Election Connection patch program has been developed to help prepare girls for their future role as informed voters. The program gives girls opportunities to take part in encouraging voters today. *In this program are only two activities specific to presidential elections; it is suitable for use at any time.*

GSUSA Policy on Political Activity

While working on this program, it is important that girls and adults follow the Girl Scouts of the USA policy concerning political activity as stated in SafetyWise:

“Girl Scouts, in their Girl Scout capacities, may not participate directly or indirectly in any political campaigns or participate in partisan efforts on behalf of or in opposition to a candidate for public office.

Girl Scouts are encouraged to become active and knowledgeable citizens, but must maintain a nonpartisan stand when acting in an official Girl Scout capacity. Wearing the uniform, citing a group number or council affiliation, or otherwise identifying oneself as a Girl Scout are examples of when one is acting in an official Girl Scout capacity.... Letter-writing campaigns, circulating petitions, or carrying banners or signs at political rallies and functions are all examples of partisan political activity.”

Girl Scouts May Not:

- Volunteer, perform ceremonies or appear in uniform as a Girl Scout at any partisan event
- Distribute fliers, posters or other materials for a candidate
- Raise money for any candidate or organization
- Endorse candidates or speak publicly about candidates
- Campaign against any candidate or political party

- Make financial contributions from Girl Scouts to candidates or political organizations

Girl Scouts May:

- Take part in "get out the vote" activities (distributing registration forms, encouraging people to vote) as long as they're not favoring one candidate or cause
- Assist voters in getting to polling places or provide activities for younger children at polling places
- Organize debates representing all sides
- Organize mock elections at school
- Create displays or other educational-awareness information about women in politics

Taking a Non- Partisan Approach

Discussions of different political parties and views are an important part of this program and should be encouraged. Troops should concentrate on general education about the election. When looking at an issue, girls should research all viewpoints so they can make informed, independent decisions. Adults should be careful not to present a biased point of view.

Troops may want to develop a parent letter using the wording found at the end of this patch program to inform parents of their daughter's participation in the program. If you have any questions about the program or a particular activity, please contact the GSCNC Program Services Department.

Please feel free to use the Sample Family Letter below to explain to the families of the girls you will be working with the purpose of participation in the Election Connection patch program and what topics will be covered.

Make sure parents know who to contact if they have any questions or concerns.



Sample Family Letter

Dear/Parent Guardian:

Troop _____ will be participating in a patch program called “Election Connection.” This program was originally developed by Angeles Girl Scout Council and has been adapted by the Girl Scout Council of the Nation’s Capital. It is a **non-partisan** educational program designed to:

- Inform girls about the election process;
- Empower girls to help educate people in their communities about the election process; and
- Empower girls to encourage adults to vote.

Girls will be learning about their communities, political parties and how to register to vote. They will be discussing issues and candidates, but Girl Scouts may not endorse a candidate or take a stance on one side of any issue. The activities will stress learning about the election process and looking at all candidates and all sides of an issue.

We encourage you to answer questions and discuss topics related to elections to assist the troop in encouraging girls to become informed citizens. Please contact me if you have any questions or would like to review the program material.

Sincerely,

Leader, Troop

ELECTION CONNECTION PATCH REQUIREMENTS

- All levels must complete the **Required** activity, **one** activity from each of the **Discover, Connect** and **Take Action sections** and the **Reflection**.

In addition...

- Girl Scout Juniors must complete **one additional** activity from any section.
- Girl Scout Cadettes must complete **two additional** activities from any section.
- Girl Scout Seniors must complete **three additional** activities from any section.
- Girl Scout Ambassadors must complete **four additional** activities from any section.



REQUIRED

Election Language Understanding the terms used in connection with an election is important to learning the process. Below is a list of election related words and phrases. Use a dictionary or the Internet to look up unknown words and do one of the activity suggestions. Review the words below. Define those in your level you don't know, as well as unfamiliar words in the younger levels.

Brownie	Junior	Cadette	Senior	Ambassador
Campaign	Ballot	Congress	Absentee voter	Caucus
Candidate	Citizen	Convention	Domestic issue	Delegate
Democrat	Constitution	Debate	Electoral College	District
Election	Democracy	Endorse	Eligible voter	Economic policy
Independent	Elected official	G.O.P.	Foreign policy	Election officer
Political party	Incumbent	Issue	Party platform	P.A.C. ¹
President	Majority	Local election	Polling place	Precinct
Register	Media	Party ticket	Primary election	Referendum
Republican	Mock election	Political ad	V.A.P. ²	Social program
Third party	Nominate	President-elect	Veto	Special interest
Vote	Non-partisan	Suffrage	Voter turnout	Ward

¹ P.A.C. – Political Action Committee

² V.A.P. – Voting Age Population

Make up a game to reinforce your understanding of the words. For example, write the words and definitions on separate cards and play a matching game or relay race, or use the words and definitions to create a crossword puzzle and exchange with a friend.

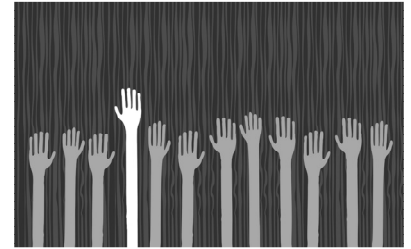
DISCOVER

1. Go on a Treasure Hunt Using the U.S. Constitution as your map, discover the answers to the questions below. Be sure to write down where you found those answers.

- How many U.S. Senators can there be from each state?
- Why are there more members of the House of Representatives than the Senate?
- How old do you have to be to be a senator?
- How old do you have to be to be a representative?
- What is the difference between a bill and a law?
- Which branch of the government can veto a bill that the House and Senate have passed?
- How many votes does it take to overcome a veto?
- Which branch of government can decide that a law is unconstitutional?
- Come up with two other facts you learned from the Constitution.

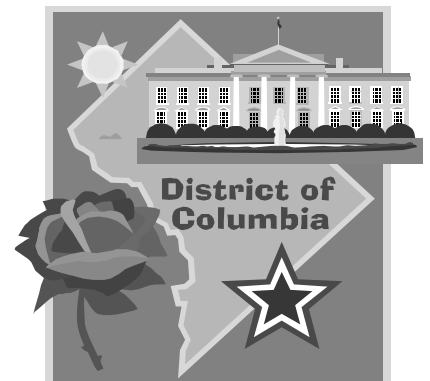
2. Voting History All Americans have not always had the right to vote. When was the first national election held in the United States and what type of people were allowed to vote? Identify two other groups that were later granted the right to vote and find out what legislation had to be passed and when members of those groups first voted. Why is being able to vote so important? Create a voting history timeline and be sure to include important dates in the women's suffrage movement.

3. Voting Think of times that you have voted. Has your Girl Scout troop decided which project to do or what to have for snack by asking girls to raise their hands for the different options? In school, did you vote by secret ballot for people to represent you in the student government or to be in the homecoming court? Did your sports team vote for its team captain or at home has your family taken a vote on what to have for dinner or where to go on vacation? What were the different voting methods that you used in each situation? Why do you think different situations use different types of voting? Make a chart that shows times you voted and the method you used. Is there one method you used more than others? If you have never voted, think of situations in which other people have voted. What are some upcoming elections that people can vote in?



4. Election and Voter Requirements Most elected offices have requirements people need to meet in order to serve in that position. Read Article Two of the U.S. Constitution. What are the qualifications for running for president? Could you run for president right now? Research what kinds of elections your community has. Do people where you live vote for who is going to be the mayor or serve on the town council? Is the school board president elected to that position? Research the qualifications for running for office in your town. Are you eligible to run for office or vote? If not, when would you become eligible?

5. Election '08 The 2008 presidential election was historic. What was unique about the candidates running for president and vice president? Use television, newspapers, magazines and the Internet to help you.



6. Electoral College What is the Electoral College and what does it do? Why was it created? How is the electoral vote different from the popular vote? How do people become members of the Electoral College? Find out how many electoral votes each state has, locate them on the map and then write the number of electoral votes in that state. Write your state's number in a different color.

Map of Electoral Votes



How many electoral votes are there total? _____

7. Campaigns In the required activity, you learned about campaigns. What are the elements of a campaign? Do they have themes or a main issue? Why is it important for a person running for a position to think carefully about each of the pieces in their campaign and tell the truth?

Imagine you are campaigning for a position – it could be for the President of the USA, a position in your school’s student government, a job position that you would like to have in the future or for a space in a college you would like to attend. Using a large poster board, create a campaign poster for yourself on one side – think carefully about what your slogan and color palette will be. What issues do you care about? On the other side, use the Internet, family photos, magazine or newspaper clippings to make a collage to tell why you are the best choice. Think about the characteristics and that make a good leader—you may get some ideas by reading the words in the Girl Scout Law or thinking about people you know who are leaders and what qualities they have. Make sure to include things that represent who you are and get your message across.

It might be helpful to walk around your neighborhood or other places where campaign signs are posted and take notes on what the signs say, what colors are used and which signs were the most memorable.

CONNECT

1. Create a Questionnaire that you can use to ask your family members about the political party they belong to and elections that were memorable for them. You may want to find out what party they belong to and why they joined that party. What beliefs do the party members share? Work with other members of your troop to come up with questions to ask.

2. Interview an elected official, someone who has run for office or worked on a campaign to help someone get elected, at the local level, statewide or nationally. The person can be someone from the school board, a law enforcement member, the mayor’s campaign treasurer or someone else who was elected to a position or worked on a campaign. Take notes and ask questions. You may want to find out why that person ran for office or helped out or what some accomplishments or challenges he or she faced while in office. If possible, if the person you are interviewing is still serving, see if you can spend some time with them and experience firsthand what they do in a day. Remember to get the proper permissions before doing so.

3. Mock Election Find out if there is an election coming up for your town, state or the country. Research two opposing candidates. Find out their positions on several issues and use the information to hold a mock debate within your troop or with another troop. Some girls can play the candidates, reporters, the debate moderator and audience members. Then set up and run a mock election for your troop or service unit or other group based on the candidates. For your election define voting requirements, provide voter identification cards and develop a process for verifying that girls are registered. Design ballots and a process for issuing, collecting and tabulating the ballots and reporting your election results. Watch voting coverage on Election Day or read about the results in the newspaper or online the next day to see how your results compare with the actual election.



4. Media List five types of media and the role each may play in an election. Find examples of election coverage on TV or in newspapers, magazines or online and analyze the commentary and reporting. Do the examples present a balanced view or do they endorse a particular candidate? What is the impact if a candidate is endorsed by a newspaper or TV station? Compare how different publications present information – do some use charts and cartoons while others just use words? How can you tell an election article from a political ad?

5. Surveys and Polls can be useful tools to help predict what the outcome of an election will be if it is not realistic to ask everyone who will be voting. Pollsters conduct surveys/polls around elections to gauge public opinion by asking a sample of people questions and recording their answers. Research different methods people use to conduct surveys and polls and list at least one positive and negative about each method. Conduct your own poll or survey. Maybe you want to ask members of your troop to be your sample group and ask them who they would vote for in an upcoming election and compare the results to the outcome of the actual election. Was your poll an accurate predictor?

TAKE ACTION

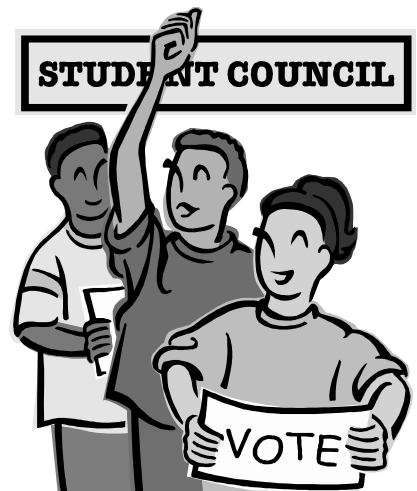
1. Act If you did Discover activity 4 and designed a campaign for yourself for an actual event that is happening to you now, put it to work. Run for a spot on your student government or show why you should be selected for an internship by using the different campaign elements you learned about. It may be appropriate for you to enlist the help of others to get the word out; as you build your team, make sure to share with them the election information you learned.

2. Share what you have learned with people of voting age. For most governmental elections, the voting age is 18 years. Can you think of any 18-year-olds who may not be registered to vote? A good place to start might be high school seniors or college freshmen. What information would be helpful for them to know? Make arrangements to speak with a group or create a handout with the information.

3. Write a Letter to a newly elected official to tell that person about an issue you care about. You may want to write about the pollution problem in a nearby stream or the length of school breaks. Make sure it is an issue that is important to you. If you ask the official to make changes, include ideas and suggestions of your own. Contact the appropriate government office to find the mailing address. Mail your letter.

4. Voter Help Talk to a number of adults and ask if they voted in the last local or national election. If they did not vote, ask why not? Make a list of reasons people give for not voting. What are some ways you might be able to help people overcome these factors? Would providing information about absentee voting, getting the word out about a voter registration drive or creating a voter guide with requirements help? Put one of your ideas into action.

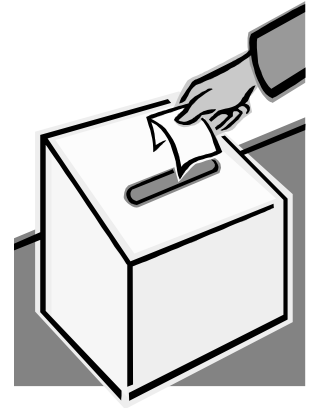
5. Make “I Voted” stickers to hand out to people after they cast their ballots. You can use blank labels and permanent markers to create your stickers. As you design and give out your stickers, think about what you learned and why it is important to vote in elections. You may also make stickers reminding people before the election to vote by writing the date on the sticker along with the word “Vote.” If you make extras, wear one of the reminder stickers.



6. Vote If you are eligible to vote in an upcoming election, register and vote! If you are not eligible, find out what your area's rules are for children accompanying their parents to a polling place. If your parents are voting, see if you can go with them to the polls. Educate other people your age about the rule.

REFLECTION

Once you have completed all of the other requirements, take some time to think about the different activities you did. What did you learn from each step? What was the most interesting thing you discovered through doing the Election Connection patch program? You may want to write some notes in a journal. Share some of your thoughts and what you learned about voting and the election process with other girls at a troop or group meeting, or with your family. If other girls also worked on the Election Connection patch compare your observations with theirs. What did you have in common and what observations were different?



EXTENSION SUGGESTIONS

- Research and learn the answers to the following questions:**
 - Who is the President of the United States?
 - Name three members of The Cabinet.
 - Who is the mayor of your town or city?
 - Who represents your community at the state level?
- Watch a political debate on TV or in person.**
- Take a field trip to a government office, such as your Town Hall or the U.S. Capitol. Be sure to make the appropriate advance arrangements.**