

Chapter 11

Elections and Officials

In the United States citizens have a right and a responsibility to vote. Men and women running for office are called candidates. Any US citizen who is 18 or older can vote for the candidate they think will do the best job in office. Most candidates come from the two major political parties, the Republicans and the Democrats.

There are also independent candidates and candidates from minor parties. Elections are usually in November. Citizens, however, can participate in democracy all year long. They can help a candidate with a campaign, or they can call or write their senator or representative to explain their opinion on an issue.

Different government positions have different terms. The US President and Vice President serve for 4 years. We vote for representatives to Congress every 2 years. Senators are elected for a 6 year term. If a government official cannot do the job because of illness or accident, we might have a special election for that position.

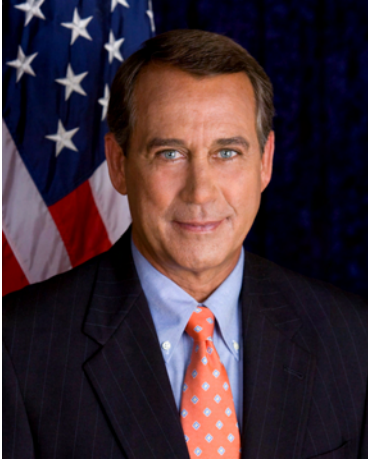
The current United States President is Barack Obama. He's in the Democratic Party. He first won the election in November 2008 and took office in January 2009. He's our first African-American President. All US Presidents are limited to 2 terms and this is his first term in office, so he can run again in 2012. His Vice President is Joe Biden.



Barack Obama
US President



Joe Biden
US Vice President



John Boehner
Speaker of the House

The US House of Representatives has 435 members. The leader is the Speaker of the House. The current Speaker of the House is John Boehner. He is a Republican who has been in Congress since 1991. He was the Republican minority leader since 2007. He became Speaker when the Republicans became the majority party in the House after the 2010 elections.



Mark Dayton
Governor of Minnesota

The leader of the U.S. government is the President. The leader of a state government is the governor. The Governor of the state of Minnesota is Mark Dayton. He's a Democratic Party member elected in 2010. His office is in St. Paul, the Minnesota State Capital.



Al Franken
US Senator

Amy Klobuchar is a Democratic senator from Minnesota. She was elected in 2006 as the Democratic Farmer Labor (DFL) Candidate. The 2008 senatorial election was very close. We waited 8 months until the Minnesota Supreme Court decided that Al Franken, a Democrat was the winner. He took office in July, 2009

The people of Minnesota also elect 8 representatives to the House of Representatives. To find the name of your representative, go to www.house.gov and type your 9 digit zip code in the "find your Representative box".



Amy Klobuchar
US Senator

Write answers to these questions:

1. What is the name of the President of the United States now?

2. What is the name of the Vice President of the United States now?

3. Who is the Governor of Minnesota?

4. Who is one of Minnesota's US Senators?

5. What is the capital of Minnesota?

6. What are the two major political parties in the United States?

7. What is the political party of the President now?

8. What is the name of the Speaker of the House of Representatives now?

9. How old do citizens have to be to vote for President?

10. What are two ways that Americans can participate in their democracy?

11. What is one responsibility that is only for United States citizens?

12. We elect a US Senator for how many years?

13. We elect a US Representative for how many years?

14. Name your US Representative.

Test Yourself

1) What is one responsibility that is only for United States citizens?

- a) to vote
- b) to pay income tax
- c) to drive

2) What is the name of the President of the United States now?

- a) George Bush
- b) Barack Obama
- c) Joe Biden

3) We elect a US senator for how many years? a) 2 years

- b) 4 years
- c) 6 years

4) What is the capital of Minnesota?

- a) St. Paul
- b) Minneapolis
- c) Duluth

5) What is the name of the Vice President of the United States now?

- a) Joe Biden
- b) Hillary Clinton
- c) Dick Cheney

6) Who is the Governor of Minnesota?

- a) Al Franken
- b) John Beohner
- c) Mark Dayton

7) Who is one of your state's US senators?

- a) Amy Klobuchar
- b) Mark Dayton
- c) Tim Pawlenty

8) What are the two major political parties in the United States?

- a) Democrats and Republicans
- b) Republicans and Independents
- c) Democrats and Liberals

9) How old do citizens have to be to vote for President?

- a) 16
- b) 18
- c) 21

10) What is the political party of the President now?

- a) Republican
- b) Democratic
- c) Independent

11) What is the name of the Speaker of the House of Representatives now?

- a) John Boehner
- b) Hillary Clinton
- c) Joe Biden

12) What are two ways that Americans can participate in their democracy?

- a) get a job and run for office
- b) write your senator and vote
- c) pay taxes and buy a house

13) We elect a US representative for how many years?

- a) 2 years
- b) 4 years
- c) 6 years

Go back to the previous page. Cover your written answers and practice saying the answers to the questions.