

**VOICES
AND VOTES**
DEMOCRACY IN
AMERICA

Museum on Main Street

A partnership of the Smithsonian Institution
and state humanities councils nationwide

This docent handbook will assist you in helping visitors appreciate and enjoy *Voices and Votes: Democracy in America*.

The guide leads you through the exhibition — section by section — and offers ideas, themes, and questions designed to inspire discussion during your tours. Your job is to encourage visitors to think about the subject matter and invite them to share their memories and personal connections to the exhibit.

MUSEUM ON MAIN STREET (MoMS)

A partnership between the Smithsonian Institution and state humanities councils nationwide that serves small-town museums and their patrons.

This innovative project:

- ★ Provides one-of-a-kind access to Smithsonian exhibitions and educational humanities programs.
- ★ Provides community museums and libraries an opportunity to display their strengths and reinforce their meaningful contributions to small-town life.
- ★ Is specifically designed to meet the needs of small organizations.

MuseumOnMainStreet.org

Voices and Votes is A Museum on Main Street exhibition organized by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service. It is based on an exhibition by the National Museum of American History. Support for this program has been provided by the United States Congress. The exhibition is brought to you in your state by your state humanities council or other state wide MoMS partner.

COVER: (clockwise from upper left) Statue of Liberty sketch, June 30, 1884, courtesy of Library of Congress; National Woman's Party march for women's suffrage, Washington, D.C. February 14, 1917, gift of Alice Paul Centennial Foundation, National Museum of American History; Naturalization ceremony at Monticello, Charlottesville, Va, July 2013 ©Thomas Jefferson Foundation at Monticello; Detail, "The Declaration of Independence," engraving by Illman Brothers after painting by John Trumbull, courtesy of Library of Congress.

THIS PAGE: Detail of the Declaration of Independence, facsimile from William Stone plate, 1823. Courtesy of National Museum of American History

VOICES AND VOTES CONSISTS OF SIX CONTENT SECTIONS.

This handbook follows the same format. An overview text providing a synopsis of major concepts for each section's themes is followed by questions or suggestions in five categories:



"Think About It" highlights points for conversation and reflection. "Let's Talk" offers questions to ask visitors. Most are open-ended; the answers to others are in the exhibition text. "Let's Watch," "Let's Listen," and "Get Interactive" asks visitors to view a video, listen to an audio clip, or engage with an exhibition component.

VOICES AND VOTES FEATURES FOUR VIDEOS: "Who Are the People?," "My First Vote," "The Campaign on the Screen," and a loop of historic protests.

THE EXHIBITION ALSO FEATURES THREE DIGITAL INTERACTIVE PROGRAMS: "Creating the Constitution," "Beyond the Ballot," and a Story Kiosk, a digital touchscreen featuring video, audio, and photographic resources gathered through MoMS' Stories from Main Street programs.


ENCOURAGE YOUR VISITORS TO ENGAGE WITH EACH PRESENTATION. Review this handbook and the exhibition script, available online at museumonmainstreet.org, to become familiar with the exhibition.

A DOCENT IS NOT EXPECTED TO BE AN EXPERT. YOU ARE HERE TO INITIATE AND LEAD A DISCUSSION. Visitors in an organized group usually feel more comfortable speaking up; those who arrive individually and join a tour may require some coaxing. You don't have to ask all the questions in this handbook. Just one question can spark an animated discussion. You'll learn quickly which questions work best for different age groups and how long you need to spend in each section. Share what you learn on your tours with fellow docents. Your experience may help them with their tour.

MANY ISSUES IN THE EXHIBITION ARE COMPLEX AND MAY LEAD TO DEBATE. You may have visitors who disagree with one another or with the exhibition. That's okay! Foster a civil conversation by ensuring that all opinions are welcome. If debate continues, encourage visitors to resume their discussions at the end of the tour. They'll learn from you and from each other.

HELPFUL HINTS ON BEING AN EFFECTIVE AND ENGAGING DOCENT ARE AT THE END OF THIS HANDBOOK. While this handbook was specifically designed for *Voices and Votes*, we hope that you'll extend your skills to initiate discussions about related displays, artifacts, and wonderful stories about how democracy has played out in your community.

—The Museum on Main Street Team

A large crowd of people, many holding small American flags, is shown in a blue-tinted photograph. The people are diverse in age and ethnicity, and many are smiling or looking upwards with anticipation. The scene is a naturalization ceremony in Los Angeles, 2007.

“Democracy is a
process, not a static
condition. It is becoming,
rather than being.”

—Federal Judge William H. Hastie



Voices and Votes: Democracy in America

American revolutionaries took a great leap of faith and established a new government that entrusted the power of the nation in its citizens. That great leap sparked questions that continue to impact Americans: Who gets to participate? How will citizens get involved? What are our rights and responsibilities? Whose voices will be heard?

Our country has changed dramatically since the end of the Revolution. What has not changed is the essence of democracy: sharing power with people with whom you may have vast differences. The democratic process has uncertainty, complexity, and incompleteness, but it is a process that also calls for our continual participation.

How will we answer that call? Everyone in every community is part of this ever-evolving story — the story of democracy in America.

RIGHT: "The Chain of States," detail from Continental paper money, 1776. Courtesy of National Museum of American History



THINK ABOUT IT

Ask visitors to take a moment and consider the question, "What does democracy mean to you?"

Visitors may wish to share their thoughts now or after seeing the exhibition. Our exhibition encourages them to take a selfie during their visit to post on social media. They can even share their thoughts about what democracy means with their photograph. Use the hashtag #VoicesVotes



LET'S TALK

What is the significance of the exhibition title, *Voices and Votes*? What do those words mean in the personal experiences of your visitors?

Ask visitors what images, people, or historical events spring to their minds? Has any of those people or events inspired your visitors to become more involved in local or national issues? Is the democratic process inspiring?

Remember, while *Voices and Votes* may spur political debate, encourage visitors to use conversation throughout the exhibition as a chance to examine the promise, power, and challenges of our democracy.



THE GREAT LEAP



The World They Inherited



Grievances

In colonial times, Britons on both sides of the Atlantic believed that governing was the role of elites. Political power came through economic power, birth into the right social circles, and influential connections. Kings and queens were at the top of the social hierarchy, with aristocrats below them, and common people lower still.

Parliament passed laws regulating trade, leaving legislation to the legislatures of the colonies. However, Parliament sent new officials to enforce unpopular laws, with power to bypass law courts where colonial juries had a voice. They sent troops to keep colonists under control and directly taxed them. Americans insisted that legislators who enacted colonial laws and taxes needed to be chosen by colonial voters. Colonists made their voices heard through their unruly acts, disputes, public destruction of property, and economic boycotts.

“The only representatives of these colonies are persons chosen therein by themselves...”

The Stamp Act Congress, October 1765



ABOVE: “Destruction of Tea at Boston Harbor,” printed 1846. Courtesy of Library of Congress

BACKGROUND: An Accurate Map of North America, by Eman Bowen, Geographer to His Majesty, London, 1747. Courtesy of National Museum of American History



THINK ABOUT IT

Point out the map shown at the bottom panel. It shows areas outlined in light red as under the control of Britain before the French and Indian War. Colonists saw themselves in the context of this world — part of a growing, powerful British empire.

Ask visitors what they think of this map and what it must have been like for colonists to conceive of breaking away from or challenging this worldview.



LET'S TALK

As opposition to Britain's actions grew, resistance was led by everyday people — patriots organizing locally, using the press to share views, merchants agreeing not to import British goods, and colonists agreeing to boycott. Artisans and farmers produced locally, women made homespun fabrics, and wealthier colonists agreed to buy local.

Ask visitors if they would have considered participating in resistance movements. How would such boycotts affect their daily life?

THE GREAT LEAP



Declaring Independence

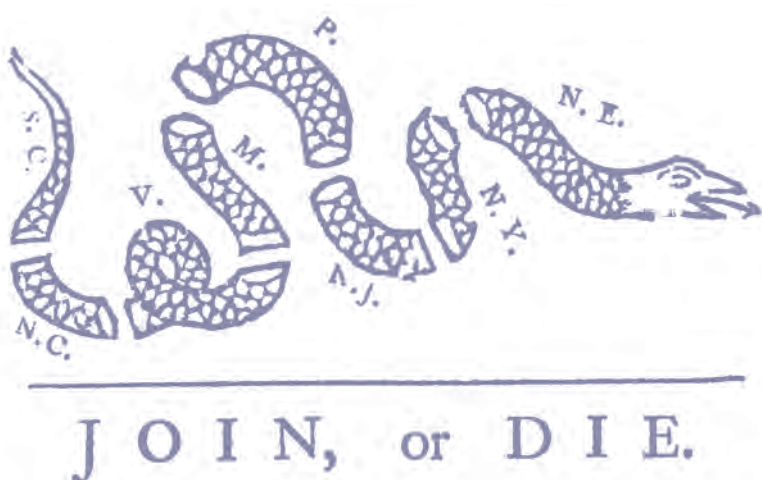


Revolution

What began as disagreement over some British policies quickly became a dispute over government. Neither the king nor Parliament seemed to listen to colonial grievances. The colonists moved beyond voicing grievances to organizing committees, county congresses, and conventions. Widespread literacy made it possible to circulate ideas through the publication of debates, essays, and cartoons.

In 1776, Americans decided to take a leap of faith and overturn their world ruled by kings, aristocrats, and wealthy gentlemen. Many colonists united around the ideals that “all men are created equal” and that government depended on popular consent. But who would really count as “the people?” It was an unequal world. Americans still inherited a belief in social hierarchy and institutions that perpetuated inequality. Through generations, Americans inspired by the Declaration of Independence would contend with these conflicting ideas.

“We have it in our power to begin the world over again.” — Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*, 1776



TOP RIGHT: “The Manner in Which the American Colonies Declared Themselves Independent,” London, printed about 1783. Courtesy of Library of Congress

ABOVE: “Join or Die” by Benjamin Franklin was first published in 1754, but used again in the 1770s to urge resistance. Courtesy of Library of Congress



THINK ABOUT IT

As King George III ignored their calls for representation, more colonists began to distance themselves from Britain.

By 1774, Patrick Henry was already proclaiming, "I am not a Virginian, but an American!" What do visitors think of his statement?

Then look at the image of the rider reading the Declaration of Independence. By this time, it had been six years since the Boston Massacre and a year since the battles of Lexington and Concord.

Ask visitors to imagine what it must have been like to hear official news of the revolution for the first time.



LET'S TALK

Examine the Declaration of Independence shown on the panel. Consider providing legible copies for visitors to share. Ask visitors to share excerpts that speak to them.

Other documents that influenced the Founders, such as John Locke's *Second Treatise of Government* or Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, can be provided as well to enhance your discussion.

THE GREAT LEAP



Creating the Constitution

After a long war and many disputes, many Americans saw the need for a stable, central government to “secure the blessings of liberty.” A constitutional convention met in 1787 to establish a new frame of government.

Delegates to the Constitutional Convention agreed to shift power to the central government. At the same time, they provided that federal government officials be elected, either directly or indirectly, to represent the people.

Should the states ratify, reject, or amend this document? The Constitution was ratified by 1789, but the debates about government “by the people” were just beginning.

BACKGROUND: “We the People,” detail of the Constitution of the United States. Courtesy of National Archives

BELOW: “Scene at the Signing of the Constitution of the United States,” (1940) by Howard Chandler Christy. Courtesy of the Architect of the Capitol





THINK ABOUT IT

Take a closer look at the images “The Chain of States” and “The Federal Pillars.”

In the first, “We Are One” appears in the center of this graphic as used on Continental paper money in 1776.

The second image shows the states as pillars, rising up as each state ratified the constitution, published in a newspaper. What do visitors think of these images and how they were used?



LET'S WATCH

The meaning of “The People” has always been contested. View the video “Who Are the People?” to see who could vote during this time.




GET INTERACTIVE

Delegates to the Constitutional Convention did not agree about the frame of government to create. They had to compromise before the document was ratified. Explore the computer program “Creating the Constitution” to find out what proposals were ratified or rejected.

As the Constitution was being drafted, other divisive issues, including slavery, the rights of women, and the nations relationships with Native Americans also tore at the fabric of the new nation.

Read the flipbook “Great Debates” to go into more depth on these issues.





HOW LONG
MUST
WOMEN WAIT
FOR LIBERTY

A VOTE, A VOICE




Gaining the Vote



Demanding the Vote

When the United States of America was established, voters made up just a fraction of the new country's population. The nation's founders never foresaw the great diversity of Americans that now cast ballots. They envisioned a world in which propertied men voted on behalf of the rest of "the people." Many of "the people," however, showed a stubborn desire to choose their leaders and laws.

Each addition to the electorate brought a change to the balance of power and led to collisions between practical politics and America's democratic ideal of government "by the people." Voting rights expanded, contracted, and expanded again as Americans dealt with shifting issues of politics, race, class, and wealth. Constitutional amendments and federal laws have sought to protect voting rights from discrimination based on race, ethnicity, or sex, and to make voting easier.



President Johnson signing the Voting Rights Act, August 6, 1965. Courtesy of LBJ Library, photo by Robert Knudsen



THINK ABOUT IT

Constitutional amendments and federal laws have sought to protect voting rights from discrimination based on race, ethnicity, or sex, and to make voting easier.

Take a look at the timeline “Voting Rights Amendments and Laws.” Did any of these amendments affect your visitors or their family members?

Ask them what they would do if they didn’t have the right to vote because of gender or ethnicity? Do visitors under 18 think they should have the vote?




GET INTERACTIVE

Explore the flipbook of cartoons, “Sketches and Skirmishes.” These cartoons were selected because they were created during particular historical periods when certain minority groups were fighting for the vote.

Please be aware that some of the cartoons use depictions that today are culturally insensitive and outdated. Art like cartoons, paintings, sculpture, and other mediums can be tools both for and against social causes.

Discuss which pieces stand out to visitors the most. Suggest a post-visit activity of creating their own art on a cause important to them.



“This right to vote is the basic right without which all others are meaningless.”

—President Lyndon Baines Johnson, August 6, 1965

SU VOTO E

REGISTRATION EDUCATION PRO

A VOTE, A VOICE



Keeping the Vote



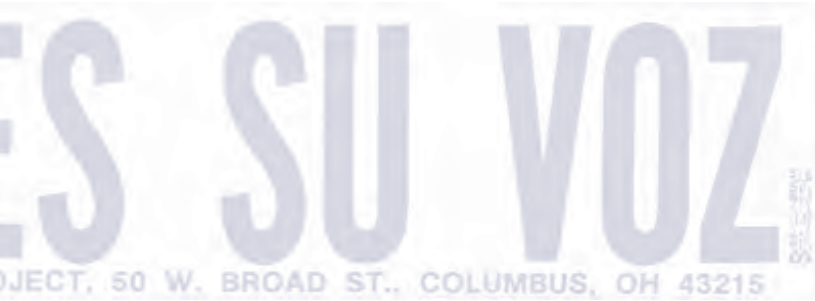
The Push and Pull of Voting Regulations

As new and diverse groups of Americans won the right to vote, local and national concerns shifted from whether they *could* vote to whether they *would* vote and how do we get them to vote! Some officials made voting easier with early and absentee voting and handicap-accessible polling sites. Others sought to minimize the political power of new voters, disenfranchise felons permanently, levy poll taxes and introduce literacy tests. Today, people continue to march to protest threats to voting rights and accessibility.

REGISTER TODAY

**so you can vote for a
BETTER TOMORROW**





“The vote is precious.
It is the most powerful
non-violent tool we have
in a democratic society,
and we must use it.”

—John Lewis, October 3, 2016



THINK ABOUT IT

Notice the key words at the bottom of the panel: Why would we choose these words? How do they relate to “Keeping the Vote”? How do the posters in the center reflect these words?



GET INTERACTIVE

Don’t miss the flipbook “Restricting and Assisting Voting Rights,” which highlights stories from the civil rights struggle to helping deployed soldiers vote.

Which stories resonate the most with your visitors and why? Try out the VOTE! interactive at the end of the section. Choose the answer that best fits why they vote and discuss!



LET’S WATCH

Watch the four-minute video called “My First Vote.”

Can your visitors relate to some of the reasons people in the video give for choosing to vote? What was their first voting experience? They can even share their stories in images, video, and written pieces through our Stories from Main Street program online.

Encourage them to visit our website, museumonmainstreet.org, after their visit for more information!

TOP: “Su voto es su voz” bumper sticker. Courtesy of National Museum of American History

LEFT: “Register Today So You Can Vote for a Better Tomorrow,” about 1948. Courtesy of National Museum of American History



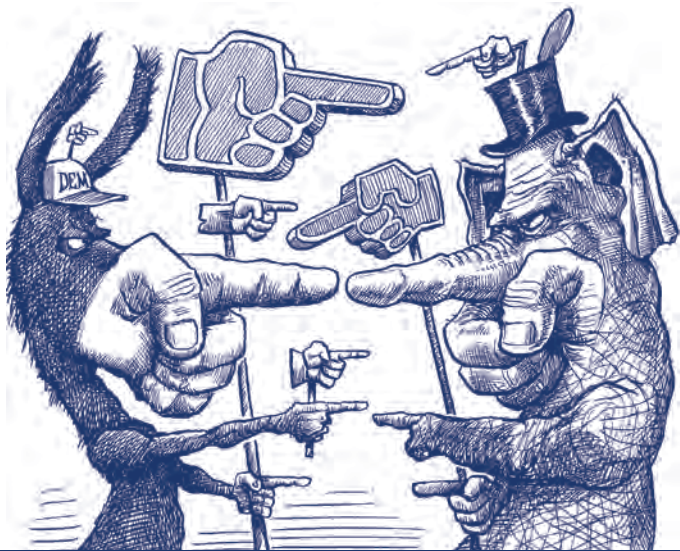
Designed & Lithogr. by E. Webb.

THE HARD CIDER

THE MACHINERY OF DEMOCRACY

★ Popular Images and Party Symbols

Informal institutions and activities not actually spelled out in the Constitution help make America's participatory political system possible. Political parties, conventions, and campaigns are informal practices Americans have adopted that give life and form to the ideas of the Constitution. Visual images and symbols, musical messages, elaborate political spectacles, and campaign paraphernalia seek one goal — get people out to vote!





...to Baltimore.

QUICK STEP



THINK ABOUT IT

American political parties began in the 1780s, and they used imagery to express views and to build an identity. Point out the log cabin and hard cider imagery of the Whig Party.

This was the first time a campaign used predetermined symbols for a presidential race. The frontier myth of the cabin masked Harrison's more affluent plantation upbringing.

What do visitors think about when they see the log cabin images? How do visitors see or encounter other political imagery today?



LET'S TALK

Discuss how visitors interpret the quotation, "When they lay down the weapons of argument and attack us with musical notes, what can we do?" said by a Martin Van Buren supporter in 1849. How does the sentiment of this quotation resonate today?

LEFT: Untitled cartoon, by Kevin KAL Kallaugher, *The Economist*, Kaltoons.com

ABOVE: Detail of sheet music "The Hard Cider Quick-Step," 1840. Courtesy of National Museum of American History

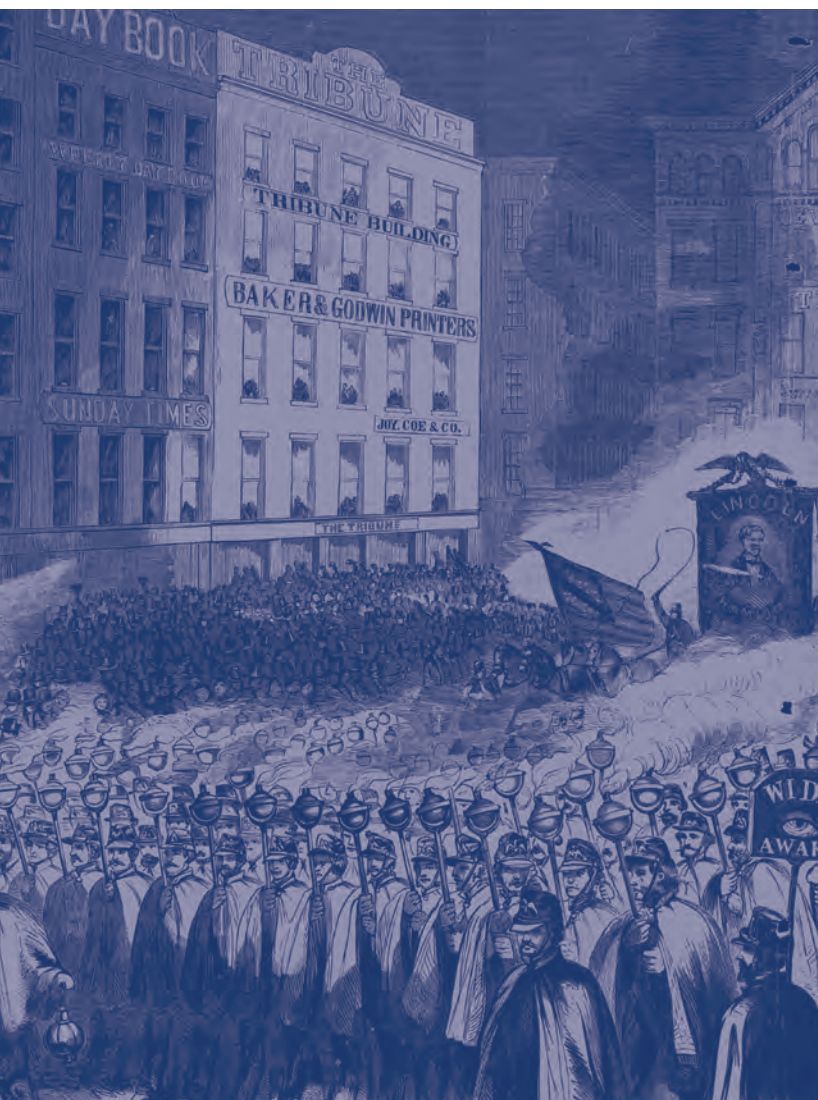
THE MACHINERY OF DEMOCRACY



Campaigning

Political campaigns of the 1800s reflected popular traditions of celebration, such as Fourth of July parades, to promote candidates and build momentum. Mass campaign spectacles, like the torchlight parade displayed on the panel, arose as a way of demonstrating partisan strength and mobilizing indifferent and easily distracted voters. In more recent decades, party activists have turned to television, radio, and the Internet to promote their candidates.

Torchlight parade for Abraham Lincoln, New York City, 1860, published in *Harper's Weekly*. Courtesy of National Museum of American History





THINK ABOUT IT

When we think of campaigning today, we often think of the buttons, shirts, hats, and patches used to promote candidates — the “fashion of campaigning.”

The Whitehead & Hoag Company of Newark, New Jersey, acquired the rights to produce celluloid pin-back buttons starting in the 1890s.

Today, buttons are a ubiquitous symbol of democracy. Take a look at the various campaign material inside the case. Ask visitors of all ages how they show support for a candidate and why it may be important to them.



LET'S WATCH

Since the 1950s, political campaigns marched into the home through television ads.

Today, campaigns can reach you any where, any time in a variety of ways.

Take a moment to watch the campaign videos displayed on the television. What strikes you about the ads, their style, and their messages? How do you think the ads have changed over time? How do visitors get information on candidates?



THE MACHINERY OF DEMOCRACY



Voting, 1789 to the Present

Because the Constitution gives states the job of running elections, ways of voting in the United States vary. Americans have developed a patchwork of manual, mechanical, and electronic balloting. The earliest elections were conducted by voice vote or with paper ballots. As the electorate expanded, improvements appeared in the form of the blanket ballots that listed all candidates; ballot boxes with security features; and metal gear-and-lever machines. Later, computerized punch-cards and touchscreen voting sped up counting and announcement of returns.



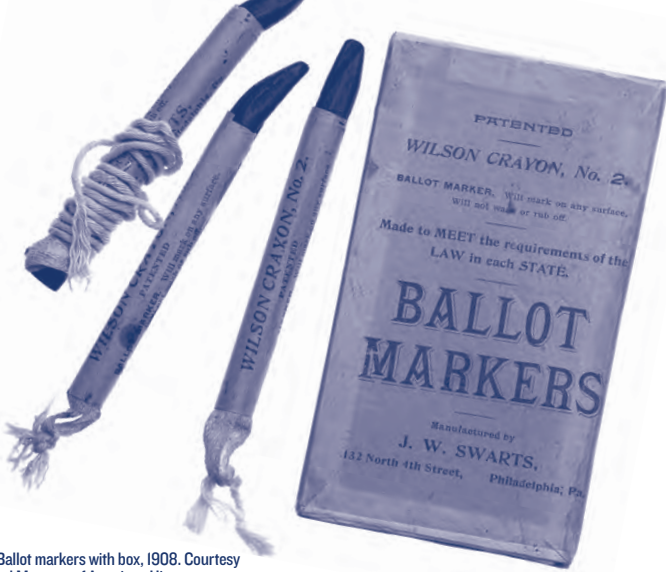
THINK ABOUT IT

Whether their vote is digital or on paper, Americans don't elect their president directly.

A vote for president is a vote for a slate of members of the Electoral College, who cast the actual votes. In most states, the candidate who gets the most popular votes wins all of the state's Electoral College votes. This process can be complicated, but it exists to balance the votes of high- and low-population states.

Encourage visitors to investigate how their state selects electors. What do visitors think of the Electoral College?





ABOVE: Ballot markers with box, 1908. Courtesy of National Museum of American History

BELOW: Citizen ballot counters examine Votomatic punch cards, Emergency Operations Center, Florida, November 2000. Courtesy of William L. Bird



GET INTERACTIVE

Flip open the “Voting Patchwork” panel to see types of equipment used in the 2000 and 2016 elections.

What do visitors think of the changes in voting technology? Discuss some of the advantages and disadvantages of each type of technology.

Should the United States standardize its method of voting? Discuss some advantages and disadvantages of such standardization for communities across the country.





Petitioning

The First Amendment of the Constitution establishes that Congress shall make no law restricting “the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for redress of grievances.” Individuals and groups with very different resources have brought their interests and concerns before the nation.

While petitioning is open to everyone, it is especially important for those barred from voting. In the early Republic, mass petitioning gave poor white men, women, free blacks, and other minorities a means to claim a role in the direction of the country.

BELOW: Congress receives petitions for reducing federal income tax, December 1929. Courtesy of Library of Congress





THINK ABOUT IT

The era of the modern Civil Rights Movement began with *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) and the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955.

It would be another ten years of petitioning, civil disobedience, and facing violence before the Civil Rights Act passed.

Consider the personal, political, and public support needed to sustain such movements for so long. Can visitors see themselves petitioning for a cause over several years?



LET'S TALK

Examine the Steubenville memorial (aka, petition) from 1830 protesting the removal of Cherokee Indians from eastern native lands.

Written in February 1830, it is one of the first nationally organized petition drives and the first time women were active politically on a national scale.

Share excerpts of the language (also accessible from the National Archives) they used regarding the role of women, the ethical responsibilities of elected officials, and Cherokee land ownership. Their petition was unsuccessful, but they found a political voice.

Was there a time when your visitors found their political voice and power?





“The great glory of
American democracy is the
right to protest for right.”

—Martin Luther King Jr., 1955





Petitioning with Your Feet

From local protests to massive marches in Washington, D.C., demonstrators have forced officials to confront difficult issues. Carrying signs, singing songs, and shouting from a podium, whether beautiful and moving or disrespectful and offensive, these demonstrations are an exercise in the American democratic process.



THINK ABOUT IT

Observe the reproduction protest posters hanging in front of the Capitol photograph. What various causes do visitors see depicted?

What marches and public protests have happened locally? Do they have buttons, shirts, or other items like the ones in the case that are kept as mementos?

What do visitors think about petitioning through marches and protests?



GET INTERACTIVE

Encourage visitors to explore the touchscreen computer in front of the posters. This computer features more information on all of the posters displayed in the exhibition, including more photographs, some video, and text to provide historical context.

All of the poster reproductions displayed on the panel come from actual artifacts in the collection of the National Museum of American History. Why would the Smithsonian collect these posters? Have visitors collected items from movements or protests and if so, why?



LET'S WATCH

Check out the television displaying footage of historic protests.

Do they see protests that they remember? Did they take part in a march for a cause? What was the experience like?

Discuss why the right to protest — no matter the cause — is important in a democratic society.

LEFT: March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, August 28, 1963, by Rowland Scherman. Courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration

TOP LEFT: U.S. Capitol building. Courtesy of National Museum of American History

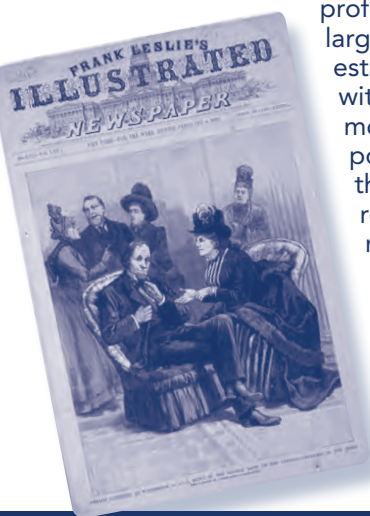


BEYOND THE BALLOT

★ Lobbying

★ Deceit and Corruption

Like other forms of petitioning, lobbying involves direct actions intended to influence governmental policy. From the days in which politicians were regularly confronted in hotel lobbies in Washington, D.C., it has been a significant way for some people to affect and participate in government. Lobbying has been carried out by individuals and informal groups advocating their causes, and by well-funded professionals who represent large corporations and established organizations with significant sums of money. Where money and power meet, there is always the possibility that in this representative democracy not everyone is listened to equally.



ABOVE: "The Bosses of the Senate," *Puck*, January 23, 1889. Courtesy of U.S. Senate Collection

LEFT: "Female lobbyists at Washington," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, February 4, 1888. Courtesy of Library of Congress



THINK ABOUT IT

While lobbying can be for positive change, like Susan B. Anthony lobbying for women's rights, it also has a dark side. Money, scandal, and politics can be entangled in lobbyist activities, as represented by Jack Abramoff on the cover of *Time* magazine.

What ideas do visitors have when they hear the word "lobbyist"? Why do they have such ideas or opinions?



LET'S TALK

Closely examine the 1889 Puck cartoon "The Bosses of the Senate" by influential cartoonist Joseph Keppler. What curious and thought-provoking details do you see depicted?

Notice that the "People's Entrance" at the back is blocked. Get visitors' ideas on who they think Keppler's audience was for such a cartoon.

Do visitors think this cartoon continues to have relevance? Why or why not?

CREATING CITIZENS



Defining Citizenship



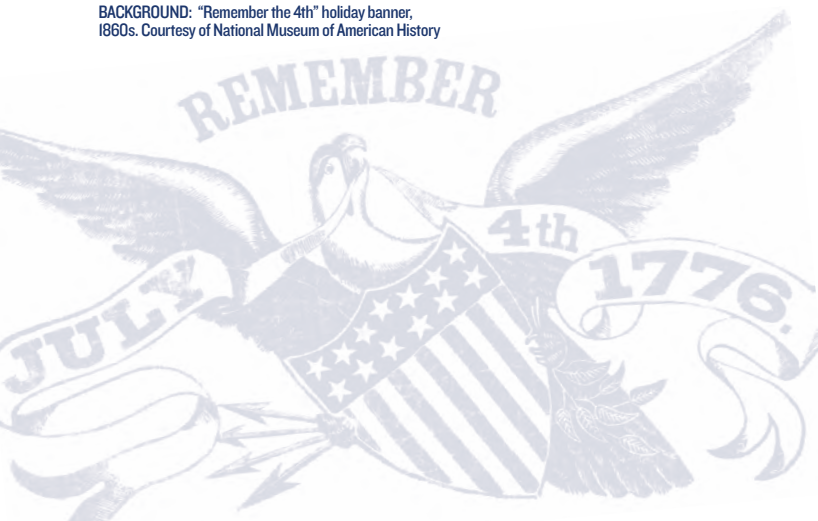
Do We Need a Shared National Identity?

Following independence, citizens of the new nation sought to forge their own identity and create a unique history. However, fulfilling the ideals of American democracy also required defining "The People" and determining the meaning of citizenship. These issues were not clearly articulated in the founding documents, so they were left to future generations to decide. Some basic questions have long been debated by Americans: How diverse should the citizenry be? Do we need to share a common national story? How will our American story be taught? What are the rights and responsibilities of citizens?

TOP RIGHT: New citizens take the Oath of Allegiance during a naturalization ceremony, Chicago, October 13, 1939. Courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration

BELOW: Students in Mott Street Industrial School salute the flag, New York City, by Jacob Riis, around 1892. Courtesy of Library of Congress

BACKGROUND: "Remember the 4th" holiday banner, 1860s. Courtesy of National Museum of American History





THINK ABOUT IT

Americans have prided themselves on being a nation of immigrants. Yet there has been ongoing tension between welcoming newcomers to help enrich society and fearing that the character of the nation might be changed.

Take a look at the citizenship timeline. Consider discussing the struggle some immigrant and ethnic groups have faced to become citizens. Then point out the “Remember the 4th” banner and imagery of George Washington and Uncle Sam.

Do visitors think these images and stories have influenced or created a national identity?



GET INTERACTIVE

Could you pass the citizenship test? Have visitors explore the flip-up questions taken from study flash cards created by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. How many can you answer correctly?



LET'S TALK

Schools throughout the nation have struggled to find the right balance in how they teach American history. Attempts have been made since the 1990s to establish national standards, but these efforts sparked debates: Will schools focus on teaching history through the Founders or include stories of less famous people? Will the stories of diverse people and groups be heard?

Have communities faced such questions?



LET'S LISTEN

Make a few selections from the audio box “Our National Anthems”?

Besides “The Star-Spangled Banner,” this box contains patriotic music embraced by the American public. What songs would visitors add?

Do visitors think music contributes to a national identity?



CREATING CITIZENS

★ How Diverse Should the Citizenry Be?

In a diverse nation, nothing has been more debated than what should be the ideal character of its citizenry. One view celebrates multiculturalism, enriching the country through diverse cultural heritages. Another view holds that we need a common citizenry — a melting pot where immigrants assimilate and transform their cultures into one American culture. The last view rejects diversity, seeks to restrict immigration, and desires to exclude certain ethnicities from joining the fabric of America.

"Uncle Sam's Thanksgiving Dinner," *Harper's Weekly*, November 20, 1869. Courtesy of National Museum of American History



THINK ABOUT IT

More than 20 million people, most from eastern and southern Europe, immigrated to the United States between 1880 and 1920.

In response, there arose the concept of the “Melting Pot,” the idea that immigrants needed to be transformed into patriots through “real American” values and speaking English.

Now consider the image of “The Mortar of Assimilation” (1889) and “Uncle Sam’s Thanksgiving Dinner” (1869). How do visitors interpret these two different images? How do they portray minority ethnic groups of the time period?



LET’S TALK

Consider these three different viewpoints on the diversity of America. What events or activities might bring people of diverse backgrounds and viewpoints together in your community? What national holidays bring people together?

Is there a need for more such opportunities?

CREATING CITIZENS



The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizens

Citizens have the right to “Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.” That promise and the ideal that government under the Constitution was designed to “promote the general Welfare and secure the Blessings of Liberty” was asserted by America’s founders. Yet with these rights came responsibilities that citizens should undertake to participate in a democracy. These principles never had a single interpretation, and they have led to differing ideas and debates.





THINK ABOUT IT

In a famous speech, Franklin D. Roosevelt set out four essential human freedoms. Two freedoms, speech and religion, are included in the Bill of Rights. The other two, freedom from want and freedom from fear, spoke to a generation overcoming the Great Depression and facing the threat of war. **Examine what is depicted in each image of *The Four Freedoms* by Norman Rockwell.**

Do visitors think these images still speak to our daily lives and aspirations for the nation?



LET'S TALK

Survey each of the rights and responsibilities depicted on this side. Do visitors have differing ideas about what is a responsibility and a right? Have they had any experiences with these responsibilities, such as jury duty?

Then consider the buttons that call for equal rights shown at the bottom. How can this basic right for equal access and protection under the law for all be achieved today?

LEFT: Give a Hoot comic, 1973. Courtesy of National Museum of American History

IMMEDIATE LEFT & BELOW: Buttons advocating various civil rights causes. Courtesy of National Museum of American History



STORIES OF DEMOCRACY

Americans experience the nation's democratic process in different ways. But, when you talk to them about what makes the country thrive, their appreciation of liberty, participation, and compromise shines brightly. Americans recognize the democratic process as an opportunity to be active in their communities, to help determine shared priorities, and to be part of the nation's future.

Stories of Democracy features the voices of diverse Americans reflecting on how they and their neighbors take part in this great American process and how they put it to work to improve their hometowns.





THINK ABOUT IT

One of the most popular excerpts from the Declaration of Independence highlights our rights of “Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.” Point out the line after—that governments derive their powers only from “the consent of the governed.”

Discuss with visitors how this might be one of the most important lines in this very famous document.



GET INTERACTIVE

Allow visitors to explore the Stories of Democracy kiosk, a touchscreen computer featuring digital resources gathered through MoMS’ Stories from Main Street programs.

Go to the Liberty category and play the stories “Embracing Freedom,” “One of the Things That Sets our Country Apart,” and “Participate! Participate!” which feature speakers talking about their families’ experiences living under totalitarian governments before migrating to the United States. Ask visitors to list the themes they hear each of the speakers discussing. What are the speakers saying are some of the important elements of American life that many people take for granted? Ask visitors what features of the American process would they miss most if they lived under a different form of government?

Go to the Compromise category and play a couple of the stories for visitors. Ask visitors how people in their communities talk about important issues. Do people confront difficult issues, or do they fear divisiveness? How do visitors think Americans can ensure that conversations about important national and local issues remain civil?



CLOCKWISE FROM UPPER LEFT:
Alix Desulme, North Miami, FL;
Jillian Hartley, Jonesboro, AR;
Dr. Tamika Sanders, Phoenix, AZ;
Michael Walker, Des Moines, IA

AMERICAN EXPERIMENTS

Go beyond the exhibition with “American Experiments,” a collection of on-the-go activities designed to engage visitors inside the museum, students in the classroom, or members of your community outside of the exhibition. Thought-provoking and fun, “American Experiments” embodies how democracy requires conversation, debate, and compromise. **The following four games are included:**

Head to Head

Visitors divide into two groups in a head-to-head bracket competition. Groups can choose one of two topics: “Who Changed America More?” or “Which Food is More American?” Determine in your group which word or name will move forward in each matchup until an ultimate winner is chosen. What will you do when you don’t agree? Head to Head will lead to lively discussion!

Ideals and Images

Four players will be presented with identical decks of Image Cards. A deck of Ideal Cards containing words such as equality, community, and citizenship will be centrally-placed. When players are ready, one Ideal card will be flipped over. Each player will choose four



Woman's suffrage pickets, Washington, D.C., February 14, 1917. Photograph, gift of Alice Paul Centennial Foundation, National Museum of American History

Image cards that they feel best represent the word shown. Players will discuss the images they chose and why they chose them. Continue flipping Ideal cards to keep the conversation going!

My Fellow Citizens

What does it mean to be a good citizen? Players will be given a white board with the phrase “I believe good citizens should...” written at the top. Each person can then write their own answer to complete the sentence and share on social media with the hashtags #MyFellowCitizens and #VoicesVotes.

Where Do You Stand?

Explore your beliefs about democracy. “Get up, move, and see where you stand in comparison to others in a voting game. Topics will touch on a range of issues such as: Should it be mandatory to vote? Or would you join a protest even if most people I know disagreed with my viewpoint?”

“American Experiments” is just one example of the many rich programming opportunities Voices and Votes opens up for communities.



STORIES FROM MAIN STREET

Voices and Votes offers a chance for you and your visitors to participate in an exciting initiative called Stories from Main Street, a Smithsonian repository for stories from rural America. MoMS host states and communities can contribute content related to exhibition themes. The project website, www.MuseumOnMainStreet.org/stories, provides a place where the Smithsonian, state humanities councils, host organizations, and the general public create a permanent home for these important stories, images, videos, and histories.

Why?

Organizations and communities like yours that host Museum on Main Street exhibitions are gatekeepers for American history and culture. An important focus for MoMS is to help local organizations bring out their stories — old and new — for a wider audience.

This website is for you. Share your local stories with the Smithsonian and the world.

What Kinds of Stories Does the Initiative Collect?

For *Voices and Votes* stories could reflect the following themes:

- Voting
- Petitioning
- Citizenship
- Diversity
- Immigration
- What democracy means to you

How Can My Community Help?

Encourage your visitors to share stories with the Smithsonian. Visitors can use the website to leave stories, photographs, and even videos.



Sean Kearney with Kollektiv



St. Joseph, Michigan. Credit: The Heritage Museum and Cultural Center

Tips for being an Informed and Effective Docent

- **INTRODUCE** yourself and make sure each visitor in your tour group feels welcome.
- **TELL** visitors that *Voices and Votes* was created by an innovative partnership that brings Smithsonian exhibitions to rural towns. Each exhibition is specifically designed to be small and flexible.
- **ORIENT** your visitors to the exhibition and give them a starting point from which you'll begin the tour. Give your visitors an idea of what to expect — how long the tour will last (30 minutes is a good average), whether there are seating areas along the way, where facilities are located, etc.
- **ASSESS** your audience and structure your tour accordingly. Younger visitors often relate to technology, popular culture, and references to today, while older visitors relate to historical content and personal memories. Be prepared to provide information to any visitors that may not be able to access the exhibition due to a disability.
- **BE FAMILIAR** with the exhibition and the information provided. Feel free to carry your handbook on tours, but avoid reading directly from it. Aim for comfortable and conversational exchanges with your visitors.
- **ENCOURAGE** visitors to ask questions. Don't be afraid to say, "I don't know," but try to find out the answer before the visitors leave.
- **AVOID** focusing on questions that can be answered with "yes" or "no." Ask open-ended questions like: "What do you think...?" or "How do you feel about...?"
- **GIVE** visitors time to think about and answer questions. Usually someone will speak up in about 10–15 seconds.
- **BE SURE** to practice your tour with museum staff, other docents and volunteers, and your family and friends.
- **REMEMBER**, if you're relaxed and having a good time, your visitors will enjoy themselves too. Have fun!
- As representatives of the museum, docents are often asked all sorts of questions. **BE PREPARED!**
- **KNOW** the museum's name, website address, phone number, hours of operation, and the location of the gift shop, restrooms, water fountains, and seating areas for all visitors, including those with disabilities.
- **BE FAMILIAR** with dates and times of programs and special events associated with *Voices and Votes*, and with other exhibitions in the museum.



To learn more about the exhibition, visit our website at
MuseumOnMainStreet.org/VoicesVotes

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