

The Empty Ballot Research Project — One-Page Syllabus

For teachers who want a civics project with a real product. Fits Washington's required stand-alone civics course (RCW 28A.230.094). The League signs whatever documentation the school requires and publishes the finished list with student credit.

The question

Which offices in our county will be on the ballot this year, and how many of them will have a real choice on the ballot?

What students produce

A complete, dated, sourced list — by office — of every position up for election in the county this year, showing for each: the office, the district or position number, the term, the pay, the filing fee, the incumbent (name only, no commentary), whether the incumbent has announced, and how many candidates filed in the last election for that seat.

Sources (all public)

- 1 The county auditor's "offices open for election" list for the year.
- 2 The auditor's candidate filing records from the prior election cycle for the same seats.
- 3 Each district's own website for meeting schedules and pay.
- 4 The Washington Secretary of State's candidate filing pages.
- 5 Ballotpedia's uncontested-election data for context (cite it as such).

Week-by-week (four weeks; adjust to the term)

Week 1 — What's on the ballot. Obtain the auditor's list. Build the spreadsheet: one row per office. Learn the difference between a county, a city, and a special-purpose district. Reading: the League's "What This Office Does" sheets. **Week 2 — Who ran last time.** Pull prior filings for each seat. Count candidates per seat. Compute the county's uncontested rate for the last cycle. Compare to the state and national figures on lcvoters.org/the-problem (cite the date and source). **Week 3 — The empty ballots.** Identify every seat likely to have fewer than two candidates. Draft the county's Empty Ballot List in the League's format. Check every row against the auditor's records a second time. **Week 4 — Publish and present.** Submit to the county chapter for verification. Present findings at a chapter meet-and-greet or to the class. The chapter publishes the list with the students' names (with consent) and the date.

Rules of the project

- Facts only. The project records who holds a seat and how many people ran; it does not evaluate anyone. No opinions about incumbents, parties, or issues appear anywhere in the product.
- Every figure carries a date and a source.
- Corrections are made openly and noted.

Assessment (suggested)

Accuracy against the auditor's records (40) · completeness (25) · sourcing and dating (20) · presentation (15).

What the League provides

The spreadsheet template · the "What This Office Does" sheets · a certified member to verify the final list · a letter confirming the project for academic credit or service hours · publication on the county page.

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