

WE THE VOTERS™

20 FILMS FOR THE PEOPLE

SCREENING AND DISCUSSION GUIDE



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LETTER FROM THE PRODUCERS

Dear educator, event organizer, community leader, advocate, and seeker of great and informative content:

WE THE VOTERS initiative is a groundbreaking social impact and web campaign, and we are thrilled you have decided to take part. This discussion guide is filled with imaginative tools we hope will spark constructive conversations about government and inspire participation in our democratic process.

People who don't engage in elections or government usually cite one of four reasons: They don't think it has anything to do with them; they feel overwhelmed; they think participation is pointless; or they're turned off by the shouting. Our mission is to break down these obstacles one by one, because citizens who aren't heard – or who don't feel connected – are too often left behind.

Together, we can take these challenges head on.

We hope these entertaining and informative films and accompanying materials will inspire you and your organization to share and expand upon these topics, and to help others become informed citizens and active voters. Maybe we'll even inspire a future candidate or two!

We thank you for taking the time to read through these materials to help put this content to work, and welcome any thoughts and feedback you have on our program and the films.

Gratefully yours,

THE PRODUCERS

ABOUT WE THE VOTERS

WE THE VOTERS is a groundbreaking social impact, web-based campaign. It is designed to inspire and activate an audience of millions by presenting the subjects of democracy, elections, and U.S. governance in a new, accessible format. Twenty short films will be interconnected with digital extensions across multiple platforms. The project incorporates real characters, dynamic storylines, and thought leaders into films, apps, and games that demystify how the government works and motivate Americans to seize the power of their vote. Leading up to the 2016 Presidential race, the project will promote a call to action that encourages voters to make informed choices. This is an invaluable resource for understanding the stakes of this election—and those to come.

HOW TO HOST YOUR OWN “POLITICAL PARTY”

There is no more powerful way to engage in the democratic process than to gather people together to discuss the issues and the ways in which each citizen can participate.

By organizing your own We the Voters Political Party, you’re well on your way! Here’s how you can get started:

Go to wethevoters.com, and decide which of the 20 films you’d like to show. Each film runs between 4 and 7 minutes; we’ve found that the ideal number of films for a screening is between 4 and 8 films total. Once you know which films you’ll be showing, you can better plan for your screening and discussion. Then, you can decide on all of the details of your event using the step-by-step guidelines below.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDELINES

STEP 1: PICK THE TONE

Your Political Party can be anything you wish – from a Sunday brunch-and-a-movie to a get-together for your office staff to an outdoor family movie night in your backyard. It can be a call to action for your neighbors, or an educational opportunity that can start a meaningful conversation. Be creative, and don’t be afraid to customize your approach to fit your group of friends, neighbors, or colleagues.

STEP 2: CONSIDER TIMING AND AGENDA

This film anthology can be used in a variety of settings, depending on your own needs and limitations. Time is one of the most important considerations. For an effective event, plan to add at least 15 minutes before the films to set the tone, and 30–45 minutes after the films for a follow-up discussion and dialogue. To assist with the post-film discussion, you might consider inviting a moderator, or assembling a panel of local experts or stakeholders, such as a professor from your local university, an elected official, religious leader, or even a friend or colleague with expertise in one of the film’s subject areas. You might also consider a series of two or three meetings, which would allow more time for an in-depth follow-up, or for the group to develop a community action plan. As you begin to envision your event, you should set the agenda and format depending on your desired outcomes.

STEP 3: CHOOSE A DATE

When picking the date and time for your We The Voters Political Party, keep in mind holidays and other local events that might conflict, as well as the general preferences of your invitees. A weeknight evening is often a good time to host an adults-only event, as it allows professionals to come straight from work and does not conflict with major weekend plans. But if you are considering a family-friendly event, a weekend evening or afternoon might be best. If you are choosing between days, do not hesitate to ask an expert, such as an administrator at your church or synagogue, about when they've had the most success with attendance for their own events.

STEP 4: ENLIST OUR SUPPORT

If you'd like advice or support for your Political Party, or help getting the word out, we're here to help! Just go [here](#) to submit your information, and we'll get back to you right away. Some things we can help with:

- Securing local press to cover your event
- Publicizing your event and recruiting attendees
- Publicity materials
- Identifying and securing local partners to co-sponsor or co-host your event
- Securing local experts to participate in your discussion, Q&A or panel

Additionally, you can promote your event on the We the Voters website by visiting www.wethevoters.com/events-and-screenings, or email events@wethevoters.com for additional tips and advice.

COUNTDOWN TIMELINE

Now that the basics have been decided, you can use our countdown timeline to start planning your event!

3-6 WEEKS PRIOR

- Put together your invitation list.
- Design and mail, or email, your invitation. Make sure your invitation outlines all of the details of your event including the name of the series and a description of the activities you have planned (panel discussion, moderated Q&A, open group dialogue, small group activities, etc). If you are planning a potluck or bring-your-own-picnic event, make sure you detail this expectation in your invitation as well.

3 WEEKS PRIOR

- Do you plan to serve food and drinks at your event? If so, plan what you will need. Will you serve drinks and light snacks? A full buffet meal? Do you need to rent tables, chairs, plates, glasses, and utensils, or purchase disposable ones?
- Prepare an agenda for your event. This can be as formal or as informal as you wish, but you should decide on the timing for arrivals, introductions, starting the films, and starting the post-film discussion or supplemental activities. This guide provides questions and discussion prompts for creating a unique, dynamic dialogue. Be sure to allow time for a bathroom and/or refreshment break after the screening portion of the event ends.
- If you're organizing a community screening, you can customize a We The Voters poster to include the time, date, and location of the event. Click [here](#) to download the customizable poster Hang it up at your office, school, post office, grocery store, or your local library. Create a Facebook event, tweet about it, or post on other social media platforms. Use the hashtag #wethevoters or tag our handle @ WeTheVoters, and we'll share as well!

2 WEEKS PRIOR

- Send out a reminder to those guests who have RSVP'd yes and those who have not RSVP'd at all.
- Consider providing RSVP'd guests with the following links to encourage involvement in the issues and get your guests excited about your event.

website: www.wethevoters.com

Facebook page: www.facebook.com/WeTheVoters

Twitter feed: [@WeTheVoters](https://twitter.com/WeTheVoters)

3 DAYS PRIOR

- Purchase the necessary food, drinks, and other event supplies.
- Set up your technology – whether it is a projector and screen or a TV and computer, you want to ensure you have it up and running before the day of your Political Party event.
- Confirm with your invited guests one more time, and consider resending links to any late RSVPs.
- Prepare and practice an introduction to the film and a welcome to your event.

THE DAY OF THE EVENT

- Test the tech before guests arrive. Give yourself ample time to test the TV, computer, projector, and/or sound equipment to make sure everything will run smoothly.
- Arrange your space to accommodate your guests and to create a welcoming environment for a meaningful event and discussion.
- Don't forget your agenda. Make the most out of your time by following the agenda you created. Introduce the films and explain why you are bringing it to the group.
- Before the films start, let your guests know that there will be a short discussion, panel discussion, or activities in small breakout groups afterwards.

THE DAY AFTER THE EVENT

- Send a thank-you to all of your guests and encourage them to continue the discussion and/or the action plan that was started at the Political Party.
- Think about the ways you will continue to work as an engaged citizen to improve our democratic process.

THINGS TO CONSIDER BEFORE WATCHING WE THE VOTERS

The **WE THE VOTERS** films address a variety of socio-political issues – from the role of our national and local government in citizens’ daily lives and the impact of immigration policy to Constitutional law and how social media affects governance. Before viewing, take a moment to consider one or all of the following questions to enhance both your understanding of the topics and your enjoyment of the films:

- What is the role of government in your daily life?
- What is lobbying?
- What is your opinion on the issue of immigration and citizenship?
- What do you know about the difference, and relationship, between state and federal laws?
- How often do you vote in midterm elections?
- Do you belong to a specific political party? Do you feel that party perfectly represents your political stance?
- When it comes to public policy, what are the issues that are most important to you?
- What role does social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) play in your access to news?
- What role do social media and websites such as InfoWars, BuzzFeed, OccupyDemocrats, and others play in the national political discourse?
- What are some examples of political protest? Have you ever participated in a political protest? What are your personal opinions of protest? Do you ever find yourself yelling at the TV when you watch political debates, or coverage of political speeches or events? What, typically, are you yelling, and why?
- Do you pay attention to polls?
- Do you believe that every vote counts?

- What do you know about the history, importance, and content of the Constitution?
- What is more important, freedom or safety?
- What is the role of money in our political process?
- Should free public education be a basic civic right for every citizen in this country? What else should be provided to our citizens, free of charge, as a basic civil right?
- Why do we pay taxes?
- Do you think there is successful, cross-party civil discourse in our country? How does this affect the functioning of our democracy?
- Do you think the news media is biased or unbiased? How has this affected our democratic process?
- What are the local issues that are affecting your immediate community? Are you involved in any local movement or government?
- Do you feel that the current president represents your best interests? What about your city council representative, or your mayor?

THINGS TO CONSIDER AFTER WATCHING WE THE VOTERS

WE THE VOTERS was specifically designed as a nonpartisan educational resource and can be appreciated on many levels, by citizens on both sides of the aisle. Use the following discussion starters to broaden your thinking about the films you just saw and foster productive dialogue about the issues they depict.

MEDIA LITERACY/FILM STUDIES

- What was your favorite film, and why?
- How are filmmaking devices such as color saturation, editing, music and narration used to make a point in these films?
- How do some of these films use satire and irony devices for communicating complicated political ideas?
- How do the films that are straight documentaries differ from those that are scripted or humorous? Why might a filmmaker choose one genre over the other to explore a specific issue?
- What did you learn from watching these films? How is this different from what you might have learned from reading an article on the same subject?

ELECTIONS

- Do you think it's important to "get out the vote" when it's not a presidential election?
- If you could create a presidential candidate who would perfectly represent your interests, would it be a Democrat, Republican, or other? Does your ideal political party exist?
- Are debates a useful way to evaluate the candidates?
- How can polls undermine the political process if not used correctly?
- Do you believe that every vote counts?

CIVICS

- Are you more likely to get personally involved in your local and national politics after watching these films?
- Is lobbying a way of rigging the system and only supporting special interests? How can it work for the public interest?
- How does the Constitution undermine state laws? Why is this an issue?
- Do you think the Constitution should be enforced verbatim? Or is it a living document that should be reinterpreted as society evolves?
- Does it help democracies when their citizens are more educated, or less?
- What are the best ways to pay for the upkeep of our public spaces and infrastructure, such as roads, electrical grids, parks, and more?
- What role should government have in public safety?
- How might you get involved in your local community policies?

SOCIAL ISSUES

- Are the challenges that are placed before immigrants who are trying to attain citizenship fair?
- How does “incestuous amplification” in the media affect the representation of issues and, in turn, the national dialogue about these issues?
- How can you actively challenge your personal opinions and beliefs in the age of social media?
- How does money equal power in our society? How is our society at-large working against that idea?
- How can you as an individual work towards a more civil conversation when it comes to political discourse?
- After watching this series, will you look to new outlets to get your news? Or return to the outlets that you were frequenting before?

SCREENING EVALUATIONS

An important component to any screening event is gathering and sharing information about your event's impact and success. We've created an online evaluation form that you can easily access and share with your audience members. After you've finished your post-screening discussion and before everyone leaves, ask them to please take 2-3 minutes to complete this brief online survey. There are several options for how to share the survey

- Email or text the link to your guests (make sure to gather email addresses or phone numbers from everyone when they register for your event or have them sign in when they arrive).
- Print the link on slips of paper and distribute to everyone so they can access the survey on their phones or tablets, or, if necessary, at home on their computers.
- Project the link on the screen after the films are over and ask participants to access the survey on their phones or tablets or at home on their computers.

The link to the participant survey is: www.surveymonkey.com/r/WeTheVotersAudience

Once your event is over and you've had a moment to reflect on your experience as a facilitator, we ask that you also complete a brief online facilitator survey. It will take only 5 minutes to complete, and the information you share will be incredibly helpful in assessing the impact of our programs and making improvements for future programming.

The link to the facilitator survey is : www.surveymonkey.com/r/WeTheVotersFacilitator

Thank you in advance for your assistance in gathering and sharing data about your screening event!

TAKE ACTION IDEAS

Now that minds have been opened and previously held perspectives have been challenged, encourage your attendees to put this newfound energy and excitement to good use and get involved! Here are some organizations doing great work in the field of civic engagement, empowering democracy, media literacy education, and voter rights.

[Brigade](#) connects voters around the issues that matter most, helping make sense of every election and become more engaged in the political process.

[Headcount](#) works with musicians to promote participation in democracy, translating the power of music into real action. By reaching young people and music fans where they already are, they make civic participation easy and fun. Volunteer today!

[League of Women Voters](#) was founded in the struggle for women's suffrage, and grassroots chapters around the country continue the fight today to ensure that all eligible voters – particularly those from traditionally underrepresented or underserved communities – have the opportunity and the information to exercise their right to vote. Get involved with LWV by volunteering at your local chapter today!

[NAMLE](#) (National Association for Media Literacy Education) helps individuals of all ages develop the habits of inquiry and skills of expression that they need to be critical thinkers, effective communicators, and active citizens in today's world. Join their free online community today to stay at the forefront of this developing field.

[Newseum](#) has a comprehensive online collection of free learning tools that focus on media literacy and first Amendment rights.

[PBS Election Central](#) helps engage your students in the political process, with virtual field trip ideas and a collection of election-themed resources to support History, Civics and English curriculum - with relevant content for use throughout the election year and beyond!

[Voto Latino](#) is a pioneering civic media organization that provides culturally relevant programs to engage, educate and empower Latinos to be agents of change. Get involved and join the movement today!

AUTHORED FOR WE THE VOTERS
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