

AP[®] U.S. Government and Politics

USING POLITICS TO IMPROVE PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIONS

Student Workbook



AP[®] with WE Service

Table of Contents

- Getting to Know the Topic–Globally.....4
- Getting to Know the Topic–Locally.....5
- Think-Pair-Share.....6
- Evolution of Access to Elections.....7
- Barriers to Access8
- Money and Elections.....9
- The Role of the Media 10
- Small Group Research11
- Issue Selection12
- Problem Tree13
- Needs Assessment..... 14
- Solution Tree.....15
- Exploring Solutions16
- Setting a Goal17
- Identifying Targets: Decision-Makers & Influencers18
- Summarizing Your Investigation.....19
- Working Independently..... 20
- Approaches to Taking Action Information Sheet.....21
- Creating the Action Plan22
- Five Action Planning Pitfalls Tip Sheet..... 23
- Reflect: Action Plan 24
- Student Log Sheet..... 25

Getting to Know the Topic

Elections and Voting Rights: Globally

Most countries allow only citizens to vote. Some countries allow noncitizens to vote in some local or national elections. For example, in Denmark, noncitizens who have lived in Denmark for at least three years can vote in local elections, and European Union citizens living there can vote in local elections without having to wait the three years.

Additionally, voting age varies by country. In the majority of states, the legal voting age is 18, but it varies from 16 to 25 years old. For example, the voting age in Austria is 16 and the voting age in United Arab Emirates is 25. Source: www.worldatlas.com/articles/legal-voting-age-by-country.html

Fast facts

- ▶ New Zealand was among the first countries to allow women to vote in national elections in 1893. Women in the United States gained the right to vote in both state and federal elections with the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920. Saudi Arabian women gained the right to vote in local elections in 2015.
- ▶ In the United Kingdom, Parliamentary elections are scheduled every five years, but an early election can be called if two thirds of the members of the House of Commons agree to it.
- ▶ In Brazil, the president and members of the lower legislative house, the Chamber of Deputies, are elected to four-year terms, but members of the upper house serve eight-year terms.

Taking Action Globally

There are a number of ways that elections in the United States differ from those held in other countries. Choose another country and research whether voting is compulsory or non-compulsory, the frequency of elections, who gets to vote, and at what age can you vote, terms of office, etc.

Extended Learning

WE Villages is an international development model that increases opportunities for people in different communities around the world. Support this program by visiting WE.org/we-schools/programs/campaigns to get ideas and resources for taking action on global issues.



New Zealand was among the first countries to allow women to vote in national elections in 1893.

Getting to Know the Topic

Elections and Voting Rights: Locally

Where is your polling location? What issues are currently on the ballot in your voting area? When is the next election? Becoming educated in local voting logistics and issues is an important part of being an informed and active citizen. Whether or not you are eligible to vote now, you can get to know your local issues and election schedule.

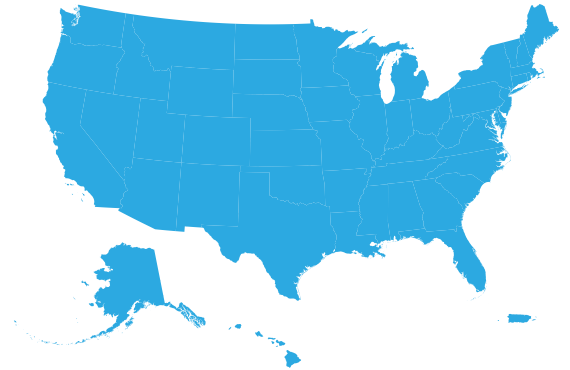
Fast facts

- ▶ Students who attend college in a different location than their family home may not be able to vote during the academic year because they are technically residents of another municipality.
- ▶ Many states offer voter registration when applying for a driver's license.
- ▶ Non-national elections often have a low voter turnout. Many local or state issues and elections are held at times different from the presidential or congressional elections.
- ▶ According to our initial, post-election estimate, approximately 50% of eligible young people—about 24 million youth, ages 18-29—voted in the 2016 general election. Source: <https://civicyouth.org/quick-facts/youth-voting/>

Taking Action Locally

Within their local or national community, students can:

- ▶ Participate in a voter registration drive.
- ▶ Educate themselves about local ballot issues and create a nonpartisan voting guide.
- ▶ Take a poll to determine how members of their community feel about a local or state ballot issue.
- ▶ Research Civic Learning and engagement amongst youth to better understand why voting matters, the affects of youth voting, and more.



Becoming educated in local voting logistics and issues is an important part of being an informed and active citizen.

Think-Pair-Share

In the original Constitution, senators were to be elected by their state legislatures. The Seventeenth Amendment, ratified in 1913, changed this so that senators were elected by voters in their states.

What does the way senators were originally elected tell you about how the founders viewed the electorate?

What does the Seventeenth Amendment demonstrate about elections in the United States?

Systems can change over the years. Is our system of elections still changing? What changes should be made?

Evolution of Access to Elections

Complete the graphic organizer below, outlining the changes in access to elections over time.

What happened to cause a change?	Constitutional Amendment / Federal Law/etc.	Which group(s) were impacted?
The Civil War	15th Amendment	Male African Americans
	19th Amendment	
	24th Amendment	
	26th Amendment	
	Voting Rights Act of 1965	
	Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act of 1984	
	Help America Vote Act (2002)	

Barriers to Access

The following are examples of both structural and nonstructural barriers to voting.

Structural		Nonstructural	
Timing of elections	This barrier covers when the elections are held, including what day, what time polls are open, the length of time polls are open, early voting times, etc.	Accessibility	Voters need to be able to physically get to the polling place.
Losing the right to vote	In some states, people convicted of a felony lose their right to vote.	Political efficacy	The belief that your vote, and voting in general, matters.
Voter registration purges	Some states have adopted a policy of purging voter registrations for people who have not voted in a certain number of past elections.	Type of Election	The type of election, (presidential, midterm, state, local, etc.) usually affects voter turnout.
Voter ID laws	Most states require you to show some form of identification before you can vote.	Number of elections	In many states, there are several elections held at various times of the year, usually for local offices or ballot initiatives.

Money and Elections

Case Notes for *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission (2010)*

Facts of the Case	
Reason behind the Majority Ruling	
Constitutional Issue	
Significance (what was/is the impact of the decision)	<p>Positive results:</p> <p>Challenges:</p>

Political Action Committees (PACs) & Campaign Finance

Watch the following KHAN academy video [Campaign finance](#) and complete the following organizer.

Questions	Answers
What are Political Action Committees?	
What is the influence PACs have on our democracy?	
What slippery slope did the Supreme Court avoid with the <i>Citizens United</i> ruling?	

After completing the graphic organizer, discuss your responses in small groups. Also, discuss how the *Citizens United* ruling affected PACs.

Small Group Research

Conduct research to determine which factors that affect elections (which we've learned about) have caused issues or challenges within our state and/or local area. You also may discover additional challenges relating to elections in our state and/or local area that we haven't covered and you're free to add those to your research. Complete the graphic organizer to guide your small-group research. Suggested research sources: online searches, local newspaper, local news radio, state publications, local TV news stations.

Factor affecting elections	Where is this happening? (State and/or local level)	What's going on/how is this presenting itself in our state and/or local area? *Must summarize research	Impact (Groups affected? Challenges or obstacles created by issue? etc.)

Issue Selection

Complete this table and checklist once issue is selected.

Checklist Table

Selected Issue	Description/Controversy	Why we selected this issue	Teacher Approval

Issue Selection Checklist

- Issue is associated with elections
- Issue is relevant at state and/or local level of government
- Issue, if addressed, would improve participation in elections
- Issue is actionable, can be addressed with direct/indirect action and/or through advocacy



NAME: _____

TEAM MEMBERS: _____

Problem Tree

(1 OF 1)

In your Problem Tree graphic organizer, start by writing the problem at the center of the tree, and then look at the causes and effects of an issue. Keep digging to go deeper on the issue to find its supporting and root causes. Use this as one tool to explore the causes and effects of food insecurity.

LEAVES/BRANCHES: EFFECTS

These are the results created by the problem. At first, this part of the issue appears easy to tackle, but when leaves and branches are trimmed, they grow back quickly. Consider the multi-layered effects, or "effects of effects," that can arise when a problem goes unaddressed. Always ask: "Then what happens?"

TRUNK: PROBLEM

This is the key issue that is being studied. This is where you'll write the issue within elections that you've chosen to focus on.

ROOTS: CAUSES

These are the situations or factors that have led to the problem. When exploring the root causes of a problem, ask yourself "Why does this problem exist?" Dig deeper to consider the "causes of causes" — the multiple layers of factors that contribute to a problem.



NAME: _____

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Needs Assessment

The following series of questions helps you to analyze and identify ongoing areas of need within organizations addressing your issue.

1. Identify three organizations working on issues related to the issue your team is working on.

2. What does each organization do well in response to the issue and/or related issues locally?

3. What does each organization do in response to the issue and/or related issues globally?

4. Compare each organization's approach to tackling the issue and assess the effectiveness of each approach.

5. Identify a criticism of or what's lacking in each organization's approach. Site the source and share their argument.

6. What could all three organizations do better?

Exploring Solutions

Complete the organizer below to gather a robust list of potential solutions to your chosen issue.

Be on the lookout for solutions like:

- ▶ a state law or city ordinance that mandates something related to the issue or a law or ordinance that could be repealed
- ▶ a government program or department that oversees something related to the issue
- ▶ perhaps there isn't one and there should be
- ▶ or perhaps there is one but it's running inefficiently and needs to be eliminated or needs more funding
- ▶ a budget measure to allocate funding for something related to the issue

Try searching online for the issue plus solutions and/or plus you state or local area like

- ▶ gerrymandering solutions
- ▶ gerrymandering in your state

Solution	Existing (already in effect) or Proposed	Where — local, state, or other state?	Which root cause might it address?



NAME: _____

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Solution Tree

In your Solution Tree graphic organizer, start by rewriting the problem from your Problem Tree, and reframing it as a goal at the center of the tree. Then consider the different solutions (the roots) and possible outcomes of the solutions (the branches).

LEAVES/BRANCHES: OUTCOMES

These are the results created by the solution. Results may appear as straightforward as having achieved goals, but when you consider the ripple effects and outcomes of sustainable results, the impact is far-reaching and long-lasting. Always ask: "Then what happens?"

TRUNK: PROBLEM

TRUNK: GOAL

ROOTS: SOLUTIONS

These are the actions needed to solve the problem and achieve the goal stated at the center of the solution tree. When exploring solutions, ask yourself "How will this solve the problem?" Dig deeper to think holistically, so that you are looking beyond the short-term and addressing not only the symptoms of the problem but the root causes as well.

Setting a Goal

Revisit your Exploring Solutions research table and consider the following questions.

- ▶ Which existing (already in effect) solutions from other states did you like and why?

- ▶ Which proposed solutions from your local area and/or state or another state did you like and why?

- ▶ Which solutions best address root causes of your issue?

- ▶ What do you hope will be the immediate and eventual outcomes of your project when you're finished?

- ▶ Based on what you've learned and your hopes for outcomes, which solution would you like to take on for your project goal? Which one will help you most bring about substantive change?

- ▶ Once you've agreed upon a goal, create a goal statement.

Here is an optional sentence stem for crafting your project goal statement...

In order to create substantive change to improve participation in elections in _____, (location)
we will advocate for _____(solution) to accomplish _____ (desired outcome).

Identifying Targets: Decision-Makers & Influencers

Now that you have an in-depth understanding of your issue and have chosen a goal, it is time to identify who can help influence and/or make substantive change in order to improve participation in elections for our city/state. You're going to need to research different targets — both decision-makers and influencers. These could be elected officials, community members, and/or fellow advocates.

Decision-Maker(s): Someone who holds decision-making power over the issue — for example, a city council/member, mayor, senator, head of a department/agency, etc.

Influencer(s): Individuals that can influence the decision-maker — it can literally be almost anyone, depending on the focus issue — community members, business owners, elected officials, bureaucrats, nonprofit staff, etc.

Complete the chart below with your possible targets:

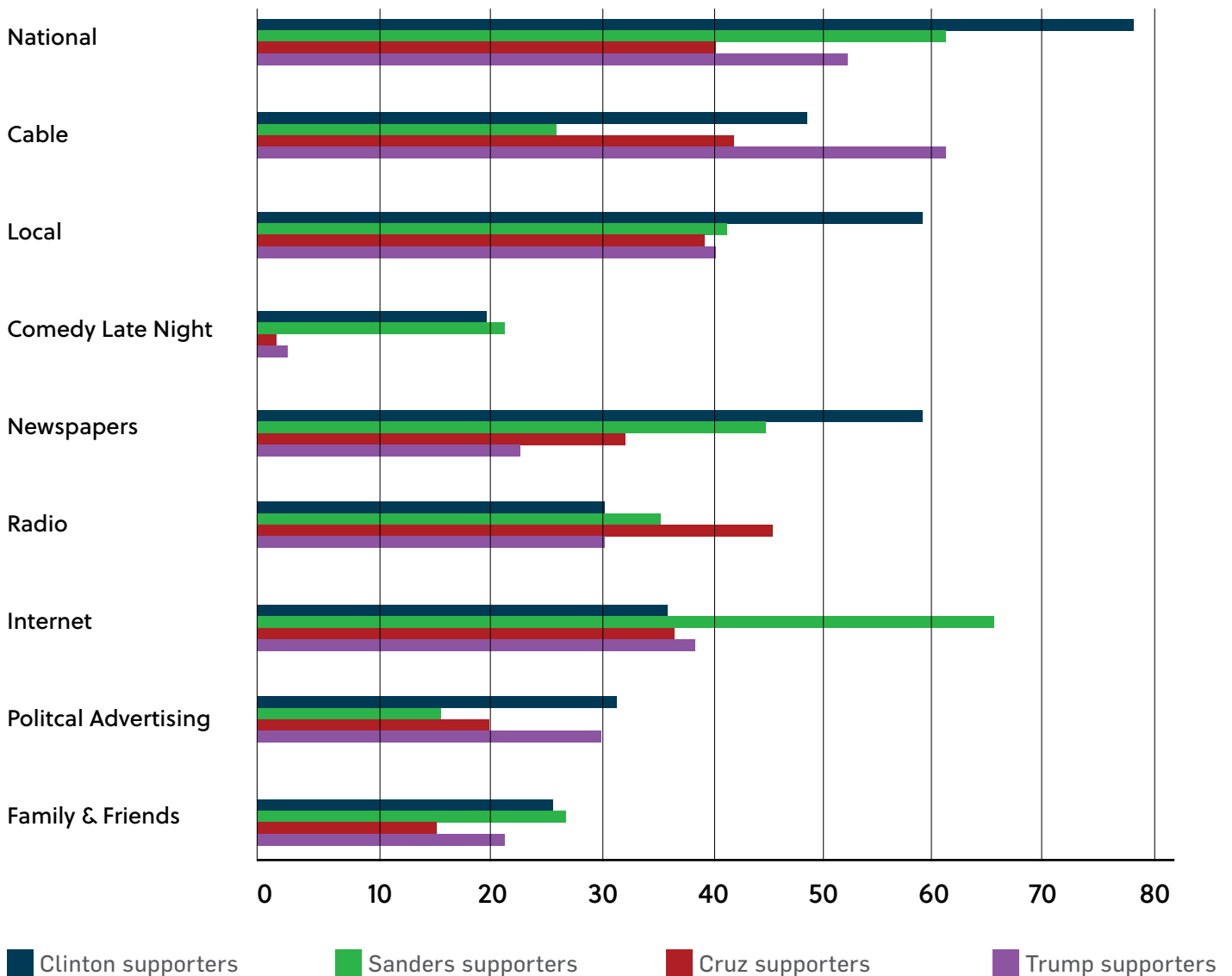
Target (name)	Decision-Maker or Influencer	Contact info (phone & emails)	Role & responsibility (Why would they be concerned/interested with your goal?)

Working Independently

Use the information graphic to answer the questions.

- (A) Identify the media most used by Trump supporters in 2016.
- (B) Describe a similarity or difference in the type of media used by Trump and Clinton supporters, as illustrated in the information graphic.
- (C) Draw a conclusion about that similarity or difference in the type of media used by Trump and Clinton supporters illustrated in the information graphic.
- (D) Explain how a Political Action Committee supporting Sanders in 2016 would decide how best to spend their advertising budget.

Frequent Use of Media Suppliers



Source: <https://phys.org/news/2016-01-tv-source-political-news-caucus-goers.html>

Approaches to Taking Action Information Sheet

DIRECT SERVICE	
WHAT IS IT?	Personally engaging with and providing hands-on service to those in need (usually in conjunction with an organization).
EXAMPLE GOAL	By the end of the year, we will work to increase voter turnout in the 2020 election by encouraging more residents register to vote. We will also work to increase voter participation by ensuring access for residents to polling locations and advocating for the passage of legislation that would increase participation by making Election Day a state holiday.
ACTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Conduct research to identify local organizations working on access to elections in our state and local area. ▶ Reach out to and partner with these organizations on initiatives like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Raising money to ensure adequate transportation is provided to nursing homes and neighborhoods with less access to transportation ▶ Facilitating a voter registration drive at your school or in your community ▶ Volunteer to serve as an election day worker to ensure there are enough well-staffed polling locations in your community. ▶ Conduct research on the value of Election Days as holidays. ▶ Work with local organizations to organize a lobby day advocating for the passage of the legislation. ▶ Contact local press and news agencies about your efforts and request that they help bring media attention. ▶ Contact elected officials and request an opportunity to meet with them to speak on behalf of the legislation. ▶ Create a presentation reviewing your research and advocating for the passage of the legislation and share your presentation with elected officials. ▶ If unable to meet with elected officials, create video presentation with elected officials and email to their office.
INDIRECT SERVICE	
WHAT IS IT?	Channeling resources to the needs of a community — locally, nationally, or internationally.
EXAMPLE GOAL	By the end of the year, we will work to encourage the participation of more residents as candidates in our state and local elections by advocating for legislation that will allocate matching funds for eligible candidates.
ACTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Conduct research to identify local organizations working on campaign finance in our state and local area. ▶ Reach out and partner with local organizations to organize a fundraising campaign for eligible candidates with less funds. ▶ Identify candidates with less funds and resources that you support and volunteer on their campaigns. ▶ Launch a social media campaign to encourage people to donate their time and money to these candidates. ▶ Conduct research on the value of equitable financing in elections. ▶ Partner with local organizations to organize a lobby day advocating for the passage of the legislation. ▶ Contact local press and news agencies about your efforts and request that they help bring media attention. ▶ Contact elected officials and request an opportunity to meet with them to speak on behalf of the legislation. ▶ Create a presentation reviewing your research and advocating for the passage of the legislation and share your presentation. ▶ If unable to meet with elected officials, create video presentation and email to their office.
ADVOCACY	
WHAT IS IT?	Educating others about an issue to increase visibility and following up with an action that focuses on enacting change. Raising awareness about a problem is often part of an advocacy project, but the strongest advocacy projects also have a specific call to action of what they'd like others to do to support making change on their issue.
EXAMPLE GOAL	By the end of the year, we will work to increase voter engagement in the political process by educating residents about the electoral process and advocating for the passage of legislation requiring civics education in middle and high schools in our state.
ACTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Conduct research on political efficacy and its decline over time as well as the relationship to the decline in civics education. ▶ Contact and interview experts in state and local government agencies and nonprofits and advocacy organizations on this topic. ▶ Launch a social media campaign to educate residents about your research including the consequences of low political participation and a lack of civics education as well as ways to get involved in the political process including and beyond voting. Encourage individuals to support the legislation by contacting their elected officials. ▶ Work with local organizations to create resources like letter templates and petitions for supporters to get involved with the efforts. ▶ Contact local press and news agencies about your efforts and request that they help bring media attention. ▶ Contact elected officials and request an opportunity to meet with them to speak on behalf of the legislation. ▶ Create a presentation reviewing your research and advocating for the passage of the legislation and share your presentation. ▶ If unable to meet with elected officials, create video presentation and email to their office.



NAME: _____

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Creating the Action Plan

This outline serves as a basic template for your action plan. Use additional space and resources to help you build out each part with the right amount of detail and flow to ensure you have the strongest action plan that you and your team can implement with ease. Remember, this is your road map for your service project!

Team Goal:

Measures of Success:

Required Network and Resources

In order to complete this goal, our team will need to develop the following network and access the following resources:

Network:

Resources:

Roles and Responsibilities

Each team member will take on the following roles and associated responsibilities:

Timeline

Our team will use the following timeline to complete tasks and successfully carry out the action to meet our goal(s):



NAME: _____

TEAM MEMBERS: _____

Five Action Planning Pitfalls Tip Sheet

(1 OF 1)

Once your team has completed the major components of your action plan (creating your teams and setting goals, timeline, and network), review the five action planning pitfalls provided below to ensure these have been avoided. Review your plans — individually first, then together as a team. After the review, rework your action plans, if necessary.

1. **Setting an unclear goal**

The first and most important part of any action plan is defining the goal, or what you want to achieve. It should be clear and easy to understand, for example, “we want to collect 500 cans of food,” or “we want 200 people to learn about WE Villages.” If the goal is not clearly defined, proper planning will be difficult if not impossible. As a best practice, have a peer from another team review your goal to ensure it is as clear as you hope.

2. **Planning unrealistic actions**

After the goal is set, begin planning the actions necessary to achieve it. It is important that the steps make sense and are achievable. Do not plan unrealistic actions such as working at times that will interfere with schoolwork, overestimating how many people can help out, or planning to go to places that would be difficult for you to reach. Consider each team member’s school and community schedule, such as work and extracurricular activities. Before planning an action, ask yourself, “Is this action realistic?”

3. **Rushing the process**

Do not be too hasty in planning actions. While you may be excited to start, proper planning takes time. The better the planning and organization, the more success you will achieve. Even if it means slowing down to figure out details, do not rush and leave out important steps.

4. **Not asking for help**

Do not be afraid to ask for help. When a network is created, bigger goals can be achieved faster. Reach out to friends, parents and mentors. People generally enjoy helping, especially if it is for a worthy cause.

5. **Not learning from mistakes and giving up too quickly**

We all make mistakes — it is normal and healthy. Mistakes allow us an opportunity to learn and grow. So, learn from the mistakes. Ask, “Why did this happen?” and “How can I avoid this problem next time?” Actively think about the mistakes and how it will be better the second time around. If something does not go as planned, do not stop!



NAME: _____

TEAM MEMBERS: _____

Student Log Sheet

DATE / TIME SPENT	ACTIVITY, DESCRIPTION, AND REFLECTION	VERIFIED BY (NAME, ORGANIZATION)

Notes

Notes

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