



Votes of Confidence: A Young Person's Guide to American Elections: 3rd Edition

Jeff Fleischer

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Votes of Confidence teaches citizens about the importance of the electoral process through evidence and examples.

A masterful overview of the history and mechanics of US elections, Jeff Fleischer's *Votes of Confidence* is a citizen's guide to participating in the democratic process.

This updated third edition of *Votes of Confidence* places the 2024 presidential election in the context of the previous eight years' major events, from the appearance of Donald Trump on the political scene in 2016 to COVID-19, the January 6 insurrection, and the repeal of the 1973 Supreme Court decision *Roe v. Wade*. Its six chapters make clear distinctions between applicable information, historical analyses, and recent context. The section on primaries begins with a subsection on their origins then moves to the beginnings of party conventions before discussing the contemporary primary system.

Cutout sections are used to condense huge amounts of information, as on how different states choose their governors and how this is affected by simultaneous state and national elections. These eye-grabbing asides allow for different levels of engagement with each section. Graphs, bullet points, and images complement the text too.

Votes of Confidence is a comprehensive text, hearkening back to the formation of the United States itself. The book explains the origins of the American system of government, delving into the way decisions like the Connecticut Compromise continue to reverberate hundreds of years later. It then moves forward to expound on practical avenues open to everyday citizens for engaging in electoral politics. There's information on working on a political campaign, what polls have real significance, and ways to move the political dial that don't include volunteering or donating money. Its focus is practical and step-by-step on issues both large and small.

The book weaves facts and figures into its compelling prose to argue that topics like political fundraising, third parties, and state and local elections are vital elements of American civic life. It reflects both encyclopedic breadth and accessibility—the latter with its direct addresses and humor (political oddities, such as the fact that a state like Massachusetts may elect a Republican governor while voting for a Democratic president, are raised). Its information accumulates into a serious groundwork of information and lore that makes the electoral process tangible. Whether zooming in on the Clintons, who both worked on George McGovern's 1972 presidential campaign, or discussing Mel Carnahan, a Democratic nominee for senate who was replaced a month before the election following his tragic death, Fleischer teaches through evidence and examples.

A rigorous, unbiased introduction to US elections, *Votes of Confidence* combines historical analysis with actionable details about how to become involved in the political process.

WILLEM MARX (September 25, 2024)

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