AMERICA VOTES WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES

**Part I: What Is Voting?**

***WHAT IS IT?***

1. When do you get to make choices in your life?

2. How is making a choice when you are part of a group different from choices you make as an individual? How are they the same?

3. Think about choices you make when you are part of a group. Is it always best for everyone to have an equal say? When might it best for just one person to make a choice for a group? When is it important to have everyone involved in the decision?

4. How does casting a vote for the President like other choices you make? How is it different?

***AND ONCE THE VOTE IS CAST???***

A group has held a vote. For which of the following, must you go along with the group’s decision?

1. Three friends decide to order a pizza. Two want sausage. Does the third who ‘voted’ for mushrooms

· Have to eat the pizza?

· Have to pay for the pizza?

Would your answer change if you learned that the third person doesn’t eat meat because she doesn’t like it? How about if her religion forbade her from eating pork?

2. Your town has a school tax increase of 3%. Do you have to pay the School Tax if

You don’t have children who attend the town’s schools?

Your children attend a private school?

3. The US Congress declares war on Mexico and reinstates the draft.

Do I have to pay taxes for a war I don’t believe in?

Do I have to fight in a war I don’t believe in?

4. The State Board of Health mandates that all children receive a vaccine against disease X. Proof of vaccination is required for school attendance. Do I have to get my child vaccinated?

META QUESTION: What is the difference between politics and government??

***STEPS TO VOTING***

In theory

In sense

In reality

**Part II: WHAT IS THE JOB OF THE GOVERNMENT?**

For each of the following issues, decide if it should be under the authority on the local, state or federal government, If you don’t think the government should get involved, put it in the last column

LOCAL STATE FEDERAL NO GOVERNMENT

1. paying for college

2. determining how much someone earns for a job

3. putting out fires

4. fighting wars against other countries

5. deciding on whether immigrants can enter the country

6. deciding what we learn in school

7. keeping our food safe

8. deciding what we are allowed to eat

9. vaccinating children

10. getting a license for your dog

11. getting a license to drive a car

12. making sure the shows on TV are appropriate

13. punishing criminals

14. determining how much some earns for a job

15. granting permission to listen to song lyrics

16. permission to drink alcohol/smoke marijuana

17. permission to sell alcohol/marijuana

18. whom an individual is allowed to marry

19. street repairs in front of your house

When do we want the government in our lives?

What is the distinction between Government and Politics????

**Part III: PRESIDENTIAL JOB DESCRIPTION:**

Please complete the following

WANTED: President of the United States

JOB DESCRIPTION:

QUALIFICATIONS:

RESPONSIBILITIES:

Compare what you wrote to what is outlined in Article II, US Constitution

**PART IV: AN INFORMED CITIZENRY**

What does it mean to be informed in 2016?

*Convinced that the people are the only safe depositories of their own liberty, and that they are not safe unless enlightened to a certain degree, I have looked on our present state of liberty as a short-lived possession unless the mass of the people could be informed to a certain degree.* --Thomas Jefferson to Littleton Waller Tazewell, 1805

Read Googling Is Believing

<http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/03/09/googling-is-believing-trumping-the-informed-citizen/?smprod=nytcore-iphone&smid=nytcore-iphone-share>

TS: The Final Word

B. The Power of Narrative

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/18/opinion/how-to-win-an-election.html?smprod=nytcore-iphone&smid=nytcore-iphone-share>

1. Who is the person speaking in the video? Why is he a good source to learn about presidential campaigns and stories?

2. How do stories shape/affect campaigns?

3. What is the story Secretary Clinton is trying to tell about herself? About Mr. Trump?

4. What is the story Mr. Trump is trying to tell about himself? About Secretary Clinton?

5. Who else participates in the telling of these stories for and against the candidates?

6. How do we know whom to believe?

**PART V: THE MATH OF PARTISANSHIP**

1. **THE RED, WHITE, AND BLUE SCHOOL**

These are the number of students at the Red, White and Blue School:

Kindergarten-75 Students

Grade 1-100 students

Grade 2 50 students

Grade 3 200 student

Grade 4-100 students

Grade 5-25 students

Each class at Red, White and Blue (R,W, & B) has 25 students.

Answer the following questions. Be sure to be able to explain your answer

1. What are two different ways the students could elect a president of the R,W & B school?

2. How could the students of these students form a school government? Be sure to answer:

How many people should each grade send to student government?

How should each grade decide whom to send?

3. Suppose the school was giving out pencils to its students—should each grade get the number of pencils—why or why not?

4. The school is choosing a new flag. How might an election for that choice be set up?

5. Grade 3 holds a bake sale and raises $60. Should all of the students in the school decide how to spend the money? Why or why not?

6. One of the classrooms in Grade 4 has a flood and it will take 200 hours to clean it up. Who should spend the time cleaning up the classroom? Would your answer change if those students had to use the gym for class until their room was clean and all gym classes were canceled until the classroom was cleaned?

7. The school’s budget for field trips is $5000. It costs $2.00 per student to take a field trip. How would you give out the money for field trips—by grade, by class, by scores on a test? What would be the most fair? If everyone goes on one field trip,

what would you do with the extra money?

8. Write you own question about the R,W, and B school.

**2. THE CENSUS**

*Article I, Section 2, US Constitution:*

Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons. (Note: changed by section 2 of the Fourteenth Amendment.) The actual Enumeration shall be made within three Years after the first Meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within every subsequent Term of ten Years, in such Manner as they shall by Law direct. The Number of Representatives shall not exceed one for every thirty Thousand, but each State shall have at Least one Representative

1. Why do we count the people in this country?

2. How many representatives are each state guaranteed?

3. Why do you think the framers created this system of representation?

4. Below is a chart based on the most recent census.

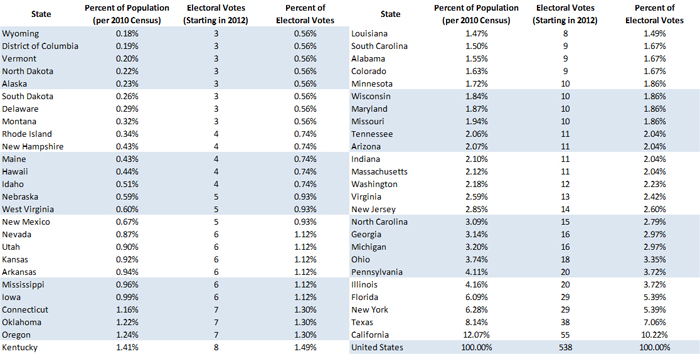
a) What information does it provide?

b) What do the first 31 states on the list have in common?

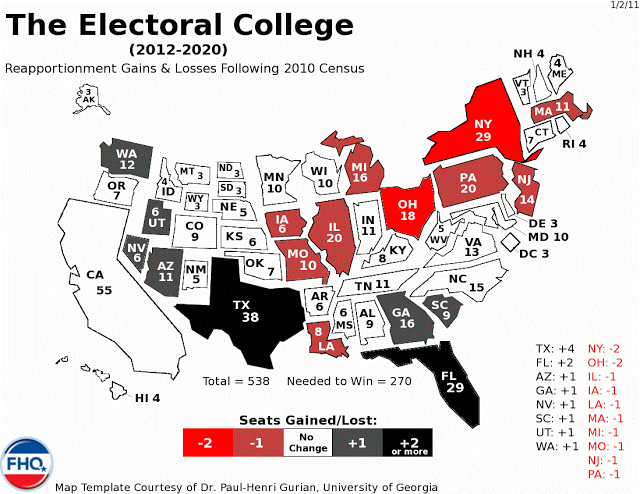
c) Where would your rather vote for President—Wyoming

d) Does our current system of electoral votes represent a democratic process? Justify your response using the data in the chart below.

**STATE PERCENT OF ELECTORAL AND POPULAR VOTE CHART**

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**3. What Happened in 2010?**

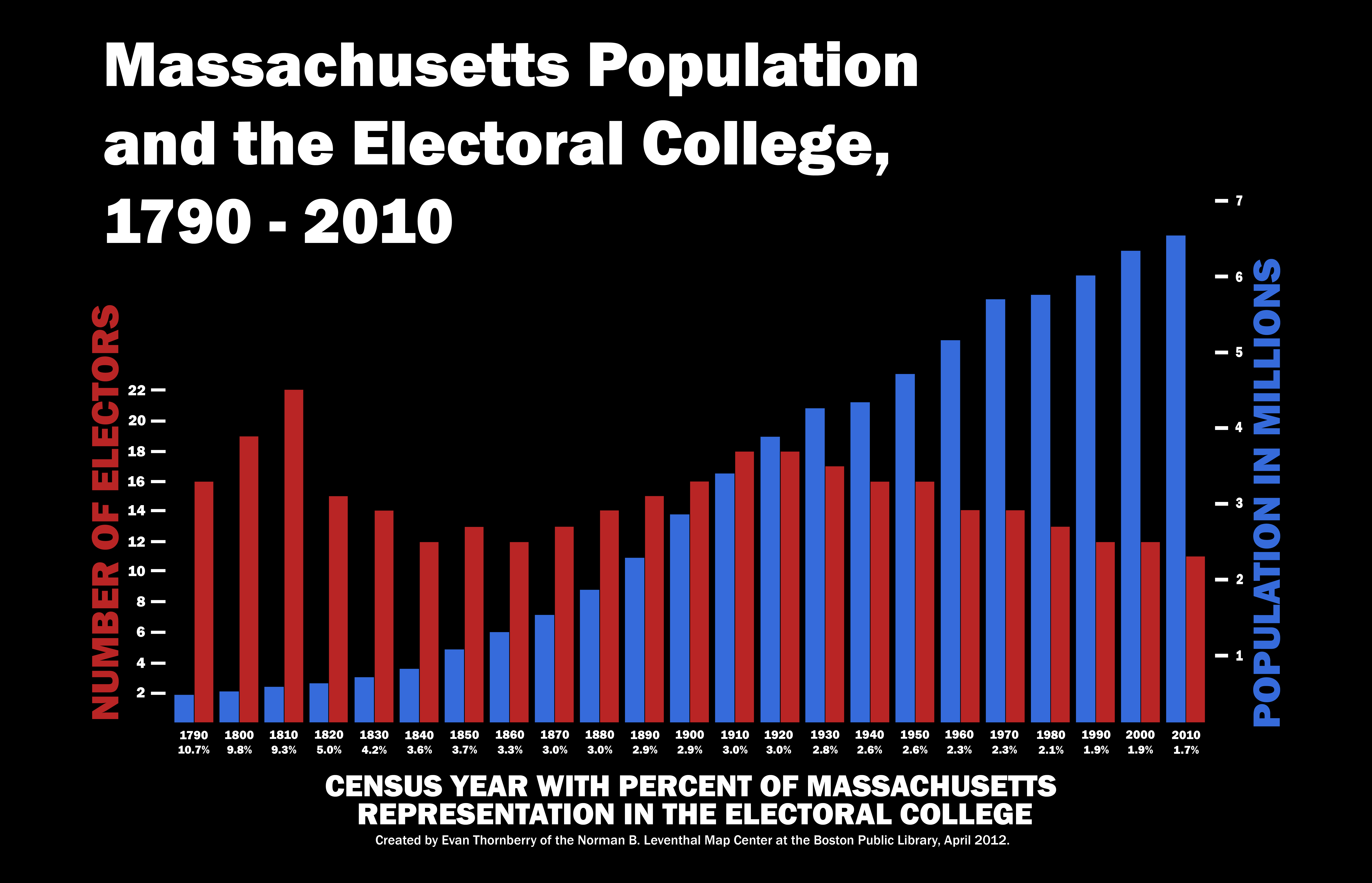


1. Which states were the big winners? Losers?

2. Why do you think the numbers changed, i.e. why did some states gain and others lose?

**4. One State, Over Time**

Now look at the following graph:

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1. What do the Red Lines show? The Blue?

2. How is it possible that the Blue lines have risen while the Red lines have shortened?

3. What has happened to Massachusetts’ political power over time?

4. To compare the history of voting in Massachusetts with that of another state, go to

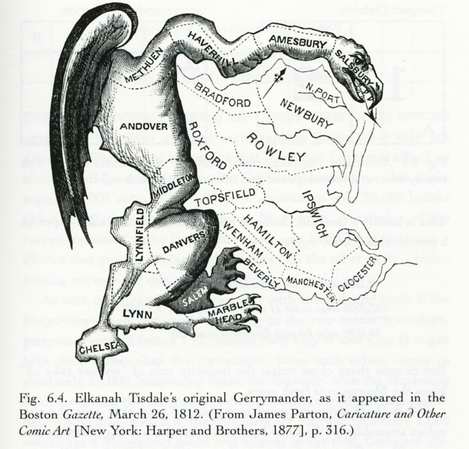
[**http://www.270towin.com/states/**](http://www.270towin.com/states/)

**5. Within the States**

1. What does this image remind you of?

2. What features dominate the ‘creature’?

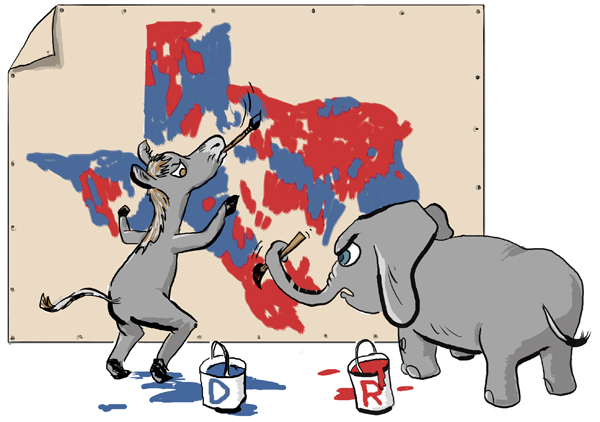
3. As you look at it more closely, what words are also on this picture?

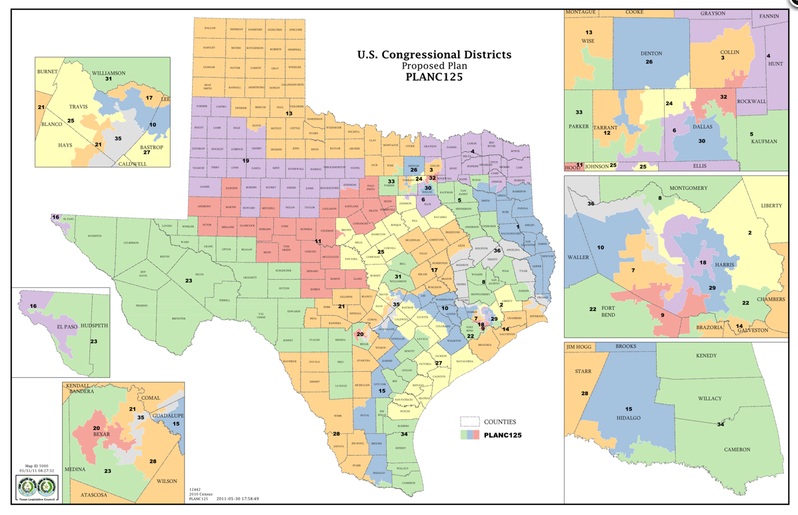


5. Look at the current cartoon and map from Texas (on the next page). What is the cartoonist’s point about the current redistricting process in Texas?

6. What conclusions can you draw about the history of redistricting from these two cartoons? Do you think it is a fair assessment?

**TEXAS REDISTRICTS**





LESSON 9 STUDENT SHEET, P.6

**6. Is It Fair??**

Consider the case of Pennsylvania,<http://www.270towin.com/states/Pennsylvania>

1. How has Pennsylvania Voted in the last 3 presidential elections? By how many percentage points did the candidate carry the state?

2. Based on that data alone, what would expect the Congressional delegation (18 to the House of Representatives and 2 the Senate) from the state to look like?

3. Now look at the state’s current representatives:<http://www.270towin.com/elected-officials/pennsylvania>

What might explain the discrepancy?

Now look at Rhode Island:<http://www.270towin.com/states/Rhode_Island>

1. How has it voted in the last 3 presidential elections? By what percent did the candidate carry the state??

2. Look at the state’s current representatives:<http://www.270towin.com/elected-officials/rhode-island>

3. Is everyone in the state being fairly represented in Congress?

Consider the following problem:

*What’s the Scoop?: National Ice Cream Convention*

100 Ninth Graders voted for their favorite ice cream flavor given a choice of Chocolate or Vanilla. 66 voted for Chocolate Ice Cream. 34 voted for Vanilla. Somehow the district is sending two Vanilla representatives and one Chocolate representative to the National Ice Cream Convention in Burlington, VT this year.

***How could this have happened?????***

After you solve the problem, please consider

1. Is democracy being served in this election?

2. How might you ensure a more fair result?

3. Imagine that all the representatives to the Ice Cream Convention come from districts like the ones described above. How much work do you think will get done at the convention?