

Junior Elections Committee

The Junior Election is a joint effort of the LWVEP and the Estes Park School District. With the assistance of the Estes Valley Library and the EPRPD Community Center, and a grant from the Youth in Action program, we offer students who reside in the Estes Valley an opportunity to practice vote in all public elections -- ALL students grades K-12, whether or not they attend the public schools. Marsha Weaver, EPHS Civics teacher coordinates the effort on behalf of the school. She offers an electronic ballot for students in the Estes Park Public School District and she encourages the teachers to offer voting in their classroom curriculum.

With the help of a decision-making Committee (as a part of Voter Services), the chairperson designs and prints ballots. Smith Sign Studio supplies ballot boxes for paper ballots (off campus locations) and "I Voted Too" stickers. On Election night, the committee collects ballot boxes, opens them, and counts the votes, then reports the results to local newspapers, plus Valley TV stations, and KUNC. It helps to have a Committee to make decisions as they arise, such as "Do we allow TV reporters access to our junior voters?"

In order to raise knowledgeable voters, who feel that informed voting is important to our culture, the Junior Election offers a variety of opportunities for students to interact with elected officials as well as candidates. Not only during campaigns for elections in November (National, State, and County), April (Town), and May (Districts), but also throughout the winter season, we host forums, meet and greets, and other events specifically for students and those individuals in governmental positions. Many candidates have assured us that our students ask deeper, more difficult questions than the adults.

It is also the job of this Committee to produce posters for Junior Election Events, be sure they get up in public places, provide information to the local newspapers, and generally encourage an interest in voting. We have found that children, particularly young children, who vote encourage their parents to vote as well. This is a universal benefit. However, thus far, the Estes Park Elementary School has not offered an opportunity to vote at school below the 5th grade. Grades K-4 must vote at the Library or the Community Center. This requires more extensive publicity to reach the parents and have them bring the children to vote.