



November 2012

# ZOOM

**in on america**

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## *General Election*

The 1990 photo of the White House Oval Office (photo AP?White House)

*In this issue: General Election Zoom in on America*

# The President and First Lady

The 2012 presidential campaign is now over; the lights in the TV studios which hosted the three presidential debates between the two candidates, Republican Mitt Romney and Democrat Barack Obama, have been turned off; and Hurricane Sandy, which darkened the lights in so many homes across the eastern coast of the United States - thus affecting the campaign in an unforeseen way - has run its course. President Obama is back in the White House preparing for a second term in office as America's President.

**Barack Obama** was born in Hawaii on August 4, 1961. His mother was from Kansas and his father from Kenya. He was raised with help from his grandparents in Hawaii and later in Indonesia. As a student Obama attended Columbia and Harvard Universities and received a law degree from the latter. He was the first African-American president of the *Harvard Law Review*. Upon graduation, he lived in Chicago where he taught constitutional law at the University of Chicago, worked as a community organizer and as a civil rights attorney. He worked in the Illinois State Senate for eight years and was then elected to the U.S. Senate in November 2004.

In the Illinois State Senate, he passed the first major ethics reform in 25 years, cut taxes for working families, and expanded health care for children and their parents.

On November 4, 2008 Barack Obama was elected the 44th President of the United States and

sworn in on January 20, 2009.

**Michelle Obama** was born in Chicago to Fraser and Marian Robinson. She studied sociology and African-American studies at Princeton University. After graduating from Harvard Law School in 1988, she joined the Chicago law firm Sidley & Austin, where she met her future husband. She liked working with people to serve their communities and their neighbors. In 1996, Mrs. Obama joined the University of Chicago as Associate Dean of Student Services, where she developed the university's first community service program. As First Lady, Mrs. Obama launched Let's Move!, a campaign to bring together community leaders, teachers, doctors, nurses, moms and dads in a nationwide effort to tackle the challenge of childhood obesity.

Michelle and Barack Obama have two daughters: Malia, 14, and Sasha, 11.



Fourth grade student Joy English of Central Intermediate School in Washington, Ill., lifts her President Obama mask during instructor Jane Woith's Wax Museum Hall of Presidents on Thursday, February 16, 2012. (photo AP Images)

# How Do People Vote?

This year, Americans went to the polls on Tuesday, November 6. The general law establishes the Tuesday after the first Monday in November every four years to be the day of General Election.



*H. Maxine Daniels, left, director of the Dekalb County Board of Registrations and Elections helps sign in voters at the Dekalb County Voter Registration and Elections office in Decatur as they cast their ballots Monday Oct. 15, 2012. Voters began going to the polls Monday as early voting started in Georgia (photo AP Images)*

## Who Can Vote?

All American citizens who are at least 18 years of age can vote in presidential elections. In case of convicted felons, the right to vote depends on the state regulations. Two states - Maine and Vermont - allow felons to vote from prison, but the rules in other states are more restrictive. In most states felons are not allowed to vote while in prison, but their right to vote may be restored after the release from prison, parole and probation. However, there are a dozen other states where some felons may lose vote permanently depending on the committed crime.

## Who Coordinates Voting in States?

In each of America's 50 states, State Election Offices are responsible for the conduct of elections throughout their state. They assist voters by preparing Voter Guides that provide information on

voter registration procedures and deadlines, how to request and submit absentee ballots, and details on the location and opening hours of polling places.

## How Do People Register?

Eligible voters in the United States must register to vote prior to the elections through their State's Election Office. The National Mail Voter Registration Form allows voters to register from anywhere in the U.S. Americans who are abroad on Election Day can vote by means of the absentee ballot.

## Absentee Ballot and Early Voting

In the United States it is also possible to vote prior to Election Day. This year many people voted prior to November 6. The trend to vote prior to Election Day has been on the rise recently. It is also possible for registered voters who will be traveling on

Election Day, or who for other reasons are unable to go to the polls on Election Day, to cast an absentee ballot. There are state-imposed deadlines for returning an absentee ballot. In this election, most states established deadlines during the last week of October or the first week of November. Some states accepted all absentee ballots postmarked before the November 6 election.

## Who Can Become President of the United States?

The U.S. Constitution requires a presidential candidate to be a natural born citizen of the United States. He or she must be at least 35 years of age and must reside in the U.S. for a minimum of 14 years.

## Caucuses and Primaries

The presidential election campaign in the United States begins with preliminary contests within the two major political parties: Democratic and Republican. In a few states, political party candidates for the office of President of the United States are selected through Caucuses. Caucuses are meetings of local members of a political party during which the members select their candidate of choice for the office of President. Most states in the U.S. conduct preliminary elections called Primaries, during which the public casts votes for its preferred candidate from each of the two political parties. Some states conduct “closed” primary elections, while others conduct “open” primary elections. In a closed primary, only voters registered for a particular party are eligible to vote for their party’s candidate. In an open primary, any registered voter in the state may cast a vote in the primary. Each

political party’s candidate for the presidency is determined by the results of the caucuses and conventions across the United States. The outcome of these contests is confirmed by each party at their national Convention. This is also the time when the presidential candidates choose their vice presidential running mate.

## Presidential Campaigns

As soon as the National Convention is finished, the nationwide presidential campaign starts. Presidential candidates travel around the country and meet with the general public. They present their political goals and ideas, and suggest ways in which they plan to achieve their aims.

## General Election

The General Election takes place then with people in every state across the country voting for president and vice president. However, voting in General Election means in fact voting for a group of electors - members of the Electoral College - who then choose the president in the final stage of elections.

## Electoral College

In the Electoral College system, each state is allocated a certain number of electors based on its representation in Congress. There are a total of 538 Electoral College votes. Each elector casts one vote following the General Election and the candidate who gets more than 270 votes, i.e., half, is the winner.

In all but two states, Elector College votes are allocated according to a “winner-takes-all” system:



*Cindy Lecates holds up absentee ballots that were rejected because of lack of signatures (photo AP Images)*



*Members of the AKA society prepare to vote early, Sunday, Oct. 28, 2012 in Miami. They were carrying fans that read “No Vote, No Voice”. (photo AP Images)*

whichever candidate receives a majority of the votes cast in those states receives all of that state's Electoral College votes. In the other two states, Nebraska and Maine, the Electoral College votes are allocated proportionately. In this year's election, Barack Obama received 332 Electoral College votes while Mitt Romney received 206 Electoral College votes.

## Swing States

The majority of states in the U.S. consistently vote for either a Republican or Democratic presidential candidate, and the outcome of votes in those

states is fairly predictable. States that consistently vote for Republican candidates are known as "red" states. States that consistently vote for Democratic candidates are known as "blue" states. In "swing states" or "battleground states", as they are also called, neither the Republican nor the Democratic nominee has a clear majority in advance of the election. These states also have another nickname: Purple states, since purple is the combination of red and blue states. It is in these states that the presidential election is most competitive, and it is in these states that the election campaigns are most active.

# Trivia Quiz

**1. HOW MANY PRESIDENTS HAS AMERICA HAD SO FAR?**

- A. 39
- B. 44
- C. 48

**2. HOW LONG DOES A PRESIDENTIAL TERM LAST?**

- A. 48 MONTHS
- B. 24 MONTHS
- C. 36 MONTHS

**3. HOW MANY TERMS CAN ONE PERSON SERVE AS THE U. S. PRESIDENT?**

- A. 3
- B. 1
- C. 2

**4. WHICH PRESIDENT SERVED MORE THAN**

**2 TERMS BEFORE THE NEW LAW ABOUT THE MAXIMUM OF 2 TERMS WAS INTRODUCED?**

- A. GEORGE WASHINGTON
- B. BILL CLINTON
- C. FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT

**5. WHICH PRESIDENT WAS A FAMOUS FILM ACTOR BEFORE HE BECAME PRESIDENT?**

- A. RONALD REAGAN
- B. RICHARD NIXON
- C. GEORGE BUSH

**6. WHICH PRESIDENT IS NOT PRESENTED IN THE MOUNT RUSHMORE SCULPTURE?**

- A. ABRAHAM LINCOLN
- B. FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT
- C. THOMAS JEFFERSON



Mount Rushmore National Memorial (photo AP Images)

# Trivia Quiz cont.

**7. WHICH PRESIDENT WAS THE FIRST TO LIVE IN THE WHITE HOUSE?**

- A. JOHN ADAMS
- B. THOMAS JEFFERSON
- C. GEORGE WASHINGTON

**8. WHEN IS THE GENERAL ELECTION DAY?**

- A. EVERY 4 YEARS ON THE TUESDAY AFTER THE FIRST MONDAY OF NOVEMBER
- B. EVERY 4 YEARS ON NOVEMBER 6
- C. EVERY 3 YEARS ON THE TUESDAY AFTER THE FIRST MONDAY IN NOVEMBER

**9. WHO WAS THE PRESIDENT AT THE TIME OF THE LOUISIANA PURCHASE?**

- A. JOHN ADAMS
- B. JAMES MADISON
- C. THOMAS JEFFERSON

**10. WHOSE FATHER WAS ALSO A PRESIDENT?**

**(THERE MAY BE MORE THAN ONE CORRECT ANSWER)**

- A. GEORGE W. BUSH

- B. FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT
- C. JOHN QUINCY ADAMS

**11. WHOSE WIFE WAS ALSO RUNNING FOR PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION?**

- A. THOMAS JEFFERSON'S
- B. BARACK OBAMA'S
- C. BILL CLINTON'S

**12. WHOSE FIRST NAME WAS ZACHARY?**

- A. LINCOLN
- B. TYLOR
- C. TAYLOR

**THANK YOU!!!**

**CHECK THE ANSWERS ON OUR FACEBOOK PAGE:**

**[HTTP://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/PAGES/KRAKOW-POLAND/ZOOM-IN-ON-AMERICA/55275357401](http://www.facebook.com/pages/KRAKOW-POLAND/ZOOM-IN-ON-AMERICA/55275357401)**



*The 1997 White House Holiday Card is a reproduction of Kay Jackson's "White House Nocturne, South Lawn 1997." It features a view of the South Lawn on a winter's evening. (photo AP Images)*

# ACTIVITY PAGE

## EXERCISE 1 READING

Read the text about the official office the U.S. President, the Oval Office, and put back the missing words below.

The office was ... (1) by the architect Nathan C. Wyeth at the order of President William Howard Taft in 1909. Named for its distinctive oval ... (2), the Oval Office is part of the complex of offices that make up the West Wing of the White House. Badly damaged by a fire in 1929, the office was rebuilt by President Herbert C. Hoover. In 1934, President Franklin D. Roosevelt ... (3) the West Wing and added today's Oval Office, designed by Eric Gugler.

The architectural features of the Oval Office, which draw from baroque, neoclassical, and Georgian traditions, have become symbolic of the power and prestige of the Presidency in the minds of Americans and people across the world. There are three large south-facing ... (4) behind the President's desk, as well as four doors into different parts of the West Wing. The ceiling is adorned with an elaborate molding around the edge, and features elements of the Seal of the President.

Presidents generally change the office to suit their personal taste, choosing new furniture, new drapery, and designing their own oval-shaped ... (5) to take up most of the floor. Paintings are selected from the White House's own collection, or borrowed from other museums for the President's term in office.

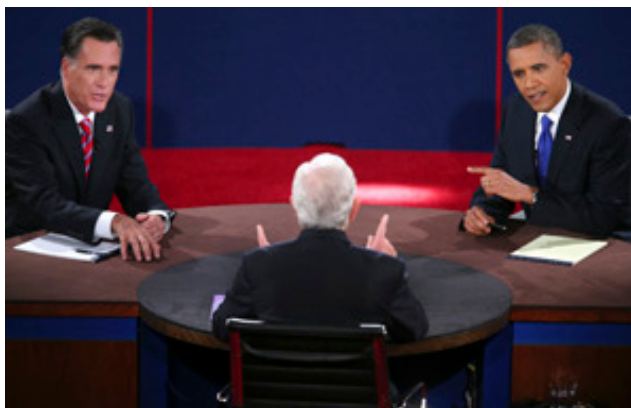
The President uses the Oval Office as his primary place of work. It is positioned to provide easy ... (6) to his staff in the West Wing and to allow him to retire easily to the White House residence at the end of the day. The President commonly chooses the Oval Office as the backdrop for televised addresses to the nation, and countless foreign leaders have traveled to the office to meet with the President.

(source: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/oval-office>)

**WORDS:** shape, enlarged, carpet, designed, windows, access.

## EXERCISE 2 SPEAKING

Work with another student. Choose one of the photos below and describe it to your partner. Then talk about the role of presidential campaigns.



(photos AP Images)

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[HTTP://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/PAGES/ZOOM-IN-ON-AMERICA/55275357401](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Zoom-In-On-America/55275357401)



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Win a Prize!

November 2012 CONTEST

What is the name of the U.S. Vice President?

Send the answer (with your home address) to: [zoom@usinfo.pl](mailto:zoom@usinfo.pl)

Deadline: December 5

Win a Prize!

The answer to the October contest was:

55 days

Thank you for participating

The winners are:

Patrycja from Lubartow, Maya from Gliwice and Ewa from Warsaw

CONGRATULATIONS

The prizes will be sent to you by mail.

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