

# **YO Vote!**

## **Why Voting Matters**

### **1. YO Vote Opening Slide – Welcome**

### **2. YO Vote Mission & Values**

### **3. TOPIC: Why Voting Matters**

### **4. Why do we have elections?**

- a. Elections allow you to choose leaders who you trust to represent you and make decisions on your behalf.
  - i. National: President, U.S. Senator, U.S. Representative
  - ii. State: Governor, State Senator, State Representatives, State Attorney General, State Supreme Court Judge
  - iii. Local: Mayor, City Council Member, School Board Member, County Commissioner, Appeals Court Judge

### **5. Voting & Ballot Initiatives**

- a. Ballot initiatives enable you to support or reject proposals by representatives and citizens that:
- b. Introduce, change or repeal specific taxes
- c. Expand community services
- d. Alter the rules applicable to government actions
- e. Address issues like climate change, police accountability, civil rights

### **6. Why does voting matter?**

### **7. There is Power in Voting - QUOTE**

- a. John Lewis: *Voting and participating in the democratic process are key. The vote is the most powerful nonviolent change agent you have in a democratic society. You must use it because it is not guaranteed. You can lose it.*

### **8. Voting Makes Your Voice Heard**

- a. The people who vote decide the outcome of elections and ballot initiatives.
- b. If you don't vote, other people will make decisions for you, which may directly affect you.
- c. Even if a candidate loses or an initiative fails, voting still indicates to leaders the voters' concerns that must be addressed.

## 9. Voting Helps Decide How Money is Spent

- a. By voting on ballot initiatives & electing officials, you can impact how tax funds are spent on programs like:
- b. Supporting local parks and recreation
- c. Renovating local schools and providing public education
- d. Building and maintaining public transportation
- e. Expanding public healthcare

## 10. Voting is an Opportunity for Change

- a. Electing new leadership and gathering signatures to put new initiatives on the ballot are powerful ways to promote change.
- b. Each member of your generation has the opportunity to define how they would like to be represented by their government by voting and being civically engaged throughout their life.

## 11. Voting Matters to All Members of Your Community

- a. Participation in voting and elections expresses care for your communities and can help to magnify the voices of community members who you know need support.
- b. Elected officials hold positions of power and represent those who voted for them – you must vote in order to be represented.

## 12. Voting Matters QUOTE

- a. Barack Obama: *There's no such thing as a vote that doesn't matter. It all matters.*

## 13. Scenario: The Result of Low Voter Turnout

### 14. Example of Low Voter Turnout

- a. Scenario:
  - i. In the next election, there will be a vote on a new law that would provide more money for schools in your district.
  - ii. Before the election, polling data shows over 60% of voters favor the new law.
- b. *What will happen if too few voters show up to vote?*

### 15. Possible Result of Low Voter Turnout

- a. On Election Day, less than 50% of eligible voters vote.
- b. The law **fails** with only 48% voting in favor.
- c. On average, only between 30-60% of eligible voters actually vote in American elections. Often voters holding the minority opinion end up making decisions for the majority of people.

**16. Decisions are made by those who Show Up. – QUOTES**

- a. **Thomas Jefferson:** *We do not have government by the majority. We have government by the majority who participate.*
- b. **Marian Wright Edelman:** *Democracy is not a spectator sport.*

**17. Washington State Information**

- a. Now we are going to discuss voting and elections in Washington State.

**18. Voter Eligibility**

- a. To register to vote, you must be:
- b. A citizen of the United States
- c. A legal resident of Washington state for at least 30 days prior to election day
- d. At least 18 years old by election day
- e. Not disqualified from voting due to a court order
- f. Not under Department of Corrections supervision for a Washington felony conviction (***Please note:*** *There is current legislation in WA that would restore the right to vote as soon as someone is release from prison. If passed this will start on January 1, 2022.*)

**19. Voter Registration**

- a. Eligible voters can register:
  - i. Online: At **VoteWA.gov**
  - ii. In Person: At local election office or at voter registration drives
  - iii. Same Day: In person starting 8 days before an election until 8 pm on Election Day
  - iv. By Mail: By printing or requesting a registration form to be mailed to you and returning it to your local department of election

**20. Vote by Mail**

- a. All registered voters in Washington State are mailed a ballot approximately 18 days before an election.
- b. Voters complete the ballot in pen and sign the back of their return envelope to ensure their vote is counted.
- c. Voters then return their ballot to a drop box or by mail to their local department of elections
- d. Ballots can be tracked online at VoteWA.gov

**21. Official Voters' Pamphlet**

- a. Voters' Pamphlets are mailed out prior to the ballot.
- b. Official Voters' Pamphlet provides details about the candidates & initiatives that will appear on the ballot.
- c. Candidates submit their education, occupation, and a personal statement on why they should be elected.
- d. For each ballot initiative, there is an explanatory statement and, if they have been submitted, statements in favor and in opposition.
- e. You can view the voters' pamphlet online at [sos.wa.gov/elections](https://sos.wa.gov/elections).

**22. Other Sources for Voter Information**

- a. Ballotpedia – ballotpedia.org
- b. Vote 411 – vote411.org
- c. Vote.org
- d. Vote Smart - votesmart.org
- e. WA Secretary of State - sos.wa.gov
- f. WA Public Disclosure Commission – pdc.wa.gov

**23. What can you do?**

- a. Talk to your family, friends and neighbors about the importance of voting and civic engagement.
- b. Educate yourself on issues that affect your community and communities that you don't interact with often.
- c. Get involved and stay engaged!
- d. VOTE!
- e. QUOTE:
- f. Margaret Mead: *Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world: indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.*

**24. Work with YO Vote!**

- i. Visit Yo-Vote.org to sign up as a volunteer or request a presentation for your class
- ii. Program contact information