



Voting and Elections:
SS.7.CG.2.6
Election Processes
READING #3

Name: _____

Date: _____



SS.7.CG.2.6 Benchmark Clarification 3: Students will explain how free and fair elections promote trust in democratic institutions and preserve the republic.

More than half of the world's population live under **autocratic** or partly free governments, denied full civil liberties and unable to freely participate in government. The most fundamental principle of elections is that they must reflect the will of the people. Free and fair elections are an essential component to any truly democratic country. A lack of trust in elections may cause conflict. When citizens cast their vote, the country must ensure that every vote is accurately counted and holds equal importance. "**Free**" refers to free of interference while "**fair**" refers to the standards in place surrounding election events.

Core principles of America's constitutional republic include free and fair elections, the acceptance of results, and the peaceful transfer of power. In a democracy, elections are held regularly, and are a primary tool to foster and expand political participation. For free and fair elections to occur, obstacles should not exist that make it difficult for people to vote. Standards should be met before, during, and after the election process. The main characteristics of an election that is free and fair include:

- Universal **suffrage** for all eligible citizens
- Laws that set standards for registration, voting processes, vote counting, and other aspects of elections
- Election officials and candidates are held accountable to the rule of law
- The ability for any eligible citizen to run for elected office
- Protected freedoms both for candidates running for office as well as voters such as: free speech, **free press** and **freedom to assemble**

autocracy - a form of government where one person has unlimited power

freedom of press - the right of the press to write and print news and information free from government interference; guaranteed in the First Amendment

freedom of (peaceable) assembly - the right to hold meetings and form groups without interference by the government; guaranteed in the First Amendment

suffrage - the right to vote

Sources:

Free and fair elections. Principles of Democracy. (n.d.). Retrieved November 17, 2022, from

<https://www.principlesofdemocracy.org/election-dem>

U.S. Agency for International Development. (n.d.). *Supporting free and fair elections: Democracy, human rights and governance - Archived (2012-2017)*. U.S. Agency for International Development. Retrieved November 17, 2022, from <https://www.usaid.gov/democracy/supporting-free-and-fair-elections>