

Tennessee Secretary of State *Civics Lesson Plans*

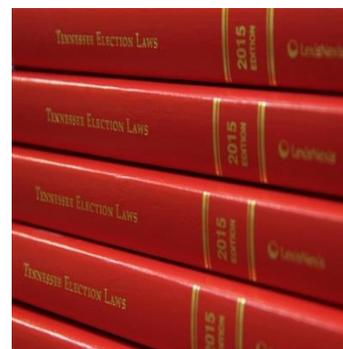
The Voting Process in Tennessee

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Grade Level: High School

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Introduction:

Most Tennessee high school students will be eligible to vote by the end of their senior year of high school. This lesson will examine the voting process from voter registration to casting a ballot.

Guiding Questions:

- In what ways should Tennesseans participate in public affairs?
- How have voting rights changed over the course of Tennessee history?
- What are the requirements for voting, and how have they changed over time in Tennessee?

Learning Objectives: In the course of the lesson, students will...

- Summarize the history of voting rights in Tennessee.
- Identify and explain constitutional restrictions on the states' power to set voting qualifications.
- Identify the universal requirements for voting in the United States and particularly Tennessee.
- Explain the other requirements that Tennessee has for voting qualifications.

Curriculum Standards:

GC.28 Describe the means that citizens use to participate in the political process (e.g., voting, campaigning, lobbying, filing a legal challenge, demonstrating, petitioning, picketing, and running for political office). (P)

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GC.29 Explain the features of direct democracy in numerous states (e.g., the process of initiatives, referendums, and recall elections). (P)

GC.30 Examine information in diverse formats and media to analyze trends in voter turnout and the causes and effects of reapportionment and redistricting. (P)

Materials Needed:

- Copy of the Voting Process PowerPoint (click [HERE](#) to download)
- Computer access Secretary of State, Division of Elections website (sos.tn.gov/elections)
- Video Links (included in PowerPoint)
 - [Why Your Vote Matters](#)
 - [What is Voting Like?](#)
- Teacher's current textbook – Most all Tennessee US Government and Civics textbooks will have a section on Voting and Voter Qualifications. Example: Magruder's American Government & Civics, William A. McClenaghan; 2013; pg. TN38; pg. 152-163.

Background:

[Election Assistance Commission](#)

[Tennessee Secretary of State, Division of Elections](#)

[Scholastic, Elections: Everything You Need](#)

Preparation Instructions:

1. Read the articles listed in the Materials & Background section.
2. This lesson assumes that students have already covered the basics of state government.
3. Create or decide on a set of questions to interview the local election commission.
4. Familiarize yourself with the sources prior to the lesson.
5. Prepare white board/PowerPoint.

Lesson Activities:

Preparation:

1. Familiarize yourself with the materials in the lesson plan.
2. This lesson assumes that students have already covered the basics of state government.
3. If inviting a member of the election commission to come speak to the class, create or decide on a set of questions to interview the local election commission.

Introduction and Activity 1 – Voter Registration

HOOK: Teacher will ask students: Are you eligible to vote? Why or why not? What are the requirements?

1. Display the PowerPoint and begin with “Voter Eligibility.” Share the information. Many of your students will learn this for the first time. Ask the students: Are you eligible to vote? In your high school classes, you may be surprised that students that will be 18 years old by the next election ARE eligible!
2. Turn to Slide 2, Guidelines for Determining Residency. Have the students discuss. Where do they live? Various situations about residency can be discussed!
3. Bring the class back together for discussion. Ask the students, “**Are you a resident of this county/city?**”
4. Explain that where you live determines who your elected officials are at different levels of government (federal, state, and local). Mention the unique situations for determining residency.
5. Show the “Tennessee Mail-In Application For Voter Registration” on the board. Click [here](#) to access a form online.
 - a. Don’t forget! **Online voter registration** is now available in Tennessee! Students can register online if they have a photo ID from the Tennessee Department of Safety and Homeland Security (such as a driver’s license).
 - b. Visit GoVoteTN.com to access online voter registration.
6. Go over this form with the students. This may be an illuminating experience for some high school students who do not know some of the questions.
 - a. Do you know all of the information?
 - b. Is there anything about the voter registration process that surprises them?
 - c. Why do you think the Election Commission needs a street address or Social Security number?
 - d. **Note:** Students who will be 18 years old on or before the next election can register to vote. Encourage them to actually fill out a form and turn it in to their local county election commission.

7. **Optional:** For the Student Mock Election, you may want to consider having students fill out “mock” registration cards that might only ask for their name, grade, and homeroom.

Lesson Activity 2 – Voting on Election Day

1. Ask students if they have ever been with their parents to go vote. If students in your class have been before, ask them to describe the experience.
2. Show the slide, “Voting on Election Day”
3. Have students watch the video “What is Voting Like?” that gives an overview of the voting process in Tennessee.
 - a. Review the summary slide after watching the video.
 - b. Ask the students: did anything surprise them about the voting process?
4. Show the slide on Absentee and Early Voting.
5. Explain the difference between “primary” and “general” elections. Ask the students if they know the difference between an “open” and a “closed” primary. (Inform students that Tennessee would be considered an open primary.)
6. Go over the procedure for voting on Election Day. Emphasize the various types of elections: primaries (open & closed), federal, state, & local (county/municipal) elections.
7. Show the students a sample ballot from your county election commission’s website or the GoVoteTN app.
 - a. Are there any offices up for election that you have never heard of?
 - b. Why do we elect these local positions?
8. Review the lesson and the whole process of voting.
9. Now that students understand the voting process, show the students the “Why Your Vote Matters” video that is included in the PowerPoint. Begin a class discussion on voter participation and voter turnout. Some questions to consider:
 - a. Why does the United States, and maybe specifically Tennessee, have such low voter turnout?
 - b. How can we improve voter turnout?
 - c. In your opinion, why do you think people don’t consider voting a priority?

Assessment:

Have students write a short paragraph or essay on the importance of voting. Students can also use the writing prompt for the Essay Contest, if appropriate.

Most textbooks will also have an exam or test regarding voting or voting behavior.

Extending the Lesson:

- Have students analyze voter turnout statistics more closely. Number could be compared to other states and countries. Can students identify factors that increase voter turnout?
- As a class, invite the local Election Commission Administrator to come to class and interview them regarding their respective office. Students can get an inside look at how elections work in Tennessee.
- Reach out to your local county election commission. Some offices have the capability of allowing schools to use actual voting machines for student council elections.
- Have students compare the different voting procedures in other states or other countries.
- Students can analyze the history of voting rights in the United States that touch on the civil rights or women's suffrage movements.