SCHOLASTIC DEMOCRACY For Kids

Election Glossary

Complete the sentences below by inserting the correct word from the glossary of U.S. political terms.

Conservative—A person who believes in a limited government that should act only when individuals and private groups cannot. Conservatives favor limits on all taxes and social spending.

Convention—A gathering of a political party's leaders, delegates, and supporters. The biggest is a national convention, which takes place before presidential elections. A national convention nominates both presidential and vice-presidential candidates and presents a platform (see definition at right).

Democrat—Member of the Democratic Party, one of two major parties that dominate U.S. politics. Democrats generally support social reform and international cooperation in foreign affairs.

Electoral College—The group of representatives, called electors, who cast the official votes for President and Vice President. Each state's number of electors equals the number of its Senators and Representatives. The District of Columbia has three electors. The presidential candidate with the most popular votes in a state usually wins all that state's electors (Maine and Nebraska use slightly different systems). Candidates must receive a majority of the 538 electoral votes—at least 270—to become President or Vice President.

General election—An election in which voters choose from the candidates nominated by each political party.

Inauguration—The ceremony that takes place when an official is sworn into office.

Independent—Someone who is not registered with a political party, or who votes for candidates from any party.

Liberal—A person who believes government should take direct responsibility for solving social problems such as providing health care and helping the needy.

Majority—Greater than half.

Minority—Less than half.

Moderate—A person who tends to compromise between liberal and conservative beliefs.

Platform—A political party's written statement of goals and beliefs.

Plurality—Getting the most votes among three or more candidates without winning a majority.

Republican—Member of the Republican Party, one of two major parties that dominate U.S. politics. Republicans generally support business and financial interests and a limited government role in social and economic life.

Third party—Any party other than one of the two major parties.

Questions

1. The two political groups that dominate American politics today are the _____ and _____ parties.
2. Any political group other than those two is a _____.
3. Each state's total electoral votes is equal to the _____.
4. A formal ceremony that marks the beginning of an official's term in office is an _____.
5. Before a presidential election, each political party holds a _____ to officially choose its candidates.
6. A special group of elected representatives called _____ cast the official votes for President and Vice President.
7. A _____ sets forth a political party's philosophy and goals.
8. To be elected President, a candidate must win a _____ of the 538 electoral votes.
9. Someone who does not support any political party is an _____.
10. Someone who finds both liberal and conservative policies too extreme is likely to be a _____.

ANSWERS: 1. Democratic, Republican; 2. third party; 3. Number of its Senators and Representatives; 4. Inauguration; 5. Convention; 6. the Electoral College; 7. Platform; 8. Majority; 9. Independent; 10. Moderate