

SUMMER FUN

CIVICS

Civics is the study of the rights and duties that every citizen has. During his inauguration speech on January 20, 1961, Kennedy stated, “ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country,” meaning that each citizen must work together to improve the public good. President Kennedy strongly believed that one of the most important things a citizen could do was to engage with their community and be politically active.



Abbie Rowe/White House Photographs/John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum.

The United States Constitution and Bill of Rights

The United States Constitution is the national law that sets the framework for the federal government. It states that the president is the head of state, that citizens have the right to vote, and establishes the three branches of government: executive, judicial, and legislative. The Bill of Rights includes the first 10 amendments to the Constitution, stating the basic rights of each citizen. An amendment is a modification to a law written within the United States Constitution. Since the Bill of Rights was adopted, the nation has ratified or passed an additional 17 amendments.

The 25th and 26th Amendments were adopted after the death of President Kennedy but are connected to his legacy. The 25th Amendment was put in place shortly after the assassination of President Kennedy and established the line of succession should something happen to the president. Before the 25th Amendment, there was not a set succession plan that specified if the Vice President would become President or Acting President. The 26th Amendment officially lowered the voting age to 18 in 1970. The issue of lowering the voting age came up during the 1960 presidential campaign when Senator Kennedy urged the youth to participate in politics, however, many could not vote because the legal voting age was 21. Many argued that if an 18-year-old could be sent to fight in the Vietnam War then they should be allowed to vote.

You can read the full United States Constitution and Bill of Rights at [constitutionus.com](https://www.constitutionus.com).



Kennedy supporters under the age of 21 could be seen wearing the “If I were 21 I’d vote for Kennedy” campaign pin. **Use the cutout to create your own “If I were 21” pin.** Write in your name and use a safety pin to wear it on your shirt.

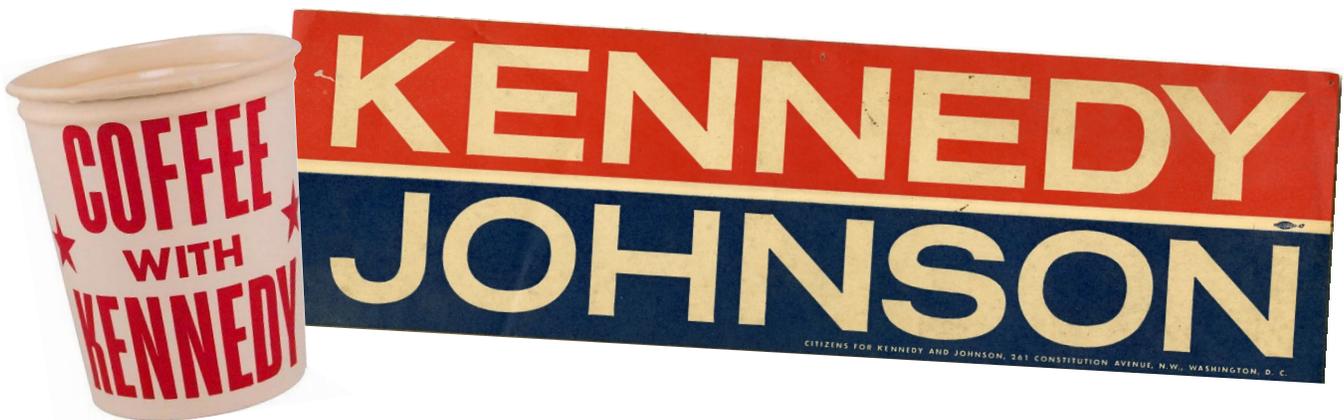
Debating the Issue

Complete the steps below to discuss and learn the amendments to the United States Constitution:

1. Print or write out a list of the 27 amendments and their descriptions
2. Cut out each individual description and fold the slips of paper in half
3. Put the slips of paper in a jar and mix them up
4. With a friend or family member, take turns pulling out a slip and assign each person a side of the issue
5. Debate your side of the issue with one another. Limit each person to a 2-minute response.

Showing Your Support

One way to be an active citizen is to participate in elections and show your support for a nominee. The use of physical campaign items was the most efficient way to show your support during the 1960 presidential election. One unique campaign item from the Kennedy campaign was the Coffee for Kennedy cup, which were distributed by The Women's Committee of the Democratic National Committee. These paper cups were distributed to promote the morning TV program "Coffee with Senator and Mrs. John F. Kennedy". The Citizens for Kennedy and Johnson also produced the well known Kennedy–Johnson bumper sticker that was used to advertise support on cars. Other campaign items included posters, buttons, pins and bracelets. Increased TV and internet access years later has changed how campaigns communicate with voters.



Imagine you are given the task to design campaign items for President Kennedy's 1960 campaign. What would you create for supporters to use? Thinking about color, text and imagery, create a design for the following campaign items: a poster, a button or pin, or a bumper sticker.

Now think about how you have currently seen people show support for a presidential candidate. TV and internet campaign ads are more popular than ever and can reach a much bigger audience. Imagine that President Kennedy is running for election today, write a social media post to show your support.

Letting Your Voice be Heard



Staying informed on political issues and voicing your support is another way to stay engaged in politics. Presidents frequently give addresses to share information with citizens on the state of the nation and what they can do to help meet the country's goals. President Kennedy gave many speeches on issues like the importance of space exploration, civil rights and volunteering. These addresses, along with the support of citizens helped lead to the U.S. becoming the first country to get a man to the Moon, the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 under President Lyndon B. Johnson, and the establishment of the volunteer organization, The Peace Corps.

Listen to the following clips from some of President Kennedy's addresses:

1. Senator Kennedy addressing students at the University of Michigan about volunteering: youtu.be/paZDs0wOfaQ
2. President Kennedy's June 1963 Address to the Nation on Civil Rights: youtu.be/RWX_pjylq-g
3. President Kennedy's remarks about the efforts to get a man to the Moon at Rice University: youtu.be/hZMKuwzDU1Q

Now pick an issue that you feel strongly about. Talking about the issue can raise awareness and help you share your opinion. Prepare a short talk that you can give on an elevator ride, with the help of this outline.

1. Pick an issue you feel is important to address: _____

Think of three reasons why your issue is important.

- Reason #1: _____
- Reason #2: _____
- Reason #3: _____

Now think of two pieces of evidence to back up each of your reasonings.

- Evidence to support Reason #1: _____
- Evidence to support Reason #1: _____
- Evidence to support Reason #2: _____
- Evidence to support Reason #2: _____
- Evidence to support Reason #3: _____
- Evidence to support Reason #3: _____

2. Although you are arguing one side of the issue, identify the counterargument.

Identify the weaknesses to the counterargument

- Weakness #1: _____
- Weakness #2: _____

3. Return to your stance on the issue to wrap up the speech.