

# YOUR IDEAS COUNT!

## Talking with Kids about Representative Democracy and the Legislative Process

### What Kids Need to Know

- Voters choose who will represent their interests and ideas on school boards, city councils and in state legislatures. That's what **"REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY"** means.
- **VOTING** is important: We elect people to study issues and make laws that affect our lives—like how many days you're in school, what tests you take and at what age you can drive a car.
- **CIVILITY** matters. It's OK to disagree, but it's important to be respectful of other viewpoints and not attack a person's character. Diverse ideas are an important part of representative government.
- **COMPROMISE** is the foundation of our American political system.
- Legislators listen—they really do!—but you have to **MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD**.
- There's power in numbers: Join forces with a group of people who feel the same way you do about an issue.
- Vote when you're old enough. Every vote counts!



### How to Talk to Kids

- Before you visit, send teachers a short bio and description of what you have planned.
- Talk with students in an informal, straightforward manner.
- Personalize the lessons with issues kids care about: cyberbullying, school violence, standardized testing, video game restrictions.



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## Suggested Activities



### The Perfect Chocolate Chip Cookie (elementary school)

Ask students to decide as a class what makes a perfect cookie (or pizza, or school lunch). When they are unable to agree, lead them through the process of negotiation and compromise: nuts/no nuts, type of chocolate chips, crispy or soft, etc.



### A Day in the Life (all grade levels)

Describe a typical legislative day for you: listening to constituents and solving problems, negotiating and compromising, voting, etc.



### Watch Your Legislators in Action (all grade levels)

Visit your state Capitol to observe a committee hearing or floor session.



### Solve a Class Problem (all grade levels)

Discuss a relevant problem (what to cut with a smaller budget, the best field trip destination), have students debate the possibilities and negotiate an agreement.



### Mock Hearing (middle or high school)

Conduct a committee hearing on a policy issue and ask students to testify, debate and vote.