



VOTER REGISTRATION **WHO CAN VOTE?** **(www.votesmart.org)**

MIDDLE SCHOOL LESSON

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

What are my political rights? What is the importance of my political rights such as the right to vote and seek political office? How do I exercise my rights?

OBJECTIVES

Upon completion students will:

- Compare and contrast the various requirements of the states for voting.
- Have an understanding of the requirements of their own state for voter registration.
- Develop an understanding and curiosity about the political process in their own state.
- Have explored the Vote Smart website and will feel comfortable navigating the site.

STANDARDS National Standards for Civics and Government,
Grades 5 - 8

- I. What are the foundations of the American political system?
- II. What are the roles of the citizen in American Democracy?

ESSENTIAL BACKGROUND

- Students should be able to evaluate, take, and defend positions on issues involving political rights.
- Students should understand that citizens must be aware of their rights and the necessity to exercise them responsibly and fulfill those personal and civic responsibilities necessary in a self-governing, free, and just society.
- Students should understand the voting process.
- Students should have some experience navigating the Vote Smart website.

MATERIALS

- Computers with Internet access.
- Large chart constructed by teacher with line for each state with a column for each of the following headings:
 - STATE NAME
 - REGISTRATION DEADLINE
 - LATE REGISTRATION
 - PARTY AFFILIATION
 - QUALIFICATIONS
 - (a) AGE
 - (b) RESIDENCY
 - ABSENTEE BALLOTS

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS

Lead a discussion to include the following focus questions:

1. Who is eligible to vote in an election?
2. Are the requirements for all states the same?
3. What are the requirements for your state?
4. Which state has the strictest requirements?
5. Which state has the most lenient requirements?

The teacher either creates a wall chart of states (scan and project on the smartboard or on butcher paper) or copies a form for each student.

The teacher will write the names of the 50 states on small slips of paper and allow each student to select the appropriate number so the states are evenly divided.

Instruct the students to go to the Vote Smart website (www.votesmart.org), go to "Voter Registration," by selecting the 'Elections and Candidates' tab, and then select the appropriate state to find the needed information.

Students should contribute the needed information to the chart - either students or the teacher will enter it.

When all information has been obtained, the teacher will lead a discussion about the information using the focus questions.