

# The Election of Representatives

by Ben's Guide to the U.S. Government



United States House of Representatives chamber

When the first Congress met in 1789, there were 59 representatives in the House of Representatives. As the number of states increased and as the population grew, the number of representatives increased significantly. A law passed in 1911 fixed the size of the House of Representatives at 435 members. Members of the House are up for reelection every two years. The number of persons representing each state depends upon its population as reported in the Nation's decennial census counts. Each state is divided into congressional districts accordingly. There is a representative for every congressional district and every state has at least one congressional district.

In order to be elected to the House of Representatives one must be at least 25 years old by the time one takes the oath of office, a citizen of the U.S. for at least seven years, and a resident of the state from which one is elected. These qualifications were established in Article I, Section 2 of the Constitution.

Most states have primary elections to decide which candidates will be on the November general election ballot. Some state parties hold conventions in conjunction with the primary. If a candidate is unopposed, there may not be a primary election. Those who represent a major political party are automatically placed on a state's primary ballot. Minor party candidates are chosen by their party's rules while independent candidates nominate themselves. Independent candidates and those representing minor parties must meet various state requirements to be placed on the general election ballot. An example of this would be to

submit a petition with signatures from a certain number of registered voters.

Senate and House of Representative elections differ in who votes for the candidates. All eligible voters within a state may vote for Senator. A representative is elected by only those eligible voters residing in the congressional district that the candidate will represent. Election winners are decided by the plurality rule. That is, the person who receives the highest number of votes wins. This may not necessarily be a majority of the votes.

# Vocabulary

## candidate

noun

definition: a person who seeks to be elected or appointed to a certain position.

*The candidates for mayor will speak on TV tonight.*

Spanish: candidato, aspirante, solicitante

## conjunction

noun

definition: the act of joining or combining, or the condition of being combined.

## eligible

adjective

definition: qualified for something; in a position to be chosen.

*Only kids under twelve years old are eligible to enter the contest.*

Spanish: elegible, apto, deseable, atractivo

## qualification

noun

definition: something that makes a person fit for an activity or job.

*The ability to type quickly is one of the qualifications for the job of a secretary.*

Spanish: requisito, cualidad

**1. Before you start reading...**

Here are the vocabulary words that will be in this reading. Let's see how well you already know them.

Check the box that shows how well you know each word. It's ok if you don't know them yet (this is not graded)!

	Don't know it	Have heard of it but not sure of its meaning	Know something about its meaning	Know it well
<b>candidate</b>				
<b>eligible</b>				
<b>qualification</b>				

**2. Word Changer**

Words have different forms when we use them in different ways. Write the correct vocabulary word, in its correct form, in each blank.

The \_\_\_\_\_ for mayor will speak on TV tonight.

Only kids under twelve years old are \_\_\_\_\_ to enter the contest.

The ability to type quickly is one of the \_\_\_\_\_ for the job of a secretary.

**3. After reading and exploring the words through some activities...**

Do you know these words better? Check the box that shows how well you know each word. It's ok if you don't know them yet (this is not graded)!

	Don't know it	Have heard of it but not sure of its meaning	Know something about its meaning	Know it well
<b>candidate</b>				
<b>eligible</b>				
<b>qualification</b>				

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

1. According to the text, what is each state divided into?

2. Read this sentence from the text:

"There is a representative for every congressional district and every state has at least one congressional district."

Explain the process for United States citizens to become representatives for their congressional districts. Support your answer with evidence from the text.

3. What is the main idea of this text?

4. Compared to a state with a small population, does a state with a large population have a greater amount, fewer amount, or the same amount of members in the House of Representatives?

Support your answer with evidence from the text.