

## Votes of Confidence: A Young Person's Guide to American Elections

**Jeff Fleischer**

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Even as a kid, Jeff Fleischer recalls, he was a politics nerd. Now a Chicago journalist with history books about iconic revolutionaries and instances of mass hysteria under his belt, he's issued a timely primer on the American electoral process, *Votes of Confidence*. Many adults are poorly informed about the political system, he notes; only 62 percent would likely pass the US citizenship test. This book would be a perfect refresher course, then, but should also be required reading for sixteen- to eighteen-year-olds as they prepare to vote for the first time.

Fleischer covers a huge amount of information, but in such an orderly and lucid manner that it never feels overwhelming. The book starts with a quick rundown of American history from the original colonies through to the Constitution and its amendments, then moves on to discuss how the three branches of the federal government function and how laws vary between states. At every turn the author gives historical examples: the three presidents who lost the popular vote but gained the office anyway, the third parties that have been at least temporarily viable, and so on. Relevant factoids abound; for instance, Bernie Sanders "holds the record as the longest-serving independent in Congress."

The book goes deep into the nitty-gritty of elections—voter registration, polling, campaign fundraising, volunteering opportunities, and how to find reliable, non-partisan information about candidates—yet never loses sight of the big picture. "It's easy to be cynical" about the small role individuals play in the political process, Fleischer acknowledges, but "there's only one solution. If more Americans become informed voters, especially young voters, they'll be able to outnumber the uninformed ones."

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