AP U.S. Government and Politics
Campaigns and Voting Behavior

Reading:
• Edwards, Chapter 9, “Campaigns and Voting Behavior”

Essential Question:
• Why do voters act the way they do?

Guiding Questions:
• How fair is our current system of primaries and caucuses?
• What factors influence voter behavior? (Who votes, and why?)
• How is campaign finance regulated?
• How fair is our current electoral system?

Objectives:
Students will
• Evaluate the fairness of our current system of presidential primaries and caucuses.
• Explain the key objectives of any political campaign.
• Outline how the financing of federal campaigns is regulated by campaign finance laws.
• Determine why campaigns have an important yet limited impact on election outcomes.
• Identify the factors that influence whether people vote.
• Assess the impact of party identification, candidate evaluations, and policy opinions on voting behavior.
• Evaluate the fairness of the Electoral College system for choosing the president.
• Assess the advantages of the U.S. system of campaigns and elections.

Vocabulary: You should be able to define and use these terms appropriately and accurately in context. You DO NOT need to write out definitions unless that is what will help you learn them.

nomination  
campaign strategy  
national party convention  
McGovern-Fraser Commission  
superdelegates  
invisible primary  
caucus  
presidential primaries  
frontloading  
party platform  
direct mail  
campaign contributions  
independent expenditures  
Watergate*  
Federal Election Campaign Act  
political action committee  
Federal Election Commission  
soft money  
McCain-Feingold*  
527 groups  
Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission  
501(c)3 groups  
Super PACs  
dark money*  
selective perception  
suffrage  
political efficacy  
civic duty  
voter registration  
Motor Voter Act  
mandate theory of elections  
policy voting  
Electoral College  
battleground states

✓ Vocabulary Quiz: _____
Reading Responses: Answer the following questions and be ready to discuss them in class.

1. Evaluate today’s primary and caucus system. What are some of the major criticisms of the current system? Is the current system the best way to pick a president? If so, why? If not, what alternatives might be better?

2. Describe who votes in U.S. elections and who stays home. Which groups have the highest turnout rates? Which have the lowest? Explain why you think some groups are more, and some less, likely to vote.

3. Explain how the Electoral College system works. Evaluate the system. Is it in fact “archaic, undemocratic, complex, ambiguous, indirect, and dangerous,” or does it still serve a purpose? What can be done to change it if necessary?

4. Based on what you know about elections and voting behavior, what do you believe are the two greatest strengths and the two greatest weaknesses of the U.S. electoral system? Be specific and support your answer with examples.

5. How does voter turnout rate in the United States compare to the other industrialized democracies of the world? Why is this so? Is it a problem? Would compulsory voting solve the problem?

✓ Responses to Questions Due: _____