

Council Patches

Political Power J C S A

This program is designed to help girls learn about the political process and their ability to be of influence.

J C S A

Complete at least six activities, including the starred activities.

Discover:

1. * Research the requirements a person must meet to be a presidential candidate of the United States of America.
2. * As of January 1, find out who the candidates are for this year's local, state or national elections. Track the progress of the campaigns, including the results, through newspaper articles, television or the internet.
3. * Find out how you become a registered voter. Hold a mock election and use absentee ballots or make up your own ballots.
4. * Find out in which year women received the right to vote. Which amendment gave them this right? Name one woman who has been a candidate for President or Vice-President of the United States of America.
5. Find out what a caucus is. Do two of the following:
 - Find out how a caucus differs from a primary.
 - Find out which state traditionally has the first caucus in the United States of America.
 - View a video/DVD about caucuses.
 - Find out the local caucus results, if available.

Connect:

1. Learn what is involved in running a political campaign by completing one of the following:
 - Visit a campaign headquarters.
 - Invite a person who has run for public office to speak to your troop.
 - View a political rally or debate (in person or watch on TV).
2. Tour a government office building. Ask about the services provided there, free information offered and kinds of work done there.

Take Action:

1. Find out what someone must do to become a citizen of the United States of America. How could you help someone to become a citizen?
2. Make posters encouraging people to vote. Remember, you are encouraging people to participate in an election, not to vote for any particular party or candidate.
3. Sometimes people who don't know how to drive, the elderly or disabled people need help getting to their voting sites. Volunteer as troop or family to help people participate in the election.
4. Contact your local government to see what kind of non-partisan help your group could be to the voting process and make an action plan.

Restrictions on Political Activities for GSUSA & Girl Scout Councils

Although a charity may engage in certain types of lobbying activities, it may not engage in political activity. The IRS may revoke an organization's tax-exempt status if the organization intervenes or participates "in any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office." (Internal Revenue Code 501 (3).) "Political activity" is defined as intervention in a political campaign, while "legislative activity" concerns communication in regards to legislation (broadly defined). This restriction on political activity involves three major areas of consideration.

- A "candidate" is a person running for an elective public office at the national, state or local level. The fact that the election is non-partisan does not make it any less a political campaign. A person becomes a candidate once he or she declares candidacy for the office.
- "Intervention" or "participation" occurs when an organization expresses an opinion about any candidate in a political campaign. Charities may, however, carry out "voter education" activities. The voter education activity could indicate how candidates voted on various issues, as long as several issues are included and the organization does not comment on how a candidate voted. Voter education could also mean a survey of candidates' opinions, as long as all the candidates are included and the charity does not indicate a preference.
- The law of agency, which generally describes how one entity can be responsible for the actions of others, governs whether political activity by individuals will be attributed to Girl Scouts. In other words, political activities by individuals under actual or apparent authority of GSUSA or a council, whose acts are ratified by GSUSA, are treated as acts of GSUSA. You may be approached by representatives of a candidate or party to have Girl Scouts participate in various activities or events. The most likely event would be a flag ceremony to open a rally or parade. At first glance, it may appear that this type of invitation would be an opportunity for TV or newspaper visibility. However, accepting the invitation would be in direct violation of GSUSA's policy. The restriction also prohibits wearing campaign buttons on the Girl Scout uniforms as well as on non-Girl Scout apparel while conducting Girl Scout business, and use of Girl Scout stationary for political purpose.