



# LifeSmarts

*Learn it. Live it.*

## Key Points

### YOUR VOTE = YOUR POWER

Voting lets you shape laws, policies, and the leaders who represent you.

### NOT JUST PRESIDENTIAL

Local elections impact schools, roads, and community issues—even more directly than national races.

### CIVIC ENGAGEMENT STARTS NOW

Teens can pre-register in some states and get involved through advocacy, volunteering, or staying informed.

### TRUSTED SOURCES MATTER

Misinformation spreads easily; always double-check election facts through official channels.

## Core Concepts

### CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY

Voting is a right and a responsibility. It ensures your voice is heard in decisions that affect your life.

### ELECTION CYCLES

Not all elections happen every four years. Understanding the election calendar helps you plan ahead.

### BALLOT BASICS

A ballot lists the races and issues you're voting on. Ballots may include local measures or constitutional amendments.

### INFORMED CHOICES

Researching candidates and propositions helps you vote based on facts, not slogans or ads.

### YOUTH IMPACT

Even before you're eligible to vote, you can influence your peers, raise awareness, and help others register.

### VOTING RIGHTS EVOLVE

Laws around voting, like ID requirements or access to early voting can change, so it's important to stay updated.

### ADVOCACY IN ACTION

Beyond voting, writing letters, signing petitions, or joining community groups are powerful ways to make change.

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# Your Voice, Your Vote

## Additional Resources

### USA.gov – How to Vote

Step-by-step guide to registering, finding your polling place, and casting your ballot

<https://bit.ly/46Qb8J0>

### National Archives – America's Founding Documents

Overview of the U.S. government's structure and the documents that define it

<https://bit.ly/40XI2Ua>

### YouTube – How Does the U.S. Government Work?

The U.S. government explained in 10 minutes

<https://bit.ly/45snK6u>

### YouTube - Why Do We Vote? It's Not For the Reasons You Think...

The complex psychological and social factors that motivate us to vote... or not to

<https://bit.ly/4opFkkB>

## Listen to the Podcast



## Explore and Explain

1. Why is voter participation important in shaping local, state, and national decisions?
2. How can local elections impact your daily life more directly than national elections?
3. What steps can you take to become an informed voter before casting a ballot?
4. How can people participate in civic life even before they are old enough to vote?

*Learning how government works, and how you can take part, helps you make informed decisions and have a voice in your community.*

## **Voting and Civics**



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## Vocabulary

### **ABSENTEE BALLOT**

A ballot filled out at home and returned by mail or drop box before Election Day, used when not voting in person

### **BALLOT MEASURE**

A question or proposal on the ballot that voters approve or reject

### **BIPARTISAN**

Supported by members of both major political parties

### **CONSTITUENT**

A person who lives in a district and is represented by an elected official

### **EXECUTIVE BRANCH**

The part of government that enforces laws (includes the President, governors, etc.)

### **JUDICIAL BRANCH**

The branch that interprets laws and ensures they are fairly applied (includes courts and judges)

### **LEGISLATIVE BRANCH**

The part of government that makes laws (includes Congress or state legislatures)

### **MIDTERM ELECTION**

Elections held halfway through a president's term, often for Congress or local offices

### **PROPOSITION**

A proposed law change that voters can approve or reject on the ballot

### **TERM LIMIT**

A rule that caps how many times someone can be elected to the same office

### **VOTER REGISTRATION**

The process of signing up to be eligible to vote

## Acronyms

### **DNC**

Democratic National Committee

### **FEC**

Federal Election Commission

### **GOTV**

Get Out The Vote

### **RNC**

Republican National Committee

### **PAC**

Political Action Committee