### **U.S. Government**

by Walter A. Hazen

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## How a Bill Becomes a Law

A bill is an idea for a law. Thousands of bills are introduced in Congress each year, but only a few become law. This is because the lawmaking process is long and complex, and at any point in the process a bill can be rejected and "killed." Even if it clears both chambers of Congress, a bill can be vetoed by the President.

First a bill is introduced in either the Senate or the House of Representatives. A senator or representative sends the bill to the clerk of his or her particular chamber. The clerk gives the bill a number and title, and then it is sent to a committee to be studied. Both the Senate and the House have special committees that review proposed laws. These committees hold hearings and invite experts and others to voice their opinions on bills being considered. If the members of a committee think a bill has merit, they pass it on to their chamber to be debated, possibly amended, and voted on. If the committee sees no reason for the law, the bill dies. If the bill passes, it goes to the other chamber.

After a bill passes in both chambers, it must be sent to a conference committee. A conference committee is made up of members from both chambers who iron out differences between the House and Senate versions of the bill. When a final wording of the bill is agreed upon by both chambers, the bill is sent to the President for approval or rejection.

Decide if the statements below are true or false. Write T or F in each blank.

- 1. \_\_\_\_ Most bills make it through Congress and become laws.
- 2. \_\_\_\_ The first step in a bill becoming a law is when it is sent to the clerk of either the Senate or the House of Representatives.
- 3. \_\_\_\_ Once a bill is approved by both the Senate and the House of Representatives, the President must sign it.
- 4. \_\_\_\_ Congressional committees must pass along every bill to be debated and voted on by the other members of their respective houses.
- 5. \_\_\_\_ Committee hearings are held to get opinions from experts and others on a bill.
- 6. \_\_\_\_\_ A bill dies if it passes in one chamber of Congress but fails in the other.
- 7. \_\_\_\_ A conference committee is a group that considers a bill received from the clerk of either the Senate or the House of Representatives.
- 8. \_\_\_\_ The final step for a bill to become a law occurs when the bill is approved or rejected by the President.
- 9. Do you think the lawmaking process is too complicated? Should the process be simpler? Why or why not?

# **The Office of the Presidency**



The chief executive officer of the United States is the President. The President is elected for a period of four years and can serve up to two terms. Only Franklin Delano Roosevelt served longer. He served three full terms and was even elected to a fourth before his death in 1945. In 1951 the Twenty-second Amendment officially stated that a President can only be elected twice.

Candidates who seek the Presidency must fulfill three qualifications. First, they must be at least thirty-five years of age. Second, they must be a natural-born citizen of the United States. Third, they must have resided within the United States for fourteen years. These are the only conditions mentioned in the Constitution. The Vice President must also meet these requirements.

Decide which words from the passage complete the sentences below. Write the words, one letter per blank, to complete the puzzle at the bottom of the page. The letters in the box should spell an important term on this page.

- 1. The person second in command to the President is the \_\_\_\_\_ (2 words).
- 2. Franklin Delano Roosevelt was the only President elected to \_\_\_\_\_\_ terms.
- 3. The Constitution lists \_\_\_\_\_\_ requirements to be President.
- 4. The \_\_\_\_\_\_ identifies the qualifications a person must have to become President.
- 5. The President must be at least thirty-\_\_\_\_\_ years of age.
- A person running for election is called a(n) \_\_\_\_\_\_
- 7. The President is the \_\_\_\_\_\_ executive officer of the United States.
- 8. The Twenty-second \_\_\_\_\_\_ limits the President to two terms.
- 9. A presidential candidate must have resided in the United States for \_\_\_\_\_ years.



10. Do you think a President should be limited to two terms? Why or why not?

# **The Importance of Voting**



Voting is a precious right that all citizens who meet certain qualifications have. Voting is also a privilege that citizens should not take lightly. Many people even consider voting a duty.

The requirements for voting are basically the same throughout the country. Voters must be at least 18 years old and United States citizens. They must live in the state, county, and precinct (voting district) in which they wish to vote. Usually they must also satisfy a residency requirement of a set number of days. This requirement prevents people from voting in one county or state and then traveling to another and voting a

second time. People who are imprisoned or on probation for committing a felony (a serious crime) are not allowed to vote.

Even when people satisfy every requirement above, they can only vote if they are registered. Those who wish to vote for the first time must register at their local city hall, their county courthouse, or another location set up for registration. Cities and counties are divided into a number of precincts. Voters are given a registration card that shows the number of the precinct in which they live. Voters can only vote in their assigned precinct.

People who will be away from home at the time of an election can still vote. Upon their request, they are sent absentee ballots, which they mark and return to the Supervisor of Elections.

- 1. List three qualifications a person must meet in order to vote.
- 2. What do absentee ballots allow people to do?
- 3. Explain two reasons why it is important for people to vote.
- 4. In some nations, citizens are fined for failing to vote in an election. Do you think this is a good idea? Why or why not?