# Votes and Divides

Elections, federal policy, and political polarization since 1992

**SS24.US2.20** "Evaluate how federal policies and legislation have shaped American society since 1988. 20a Assess how political events beginning with the Clinton presidency and into the early 2000s contributed to growing political polarization..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

## 1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

**YOUR JOB** Underline two federal policy decisions, circle three election turning points, and number two events that intensified political division. Use your marks to trace how elections and policy shaped American society.

### When Elections Changed the Debate

1. In 1992, Bill Clinton won the presidency with 43 percent of the popular vote in a three-way race that included independent Ross Perot. Two years later, Republicans captured both houses of Congress for the first time in four decades. Clinton and the Republican Congress battled over spending, and a budget stalemate shut down parts of the federal government in 1995 and 1996. Congress passed a welfare overhaul in 1996 that Clinton signed, showing that rivals could still cooperate even as budget fights sharpened partisan identities.

2. In 1998, the House impeached Clinton over perjury and obstruction of justice related to his testimony about a personal relationship. The Senate acquitted him in 1999. Many lawmakers split along party lines, and Americans argued over whether the charges justified removing a president. In 2000, Florida's disputed presidential vote led to recounts and lawsuits. The Supreme Court stopped the recount, and George W. Bush won Florida by 537 votes in the certified result, giving him the Electoral College victory although Al Gore won the national popular vote.

3. In 2008, voters elected Barack Obama, the first Black U.S. president, amid a severe economic crisis. His administration's Affordable Care Act of 2010 expanded health insurance coverage, but Republicans challenged its cost and federal reach. In 2020, Joe Biden defeated incumbent Donald Trump; Trump's false claims of widespread election fraud and the January 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol deepened conflict over election legitimacy. Trump won again in 2024. These elections show how disputes about federal authority and trust in voting can extend beyond a single presidency.

## 2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the 1992 and 1994 election results set up both conflict and cooperation over federal policy?

2. Why might Clinton's impeachment have increased political polarization even though the Senate acquitted him?

3. Why did the Florida recount matter to both the 2000 election outcome and debates about election fairness?

4. How did the 2008 election lead to a federal policy dispute, and what later dispute shows that election conflict continued?

## 3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a five-sentence museum label arguing which event or policy in the passage most reshaped American politics. Use details from two different paragraphs, explain its effect on society, and briefly acknowledge another choice.

ANSWER KEY

# Votes and Divides

GRADE 11 · SS24.US2.20

## PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two federal policy decisions, circle three election turning points, and number two events that intensified political division. Use your marks to trace how elections and policy shaped American society. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

## PART 2 · ANSWERS

| # | QUESTION | ANSWER |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | How did the 1992 and 1994 election results set up both conflict and cooperation over federal policy? | **Clinton became president, then Republicans won both houses of Congress. They fought over spending but worked together on the 1996 welfare overhaul.** |
| 2 | Why might Clinton's impeachment have increased political polarization even though the Senate acquitted him? | **Lawmakers split largely along party lines, and Americans disagreed about whether the charges justified removing him.** |
| 3 | Why did the Florida recount matter to both the 2000 election outcome and debates about election fairness? | **Bush's 537-vote certified Florida victory gave him the Electoral College win despite Gore's national popular-vote lead. Recounts, lawsuits, and the Supreme Court's decision raised questions about how disputed votes should be resolved.** |
| 4 | How did the 2008 election lead to a federal policy dispute, and what later dispute shows that election conflict continued? | **After Obama's election, his administration's Affordable Care Act expanded health coverage, while Republicans challenged its cost and federal reach. After the 2020 election, Trump's false fraud claims fueled conflict over election legitimacy.** |

## PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The 2000 Florida recount most reshaped American politics because it showed how a close state result could decide the presidency. Bush won Florida by 537 votes in the certified result, although Gore led in the national popular vote. The Supreme Court's decision to stop the recount made the rules for resolving disputed votes a national issue. Later, Trump's false fraud claims after the 2020 election showed that arguments over election legitimacy could persist. The Affordable Care Act is another strong choice because it expanded health coverage, but public trust in elections affects every policy debate.

Accept other defensible choices in the museum label if the student uses accurate details from two paragraphs, explains a societal effect, and acknowledges an alternative. For the marking job, students may select any three elections and any two divisive events supported by the passage.