

## **The Presidential Election**

Every four years, on the Tuesday after the first Monday in November, the presidential election is held. Voters from all across the United States go to the polls, or voting sites, to vote for the next president. They use ballots and voting forms, which are filled out secretly inside voting booths.

A lot happens before the election. The United States has several different political parties. These political parties are groups of people who have joined together and share a core set of values. They may not agree on everything, but they usually agree that this core set of values is very important to their party. These core values are called the party's platform.

Each party must choose who it wants to be president. The choice should be someone who represents that party's platform. It should also be someone who represents the values of the American public in general. Choosing a person who can do both is sometimes difficult. The parties each choose their candidate, or person running for president, in various ways. Larger parties usually have a primary, which is a preliminary election where delegates or nominees are chosen. The presidential primary is usually held several months before the presidential election. In the primary election, members of the party vote to choose the candidate.

After the primary, the candidates of each party start the campaign process. Choosing the best candidate can be very difficult, because it is not always easy to know where all of the candidates stand on the issues, or important topics. This means you have to watch all the candidates carefully and choose the best one. The candidates also must choose a running mate who will be the vice-president.

Before the election, the candidates give speeches and debate the other candidates. People listen to these speeches to understand what a candidate believes. Information is also available through television, newspapers, and the internet to help people choose.

After the election, the votes are counted. This is called the popular vote-the vote of the people. Special representatives from each state, promise to cast their votes at the gathering of the electoral college. The electoral college vote is the same as the popular vote in each state, but when it is not clear which candidate won the vote in a state, the electoral college decides who will be president.

The elected president will serve for four years. In four years, there will be another election. The President often runs again, for re-election (this can only happen once with each president).