CE.5 Study Guide

STANDARD CE.5A
-- POLITICAL PARTIES

The functions of political parties

Political parties play a key role in government and provide opportunities for citizens to participate in the political process.

Functions of political parties

- Recruiting and nominating candidates
- Educating the people about campaign issues
- Helping candidates win elections
- Monitoring actions of officeholders

STANDARD CE.5B
-- TWO-PARTY SYSTEM

Similarities and differences of political parties.

A two-party system characterizes the American political process.

Although third parties rarely win elections, they can play an important role in public politics.

Similarities between parties

- Organize to win elections
- Influence public policies
- Reflect both liberal and conservative views on the political spectrum
- Define themselves in a way that wins majority support by appealing to the center of the political spectrum

Differences between parties

- Stated in party platforms and reflected in campaigning

Third parties (e.g., Green Party, Constitution Party, Libertarian Party)

- Introduce new ideas and/or press for a particular issue
- Often take votes away from the two-major parties
- Often revolve around a political personality (e.g., Theodore Roosevelt)

STANDARD CE.5C
-- ROLE OF MEDIA IN CAMPAIGNS

Campaigns for elective office, with emphasis on the role of the media

Voters evaluate information presented in political campaigns to make informed choices among candidates.

The media play an important role in the political process.

Strategies for evaluating campaign speeches, literature, and advertisements for accuracy

- Separating fact from opinion
- Detecting bias
- Evaluating sources
- Identifying propaganda

Mass media roles in elections

- Identifying candidates
- Emphasizing selected issues
- Writing editorials, creating political cartoons, publishing op-ed pieces, posting to social media and blogs.
- Broadcasting different points of view
STANDARD CE.5D
-- CAMPAIGN COSTS

Role of campaign contributions and costs

Running for political office can be very expensive.

Rising campaign costs

- require candidates to conduct extensive fund-raising activities
- limit opportunities to run for public office
- give an advantage to wealthy individuals who run for office
- encourage the development of political action committees (PACs) and Super PACs
- give issue-oriented special interest groups increased influence.

Campaign finance reform

- Rising campaign costs have led to efforts to reform campaign finance laws.
- Limits have been placed on the amount individuals may contribute to political candidates and campaigns; however, individuals, business, and unions can donate unlimited amounts to PACs and Super PACs (Citizen’s United vs. Federal Elections Committee).

STANDARD CE.5E
-- VOTER REGISTRATION

Requirements for voter registration

Through legislation and constitutional amendments, different American citizens have been granted the right to vote at different times.

Legislation and constitutional amendments

- 15th Amendment
- 19th Amendment
- 23rd Amendment
- 24th amendment
- 26th Amendment
- Voting Rights Act of 1965

Voter registration is required before a citizen may vote.

Only citizens who register may participate in primary and general elections.

Qualifications to register to vote in Virginia

- Citizen of the United States
- Resident of Virginia and precinct
- At least 18 years of age by day of general election

How to register to vote in Virginia

- In person at the registrar’s office
- By mail (application obtained from the Department of Motor Vehicles, public libraries, state/local government offices, or other designated locations)
- Online

Voting is a basic responsibility of citizenship.

Voter registration is closed 22 days before elections.

Factors in predicting which citizens will vote

- Education
- Age
- Income

The percentage of voters who participate in presidential elections is usually greater than the percentage of voters who participate in state and local elections.

Reasons why citizens fail to vote

- Lack of interest (in candidates or issues)
- Failure to register
- Belief that vote does not count or will have no impact
- No time or too busy

Every vote is important.

Students can participate in the democratic process by:

- participating in campaigns
- participating in classroom and online simulation
STANDARD CE.5f

-- ELECTORAL COLLEGE

The role of the Electoral College in the election of the president and vice president.

The Electoral College process is used to select the president and vice president of the United States.

The Electoral College casts the official vote for president and vice president.

The number of electors of each state is based on each state’s congressional representation (the number of United States senators plus the number of representatives in the House).

Electoral College Process

- Each political party chooses its slate of electors
- After the popular vote, the electors cast their official votes
- Most states have a “winner-take-all” system that awards all electors to the winning presidential candidate
- Candidates need 270 electoral votes to win, which favors the two-party system

The winner-take-all system leads to the targeting of densely populated states for campaigning, although candidates must pay attention to less populated states and swing states whose electoral votes may make the difference in tight elections.

In most states, the party that wins the popular vote has its slate of electors cast the official vote for the president.