

SHOULD ALL AMERICANS VOTE BY MAIL?

THIS ACTIVITY SHOULD TAKE ABOUT 90 MINUTES. IF STUDENTS ARE ABLE TO REVIEW MEDIA FOR HOMEWORK, IN-CLASS TIME SHOULD BE 45 TO 60 MINUTES.

INVESTIGATE

Read, watch, and listen to the three media resources on the Thinkalong module. Students can use the Investigate graphic organizer to summarize each piece of media and record new information. Below are summaries of the three pieces of media curated in the Thinkalong module.

THE TRUTH ABOUT VOTE BY MAIL AND FRAUD

PBS Newshour | June 9, 2020 | Video

7:21 minutes

After problems with in-person voting in some primary elections, several officials are pushing for mail-in voting for the presidential election, but President Trump and a number of Republicans say it would lead to widespread voter fraud.

- The recent argument for voting by mail is that American voters should not have to sacrifice their health in order to exercise their right to vote.
- President Trump has made claims that the Democratic Party is trying to rig the election in their favor, and he threatened to withhold financing from Michigan and Nevada, where voting by mail is legal.
- Tens of millions of Americans already vote by mail, but the political parties are split on whether or not it should be allowed. 61% of Democrats say they will vote by mail, while 41% of Republicans say they will.
- While voter fraud is very rare, there was a case of fraud with absentee ballots in a North Carolina congressional election.

LESSONS TO LEARN FROM WASHINGTON'S DECADES-LONG EXPERIENCE WITH MAIL-IN VOTING

NPR | May 28, 2020 | Audio

4:00 minutes

Washington State's Republican secretary of state says that mail-in voting has worked well for Washington for decades.

- Voters in Washington have found mail-in voting more convenient, and officials say it is both accessible and secure.
- Cases of voter fraud, which sometimes involves people voting using the name of a deceased person, has occurred by approximately .004% of voters, which is similar to in-person numbers.
- One positive effect of mail-in voting in Washington has been increased voter turnout, particularly in local elections.
- The secretary of state cautions that switching over to voting by mail may take five to ten years, due to the need for new equipment and increased staffing.

FOR NAVAJO NATION IN ARIZONA, THE ELECTION PROCESS IS COMPLICATED AND PROBLEMATIC

NPR | May 30, 2020 | Audio

3:00 minutes

Voting presents challenges for Native Americans in rural areas, and voting by mail would be even more difficult.

- Some families rarely retrieve their mail because they have to travel a long way to reach a post office.
- In some communities families do not have street addresses, they might share P.O. boxes, or live in what is considered temporary housing.
- A lack of translators for the Navajo people is already a problem at polling places, and mail-in ballots would not be translated.

KEY WORDS

Look out for these important keywords in the news stories. Discuss the definitions with your classroom and see how they affect the understanding of the story.

- Allegations
- Partisan
- Fraudulent
- Battleground states
- Auditing

CONTEMPLATE

Students will use media literacy questions to critically engage with news by thinking about its purpose, searching for bias and discussing missing perspectives. They will answer the 5 Key Questions of Media Literacy created by the Center for Media Literacy, which are:

1. Who created this message?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might different people understand this message differently than me?
4. What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
5. Why is this message being sent?
6. When was this media created, and is it still relevant?

A graphic organizer is included in this guide and the Thinkalong website to help students answer these five questions about each piece of media.

DEBATE

Students will engage their peers in an evidence-based debate using the media they just analyzed. Use the debate tool on the module webpage to help form an evidence-based response to the debate question.

In addition to rich in-class discussions, teachers can also connect with other classrooms through the Thinkalong website.