

# Patch Curriculum

## Preface

Elections offer a unique opportunity to help build a foundation for active citizenship and leadership. By participating in this program, you'll discover how the election process works and what you can do right now to become a voter and possibly a future office-holder.

You have a voice—it's important that you use it!

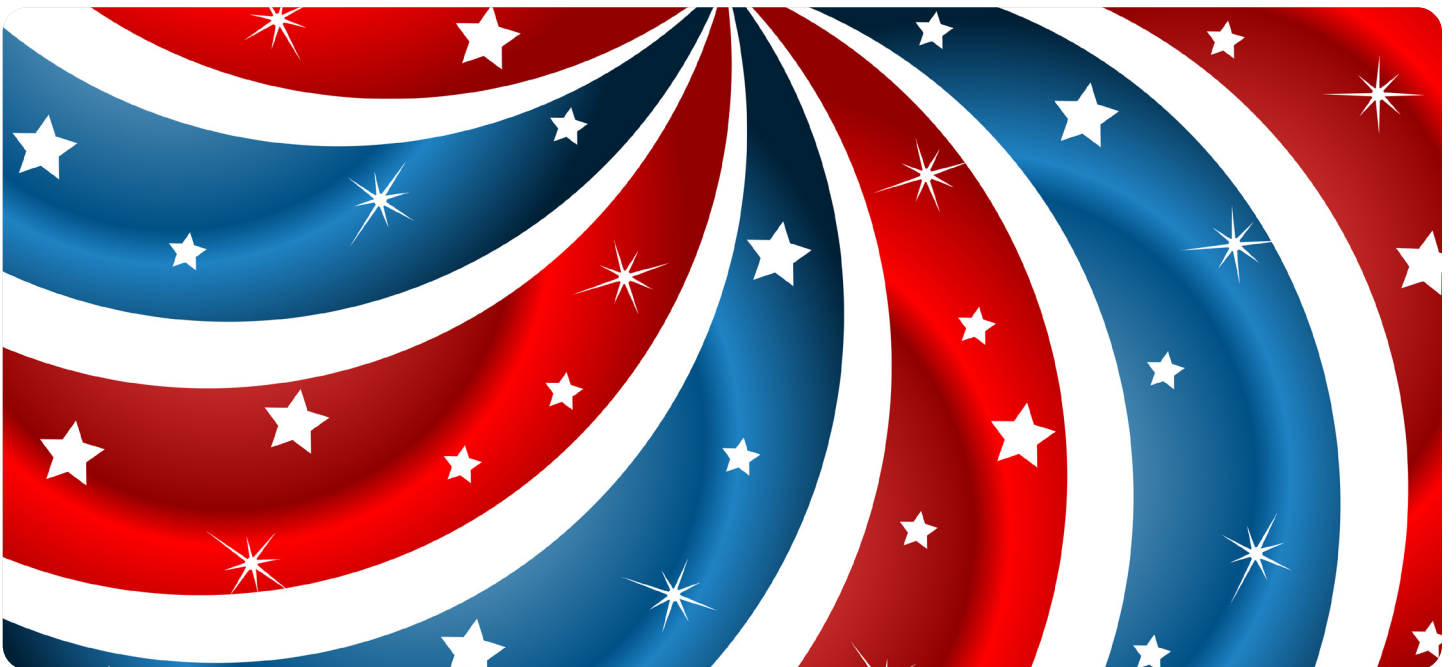
Participation in this program will help build a foundation for active citizenship and leadership.

## Steps

1. The election process
2. Who represents me?
3. Get the word out
4. Democracy in action
5. Earn a patch

## Purpose

When I've earned this patch, I will understand the election process, the importance of voting, and how people get elected to office.



# Step 1: The Election Process

What does it mean to be an active and involved citizen? Living in a democratic society means you have the right to vote for whomever you choose, but with that privilege comes the responsibility to learn how the process actually works.

## The US Constitution

The Founding Fathers wanted to form a government that did not allow one person to have too much control, so they wrote the Constitution to provide for a separation of powers into three separate branches of government: legislative, executive and judicial.

Each branch of government has its own responsibilities; however, they work together to ensure the country runs smoothly. This is done through a system of checks and balances.

## Did You Know?

The entire Constitution is displayed only one day a year—September 17, the anniversary of the day the framers signed the document.

The Rotunda of the National Archives Building in downtown Washington, DC, displays the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the Declaration of Independence.

## Actions: Do One of the Following

### Investigate the election process.

Research who is eligible to vote and how they register, or learn about the specific requirements for different offices. Running for president looks a lot different than running for mayor.



## Research the evolution of voter rights.

Did you know women weren't always able to vote? Focus on a significant figure in the women's suffrage movement, or draw a timeline that includes major events and changes in voter rights over history.

## Discover differences and similarities between our government and others.

Pick a country you'd like to know more about and learn what rights their citizens have. Who is eligible to vote? Who is their current leader?

Consider inviting a returned Peace Corps volunteer or international aid worker to your troop meeting to share their experiences, and hear first-hand what living in a different political system is like.



## Women in Elected Office

In 2022, women make up 50.4% of the population; but, only one in four members of Congress is a woman.

If more women had held elected office throughout U.S. history, would we recognize today's American political structure? We can only imagine what society might look like today if American government had been more inclusive over the course of its history.

The future for women in elected office looks hopeful—several records have been set for women in elected offices in the last decade. Since 1971, the number of women serving in state legislatures has more than sextupled. Currently there are 2,662 women in power across governorships, congressional seats, and state legislative seats.

Take a look at the number of women in elected office in 2022.

## What about Indiana?

Today, there are no women representing the Hoosier state in the U.S. Senate.

2 of 9 U.S. House of Representatives from Indiana are women. Indiana has never elected a woman to serve as governor.

40 of 150 seats in the Indiana State Legislature, or 27%, are held by women, including 9 senators and 32 representatives.



### Statewide elective executive offices

Currently only 96 women hold statewide elective executive offices across the country. This means that women hold only 31% of the 310 available positions.

- Governor—12
- Lt. Governor—22
- Attorney General—11
- Secretary of State—10
- State Treasurer—8
- Commissioner of Labor—2
- State Comptroller—3
- Corporation Commissioner—3
- State Auditor—8
- Public Service Commissioner—4
- Chief State Educational Official—8
- Public Utilities Commissioner—1
- Railroad Commissioner—1
- Insurance Commissioner—1
- Commissioner of Lands—3
- Agriculture Commissioner—0
- Superintendent of Public Instruction—7

### Congress

Women currently hold the following:

- 150, or 28%, of the 535 seats in the U.S. Congress
- 25, or 25%, of the 100 seats in the Senate (a new record)
- 125, or 28.7%, of the 435 seats in the House of Representatives
- 60% of female members of Congress are Girl Scout alumni

Fun fact: Kamala Harris became the first woman to hold the office of Vice President on January 20, 2021. She is also the first woman of color, the first black person, and the first South Asian to be elected to office. Previously, Vice President Harris served in the U.S. Senate as well as California Attorney General.

## Step 2: Who Represents Me?

Before voting, it's important to know who is currently in office and who hopes to win the next election.

You will discover some politicians believe in the same things as you, while others do not.

Learning about these similarities and differences helps you make an informed decision.

Shirley Chisholm represented New York State in the U.S. House of Representatives from January 3, 1969 until January 3, 1983.

Chisholm was a founding member of the Congressional Black Caucus and championed minority education and employment opportunities throughout her tenure in Congress.

In 1972, she ran for the Democratic nomination for the presidency—becoming the first major-party African-American candidate and second woman to do so.

In 2015, Chisholm was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom.



## Actions: Do One of the Following

### Who currently represents me?

Use the “Who is representing me?” worksheet on page 5. You can use the Internet or contact your local election office for help in filling in the blanks.

### What makes a great leader?

As a troop, discuss some of the characteristics of a good leader. What does leadership mean to you? Why? Be sure to include both local and global leaders in this discussion!

## Which candidates are running for office?

Find out when the next election will be held, then determine who is running for office on that date. Once you have the names and offices, ask them for an interview.

A candidate's "platform" expresses their position on a particular issue. Talk with your interview subject about their platform. Find out what issues matter most to them.

## Who is representing me?

At each level of the government there are officials elected to represent the people. The contact information for all elected officials is available online: [www.votesmart.org](http://www.votesmart.org) and will help you find the answers to the following questions and find out the purpose of each position. For state and national offices, you can go to [www.votesmart.org](http://www.votesmart.org).

The United States senators from my state are:

Who is the Head of my town/city government?

Name the United States representatives from your district.

How many congressional districts are there in my state?

If you live in a city who is your mayor? How many years does a mayor serve in office?

The governor of my state is:

## Step 3: Get the Word Out

There are a lot of ways for young people to take action and get involved with the election process before the big day. You can volunteer your time, start a letter writing campaign, or help people get registered to vote.

### Actions: Do One of the Following

#### **Encourage five adults to vote.**

Now that you know a little more about the election process, talk with your favorite adults—a grandparent, neighbor, teacher—and encourage them to register to vote.

#### **Write a letter.**

For younger girls, write a letter to an elected official, like a mayor or governor, about an issue that's important to you. For older girls, research pending legislation that applies to young people, and write a letter to your state or U.S. representative expressing your thoughts about that particular legislation.

#### **Organize a voter registration event.**

Contact a local college, church, or library and ask if you can hold a voter registration drive.

On the day of the voter registration drive, you can show people how to register to vote online at [www.usa.gov/register-to-vote/](http://www.usa.gov/register-to-vote/).

If someone is already registered, help them check that their registration is up-to-date and verify the location of their polling place.



# Step 4: Democracy in Action

Now it's time to take everything you've learned and put it to use! Polling locations are the place to be on Election Day. Make a plan ahead of time to ensure you can visit one and learn what it's like to be a voter.

## Suffragettes

Suffragettes were members of women's organizations in the late-19th and early-20th centuries who fought for the right for women to vote in public elections.

Leaders of this movement included Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, Alice Paul, and Sojourner Truth.

In 1923, the National Women's Party proposed the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)—an amendment prohibiting all discrimination on the basis of sex—to the Constitution.

The ERA has never been ratified.

## Did You Know?

Women were not allowed to vote until 1920.

On August 26, 1920, the 19th Amendment to the Constitution was finally ratified.

The 19th Amendment says that women, like men, deserve all the rights and responsibilities of citizenship!

The year 2020 marked the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment, guaranteeing and protecting women's constitutional right to vote.

# Actions: Do One of the Following

## Visit a polling site on Election Day.

Go to a polling site with an adult and see what a ballot looks like and how to complete one. Does your precinct use electronic or paper ballots? How are the ballots submitted? What questions did poll workers ask adults before giving them a ballot?

After Election Day, you can discuss what you learned with your troop.

## Interview a poll worker.

First, you will need permission from your local election office to conduct an interview with a poll worker. Next, come up with three questions to ask a poll worker, like what their job responsibilities include or why working at a poll site is important. When you talk with them, make sure to document their answers. You can discuss what you learned later with your troop.

## Thank a voter!

Make greeting cards for poll workers to thank them for their service on Election Day.

(They arrive at 6 a.m. and cannot leave until all ballots are counted!) You could also make signs and cheer for voters when they arrive at a polling location to thank them for being an active citizen.



# Step 5: Earn the Patch

Congratulations! By participating in “I Promised a Girl Scout I Would Vote” you have already completed at least two requirements from each grade-level Legacy: Citizen patch.

Patch program activities:

- Daisies—”Mari” and “Rosie” Petals
- Brownies—Celebrating Community
- Juniors—Inside Government

All that’s left to do is complete the last few steps to earn your patch and celebrate your accomplishments!

**Fun note:** Have you been thinking about starting a journey? This program is a great segue into the “It’s Your World—Change It!” Journey series.



## 3 Branches of Government

### Legislative—Makes Laws

Congress is composed of two parts: The Senate and the House of Representatives. The Senate has 100 elected senators total; two senators per state. Each senator serves a six-year term and may be re-elected. The House has 435 voting representatives; the number of representatives from each state is based on the state’s population. Each representative serves a two-year term and may be re-elected.

### Executive—Carries Out Laws

The executive branch is composed of the president, vice president and cabinet members. The president is the head of state, head of the U.S. government and the commander-in-chief of the U.S. military. The vice president not only supports the president, but also acts as the presiding officer of the senate. Cabinet members are nominated by the president and must be approved by the Senate (with at least 51 votes). They serve as advisors and heads of various departments and agencies.

### Judicial—Evaluates Laws

The judicial branch of government is made up of the court system. The Supreme Court is the highest court in the country. The nine justices are nominated by the president and must be approved by the Senate (with at least 51 votes). There are lower federal courts, but they were not created by the Constitution. Congress deemed them necessary and established them using power granted from the Constitution.

# Resources & Links

**iCivics** | <https://www.icivics.org/>

Educational website featuring games, resources, and lesson plans.

**League of Women Voters** | [www.LWVIN.org/](http://www.LWVIN.org/)

Office of the Secretary of State [www.in.gov/sos](http://www.in.gov/sos)

**Rock the Vote** | [www.rockthevote.com/](http://www.rockthevote.com/)

Rock the Vote's mission is to engage and build political power for young people in our country.

**USA.gov** | [www.usa.gov/register-to-vote](http://www.usa.gov/register-to-vote)

Learn about voter registration requirements in your district and find contact information for your local election office.

**Vote Smart** | <http://vote.smart.org/>

Search engine of voter information.

## Careers to Explore

Elected official

Lobbyist

Lawyer

Judge

Speechwriter

Campaign manager

Political or opinion writer

Editor for an online political journal

Press secretary

Political correspondent

Political science professor

Advocate, activist, or organizer

Policy analyst

Legislative analyst

Public-affairs specialist

Congressional office staff member

Community-relations director

Fundraiser

Events planner

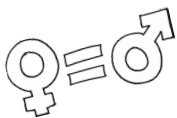
Communications director

Foreign-service officer

High school government teacher

Political commentator

Pollster



## Election definitions

**Absentee voter** - a person who cannot vote at the polls on Election Day due to infirmity, religious reasons or absence from their city or town; this individual may vote ahead of time by mail or in person.

**Agenda** - list of items of business.

**Agency** - group that has the authority to act for others in specific matters.

**Articles** - individual items to be acted upon by town meeting; the warrant is a list of all the articles.

**Ballot** - a process of voting in writing, typically done in secret.

**Board** - a group organized to deal with specific matters.

**Campaign** - series of organized, planned actions for a specific purpose.

**Candidate** - person who wishes to become an elected official.

**Caucus** - meeting of a political party or citizens to decide on policy, or nominate candidates for office.

**Citizen** - member of a state or nation.

**Clerk** - local official who is usually responsible for elections; certifies the results of town meeting; collects birth, death, and marriage stats; issues marriage, fishing, and dog licenses.

**Congress** - the national legislative body of a country; the House of Representatives and the Senate make up the United States Congress.

**Council** - assembly of people called upon for advice.

**Constituent** - one who elects or assists in electing another as his/her representative.

**Democratic party** - one of the two major political parties in the U.S.

### Did you know?

- The first woman to run for U.S. president was Victoria Woodhull, who campaigned for the office in 1872 under the National Woman's Suffrage Association.
- Jeanette Rankin of Montana became the first woman elected to Congress in 1916.
- The first female governor of a U.S. state was Wyoming governor Nellie Taylor Ross, elected in 1924.
- The first female member of a president's cabinet was Frances Perkins, Secretary of Labor under FDR.
- Kamala Harris became the first female U.S. vice president in 2020 under President Joe Biden.

**District** - geographic division made for a specific purpose.

**Election** - act of choosing a person to fill an office by a vote.

**Executive branch** - part of government, required to administer laws created by the legislative branch.

**House of Representatives** - one of the houses of Congress that works to pass laws.

**Incumbent** - person in present possession of elected office.

**Judicial branch** - branch of government that evaluates laws.

**Legislative branch** - part of government that creates law.

**Lobby** - attempt to convince others to act in favor of or against a special interest.

**Local elected official** - member of local government elected at town/city election (mayors, school board members, etc.).

**Mayor** - chief elected official of a city.

**Nomination** - act of submitting a name for election to office.

**Nonpartisan** - not related to or belonging to a political party.

**Opponent** - one who supports the opposite side.

**Platform** - a list of values and actions which are supported by a political party.

**Poll worker** - volunteers who issue ballots, register voters, and answer questions at the polls on Election Day.

**Primary** - election prior to general election; party affiliations are used.

**Precinct** - subdivision of a city or town.

**Republican party** - one of the two major political parties in the U.S.

**Secretary of State** - the position of secretary of state varies depending on where you live. The U.S. has a secretary of state who is primarily responsible for foreign affairs. Many American states have a secretary of state as well, each being assigned different responsibilities that depend on a state's constitution and laws. Many secretaries are responsible for overseeing the elections in their state.

**Senate** - one of the two houses of Congress that works with the House of Representatives to pass laws; senators have longer terms than representatives.

**Tally** - count of votes.

**Teller** - person appointed to help count votes.

**Vote** - decision by one or more people on a choice between candidates or ideas.

**Ward** - an area of a city that is divided into precincts.

## Important Dates to Remember. . .

### Get Out the Vote

☑ November 7, 2023, November 5, 2024 -  
General election day in USA

### National Conventions

☑ August 19-22, 2024 - Democratic Party  
National Convention

☑ July 15-18, 2024 - Republican Party National Convention



Special thanks to Indiana's Secretary of State office for their help developing this program curriculum.

Indiana's Secretary of State is dedicated to building active and involved citizens.

The Office of Secretary of State is one of five constitutional offices originally designated in Indiana's State Constitution of 1816.

# Conclusion

Now that I've completed this program, I can give service by:

- Working on a campaign
- Running for office at my school or serving on a committee
- Helping a younger Girl Scout understand the importance of voting

**I'm inspired to:**

**“Let us make our future now, and let us make our dreams tomorrow’s reality.”**

**- Malala Yousafzai**

**The youngest person to receive the Nobel Peace Prize**



# Congrats on completing the I Promised a Girl Scout I'd Vote patch curriculum!

Patches are available at the Girl Scout Shop.

