

# Election Glossary

**absentee ballot:** a mailable paper ballot that is used by voters who will not be able to vote on election day (like military personnel stationed overseas). The absentee ballots are mailed before election day and counted on election day.

**acceptance speech:** speech delivered by a candidate when accepting a political party's nomination for the national presidential election.

**absolute majority:** more than 50% of the votes cast.

**bipartisan** - supported by members of the two major political parties (the Democrats and the Republicans).

**blanket primary:** a primary election in which the names of all the candidates for all the parties are on one ballot.

**ballot:** either in paper form or electronic, the way voters to show their vote preferences , or a list of candidates.

**campaign:** the process of gathering public support for a candidate.

**campaign season:** period of time that candidates work to inform the public and gain support prior to the election.

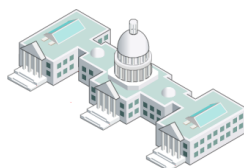
**candidate:** person running for elected office.

**caucus:** meetings where political party leaders and supporters choose candidates through discussion and consensus.

**center:** having beliefs that are in the middle between conservative and liberal.

**closed primary:** a primary election in which only those voters who have registered as belonging to a particular political party can vote.

**congressional district:** an area within a state from which a member of the House of Representatives is elected. There are 435 Congressional districts.



**conservative:** believing that it's better for individuals and businesses—not the government—to find solutions for society's problems.

**contributor/donor:** a person or organization that donates money to a candidate's campaign for office.

**convention:** meeting where a political party chooses its presidential candidate.

**delegates:** people chosen to represent each state at a political party's convention.

**Election Day:** the Tuesday after the first Monday in November.

**Electoral College:** each state has a group of people called electors who cast the actual votes for president. When people vote for a presidential candidate, they are really voting to decide which candidate the electors in their state will vote for.

**exit poll** - an informal poll taken as people leave the voting booth. Exit polls are used to predict the winners before the polls close.

**G.O.P.:** the nickname used for the Republican Party and stands for the Grand Old Party.

**Inauguration Day:** the day a new president and vice president are sworn into office (January 20).

**incumbent** - a person who is currently in office.

**independent** - a person who is not associated with any political party.

**issues** : problems facing our country that need solutions. Common examples are immigration, access to health care, finding energy sources, and how to provide quality education.

**left:** another word for liberal.

**liberal:** believing that the government has a role in solving society's problems and should take action for creating solutions.

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**majority party:** the political party that is represented by more than 50% of the members in the Senate or the House of Representatives.

**media:** news organizations that deliver information through television, radio, newspaper, or the internet.

**midterm election** - a general election that does not occur during a presidential election year. In a midterm election, some members of the US Senate, all members of the House of Representatives, and many state and local positions are elected.

**minority party:** the political party that is represented by less than 50% of the members in the Senate or the House of Representatives.

**nominee:** the candidate a political party chooses, or nominates, to run in the national election.

**nonpartisan:** not relating to any political party.

**opinion polls:** surveys that ask members of the public how they feel about different issues.

**partisan:** relating to a particular political party.

**personal appearance:** an event that a candidate attends in person.

**platform:** a set of statements that describe a political party's views about the issues facing our country.

**policy:** position the government takes on what role the government should have in solving the issues facing our country.



The **Democratic** Party is symbolized as a donkey.

The **Republican** Party is symbolized as an elephant.

**Political Action Committee (PAC):** organization that is formed by an individual or special interest group to raise money for political campaigns.

**political parties:** organized groups of people who share similar beliefs about how the government should be run and how the issues facing our country should be solved.

**popular vote:** A tally of all the votes citizens have cast in the presidential election.

**primary election:** An election in which people vote for the presidential candidate they want to represent their political party in the national election.

**primary season:** the months during which states hold primary elections.

**record:** information about how a politician has voted on bills and statements made about issues while serving in office.

**Recount:** counting the votes again if there is some disagreement about the election process

**referendum** - a proposed piece of legislation (a law) that people can directly vote on. (also called a ballot measure, initiative or proposition)

**right:** another word for conservative.

**running mate:** a candidate who is running for office with another candidate on the same ticket. (Example: president and vice president)

**swing voters** - voters who do not have a commitment to a particular political party.

**third party** - any political party other than the two major parties (Republican and Democratic)

**voting age:** The 26<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution says that people have the right to vote when they turn 18.