
STATE ANIMAL MOCK ELECTION

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

OVERVIEW: STUDENTS EXPLORE CIVICS USING INDIANA'S NATURAL AND SOCIAL HISTORY TO PREPARE CAMPAIGN MATERIALS AND STAGE MOCK PRIMARY AND GENERAL ELECTIONS.

Learning Goals/Relevant Indiana Standards:

- *SS.USG.5.3 2007 Analyze the roles of citizens in Indiana and the United States.*
- *SS.USG.5.8 2007 Explain how citizens in the United States participate in public elections as voters and supporters of candidates for public office.*
- *SS.3.2.6 2007 Roles of Citizens: Explain the role citizens have in making decisions and rules within the community, state and nation.*
- *SS.4.2.5 2007 Roles of Citizens: Give examples of how citizens can participate in their state government and explain the right and responsibility of voting.*
- *SS.5.2.6 2007 Functions of Government : Describe the primary and general election process for local, state and national offices, including those used to select congressional and presidential office holders*
- *SS.8.2.8 2007 Roles of Citizens: Explain ways that citizens can participate in political parties, campaigns and elections.*

Materials needed:

Posterboard or large paper, art supplies.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS

Indiana is one of three states without an official state animal, and the Indiana Historical Bureau receives numerous inquiries about the Indiana State Animal. In the summer of 2012, the agency conducted an Unofficial State Animal Mock Election to increase awareness of civics and the state's natural heritage, conducting primary elections via a Facebook poll and hosting a general election in person at the Indiana State Fair in August. A modified version of this activity can be incorporated into your civics lessons, in whole or in part. Note that naming an official state emblem requires an act of the Indiana General Assembly signed by the governor.

Animals are an engaging topic for children and allow the incorporation of biology, natural history, and Indiana history into a civics lesson.

Preparing your students

Explain primary elections, nominations, and the Electoral College. We highly recommend this [five-minute video](#) for introducing the concept of election procedures. Remind your class about Indiana's [state emblems](#).

Nominations and Primaries

Stage a primary. IHB chose to focus its election on mammals, with three historically-defined parties (prehistoric, pioneer, modern), but this is not necessary in your class activity. Decide (on your own or with your class) what the rules for nominations will be:

1. Is any animal eligible? If so, what (scientifically) is an animal?
2. Does the animal have to be native to Indiana to become a state animal?
3. Who can nominate an animal? Will you use a committee or may any classmate suggest a candidate? Will you allow write-ins? Will you organize into parties?
4. When will your primary begin and end? Will a simple majority do, or will you require a certain margin between votes?

Allow time for students to research their animal and make their nominations, alone or in groups. Each student or group of students should be able to demonstrate their candidate's eligibility (mammal, reptile, native creature, etc.) and tell classmates a little bit about the creature they've chosen: What does it eat? Where does it live? What does it mean to Indiana? The following resources will help your students gather information about candidates:

[The Natural Heritage of Indiana](#)

[Taxonomy/Animal Classification](#)

[Animal Information](#) and [Information on Endangered Species](#) from the Department of Natural Resources

Consider a caucus. In a caucus system, voters physically move from one candidate's side to another as they debate his/her merits. This is great for kinetic learners! Alternatively, you might set up an anonymous poll in your classroom software, create a polling station and ballots, or simply have students vote by show of hands.

General Election

Campaigning. After your parties have selected their candidate in the primary, they should campaign. Instruct them to brainstorm:

1. What are the candidate's strengths? What does it do for Indiana?
2. How does it embody the state?
3. Why should classmates vote for this animal?

Students should look at examples of political campaign materials and create their own. The [Library of Congress](#) has a digital collection that includes hundreds of political posters.

Polling. Set up a polling station and allow students to vote after the allotted campaigning period has passed. Count the votes. Celebrate the victor!