

Puerto Rico Student/Parent Mock Election



INSTITUTO DE FORMACIÓN DEMOCRÁTICA

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THE IMPORTANCE IN HISTORY OF JUST ONE VOTE

You've probably heard your parents or their friends talk about voting. Perhaps they discussed particular candidates who were running for office or important issues that affected the way you live.

Many people today think voting is the most important right Americans have. There are many places in the world where people do not have the right to vote. By voting, people can make sure that their opinion is shared with community leaders. If you are a citizen of the United States, eighteen or older, you have the right to vote in local, state and national elections. Voting may not be new to you, though — if you have helped to choose officers for a club or school government, you have already exercised your right to vote!

People vote for a number of reasons. They vote to decide how their cities, counties, states and the country should be governed and by whom. Are you attending a new school? Do you play at a new playground? If so, chances are that your parents and neighbors voted on whether to build that school or playground. No matter what the issue, voting gives people a say in how things are to be done.

But one of the biggest political problems in the United States today is the lack of voter turnout. In the 2000 election, just over half the population (51%) voted. As you can see, the people who did not vote were giving up a chance to make a difference!

A few examples:

1649 One vote made Oliver Cromwell Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England.

1649 One vote caused Charles I to be executed.

1800 One vote elected Thomas Jefferson President.

1820 One Electoral College vote kept President James Monroe from being elected president without dispute when he ran for a second term in 1820. He was so popular that all but one of the members of the Electoral College voted for him. John Quincy Adams cast the one vote against Monroe. Adams stated that the reason he did this was "to make certain that only George Washington would ever have the honor of being elected President by a unanimous vote."

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- 1845** One vote made Texas one of the United States. In 1845, the Republic of Texas asked to become part of the United States. Many Americans, however, feared that another southern state would bring trouble. When the Senate voted on this issue, a tie occurred. Then one senator changed his vote, and by this single vote, Texas became the 28th state.
- 1846** One vote decided on war with Mexico. In 1846, the Mexican army invaded Texas and President Polk asked for a Declaration of War. The Senate did not want to go to war, and the declaration passed by only one vote. The United States won the war against Mexico and with that victory added five states — Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah and California.
- 1867** One vote gave the United States the state of Alaska. The Alaska Purchase of 1867 was ratified by just one vote — paving the way for the territory to be America's largest state when it became part of the United States in 1958.
- 1868** One vote saved President Andrew Johnson from being removed from office. The House brought charges of impeachment against Johnson, but the Senate, which decides impeachment cases, found him innocent by one vote. Impeachment is the first step by which officials, such as the president, may be removed from office. President Johnson was not convicted by the Senate and therefore he was not removed from office.
- 1875** One vote changed France from a monarchy to a republic.
- 1876** One vote gave Rutherford B. Hayes the presidency of the United States. In the 1876 presidential election, Samuel Tilden received a half million more popular votes than Hayes. The Electoral College was not in agreement about who should be America's next leader. A special commission was formed to make the final decision. The commission decided, although Hayes had lost the actual vote by the citizens of the United States, he had won the electoral vote by just one ballot: 185 to 184.
- 1916** One vote in each of the voting districts of California reelected President Wilson. If Wilson's opponent, Charles E. Hughes, had received an additional vote in each one of California's voting precincts, he would have defeated Wilson.
- 1920** One vote made Tennessee the 36th state to ratify the 19th amendment, which gave women the right to vote.
- 1923** One vote made Adolph Hitler head of the Nazi Party.
- 1948** One vote per voting precinct gave Harry S. Truman the presidency. If Truman's opponent, Thomas E. Dewey, had received one vote more per precinct in Ohio and California, there would have been a tie and the House of Representatives would have decided the election. And because Dewey had more support in the House than Truman, Dewey would have won.

- 1960** One vote per voting precinct would have elected Richard Nixon rather than John F. Kennedy president.
- 1968** A change of one vote per precinct in three states would have made Hubert Humphrey president instead of Richard Nixon.
- 2000** The election on November 7, 2000, was the closest presidential race in history. In the final count, Governor George W. Bush of Texas won by 4 electoral votes, but Vice President Al Gore had won the popular vote by 337,576 votes. Bush was the first presidential candidate in more than a century to win the presidency while losing the popular vote. The deciding factor in Bush winning the election was a victory in Florida by just 537 votes over Gore!

So remember, get out and vote. You might be the most important voter in upcoming events that will make history.