

Members of Congress are **elected** (voted for or chosen for office) in even-numbered years. In order to vote, a person must be a citizen of the United States, at least eighteen years old, and must **register** (sign up) to vote. Elections are held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. In the 1800s, Congress chose this date because it took most farmers a day to get to the polls and another day to travel back home. Since Wednesday was typically the day when farmers went to towns for shopping, Tuesday was chosen.



When it is time to vote, a citizen must go to a **poll** (a special place to vote). In some polls, people vote by using a computer. In other polls, a machine is used. Still other polls use paper that can be marked or that can have holes punched in it. You can also vote by absentee ballot in many elections. People who are unable to be present at a poll use absentee ballots. Soldiers serving overseas, for example, vote by absentee ballots.

Candidates for office usually belong to a political party. A political party is a group of people who think the same way about many political issues. The main political parties are the Democratic Party and the Republican Party, but there are also other parties such as the Libertarian, Green, and Independent parties. Most candidates belong to either the Democratic or Republican Party, and so do most voters. Voters usually vote for a candidate who belongs to their party because they believe the candidate will feel the same way they do about political issues.

During an election year, citizens vote for who they want to represent them in Congress. Senators are elected for six-year terms. This means that they must run for reelection every six years if they want to stay in office. Representatives are elected to two-year terms. Since elections take place every two years (every even-numbered year), this means that every member of the House is up for reelection during every election.

### **Answer the Following**

1. What is a poll? \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. What is a political party? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How often can a citizen vote for a member of the House of Representatives? for a member of the Senate? \_\_\_\_\_  
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