# Girl Scouts Nation's Capital
# Election Connection Patch Program




An informed and active electorate is essential to the success of a democracy. Service to country is part of the Girl Scout Promise. Girl Scouts helps the youth 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 can cast a ballot for the person they think should be president of the United States for the next four-year term.

For the 2024 election, 65.3 percent of the citizens voting age population reported voting, a number that is different from the 66.8 percent who reported voting in 2020. Voting rates have also historically varied according to age, with older Americans generally voting at higher rates than younger Americans. In 2024, this was once again the case, as citizens 65 and older reported higher turnout (72.1 percent) than 45 – to 64 (63.2 percent) and 18- to 24-year-old (43.9 percent). Understanding the voting process at an early age can help Girl Scouts stay current on issues that are important to them. Our Girl Scouts have the power to enact change. Voting as soon as they are eligible will allow the youth the opportunity to see the impact of their vote and to keep making changes for the better.

The "Election Connection" Patch Program has been developed to help prepare Girl Scouts for their future role as informed voters. The program gives Girl Scouts opportunities to take an active part in encouraging voters today.

# GSUSA Policy on Political Activity

While working on this program, it is important that Girl Scouts and adults follow the Girl Scouts of the USA policy concerning political activity as stated in the Blue Book of Basic Documents, 2015:

## POLITICAL AND LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY

Girl Scouts of the United States of America and any Girl Scout council or other organization holding a Girl Scouts of the United States of America credential **may Not**, nor may they authorize anyone on their behalf to, participate or intervene directly or indirectly in any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office; or participate in any legislative activity or function which contravenes the laws governing tax-exempt organizations.

**As stated in the Electioneering Practices and Guidelines published by the Public Policy and Advocacy division of GSUSA:**

When acting as a Girl Scout representative, a Girl Scout council staff person, volunteer or young Girl Scout **may NOT** engage in the following prohibited electoral activity:

- Endorse any candidate for public office.
- Influence in any way the nomination or election of someone to a federal, state or local public office or to an office in a political organization.
- Mobilize constituents to support or defeat a candidate.
- Use official Girl Scout letterhead or office email to write in support or opposition of a candidate
- Distribute campaign materials, including flyers, postcards, newsletters and signage.
- Let a political candidate use any council office space or property for a campaign event.
- Coordinate or host council site visits, activities or other functions with an election campaign office.
- Participate in any election events or activities, including a campaign parade or rally.
- Host a flag ceremony to open a political campaign event.
- Provide public opinions about a candidate.
- Wear official Girl Scout uniforms or other insignia to a political campaign event or fundraiser, even during non-work hours.
- Wear campaign buttons on the Girl Scout uniform at any time, as well as on non-Girl Scout apparel, while conducting official Girl Scout business.
- Make financial contributions to candidates or political parties on behalf of Girl Scouts, meaning any payment, loan, deposit, gift, or other transfer of anything of value.

**It IS, however, acceptable for Girl Scout staff and volunteers to engage in the following activities:**

- Write, visit, or call your members of congress, governor, state legislator and all other local policy makers in support or opposition to legislation, especially when Girl Scout or girl issues arise.
- Keep your members of congress, governor, state legislators and all other local policy makers informed about your Council's work. For example, you may continue to mail to your elected officials newsletters, key press releases, fact sheets, annual reports, and other relevant Council publications with your position on legislative proposals (including ballot measures) and other public issues.
- Invite your elected officials to major Council events, such as Gold Award ceremonies or other community events, hosted by your Council as long as the elected official is clear that they cannot use their speaking time as an election-related platform.
- Participate in and host "get out the vote" registration drives. Registration may not be limited to a particular political party or on behalf of a specific political party or candidate.
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**It IS acceptable for Girl Scout staff and volunteers to teach Girl Scouts about the election process by**

- Going to the polls with an adult on Election Day.
- Collecting signatures of members in their community who promise that they will vote on Election Day such as participating in the "I Promise a Girl Scout I Will Vote" campaign and publicizing the efforts.
- Stage a public candidate debate on a wide range of issues concerning Girl Scouts that the candidates would address if elected to the office and that are of interest to the public.
- Equally attend Republican and Democratic candidate events in Girl Scout uniform and ask candidates questions about issues that are important to Girl Scouts and publicize the responses.

GSUSA respects that Girl Scout staff and volunteers may hold strong political convictions concerning the upcoming elections; however, it is crucial that you adhere to the GSUSA policy. Participation in electioneering as Girl Scouts could result in the loss of our 501 (C) (3) tax-exempt status. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this topic, please contact the GSUSA Public Policy and Advocacy Office at 202-659-3780 or advocacy@GirlScoutscouts.org.

**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, Girl Scouts should research all viewpoints so Girl Scouts 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 on the next page of this handout to inform parents of their child's participation in the program.

**SAMPLE FAMILY LETTER**

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Troop _____ will be participating in a patch program called "Election Connection". It is a **non-partisan** educational program designed to:

- Inform Girl Scouts about the election process,
- Empower Girl Scouts to help educate people in their communities about the election process, and
- Empower Girl Scouts to encourage adults to vote.

Girl Scouts 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 inspiring Girl Scouts to become informed citizens. Please contact me if you have any questions or would like to review the program material.

Sincerely,

Leader Name, 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 ….

- Juniors – complete one additional activity from any section. **Five activities total**.
- Cadettes – complete two additional activities from any section. **Six activities total**
- Seniors – complete three additional activities from any section. **Seven activities total.**
- Ambassadors – complete four additional activities from any section. **Eight activities total.**

## Required

**Election Language.** Understanding the terms used in connection with an election is important in understanding the process. Below is a list of election-related words. Use a dictionary or the Internet to look up unknown words at your level as well as unfamiliar words in the younger levels. Do one of the activity suggestions below.

| Daisies & Brownies | 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]PAC – Political Action Committee

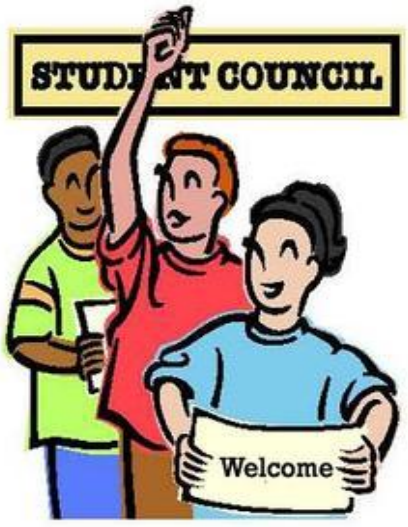
[2]VAP – Voting Age Population

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 or concentration game; or use the words and definitions for a relay race, a jeopardy-type game or, to create a crossword puzzle to share with others

# 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 the 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 a time that you have voted. Has your Girl Scout troop decided which project to do or what to have for snack by asking Girl Scouts 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? 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 to meet in order to serve in that position. Read Article II of the U.S. Constitution. What are the qualifications for running for president? Could you run for president right now? Research what types of elections your community has. Do people where you live vote for who is going to be 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 U.S. 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. How many electoral votes are there total?



**7. Campaign.** In the required activity, you learned about campaigns. What are the elements of a campaign? Do they have themes or main issues? 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 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 of the poster – 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, and magazines or newspaper clippings to make a collage to tell why you are the best choice. Think about the characteristics 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.

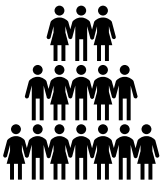
It might be helpful to walk around your neighborhood or other places where campaign signs are posted and take notes on what colors are used and which signs were the

**8. Voter Suppression.** Although the federal government has the last word on voting rights, states oversee how votes are cast and counted. Those state laws vary over who can vote, how people register to vote, and the ways people vote. And sometimes those laws try to restrict people from voting. Sometimes to help a political party's chance of winning, officials will try to prevent other people from casting ballots. This is called voter suppression, a method that has long been used in U.S. elections.

Research Voter Suppression laws to discover the states that have put laws in place to make it harder for people to vote. You can even research the laws that are or were placed within your state. Using craft materials, create an informational project on your findings. This project can be a poster board, slideshow, collage, brochure, or however you would like to present your research. This informational guide should include information on the state, the new law, and what obstacles does it create for voters. You should also add in if you agree or disagree with the law and provide your reasonings to support your stand on it. Once you have completed your project, you will present your project to either your family, troop, younger Girl Scouts, or adults.

# Connect

1. **Create a Questionnaire** that you can use to ask your family members about the political party they belong to or elections that were most memorable for them. You may want to find out what party they belong to as well as 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. 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 use words only? How can you tell an election article from a political ad?

**3. 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 accomplishments or challenges he or she faced in office. 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.

**Mock Election.** Find out if there is an election coming up for your town, state or 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. Girl Scouts can play the candidates, reporters, the debate moderator and audience members. Then set up and run a mock election for your troop, service unit, or other group. For your election, define voting requirements, provide voter identification cards and develop a process for verifying that Girl Scouts are registered. Design ballots and a process for issuing, collecting and tabulating the ballots and reporting your election results. Watch voting coverage on the next 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.

**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 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 7 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 problems 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.** Research 866OURVOTE to find out how they help voters year-round. After you have done your research, 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 overcome these factors? Would providing information about 866OURVOTE, 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 stickers 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 rules.

# 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 Girl Scouts at a troop or group meeting, or with your family. If other Girl Scouts 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 answer 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.**

