

Election Integrity

Civics and Government: Middle and High School

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

Free and fair elections are a cornerstone of a functioning democracy. In the United States, elections are decentralized, and each state conducts their elections slightly differently. In Washington State, the State Legislature has passed laws that expand access to the elected franchise. Simultaneously, concerns over the security of the United States' voting system have continued to grow over the last 10 years. One of the jobs of the Secretary of State's office is to educate voters about the Electoral Process.

In this lesson, students will hear from Washington Secretary of State, Steve Hobbs, as he answers questions from students about election integrity in Washington State. After examining how Washington ensures the equitable access of the franchise while also ensuring the safety of the ballot, students will compare how Washington conducts its elections with how its neighbor state of Idaho conducts their elections. Finally, students will imagine that they are presenting a proposal to the National Association of State Legislatures that highlights the aspects of Washington's electoral process the student thinks other states should adopt.

OBJECTIVES

1. Compare and contrast different states' election processes
2. Explain how the electoral process is safe and secure

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Teach with TVW Video - [Elections Explained: Election Integrity](#)
- [Student Notebook](#)

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How does Washington State balance access to the ballot with security of the elections?
- To what extent are Washington State's elections safe and secure?

ACTIVITY

1. **Class Opener (5 minutes)**

- Direct your students to answer the questions in Section One of the Student Notebook.

Question	Yes/No and WHY	Source
Do you think Washington State elections are safe and secure?		
Do you think that Washington voters have equitable access to the ballot?		
Do you think it is easier or harder to vote in Washington than other states?		
Do you think it is safer or riskier to vote in Washington than in other states?		

2. **Student Activity (20 minutes)**

- Watch [Teach with TVW's video: Election Integrity](#)
- With a partner, have students answer the questions below.
 1. What does the Secretary of State focus on in the month of October?
 2. How do security and access go hand in hand?
 3. How does Washington State ensure that the signature on your ballot is actually yours?
 4. How does Washington State prevent fraudulent voters?
 5. What is [ERIC?](#)
 6. How is the Secretary of State's office using AI in a positive manner?
 7. How does the Secretary of State's office correct misinformation and misconceptions about elections?
 8. What will the Secretary of State's office be doing in the future to protect our democracy?

3. **End of Lesson Task (20 minutes)**

- Election systems are determined on a state-by-state basis. Using the links provided in the table below, have students compare and contrast Washington's Electoral System with Idaho's Electoral system. Each question has a link to the State's Secretary of State's Elections Pages. The [National Council of State Legislatures](#) also compiles information on all states and territories. Answer key below.

	WASHINGTON	IDAHO
How does a voter register to vote? WA ID	Automatic Voter Registration, on-line or in-person with WA state ID and/or Social Security number	Online or in-person with identification and proof of residence Same day in person voter registration allowed
Does the state have a program to help young people register to vote? WA ID	Yes, the Future Voter Program allows 16 and 17 year olds to preregister to vote, and also 17 year olds who will be 18 by the general election can vote in the primary	No, registering to vote is the same for young people as it is for everyone else.
Does the state use vote-by-mail? WA ID	Yes, enacted in state law in 2011. State proves identity with signature checks	Only for absentee voters, military, or overseas voters
Does the Secretary of State audit (check up on) the election offices? WA ID	Yes, each county conducts an audit after the election	Yes, counties and precincts are chosen at random for a post-election audit.
How does the state prevent voter fraud? WA ID	Member of ERIC, multistate database partnership; signature verification;	Statewide verification system database; voter roll maintenance; offline voting technology
Are poll watchers and election observers allowed? WA ID	Yes, the proceedings at counting centers are open to the public. Contact your county auditor to schedule to observe ballot processing and post election audits.	Partisan observers can be at the poll to watch the conduct of an election, on behalf of a party or a candidate.
Are felons allowed to vote?	Yes, as of 2022, voting	Yes, felons can register to

WA ID	rights are restored as long as the citizen is not currently serving a sentence at the Department of Corrections. Felons still under community supervision can register to vote.	vote once the terms of their sentence have been completed, including community supervision and parole.
How many voters are registered in the state? Do voters register by political party? WA ID	4,873,357 registered voters Do not register by party in Washington	1,020,552 registered voters Register by party
What was the voter turnout percentage in the latest election? WA ID	2022 Voter Turnout: 63% (non-presidential year)	2022 Voter Turnout: 57% (non-presidential year)

4. **Wrap Up (20 minutes)**

- Have students imagine that they are presenting to the National Council of State Legislature on the topic of Elections.
 - Using at least 2 facts that you have learned in this lesson, prepare a short speech to the National Council of State Legislatures highlighting how the electoral process is safe and secure.
 - Have students present their speeches to the class.
- Conduct a classwide vote on whether all states should move to a vote-by-mail system.