



VOTE SMART

JUST THE FACTS

Lesson 1 - What is a Representative?

Standards: National Council for the Social Studies

NCSS 6: Power, Authority, and Governance

NCSS 10: Civic Ideals and Practices

Objectives:

SWBAT (students will be able to) explain what a representative is with prompting.

Subject Matter:

Just like we have rules in our classroom and homes, grown-ups have rules to live by, too. These rules are called laws. And just like we count on our teachers and the other people who take care of us to make the rules we follow, grown-ups also need people to make their laws. We choose certain people to be in charge of making laws for us, and they are called representatives. Different places in our country have different representatives, and over the next few days we're going to learn about ours and write a letter to them.

Materials:

- Whiteboard or chart paper

Procedure: (35-40 min)

1. Gather students on the carpet and ask them about the rules that we have in our classroom. As students volunteer responses, list these responses on whiteboard/chart paper. After a few responses have been given, repeat this process about rules they follow at home. After a few responses, ask students if grown-ups have rules to follow, too. Brainstorm different rules that exist for grown-ups. Finally, ask students to identify who made the rules for each of these groups. When it comes to rules for adults, they will be unsure. Here, introduce the idea *what is a representative?*
2. Ask students to imagine that all of the kids in the school are going to make rules for themselves without any help from teachers. Ask them to think about how they would do this. Give them a minute to think with no talking or raised hands, and then let them begin sharing thoughts in a guided brainstorming session. Try to guide the brainstorming process towards the idea of representatives.
3. Explain that adults also choose people to make rules for them. These people are called *representatives* and the rules are called *laws*. Explain that different places

have different representatives and that we will be learning about ours for the next couple of days/weeks.

4. If time allows, encourage students to speculate as to why we use representatives in the United States. They should be primed for this idea after the brainstorming session. This is a good time to encourage critical thought and creative problem solving, rather than seeking a specific answer.
5. Briefly review the concepts of representatives and laws, prompting students to give definitions in their own words several times. Let students know that tomorrow/next week you will be learning more about representatives.