



League of Women Voters 2008 General Election Voters' Guide For Washington County

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Miscellaneous Voting Information

- POLLS are OPEN 7 a.m. - 8 p.m.
- EMERGENCY ABSENTEE BALLOTS may be obtained at your local Board of Elections office in the 7 days prior to and on election day. You may fill out the application form, obtain the absentee ballot and VOTE in one visit.
- POLLING PLACES are usually less crowded between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Try voting on your lunch hour.

[For More Information](#)

(Located at the end of this document)

PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

About the Office

SALARY: \$400,000 per year

TERM: Four years. Limit of two terms.

HOW ELECTED: Every four years political parties nominate candidates to run for President of the United States in a general election that is held on the first Tuesday in November of years divisible by the number four. Although the parties use conventions to nominate their candidates, in most states the Democratic and Republican parties also run state-wide primary elections. The results of the primary influence how the delegates to their respective party's convention will cast ballots for candidates for President. The degree to which the result of the primary election influences the votes of delegates at conventions varies from state to state.

DUTIES: The President is the head of state of the United States of America and is the Chief Executive Officer and the Commander in Chief of all military forces. The powers of the President are described in the Constitution and federal law. The President appoints the members of the Cabinet, ambassadors to other nations and the United Nations, Supreme Court Justices and federal judges subject to Senate approval. The President, along with the Cabinet and its agencies, is responsible for carrying out and enforcing the laws of the United States. The President may also recommend legislation to the United States Congress.

Questions asked candidates for President:

The League of Women Voters of the United States posed questions to the candidates for President in accordance with the following criteria:

- All qualified presidential candidates were invited to provide biographical information and responses to five issue specific questions. Candidates were qualified if they met the following criteria: 1) the candidate must have made a public announcement of her/his intention to run for President; 2) the candidate must qualify for the ballot in enough states to win a majority of electoral votes; and 3) the candidate must meet the Presidential Election Campaign Fund Act's minimum contribution threshold requirements for qualifying for matching funds, based on the most recent data publicly available on the FEC Web site as of August 8, 2008.
- Responses were limited to 50 words and truncated after the 50th word.
- Additional information on presidential candidates is available on the League's voter information Web site, www.VOTE411.org.

In Maryland Write-in candidates are allowed to file, after spending \$50.00 in pursuit of the office, until seven days prior to the election. If they file as write-ins, their names will be posted in each polling place on Election Day and votes for them will be counted. Their names will NOT be on any ballots.

BIOGRAPHY:

GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE: What, if anything, do you believe the federal government should do to control global climate change?

COST OF HEALTH CARE: What should be done at the federal level, if anything, to combat the high cost of health care?

ECONOMIC DISPARITY: What, if anything, should the federal government do about the growing economic disparity between the middleclass and the well-to-do?

EDUCATION: What, if anything, should the federal government do to create the world's best educational system for all children in America?

U.S. STRATEGY – RISING GLOBAL POWERS: What should the U.S. strategy be towards rising global powers like Russia and China?

The responses to these questions are copyrighted by the League of Women Voters of the United States.

Vote for One:

Barack Obama (Illinois) -- **Joe Biden** (Delaware)

Party: Democratic

Website: www.barackobama.com

BIOGRAPHY: Obama began his career as a community organizer on Chicago's South Side and headed a voter registration drive. Obama practiced civil rights law and taught constitutional law. He served eight years in the State Senate before his election to the U.S. Senate. He graduated from Columbia University and Harvard Law.

GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE: I believe the federal government should pursue multiple paths to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and address the threat of global climate change, including implementing aggressive cap and trade requirements to reduce U.S. emissions by 80% from 1990 levels and investing heavily in clean energy and advanced vehicle technologies.

COST OF HEALTH CARE: My healthcare plan will make aggressive investments in cost-cutting technologies and will place more focus on prevention and chronic care management. The net result will be to bring down the costs of healthcare spending by \$2,500 for a typical family, annually, and lower the expense of Medicare's services.

ECONOMIC DISPARITY: I will cut taxes for the middle class and roll back some of the Bush tax cuts for those making over \$250,000 to restore fairness to the tax code. I will make long term public investments in R&D, clean energy, infrastructure, and manufacturing to create millions of good-paying jobs.

EDUCATION: I will strengthen public schools by expanding early childhood education, reforming and funding No Child Left Behind, recruiting and rewarding high-quality teachers, and expanding afterschool and summer learning opportunities. I will create a \$4,000 American Opportunity Tax Credit and expand financial aid to make higher education affordable for all.

U.S. STRATEGY – RISING GLOBAL POWERS: We must enhance our abilities both to collaborate and compete with China, while being vigilant about China's military modernization and respect for human rights. As we seek a future of clear-eyed engagement with Russia, we must ensure Russia acts as a force for progress, not regression to past conflicts.

John McCain (Arizona) -- **Sarah Palin** (Alaska)

Party: Republican

Website: www.johnmccain.com

BIOGRAPHY: John McCain graduated from the Naval Academy and served for 22 years as a naval aviator. He was elected to the House of Representatives in 1982 and the Senate in 1986. He has served as chairman of the Commerce Committee and ranking member of the Armed Services Committee.

GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE: I support developing a cap-and-trade system to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 60% by 2050, providing tax credits for alternative energy, promoting zero-carbon nuclear power, reducing the federal government's carbon footprint, funding research into clean-coal technology, and offering incentives for America's automobile industry to develop electric cars.

COST OF HEALTH CARE: Under my plan, American families will receive \$5,000 tax credits to purchase insurance, either through employers or the private market—insurance that can follow them if they change jobs or leave the workforce. I will work for reforms to lower costs and provide coverage to Americans with pre-existing conditions.

ECONOMIC DISPARITY: We must spur growth, create jobs, improve educational attainment, and enhance financial security. My plan will keep income and payroll taxes low, reduce the price of gas, double the dependent exemption, bring down health-care costs, give deserving homeowners new fixed mortgages, slash our high business taxes, and expand trade.

EDUCATION: Our education system must focus on standards, accountability, and choice. My plan calls for recruiting highly qualified teachers in the neediest communities, empowering parents to choose the best schools for their children, expanding online educational opportunities, providing low-income families with access to tutors, and funding professional development for teachers.

U.S. STRATEGY – RISING GLOBAL POWERS: As President, I will work to establish good relations with other nations. At the same time, I will stand up for democratic values and human rights, and I will oppose aggression and international lawlessness that threaten our security.

Cynthia McKinney (California) -- **Rosa Clemente** (North Carolina)

Party: Green

Website: www.mckinney2008.com

Did not meet LWVUS/EF criteria stated above.

Bob Barr (Georgia) -- **Wayne A. Root** (Nevada)

Party: Libertarian

Website: www.bobbarr2008.com

Did not meet LWVUS/EF criteria stated above.

Ralph Nader (Connecticut) -- **Matt Gonzalez** (California)

Party: Independent

Website: www.votenader.org

BIOGRAPHY: Attorney, author, and consumer advocate, named by Time Magazine one of the "100 Most Influential Americans in the 20th Century." Over 4 decades of public service. Helped establish the OSHA, EPA, Consumer Product Safety Commission, the Safe Drinking Water Act, Motor Vehicle Safety Act, and Freedom of Information Act.

GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE: The government should stop subsidizing fossil fuels: oil, electric and coal mining interests. Invest in renewable energy that is efficient, sustainable, and environmentally friendly: wind and solar power. Encourage more efficient automobiles, homes and businesses. Ratify the Kyoto Protocol. Create an independent Oceanic Protection Agency. Adopt a carbon pollution tax.

COST OF HEALTH CARE: Adopt a private delivery, free choice of hospital and doctor, single payer public health insurance system. This would save \$350 billion annually by eliminating exorbitant executive pay, advertising, computerized billing fraud and abuse, and apply those savings to comprehensively cover everyone without increasing taxpayer costs. Lower costs through bulk purchasing.

ECONOMIC DISPARITY: Unfair legislation allows the middle class to suffer while the rich entrench their status. To correct this we should enact a living \$10 wage, adopt a fair tax, and provide equal pay for women. We must end corporate subsidies and bailouts. Repeal NAFTA and the anti-union Taft/Hartley Law.

EDUCATION: Increase civic education and decrease standardized testing. Repeal “No Child Left Behind” Act. Do not tie test performance to school funding. Provide full funding for pre-school and nutrition programs. Get product marketing out of the schools. Ensure that the nation's crumbling schools are repaired within 3 years.

U.S. STRATEGY – RISING GLOBAL POWERS: The US should be a humanitarian superpower. Our foreign policy must redefine global security, peace, arms control, an end to nuclear weapons and expand the many assets of our country to assist with major initiatives against global infectious diseases. Stop support of foreign dictators. Human rights come before trade, profit.

Chuck Baldwin (Florida) -- **Darrell L. Castle** (Tennessee)

Party: Constitution

Website: www.baldwin08.com

Did not meet LWVUS/EF criteria stated above.

WRITE-IN CANDIDATES WHO HAVE FILED IN MARYLAND:

Donald K. Allen (Ohio)

Party: Unaffiliated

Website: www.donaldkallenforpresident.com

Lawson Mitchell Bone (Tennessee)

Party: Independent

Theodis (Ted) Brown, Sr. (Missouri)

Party: Independent

James D. Criveau (Virginia)

Party: Non_Partisan

RaeDeen R. Heupel (Montana)

Party: Independent

Website: www.raedeen.com/

Ronald G. Hobbs (Pennsylvania)

Party: Independent

Keith Russell Judd (Texas)

Party: Non-Partisan

Frank Moore (California)

Party: Independent

Website: www.frankmooreforpresident08.com

Lynne A. Starr (Florida)

Party: Independent

Blaine Taylor (Maryland)

Party: Democratic

CONGRESSIONAL CANDIDATES

About the U.S. House of Representatives:

SALARY: \$169,300 per year.

TERM: Two years, no term limit.

HOW ELECTED: The United States is divided into 435 Congressional Districts that are reapportioned after every decennial census. All seats in the House of Representatives are up for election in every even-numbered year.

DUTIES: Representatives share responsibility with Senators for enactment of the nation's laws as provided for in the U.S. Constitution.

Questions asked candidates for Representative in Congress:

BACKGROUND: What are your qualifications for this office?

IMMIGRATION: What changes, if any, do you support in regard to immigration policy?

CLIMATE CHANGE: Describe Federal legislation you would support to address global climate changes.

ECONOMY: Identify a major challenge to the U.S. economy and how Congress should address it.

EDUCATION: What are your views on the No Child Left Behind legislation?

HEALTH CARE: What plans need to be put into place to meet the country's health care needs?

NATIONAL SECURITY: Identify a national security issue and how Congress should address it.

Vote for no more than one candidate.

REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS – DISTRICT 6

Jennifer P. Dougherty

Party: Democratic

Website: www.jennifer08.com

BACKGROUND: As a small business owner for more than 21 years and a former Mayor of Frederick, I have experience setting priorities and balancing a government budget. I am the only person in the race who has balanced a government budget, created jobs and managed government contracts.

IMMIGRATION: I support legal immigration and will work to make federal law clear, enforceable and effective. I support improving electronic employment verification, raising penalties on employers who violate the law and create a method for immigrant to pay for immigration processing through a payroll deduction.

CLIMATE CHANGE: I support raising vehicle efficiency standards, adopting a cap & trade system for emissions and investing in pilot programs to encourage conversion to sustainable energy sources. I propose a bio-fuels refinery in central/western Maryland that will advance the best technology, create jobs and offer an All - American Alternative.

ECONOMY: The government budgeting process is one of the biggest problems. I support requiring new budgeting restrictions that encourage meeting the mission, controlling costs and rewarding creativity. Reckless spending, growing deficits and crushing debt is hurting our ability to invest in actual services.

EDUCATION: I support reforming No Child Left Behind by funding all federal requirements, reducing classroom size, hiring new teachers, addressing pay equity for teaching professionals, and funding Head Start.

HEALTH CARE: I support health care for all within 5 years. I support expansion of State Children's Health Insurance, allowing early retirees (over 55) to buy into Medicare coverage, allowing young people (18-24) to remain on family coverage. I support consumer choice – stay in current plan or buy into federal plan.

NATIONAL SECURITY: The endless War in Iraq has depleted the resources and strength of our military. First, support a plan for a responsible withdrawal from Iraq; guarantee the people in uniform have adequate pay, benefits, supplies; invest in restoring equipment for military; invest in adequate rehab facilities and treatment for veterans.

Roscoe Bartlett

Party: Republican

Website: <http://www.bartlettforcongress.org/>

BACKGROUND: I have been elected eight times to represent the Sixth District of Maryland in the U.S. Congress. Conservative, taxpayer advocacy and business organizations confirm that I have consistently voted for less taxes, less spending, less regulations, and to protect life and Americans' Constitutional rights.

IMMIGRATION: Our immigration system is broken. I have voted against amnesty for illegal aliens. My priorities are to secure America's borders, enforce laws against illegal immigration, prosecute those who violate laws and facilitate illegal immigration, establish English as our official language and improve resources for employers to find legal employees.

CLIMATE CHANGE: To counter mounting evidence that burning fossil fuels may contribute significantly to global warming and that world oil production may be unable to keep up with growing demand, I support energy efficiency, conservation and research and development to transition from dependence on finite fossil fuels to renewable sources of energy.

ECONOMY and NATIONAL SECURITY: Our increasing dependence upon imports for 2/3 of the oil we use is making Americans poorer. Our transportation is 95% dependent upon oil endangering both our economy and national security. We are transferring \$600-700 billion per year, more than we spend on defense, to oil producing countries such as Saudi Arabia, Nigeria and Venezuela. As cofounder and cochairman of the bipartisan Congressional Peak Oil Caucus and Defense Energy Working Group, I am recognized as a leader in Congress promoting energy efficiency, conservation and research and development to transition transportation to electricity generated by alternative and renewable sources of energy.

EDUCATION: I voted against No Child Left Behind because I oppose decreasing local control of education by parents, teachers and administrators in the Sixth District. They know better than any bureaucrats in Annapolis or Washington, DC what aid will assist our youth to acquire the skills they need to compete globally.

HEALTH CARE: We have a sick care system, not a health care system. I support changes to increase and reward healthy lifestyle choices by individuals, increase competition by insurers and health care providers and limit malpractice awards unrelated to medical expenses to help reduce health care costs.

Gary W. Hoover, Sr.

Party: Libertarian

Website: www.hoover4congress08.com

BACKGROUND: I have been in the automobile business for the past 16 years. During this time, I have had to negotiate everyday. I believe that we need people in the congress that are willing to negotiate with others to get the peoples business done.

IMMIGRATION: I support greater enforcement of the current immigration laws, not just at the boarder but also at the factories and business that are hiring people that are not permitted to work in our country. There needs to be a total reform of Immigration policy but no amnesty.

CLIMATE CHANGE: We need to completely rethink our energy policy, along with our environmental policy

ECONOMY: 9.5 trillion dollar debt that Congress has strapped the future generation with. Stop spending money we do not have, any new spending has to be matched with cuts elsewhere. Balance budget amendment with emergency provision in case of war or major catastrophe. In addition, cut in programs.

EDUCATION: Failure !!Need to abolish the Department of Education and return schooling to the states, local school boards, and the parents. After watching how those in congress run this country why in the world we want them to educate our children.

HEALTH CARE: Complex problem, but I would start with opening up the health care program that is now enjoyed by members of congress and other federal employees. This would make health care much more affordable to many people. Then look at how we can help the private sector cover those without insurance.

NATIONAL SECURITY: We need to rethink our aggressive attitudes towards the world. Deploy troops only in case of direct attack, withdraw from outdated alliances. Regain the respect of the world.

JUDGE OF THE COURT OF SPECIAL APPEALS AT LARGE

About the Office:

SALARY: \$149,552. annual base

TERM: 10 years – no term limit

HOW ELECTED: The Governor appoints judges to the Court of Special Appeals. The State Senate must confirm these appointments. At the end of a ten-year term, these judges' names must appear on the ballot. Voters vote "yes" for retention, or "no" to remove from office. Judges may not be opposed by other candidates in retention elections. Maryland is divided into 7 Appellate Judicial Circuits. One judge is appointed from each of these circuits and six members are appointed from the state at large. There are a total of 13 judges in the Court of Special Appeals.

DUTIES: Judges preside over The Maryland Court of Special Appeals, which is the intermediate appellate court for Maryland. It was created in 1966 in response to the rapidly growing caseload in the Maryland Court of Appeals. The Court of Special Appeals originally could hear only criminal cases. However, its jurisdiction has expanded so it now considers any reviewable action of the circuit court, unless otherwise provided by law. Judges sitting on the Court of Special Appeals generally hear and decide cases in panels of three.

Questions asked the Court of Appeals candidates:

BACKGROUND: What are your qualifications for this office?

JUDICIAL SYSTEM NEEDS: What is area of greatest need in the Maryland judicial system?

LEGAL ACCESS: What can be done to provide individuals with wider and better access to legal help and the legal system?

Vote "yes" for continuance in office or "no" for removal.

Deborah Eyler

BACKGROUND: In 11 years of service as a judge on the Court of Special Appeals, I have authored more than 1,000 case opinions. From that experience, I have gained in-depth knowledge of all aspects of Maryland law and have become skilled at producing case opinions that are thorough, fair, and timely.

JUDICIAL SYSTEM NEEDS: In the criminal justice system, additional "drug court" diversion programs because the vast majority of crimes in Maryland are rooted in the distribution and use of illegal drugs. In the civil justice system, affordable legal representation, especially for parents and children in contested custody cases.

LEGAL ACCESS: More outreach by courts and the judiciary's local pro-bono committees, which exist in each county, to link up, early in a case, a party who cannot afford representation with a pro bono lawyer who can handle the matter for free or at a substantially reduced rate.

Robert A. Zarnoch

BACKGROUND: Before my appointment, I served 30 sessions as the Attorney General's Counsel to the General Assembly. I reviewed 20,000 bills and authored thousands of advice letters. I argued in the Supreme Court and participated in 39 cases in the State's highest court, including one making the Camden Yards stadiums possible.

JUDICIAL SYSTEM NEEDS: A 2008 Harris Poll discloses that only 16% of the public has a great deal of confidence in the courts and the justice system. Such numbers will never be reversed until judges demonstrate by performance that the system is accessible, deals fairly with all, and reaches just results.

LEGAL ACCESS: Studies note that a citizen is more likely to go to court than be hospitalized. Greater support for legal aid and pro bono lawyering is needed. Promotion of pre-paid legal plans and self-help, expanding small claims courts and streamlining legal procedures would also help citizens obtain affordable legal assistance.

BOARD OF EDUCATION – WASHINGTON COUNTY

About the Office:

SALARY:

TERM:

HOW ELECTED:

DUTIES:

Questions asked the Board of Education candidates:

CHALLENGE: What do you perceive as the greatest challenge to Washington County Public Schools over the next four years?

BUDGET PRIORITIES: What are your budget priorities in light of the reduced Thornton funding? What areas do you believe should be reduced and what areas should be maintained or increased?

REDISTRICTING: What would be your criteria for redistricting for new and renovated schools?

MAGNET ADMISSIONS: How can we ensure that magnet school admissions are inclusive and fair?

SAFETY: What more should be done to promote safety in the schools?

PRE-K: What should the public school's role be in ensuring quality programming for pre-k children?

Donna L. Brightman

CHALLENGE: The greatest challenge for the WCPS system over the next four years will be how to maintain the delivery of excellent educational programs and services to all students with decreasing state, local, and federal funding. During the same time period we will be struggling to upgrade our schools which have an average age of 44 years. We also must insure the greatest cost benefit and highest standard of accountability. To accomplish that, we need an independent internal auditor and fraud hot line in place. I plan to work to accomplish that goal.

BUDGET PRIORITIES: Reduced funding at all levels, state, local and federal, will drive the need for a different annual budget process and realignment of priorities throughout the school system. My personal top budgetary priority is based on what "touches" the children directly. The classroom teacher, school site support

staff, and principal should be considered the “A Team” and funded accordingly. The annual Board of Education budget process should be redesigned collaboratively with the County Commissioners to insure an agreed upon baseline contribution, plus areas for negotiation.

REDISTRICTING: I served on the Facility and Enrollment Advisory Committee prior to my appointment to the Board of Education. Having gone through the redistricting process from both perspectives I firmly believe that redistricting is a technique used when land use policies have failed. There must be a more visionary comprehensive plan for the future of this county. Only then can we avoid yearly realignments and the breakup of our communities. All innovative approaches to school construction, renovation, adaptive reuse and public private partnerships should be considered when looking for solutions to our overcrowded aging school facilities.

MAGNET ADMISSIONS: It became clear during our recent redistricting that the magnet programs throughout the county need to be reviewed. When most of our elementary schools are at or over capacity and those same schools are offering programs to out-of-district students it becomes difficult to then force in-district students out of their community schools. We must find a way to balance programs, capacity and transportation to insure fair and inclusive education opportunities.

SAFETY: Washington County Public School System has worked to insure safety inside our schools, on school property and during the transportation process. I consider the safety of all our students to be of paramount importance. Internally we need to be constantly vigilant and ready to adjust policy, procedures and training as needed. Externally, we need to greatly improve how we communicate with our parents, families and the whole community. Rapid public response along with an open transparent process will go a long way to strengthening the public’s confidence.

PRE-K: The public school system has a mandate to provide services to children from birth. Washington County has several pre-k programs already in place and is working to increase availability throughout the county. I believe we have the greatest cost benefit to society in general and our community in particular when children receive very early basic skills instruction and socialization. Early identification of children in need of intervention also will reduce the demand for remedial work in later years allowing children to take more on level and advanced courses, moving into post graduate activities earlier.

Jacqueline Fischer

CHALLENGE: The greatest challenge to Washington County Public Schools over the next four years will be addressing the overcrowded conditions in many of our schools while also reducing the backlog of maintenance to facilities. As state and county budgets grow tighter, the system may have to consider some alternate means of financing new schools and additions or renovations to existing ones such as performance-based contracting and public/public or private/public partnerships. At the same time we must insist on energy efficient, environmentally friendly construction to address energy costs and environmental concerns.

BUDGET PRIORITIES: If the school system experiences a reduction in Thornton funding, I would suggest a freeze on new programs and initiatives, additional board-level staff, and replacement computers. I would also have each department reduce its budget by an equal percentage, to be determined by the amount of the shortfall. Programs and interventions aligned with the No Child Left Behind requirements must be maintained. I would also insist on maintaining the current student/teacher ratio.

REDISTRICTING: When the next new elementary school and the new high school are in the planning stages, I would task the Facilities Enrollment Advisory Committee with devising a plan to redistrict the entire county. Criteria for redistricting should include limiting elementary schools from feeding into no more than two middle schools and middle schools from feeding into no more than two high schools, 2) keeping student travel time under 40 minutes one way, 3) avoiding having students pass one school to reach another, 4) maintaining local-rated capacities, and 4) balancing ethnic and socio-economic populations where possible.

MAGNET ADMISSIONS: First, qualifying criteria must be established along with the number of students the magnet can handle. Depending on the school’s capacity, the number of students to be accepted from outside that district should be determined. Applications should be accepted from all interested students across the county. Applicants should remain anonymous to the selection committee for as much of the process as practicable. Finally, transportation links need to be made available so that all students would have the ability to attend the magnet of their choice.

SAFETY: The school system has addressed several safety issues in the last two years. Cameras and key card locks have been installed in schools. At the three new schools, visitors cannot get past the main office without office personnel providing entrance. However, students can play a major role in assuring the safety of the schools. Awareness is key. Students must be taught the importance of maintaining certain practices such as keeping outside doors locked and following teachers’ safety instructions when performing certain tasks. Perhaps more importantly, students must be made comfortable in reporting any suspicious actions or conversations they witness to adults in the school.

PRE-K: First, because of the extreme importance of early childhood training, more pre-kindergarten sessions should be made available. Currently, the school system has in place a pre-k curriculum, The Children’s Literary Initiative. Because this program aligns with the reading program used in grades K-5 and because it is used in all WCPS pre-kindergartens, quality programming is ensured. The curriculum emphasizes literacy and numerical development and teaches independent, critical, and creative thinking.

W. Edward Forrest

CHALLENGE: The greatest challenge to the Washington County Public Schools will be to build on the current successes of the school system. This can be accomplished by implementing a process of continuous improvement. This includes, but is not limited to, maintaining small class sizes, recruitment and retention of highly qualified classroom teachers, insuring that our facilities provide a safe and clean learning environment, development of fiscally responsible budgets and setting school system policies that support student learning and improved opportunities for students at all levels.

BUDGET PRIORITIES: Although the school system will incur a reduction in Thornton funding, there will still be smaller net **increase** in funding. My budget priorities include maintaining small class sizes, providing for competitive teacher salary and benefit packages, and maintaining and expanding learning resources and opportunities for students. I would also advocate for budgeting increases in maintenance, renovations, or replacements of our aging schools. Each line in the budget should be evaluated annually for opportunities for reductions or redeployment of funds to more critical areas which directly impact student learning and reported to the elected board for consideration.

REDISTRICTING: As our county grows, what was once a relatively rare process will become more frequent. I support the current Facilities and Enrollment Advisory Committee process in which a broad community based membership makes recommendations to the school board for consideration. The school board should develop a specific charge for each redistricting process that outlines clear expectations for the committee and offers multiple opportunities for citizen input. The school board should act on the recommendations with any changes or amendments in a timely manner to allow affected communities the opportunity to react, seek clarification or ask questions of school system staff.

MAGNET ADMISSIONS: Students across the county may apply for admission to a variety of magnet, signature, and academy programs which may be outside of

their attendance area. Admission may be based on parent request and/or a matrix of academic performance and other factors which may predict student success. I support these programs but have advocated for improved communication to parents about availability, curriculum and admissions process. I also believe schools should identify any student with potential regardless of their individual circumstances. I support the development of a transportation network to enhance access for students who may not have private transportation opportunities.

SAFETY: I supported the recent acceleration of school entrance security measures including the instillation of cameras and door buzzers. Further, I have supported and advocated for increased partnership with local law enforcement to place safety resource officers in several high schools. I would support placing these positions in all high schools. This would increase the level of school safety and help to establish trust between young people and law enforcement officers. Finally, portable classroom offer another area of opportunity for improving school safety. Measures must be in place to eliminate or minimize potential incidents particularly at the elementary school level.

PRE-K: The Maryland Bridge to Excellence legislation requires that all public school systems develop a plan to provide pre-k programs for 4 year olds from economically disadvantaged families. During my tenure on the board, I supported the implementation of the plan that now serves 550 pre-k students from across the county. I also supported the purchase and implementation of a researched based literacy curriculum which has improved school readiness as measured by the Maryland Model for School Readiness. I support pre-k education and would advocate for public-private partnerships to offer increased access to quality pre-k programs.

Meredith Fouche

CHALLENGE: The availability of funds to continue existing programs will be critical in every budget year in the next four

BUDGET PRIORITIES: Essential to our curriculum is the continuation of our Magnet Programs. Quality education for all students. I believe all instruction from Pre-K to 12th grade is the essence for educating life time learners. I have no opinion on cutting programs until that becomes a reality in lack of funds available from funding sources.

REDISTRICTING: Almost every renovation or new construction requires shifting of students. There is a belief of some in the community that 650 plus student elementary schools are not in students best interest. Some say our schools should not exceed 500 students. When shifting of students is required those students living closest to the new schools should be moved first.

MAGNET ADMISSIONS: Every magnet program must have clear and concise admission requirements. The Board of Education has developed a comprehensive evaluation process to ensure admission to magnet programs are fair and equitable and I approve of current procedures.

SAFETY: Unfortunately we have over 50 portable classrooms in use across the county and to be honest I do not feel they are safe. I do not wish to be an alarmist and realize for the most part we live in a safe community; but that is what other communities thought before incidents occurred there. When students move from portables to main buildings to use restrooms unescorted they are vulnerable. Just raising a concern as an involved citizen.

PRE-K: I believe the movement in American society is for public schools to be involved in Pre-K instruction. For many school districts this may be a new program and with any new program it is wise to proceed slowly. Admittedly many young children are not being provided at home with the skills they need for kindergarten thus Pre-K is needed.

Justin M. Hartings

CHALLENGE: Over the next four years WCPS will have to provide a better education for more students with less money. Several regions of the County already facing capacity challenges will be further stressed by development over the next few years. The slowdown in the housing market has given the Board a real opportunity to address these challenges. With tighter budgets projected for this period of time, the Board must be deliberate, creative, and strategic in modernizing facilities and creating more space for these new students while continuing to improve performance in the classroom.

BUDGET PRIORITIES: Achievement in the classroom should always be the primary guide for budgets. Identifying programs that are producing academic results requires continuous scrutiny by the Board. Using my background in business, statistics, and data analysis, I will take a holistic and focused approach to establishing budget priorities. This approach combines a detailed look at each budget item with a scrupulous analysis of the results produced by each program. Those programs that produce student achievement will emerge as priorities, while those that do not will be considered for reduction or elimination.

REDISTRICTING: Redistricting decisions must balance the needs of the overall school system with those of individual families and communities. Failing to populate a new school can delay funding for other school construction projects in the County, while hasty redistricting decisions can disrupt families and communities. The first priority should be to ensure that the County has the facilities it needs to educate all of its students. Every effort has to be made to provide these facilities in a way that keeps communities together. Strategic and creative approaches to expanding our facilities will ensure that these goals can be met simultaneously.

MAGNET ADMISSIONS: The magnet school admission process must ensure that the best qualified students are offered admission. The process should take a complete look at each applicant, evaluating motivation, unique aptitudes, test scores, teacher evaluations, and parental input. Now that the magnet program has been in place for a number of years, it will be important for the Board to scrutinize the program's results. Achievement of students in the program, students in schools with magnet programs, and students in schools without magnet programs should guide the Board in expanding these opportunities for students in all parts of the County.

SAFETY: As a parent putting his children on WCPS buses every day, student safety is always on my mind. The next step in creating a culture of safety is to focus on the individual school level. Each school has unique safety considerations resulting from the age of the buildings, the design of facilities, and the community location. A policy that is essential in one school may not make sense at a school in a different neighborhood or with a different design. Local school officials must be empowered and encouraged to develop local policies that address the unique needs of each school.

PRE-K: Entering kindergarten ready to learn is an important predictor of long-term success in the classroom. With the recent move to full-day kindergarten, the tight budgets in years ahead, and the capacity challenges at many schools, now is not the time to introduce a County-wide pre-k program. The school system should continue to introduce pre-k programs where they can fill unmet needs in the county, and clearly define the skills children need to succeed in kindergarten. Empowering parents with this knowledge will give them the tools to prepare their children for the first day of school.

Margie Lowery

CHALLENGE: The greatest challenge to Washington County Public Schools over the next four years will be managing the rapid enrollment growth and the necessity to address the foreseeable future in terms of providing adequate facilities. Portable classrooms are being used to satisfy student population and maintenance backlogs exist in many schools, but starting FY 2009, state education aid could be 6.3 million less than expected. However, our high school enrollment is projected to have a growth of 167 students by the year 2011. Fiscal pressures, providing adequate facilities and managing the rapid enrollment growth will be the greatest challenge for W.C.P.S.

BUDGET PRIORITIES: My budget priorities are related to helping all students reach the proficiency level and attain high achievement goals. Programs that provide appropriate support for their educational endeavors would be priorities in light of the reduced Thornton funding. Areas to be designed are cost-efficient management systems and practices in order to improve the support to instruction. I would like to see participation increased in: Children's Literacy Initiative, Comprehensive Literacy Program, Advanced Placement, Career and Technology Education, University System of Maryland, Intervention and Dropout Prevention and the 2007-2008-redesign of the Leadership Responsibilities in Student Services and Special Education.

REDISTRICTING: My criteria for redistricting with new schools starts at the very beginning with zone alignment attendance meetings: FEAC and county land-use policies. When public hearings for land-use policies are being held, all stakeholders must utilize a visionary planning approach to eliminate the need for redistricting. When redistricting renovated schools, I prefer to use Mapping Sustainability to perform calculations that determine the number of students affected by district changes with utilization of maps to determine boundaries. Advisory committees then determine the student counts to help them focus their decision making on socioeconomics and other factors.

MAGNET ADMISSIONS: We can ensure that magnet school admissions are inclusive and fair by stating: all students in W.C.P.S. are eligible via the magnet application, looking at the student selection for each program, and realizing that some students can benefit from recommended programs through their home school programs or attendance area. Usage of a variety of assessment tools, teacher recommendation, grades, student interviews, parent perception, Raven intelligence test and demographic information and a magnet lottery system can be utilized for some programs. All of these methods should ensure that admissions are inclusive and fair for any student in WCPS.

SAFETY: In order to promote more safety in schools, all volunteers need to complete background checks before interacting with students. The BOE should implement a cooperative plan with the county Sheriff's department to complete background checks. More cameras need to be utilized in entrances, hallways and parking lots and we need to secure community efforts to have a law enforcement officer in every school. Every student has a right to a safe school environment and programs such as Character Counts develop character, eliminates bullying and harassment and assist students in developing healthy lifestyles that eschew drug, alcohol and tobacco use.

PRE-K: The public schools role in ensuring quality programming for pre-k children is to follow the requirements of the MSDE. Public schools need to ensure to offer all at-risk students quality programming for pre-k. Pre-k classes need to maintain coherence and continuity that complement the reading program that is used in grades K-5. Pre-k programs need to strengthen language and reading skills and prepare the students for future educational programs.

Wayne David Ridenour

CHALLENGE: The challenges are actually two-fold but related. One is how to maintain our excellent academic standing and how to educate our children in adequate buildings in light of likely funding cuts from the state. Overcrowding, inadequate facilities and the need for new construction will be hot topics for the next four years. How to fund a variety of projects as well as adequately compensate the people, who serve our students, will be major, however, all this must be seen in the context of student achievement. We must ensure that our students have the facilities and quality teachers that will maximize achievement.

BUDGET PRIORITIES: My priorities have not changed. They remain, creating optimal learning environments for teachers and students. Everything this system does must be focused on the classroom. During the past few years student achievement has risen. The system employees deserve all the credit. From top down we have to continue to hire and retain the best people we can. Since all systems are competing for the best and brightest, we must be a competitive system, be it in salaries, benefits or facilities. Our budget has to be structured in a way to ensure we are competitive with other competing systems.

REDISTRICTING: The criteria for redistricting is both an art and science, governed in part by legal mandates and restrictions. The art is quantitative and strives to achieve a well-balanced combination neighborhoods that will enrich the school and be representative of the cross-section of students who must work together in their school environment. The science part requires studies of numbers and student yields from certain neighborhoods and developments. Parent input is essential, however, in the end the Board must do what is best for students. Relief from overcrowding, which can harm performance and raise safety issues, must be the purpose for redistricting.

MAGNET ADMISSIONS: A defined criteria is available for stakeholders. Admissions are based on multiple criteria, to ensure that no one factor outweighs another. Combinations of test scores, classroom performance, formalized state testing, student interviews, teacher perceptions and creative problem solving tasks are weighed. The test scores include a non verbal assessment that allows ESOL students to demonstrate ability without penalty for a lack of English speaking skills. At the elementary level, areas are equally weighed. With Middle and High school magnets, work in the content area applied for will be given most weight. WCPS has a highly comprehensive and inclusive admission process.

SAFETY: During my tenure, WCPS has hired a security specialist who has an outstanding background in both safety and law enforcement. The system must trust and utilize his expertise. A "risk Assessment" of all schools has been completed and the system has increased budget allocations for safety and security. Resource officers can be added as deemed necessary. But foremost, we must make certain the safe guards already in place are enforced and be vigilant to any potential new threats and adapt our practices to meet any and all new issues as they arise.

PRE-K: WCPS has been a forerunner in providing Pre-kindergarten programs, especially full day programs. The programs are giving students a sound foundation in academic skills at the earliest stages of schooling. Assessments given in September and May indicate students coming out of these programs have made significant gains in reading, writing and math. We expect these results to continue. The special literacy program, "Children's Literacy Initiative", was adopted three years ago. We hope and expect to see great results from this cohort of students when they take the MSA tests.

Russell French Williams II

CHALLENGE: To find the means to pay for the land and construction of the new schools that must be built due to increasing student population. Everyone agrees that this must be done and everyone seems to believe that someone else should pay for it.

BUDGET PRIORITIES: A Board of Education hires a superintendent. The superintendent is charged with running the schools and making recommendations for allocation of resources. Once the superintendent has determined the resources available and recommended the best allocation of these resources, the board, as a deliberative body, after listening to the reasoning of the superintendent and of the citizens who support or disagree with the superintendent's recommendations decides

what changes if any to make to the superintendent's proposals. It would be unwise for a Board of Education member or candidate to suggest cuts before having available all of the detailed information mentioned above.

REDISTRICTING: As with some of the other questions it would be easy to say, "If I was on the board I would do this and this." The reality is that there are processes and procedures for methodically dealing with questions such as this. A committee representing a wide variety of interests has, after long and careful study and debate, already made its recommendations. Citizens have given input about changes affecting their children. This is the proper procedure. However, the board did not follow its committee's report and the current situation is that some schools are overcrowded and one has a great deal of extra space. Those parents who argued against redistricting for their children should at least be required to show letters they have written asking that taxes be raised so that their children will not be moved and provide data showing that riding a school bus on the interstate is more dangerous than riding a bus on back County roads.

MAGNET ADMISSIONS: Many magnet schools are in the Hagerstown area. Students who do not live in the attendance area of the magnet school and who are qualified and wish to attend a particular magnet school must provide their own transportation. Greater geographical inclusiveness will come if the Board of Education is willing to devote resources to transporting qualified students to magnet schools that are not in the student's home school area. For example, a Hancock parent transporting a student to a Hagerstown magnet school will have to travel between 60 and 120 miles a day. Poor parents cannot afford such an expense.

SAFETY: The Board of Education has hired a safety officer. His recommendation should be listened to very carefully and, where financially feasible, followed.

PRE-K: The public schools must make sure that pre-K children are taught by qualified teachers who are well trained and that the pre-K curriculum is written to mesh with kindergarten and first grade curriculum.

STATE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

Question 1 - Constitutional Amendment

(Chapter 513, Acts of 2007)

Early Voting; Polling Places; Absentee Ballots

Authorizes the General Assembly to enact legislation to allow qualified voters to vote at polling places inside or outside of their election districts or wards and to vote up to two weeks before an election. This amendment also authorizes the General Assembly to enact legislation to allow absentee voting by qualified voters who choose to vote by absentee ballot, in addition to voters who are absent at the time of the election or who are unable to vote personally.

(Amends Article I, §§1 and 3 of the Maryland Constitution)

- For the Constitutional Amendment
- Against the Constitutional Amendment

Origin of this Ballot Question – Legislation that would allow early voting and "no-excuse" absentee voting was passed by the General Assembly in 2006, but a court decision found the legislation to be in conflict with the Maryland Constitution. Therefore, in the 2007 session, the General Assembly passed SB 1 - Elective Franchise - Early Voting and Polling Places which amends the Maryland Constitution to allow the General Assembly to pass legislation that will establish early voting sites and allow voters to vote by absentee ballot without having to give a reason. All Constitutional Amendments must be passed by a majority of voters statewide.

Present Practice – Article I, Section 1 of the Maryland Constitution states that a voter "shall be entitled to vote in the ward or election district in which he resides." As currently interpreted, this means that a voter cannot vote at an early voting location outside the voter's election district and that a provisional ballot cast by a voter outside his or her election district cannot be counted. Article XV, Section 7 of the Maryland Constitution designates the "Tuesday after the first Monday of November" as the date of the general election. This has been interpreted by the Court of Appeals to mean that early voting is not permissible. Absentee ballots are only for use by voters who are absent at the time of an election or who are unable to vote in person at the assigned voting precinct. The absentee ballot application requires a voter to affirm this fact.

Proposed Change – If the amendment passes, the General Assembly may enact laws to establish early voting sites. Early voting would allow registered voters to vote, in person, up to two weeks before a state-wide primary or general election at polling places outside of their normal district or precinct. Early voting sites can accommodate voters from multiple precincts or even from the entire state. However, passing this amendment only allows the General Assembly to establish an early voting process. The details of how many early voting sites will be established and how the locations for them will be determined will come in future legislation. Passage of this amendment will also allow the General Assembly to pass legislation that enables any qualified voter to vote by absentee ballot if they choose to do so. The enabling legislation could remove the requirement to sign a statement telling why the voter wants to vote by absentee ballot.

Pros: Allows for in-person voting by voters who, due to work hours, long commutes or other reasons, are unable to vote during the limited hours on Election Day. Early voting should ease long lines and lengthy wait times at precincts on Election Day and should ease the workload of precinct workers. This measure also increases the likelihood that a voter's provisional ballot will be counted by allowing a provisional ballot cast outside the voter's election district to be counted for eligible races.

Cons: There will be increased costs associated with providing polling locations prior to Election Day. Voters who vote during early voting may not have access to late campaign information on which to base their election decisions. By encouraging more voters to use absentee ballots or early voting sites, some of the community interaction that takes place at precinct based polling places may diminish.

Question 2 - Constitutional Amendment

(Chapter 5, Acts of 2007 Special Session)

Authorizing Video Lottery Terminals (Slot Machines) to Fund Education

Authorizes the State to issue up to five video lottery licenses for the primary purpose of raising revenue for education of children in public schools, prekindergarten through grade 12, public school construction and improvements, and construction of capital projects at community colleges and higher education institutions. No more than a total number of 15,000 video lottery terminals may be authorized in the State, and only one license may be issued for each specified location in Anne Arundel, Cecil, Worcester, and Allegany Counties, and Baltimore City. Any additional forms or expansion of commercial gaming in Maryland is prohibited, unless approved by a voter referendum.

(Enacts new Article XIX of the Maryland Constitution)

- For the Constitutional Amendment
- Against the Constitutional Amendment

Origin of this Ballot Question – For several years, efforts to enact legislation that would authorize Video Lottery Terminals (slot machines) as a way to raise revenue for state expenditures failed in the legislature. The governor proposed, and legislators agreed, that the decision of whether to significantly expand gambling in Maryland should be decided by the voters. The Maryland Constitution allows only two ways for citizens to vote on laws. The first is to gather enough signatures on a petition to place a law that has been passed by the General Assembly on the ballot for voter approval. The second is to place a constitutional amendment, approved by three-fifths of the legislators, before the voters in a General Election. In the 2007 Special Session, the Maryland General Assembly passed HB 4, which would add a new article to the Maryland Constitution to authorize video lottery terminal gaming (slot machines) in Maryland. A majority of voters, *statewide*, must vote in favor of the amendment for it to go into effect.

Present Practice – Currently, the annotated code of Maryland prohibits video lottery terminal (slot machine) gambling except certain fraternal, religious or war veterans' organizations in a few counties may operate no more than five individual slot machines, and the revenue from them must be used for the charitable purposes of those organizations. Public education is currently funded through Maryland's General Fund. State funding for primary and secondary education is about \$5.35 billion for this fiscal year. The three main sources of revenue for the General Fund are income tax, retail sales tax and the State Lottery. School construction may be funded by the General Fund but is primarily funded by borrowing through the issuance of State bonds.

Proposed Change – If the amendment passes, Maryland may operate up to 15,000 video lottery terminals in five locations: Baltimore City and Anne Arundel, Allegany, Cecil and Worcester Counties. No more than one gambling facility would be allowed in each of the authorized jurisdictions. Another bill related to gambling, SB 3, was also passed during the 2007 Special Session. It will go into effect contingent on the passage of this constitutional amendment. As defined by SB 3, 33% of proceeds from video terminal gambling would go to the licensed operators, 9.5% to the horse racing industry; and approximately 48.5% to education. The remainder would be used for lottery expenses, local impact grants and administrative costs. Included in the latter is money to fight gambling addiction. The amendment also states that no additional video lottery terminals shall be authorized without another approval by voters.

Pros: In 2007, the Department of Legislative Services estimated 2010 state revenues will increase by approximately \$86 million from video gaming receipts and by as much as \$565 million by 2013. This additional revenue could reduce tax increases that would otherwise be necessary to fund projected education expenses. Maryland residents who gamble in West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Delaware may choose to spend their gambling dollars here instead of taking them out of state. New jobs will be created in construction and the gambling industry. Jobs in the horse racing industry may be saved. Unlike taxation, gambling is a recreational choice and not a mandate.

Cons: In order to generate enough revenue to reach the projected increases to state funding, gamblers in Maryland would have to lose over \$1 billion per year. To generate this level of revenue, the state will have to urge its citizens to frequent slots parlors. Gambling, like other addictions, frequently leads to social (and government) costs associated with lost productivity, increased crime, broken families and even suicide. Disposable income that currently generates sales tax revenue could be spent on gambling resulting in a loss to the General Fund. The referendum would put a specific revenue source, gambling, in the state Constitution. A constitution should be clear, concise and confined to fundamentals of the structure of government.

VOTING INFORMATION
To Accompany the On-Line
2008 GENERAL ELECTION VOTERS' GUIDES

General Election: Tuesday, November 4, 2008

Polls open - 7 am to 8 pm

Voter Registration Deadline: Tuesday, October 14, 2008

[Find Your Local Board of Elections](#) – From the Maryland State Board of Elections Website.

[Legislative and Congressional District Maps](#) – From the Maryland Department of Planning Website.

[Absentee Ballot](#) Application Deadline: Tuesday, October 28, 2008

[Emergency Absentee Ballot](#) Procedure:

[Provisional Ballot](#) Procedure:

[The Electoral College](#): An explanation.

THE VOTERS' GUIDE and THE LEAGUE of WOMEN VOTERS

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization that works to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation in public policy debate and governmental decision-making. The League has a long tradition of publishing the verbatim responses of candidates to questions important to voters. The League offers this Voters' Guide to assist citizens in their decision-making process as they prepare for the general election. **The League does not support or oppose any political party or candidate.**

The candidates' answers in the Guide appear as submitted. If answers exceeded the word limit, an ellipsis indicates words were cut from the end of the statement. No write-in candidates will appear on the ballot but the list of filed write-ins will be available at each polling place.

In most areas of Maryland, the Local Leagues have been able to have Voters' Guides printed for distribution. For those voters who need On-Line access, this version has been prepared.

The League thanks all candidates who submitted answers to its questionnaires.

VOTER REGISTRATION STATUS and POLLING LOCATION

[Check with your Local Board of Elections](#) to verify your registration status and polling location. The registration deadline is Tuesday, October 14.

COME PREPARED TO VOTE

1. Read your **sample ballot** from Board of Elections mailed the last week of October.
2. Note your polling place location on the front; polling locations change!
3. Use this *Voters' Guide* to become informed on candidates and issues.
4. Mark your candidate selections and ballot question decisions **ahead of time**.
5. Bring your completed sample ballot with you on November 4 to vote confidently and reduce waiting times. Shorter lines are expected from 10 am to 2 pm.

DON'T PANIC IF THERE'S A PROBLEM

1. Check the signs for directions and/or ask the poll workers for assistance.
2. Depending on your jurisdiction, language assistance may be available.
3. If your name is not on the precinct register, you may be directed to another polling place or given the option of a **Provisional Ballot**. Provisional ballots are verified following the election for voter registration accuracy. Votes of verified registrants are included in the final election tally.

POLLING PLACE RESTRICTIONS

No cell phone, pagers, cameras or computers may be used by voters in the polling place.
Up to two children, 13 or under, may accompany a voter into the voting booth.

LONG WORK HOURS? KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

On Election Day, polls are open from 7 am to 8 pm. State Law requires Maryland-based employers to release you with pay for up to two hours **only if** you do not have two continuous hours off during the time the polls are open.

ABSENTEE BALLOT

1. Apply in writing for an absentee ballot if you “will be absent or unable to vote in person in the election.” Applications are available from your local Board of Elections upon request in writing, by telephone, or in person.
2. Return completed application form by 4:30 pm October 28 to the Board of Elections by mail or in person.
3. Absentee ballots are usually mailed approximately three weeks before an election.
4. Return completed absentee ballots by mail, postmarked no later than Election Day, Nov. 4 or in person at the Board of Elections by 8 pm on Election Day.

EMERGENCY ABSENTEE BALLOT

If the need arises from October 29 through Election Day, request an Emergency Absentee Ballot. Apply in person at the Board of Elections:

1. Complete Late Application for Absentee Ballot,
2. Receive an absentee ballot and
3. Vote on the spot or return to the Board yourself by 8 pm on Election Day.

If unable to complete this process in person (e.g. hospitalization)

1. You or someone acting for you must obtain a Late Application for Absentee Ballot.
2. Complete the Designation of Agent section on the Late Application.
3. Your agent then obtains an absentee ballot from the Board of Elections on your behalf, brings it to you to vote, and returns it prior to 8 pm on Election Day.

The Electoral College

The selection of the President and Vice President of the United States is more complicated than simply counting up the number of votes that each candidate receives on Election Day. When the United States Constitution was written, the country’s founders created an institution call the “Electoral College”. Part of the goal of establishing such an institution was to give power to the less populous states and to insure that candidates for President and Vice President had sufficient distribution of support from all areas of the nation to govern.

Each state is allocated one elector for every representative that they have in Congress. In Maryland, we have two Senators and eight members of the House of Representatives so we have 10 electors in the Electoral College. The smallest states have two senators and one member in the House so they have only 3 electors. Even though the District of Columbia has no members in Congress they were given the right to have electors following the ratification of the 23rd Amendment in 1961. California, the most populous state, has 55 electors. No member of Congress may be an elector.

In the beginning, the Electoral College had considerable power in making an independent choice among the candidates for President and Vice President. At one time, their names appeared on the ballot during a Presidential election. Now, only the names of the candidates appear. However, voters are actually casting ballots for electors who are pledged to the ticket they just voted for. The candidate with the highest number of votes in each state will be represented by electors who will all cast their vote for the winning candidate. The exceptions to this “winner take all” practice are the states of Maine and Nebraska. In those states, the winner of the statewide vote gets 2 electoral votes (equal to the number of senators from the state) and the candidate with the highest popular vote in each Congressional District receives the one electoral vote that is allocated for that district.

On the Monday after the second Wednesday in December, all of the electors chosen as a result of the General Election in November meet in their respective state capitals to cast two ballots – one for President and one for Vice President. The Electoral College includes 538 electors (one for every member in Congress plus 3 from the District of Columbia). In order to be elected, the candidates must receive 270 electoral votes. If no candidate for President receives that many votes, the House of Representatives picks the winner from the top three vote getters. Each state receives only one vote, regardless of its size. The Senate chooses the Vice President if no candidate receives 270 votes. Senators cast their votes as individuals, not as states.