

## **MAKING ELECTIONS MAKE SENSE EASY VOTER GUIDE WORKSHOP**

Workshop presenter's outline, adapted from Americorps Training  
Thursday January 8, 2004, National City

### **GOAL OF WORKSHOP:**

- Prepare adult literacy students and other community members to vote.
- Anticipate the most common reasons why people don't vote and address them.

### **PRESENTERS NEEDED:**

Need two community members; may add a program staff member if needed to have someone who feels comfortable serving as recorder.

**MATERIALS REQUIRED:** See last page of this handout.

### **TIME REQUIRED:**

This outline is for a 90 minute to 2-hour workshop. More time can be added in section III and/or section Vb. if more time is available. To reduce time, you can skip the "choose a political party" exercise in section V-a.

### **WORKSHOP OUTLINE:**

- I. **Introductions & Icebreaker** - *10 minutes*
- II. **Why Vote/Why Not Vote** - *10 minutes*
- III. **What would you like to change in your community?** – *15-20 minutes*
- IV. **What happens when some of us don't vote** - *10 minutes*
- V. **Voting is as easy as 1-2-3**
  - a.) **Sign up to vote** - *15 minutes*
  - b.) **Get ready to vote (learn what is on the ballot)** - *15-30 minutes*
  - c.) **Go vote!** – *10-15 minutes*
- VI. **Wrap up-** *5-10 minutes*

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## NOTE TO THE WORKSHOP LEADER:

The activities outlined in this workshop are suggestions that have been tested with adult learners and other community members in multiple workshops. However, there are many ways to cover the same material. These are the purposes of each section so you can decide how best to cover the main points based on *your* audience and needs.

SECTION & MAIN ACTIVITY	PURPOSE
I. Introduction and Icebreaker - <i>Party mascots</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help people relax as they introduce themselves</li> <li>• Introduce the topic of voting/elections</li> </ul>
II. Reasons why people vote or don't vote - <i>"T-chart" discussion</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Let non-voters feel ok, not guilty, but also find out <i>all</i> of the reasons they don't vote so you can address them during the course of the workshop (and cover some good reasons about why to vote)</li> </ul>
III. What would you like to change in your community? - <i>Issues discussion</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Let people express their views about the issues they care about (because everyone has something they'd like to see change)</li> <li>• Let people experience voting on issues</li> </ul>
IV. What happens when people don't vote? - <i>Colored paper exercise</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visualize the impact of so many non-voters</li> <li>• Experience having someone else voting for you</li> </ul>
V. Voting is as easy as 1-2-3 - <i>1-2-3 handout</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simplify voting process into 3 main steps</li> </ul>
Va. Sign up to vote - <i>Political party exercise</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain eligibility</li> <li>• Review/fill out registration form</li> <li>• Review the political parties</li> </ul>
Vb. Get ready to vote (learn what is on the ballot) - <i>Nonpartisan vs. partisan and Easy Voter Guide</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review partisan and nonpartisan sources of information</li> <li>• Orient people to the main races and issues on the ballot</li> </ul>
Vc. Go vote! - <i>Demonstrate voting at polls and voting at home</i> - <i>True/false quiz</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain the different ways of voting and let people think about which would better suit them</li> <li>• Help people understand each step of casting a ballot at the polls or at home so they are not intimidated or surprised</li> </ul>
VI. Wrap up - <i>Revisit "T" chart</i> - <i>Yarn toss</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review all of the reasons not to vote and make sure they have been addressed</li> <li>• Get a commitment from people to act on what they have learned</li> </ul>

## WORKSHOP OUTLINE AND CONTENT:

### I. Introductions & Icebreaker - 10 minutes

Some of the political parties have mascots (animals). For example, the Democrats have a donkey and the Republicans have an elephant.

When you tell us your name, please also tell us: If you started a political party, what animal would you use as a mascot? Why?

### II. Why Vote/Why Not Vote - 10 minutes

- What are some of the reasons why people choose to vote?
- Why do some people choose *not* to vote? (Record answers on "T" chart).

When done, say: Our goal in this workshop is to answer the reasons why people don't vote. (See Appendix #1 for typical answers about why people do and don't vote).

### III. What would you like to change in your community? – 15-20 minutes

If the group is large enough, ask people to get into small groups of four or five. Ask them to spend about ten minutes discussing: "What would you like to change in your community?" Let the groups know that they will be asked to choose two issues.

Each group reports their two issues and the recorder puts them on one sheet (there may be some duplication). If needed, have the group do a quick vote to get the list of issues down to 5-6 issues total. Each of those 5-6 issues is then put on a large piece of paper posted on the walls around the room.

### IV. What happens when some of us don't vote - 10 minutes

Ask people to go stand by the issue they care the most about. Ask them to draw a colored piece of paper out of a hat (see Appendix #2 for how many pieces of what color paper to use). Once they have their colored paper, say the following:

- if you have pink paper, please sit down because you are not a citizen.
- if you have blue paper, please sit down because you did not register to vote.
- if you have yellow paper please sit down because you could have voted, but decided not to.

Now look around the room. The people left with orange paper are voters.

Are they standing in front of the issue you care about?

Do you trust the 4 out of 10 people who vote to represent your issues?

**The good news is that *Voting is as easy as 1-2-3!*** (Hand out the 1-2-3 guides).

## V. Voting is as easy as 1-2-3

### a.) Sign up to vote - 15 minutes

Go over page 2 of *Voting is as easy as 1-2-3* handout:

- Who is eligible?
- Hand out registration forms
- Help learners fill out forms if they are not registered (they can also complete the form at the end of the workshop)

### Exercise about the political parties:

Ask people to throw their colored piece of paper at one of the shapes on the wall. They go stand by one of the shapes. Tell them: You just joined a political party! Turn over the shapes to reveal party names and logos.

Give people the handout describing the political parties (or use pages 3-4 of current *Easy Voter Guide*) and ask for volunteers to read part of each party's statement out loud. They read about the political parties and also about "Decline to State." Closing thought to emphasize: Make sure you choose a party that has the same views as you do.

### b.) Get ready to vote (learn what is on the ballot) - 15-30 minutes

Optional quick vote shown on board: yes or no on ice cream and toxic waste and then redo vote with more information.

Vote #1	Ice cream	yes___	no___
	Toxic waste	yes___	no___
Vote #2	We should put a tax on ice cream	yes___	no___
	We should clean up toxic waste	yes___	no___

Ask the group why their votes changed (answer: because they had more information!).

Go over page 3 of *Voting is as easy as 1-2-3* handout:

- Review the different ways that people get information and which are nonpartisan and partisan. Ask the group for suggestions of which is which (See Appendix #3).
- Show examples of your county's Sample Ballot (an example of nonpartisan information). *This is the most important document in the whole workshop because it:*
  - lists everything you will see on your ballot
  - tells you where to go vote
  - lets you apply for an absentee ballot if you want to vote at home

- Explain that people can vote at home or at their polling place. If they want to vote at home, the application for an absentee ballot is on the back cover of the Sample Ballot. It must be received by the County Registrar seven days before the election.
- How to find your polling place (show back cover of Sample Ballot). You can also call your county elections office (and clearly post the phone number for the group) or you can use [www.easyvoter.org](http://www.easyvoter.org) look-up feature a few weeks before the election.

*Tell learners to mark their Sample Ballot and take it with them when they go to vote.*

- Hand out the *Easy Voter Guide* and go over different sections about the candidates and ballot measures. Make sure people are familiar with the main races and issues that will be on the ballot. You can have learners take turns reading sections of the propositions or find some approach to make sure they open the guide and begin using it. (Note: There is also a tutor guide on to how to use the *Easy Voter Guide* at [www.easyvoter.org](http://www.easyvoter.org) in the Teachers Resources section.)

### c.) Go vote! - 10-15 minutes

- Go over what happens at polling place with page 4 of *Voting is as easy as 1-2-3* handout:
- If available, demonstrate your county's voting equipment. Or you can at least describe it (see [www.ss.ca.gov/elections/voting\\_systems/ca\\_map\\_counties3.html](http://www.ss.ca.gov/elections/voting_systems/ca_map_counties3.html))

Ask the group true or false:

- \_\_\_\_\_ You can vote at any polling place that is open on election day (false)
- \_\_\_\_\_ You do not have to bring an I.D. with you (true for prior voters and those who registered in person but false for some first time voters in 2004)
- \_\_\_\_\_ You cannot bring any notes in with you (false!! – take your Sample Ballot)
- \_\_\_\_\_ If you make a mistake you can start over (true)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Anyone can choose to apply to vote at home (true)
- \_\_\_\_\_ If you vote at home you cannot also vote at the polls (true)
- \_\_\_\_\_ You put your Absentee Ballot in the mail on election day (false – it has to be returned *by* election day)

### Wrap up 5-10 minutes

Go back over all of the “why not vote” reasons from the beginning (Section II) and show that they have all been covered. People have no reasons left (and no excuses) not to vote!

*Time permitting -- Ball of yarn closing:* Have the group stand in a circle and each person takes a turn saying one step they will take as a result of the workshop After their turn, they throw the ball of yarn across the circle to another person who takes a turn talking and throws it to someone else. At the end, a web has been created. Make the point that we are all interconnected and how important the participation of each one of us is.

## **MATERIALS REQUIRED:** (in the order they get used)

- Easel, tape and markers
- Colored paper (four colors; we chose pink, blue, yellow and orange); amount needed for each color is determined in Appendix #1.
- Eight 8.5x11 card stock (or laminated) sheets with name/logo of each political party on one side and a shape on the other (see end of this document). There are seven parties but the 8<sup>th</sup> card is blank for the “decline to state” group. (Note: this is an optional exercise)
- Hand-outs with the political party statements (you can download these from [www.easyvoter.org](http://www.easyvoter.org) – or use page 3 and 4 of the current *Easy Voter Guide*)
- *Voting is as easy as 1-2-3* four-page handout. Printed color copies are available from the Easy Voter Guide Project (415-454-6500; info at [www.easyvoter.org](http://www.easyvoter.org)) or from the Secretary of State regional office in your area (see resources below). The 1-2-3 document can also be downloaded at [www.easyvoter.org](http://www.easyvoter.org).
- Voter registration forms (preferably from your county elections office)
- Current issue of the *Easy Voter Guide* (also downloadable at [www.easyvoter.org](http://www.easyvoter.org).)
- Sample Ballot from your county plus your county elections office phone number
- Example (or description) of your county’s voting equipment
- Optional: ball of yarn

## **RESOURCES:**

- ❑ [www.easyvoter.org](http://www.easyvoter.org)
- ❑ [www.myvotecounts.org](http://www.myvotecounts.org)
- ❑ [www.smartvoter.org](http://www.smartvoter.org)
- ❑ New Citizens Vote – a workshop for new citizens, available in five languages ( see [www.immigrantvoice.org/ncv](http://www.immigrantvoice.org/ncv))
- ❑ Your county elections office – for registration forms, Sample Ballots, voting equipment, answers to questions
- ❑ Local League of Women Voters chapters – speakers on the ballot measures
- ❑ Secretary of State regional offices – for Easy Voter materials and other resources:

San Francisco Office  
(415) 557-0171  
455 Golden Gate Ave., 14th Floor  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
Suzanne Gautier  
[sgautier@ss.ca.gov](mailto:sgautier@ss.ca.gov)

Fresno Regional Office  
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1315 Van Ness Ave. Suite 203  
Fresno, CA 93721-1729  
Ed Cuellar  
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300 South Spring Street  
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1350 Front Street, Suite 2060  
San Diego, CA 92101-3609  
Susan Walsh  
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## PUTTING THIS TRAINING INTO PRACTICE EASY VOTER GUIDE WORKSHOP

### PREPARING AND RECRUITING FOR YOUR WORKSHOP

- Have your flyer emphasize the issues and candidates as much or more than the voting process – e.g. How will the state budget crisis affect the issues you care about? Who do you think should be elected President?
- Consider holding the workshop with a partner agency or community group
- Include non-citizens in your program in the workshop because they can learn about the issues, inform their communities and encourage others to vote
- Get a representative from your County Elections Office to help with supplies and voting equipment. Arrange to have a League of Women Voters rep come to help speak about the ballot measures (see <http://ca.lwv.org/> to find your local chapter)
- Think about holding a “voting fair” instead of a voting workshop. You can have a table with an activity for each major step in the voting process – e.g. sign up to vote, choose a party, choose whether to vote absentee or at the polls, try out the voting equipment, etc. It can take a little more set-up time but makes a wonderful event for the whole family and community partners, and is more flexible and customized for the participants.

### AFTER THE WORKSHOP & BEFORE THE ELECTION:

- Set up a display at your program with registration forms, *Easy Voter Guides*, 1-2-3 handouts, a big sign with the key dates and anything else to help build awareness about the election.
- Making voting *social*:
  - plan a gathering to have people apply for or fill out absentee ballots and have their own discussions of the issues and candidates
  - host a “debate” party; have people watch the debate together and then discuss it
  - have a field trip to go vote before election day to one of the early voting locations in your county (that way, people who live in different parts of the county can vote together)
- encourage learners to “buddy up” with someone to get a ride to the polls
- Have one of your program’s book club discussions relate to the election via issues of leadership, or finding one’s voice, or equitable representation, etc.
- Use your free *Easy Voter Guides* as a tool for community outreach to get visibility and/or build relationships for your program. The guides are an example of learners and community members giving back to the community.
- Get on the agenda of your tutor training and let them know about the resources available to them at [www.easyvoter.org](http://www.easyvoter.org).

## APPENDIX #1

Why/Why not vote – compilation of typical responses:

<i>Why?</i>	<i>Why Not?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To make a change</li> <li>▪ Can't complain if you don't vote</li> <li>▪ To exercise my right</li> <li>▪ Set an example for the family</li> <li>▪ For my children's future</li> <li>▪ My vote gives me a choice</li> <li>▪ To make sure my community has a voice in the political process</li> <li>▪ Not voting <i>is</i> voting- you let others make the decision for you</li> <li>▪ I'll be living in conditions affected by elections</li> <li>▪ The issue(s) affect me personally</li> <li>▪ Can change what government looks like</li> <li>▪ Doesn't take much time</li> <li>▪ Lots of choices (e.g. vote at home, vote early)</li> <li>▪ To support the cause I believe in</li> <li>▪ Honor the historical struggle to vote</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tired of changing polling places</li> <li>▪ Inconvenient polling place</li> <li>▪ Could not find polling place</li> <li>▪ Disgusted by negative campaigns</li> <li>▪ Can't read or write very well</li> <li>▪ Takes too much time</li> <li>▪ Jury duty</li> <li>▪ Intimidated by the process; don't feel confident</li> <li>▪ Afraid to make the wrong choice</li> <li>▪ Don't care</li> <li>▪ No interest for politics</li> <li>▪ Hard to get adequate information</li> <li>▪ Voter's guide is overwhelming</li> <li>▪ Props are not explained</li> <li>▪ Not registered</li> <li>▪ Not a U.S. citizen</li> <li>▪ Don't understand the process and the issues</li> <li>▪ No candidate I care about</li> <li>▪ Don't agree with candidates</li> <li>▪ No childcare</li> <li>▪ Can't get away from work</li> <li>▪ Friends think voting is stupid</li> </ul>

Examples of how to respond to the "why not's":

- *Tired of changing polling places; Inconvenient polling place* – vote by mail or vote early
- *Could not find polling place* – look at Sample Ballot or look online at [www.easyvoter.org](http://www.easyvoter.org) or call your county elections office (and post the number for everyone)
- *Disgusted by negative campaigns* – many campaigns do not want to increase voter turnout; you play into their hands when you stay home



- *Can't read or write very well* – you can have someone help you fill out the registration form and your ballot
- *Takes too much time* – vote by mail and/or choose just to vote on a few things
- *Jury duty* – the list for jury duty is taken from several places, including the DMV
- *Intimidated by the process; don't feel confident* – take your time, have someone help you
- *Afraid to make the wrong choice* – if you make a mistake when you cast your ballot, you can ask for a new one; you can take someone into the polling booth with you or choose to vote at home and you can take your time with someone to help you
- *No interest for politics /Don't care* – what are the issues in your community that you care about? They are affected by voting.
- *Hard to get adequate information ; Voter's guide is overwhelming; Props are not explained* – use the *Easy Voter Guide*
- *Not registered* – it's easy to sign up if you are eligible; just fill out the form (or have someone help you) and mail it in; it doesn't even need a stamp.
- *Not a U.S. citizen* – if you are becoming a citizen, it's helpful to follow the issues. You can also tell your family/friends who are citizens how you feel
- *Don't understand the process and the issues* – this workshop should have helped with that; you can also go to [www.easyvoter.org](http://www.easyvoter.org) for more information
- *No candidate I care about/Don't agree with candidates* – elections have ballot measures besides the candidates (plus, you can vote against a candidate you disagree with the most)
- *No childcare* – take your children to the polls with you (start a good habit early) or vote by mail
- *Can't get away from work* – vote by mail or vote on the way to or from work (your polling place is open 7am to 8pm); also, your workplace is required *by law* to allow you time to go vote
- *Friends think voting is stupid* – if they're really your friends, they will respect that you are doing something about the issues you care about

## APPENDIX #2

Deciding how many pieces of paper to use in Section IV:

Number in Workshop	First Cut	Second Cut	Third Cut	Who is left standing
	People Not Eligible to Vote	Eligible Voters Who Don't Register	Registered But Didn't Vote	People Who Voted
	# of Pink Paper	# of Blue Paper	# of Yellow Paper	# of Orange Paper
10-12	1	3	3	4
13-15	1	4	4	5
16-18	2	5	4	6
19-21	2	6	5	7
22-24	2	7	6	8
25-27	3	7	6	10
28-30	3	8	7	11
31-33	3	9	8	12
34-36	4	9	9	13
37-39	4	10	10	14
40-42	4	11	11	15

Note: 36% of eligible Californians voted in November 2002

## APPENDIX #3

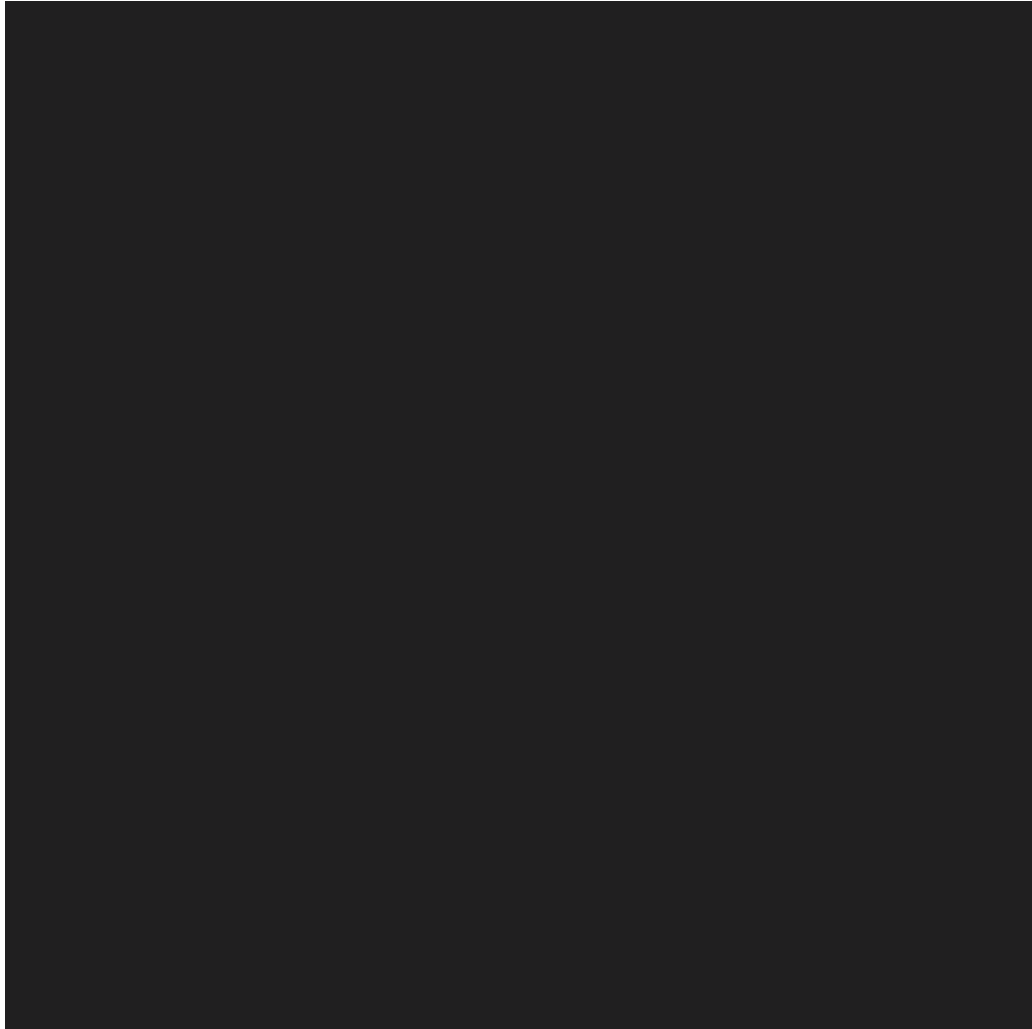
Partisan versus nonpartisan: what are the different ways you can get information about the candidates and issues? Here are some examples:

PARTISAN	NONPARTISAN
Gives opinions, may try to convince you how to vote	Gives facts; does not take sides
Newspaper editorial or “commentary”	Newspaper article
Campaign advertisement on TV or in mail	Sample Ballot
Family and friends	Official Voter Information Guide
Endorsements from groups you trust	<i>Easy Voter Guide</i>
“Slate” mailers with a list of endorsements	Candidate’s voting record (e.g. see Project Vote Smart at <a href="http://www.vote-smart.org">www.vote-smart.org</a> )

Note that a way of getting information – like “television” or “the internet” – can be either partisan or nonpartisan depending on the source.

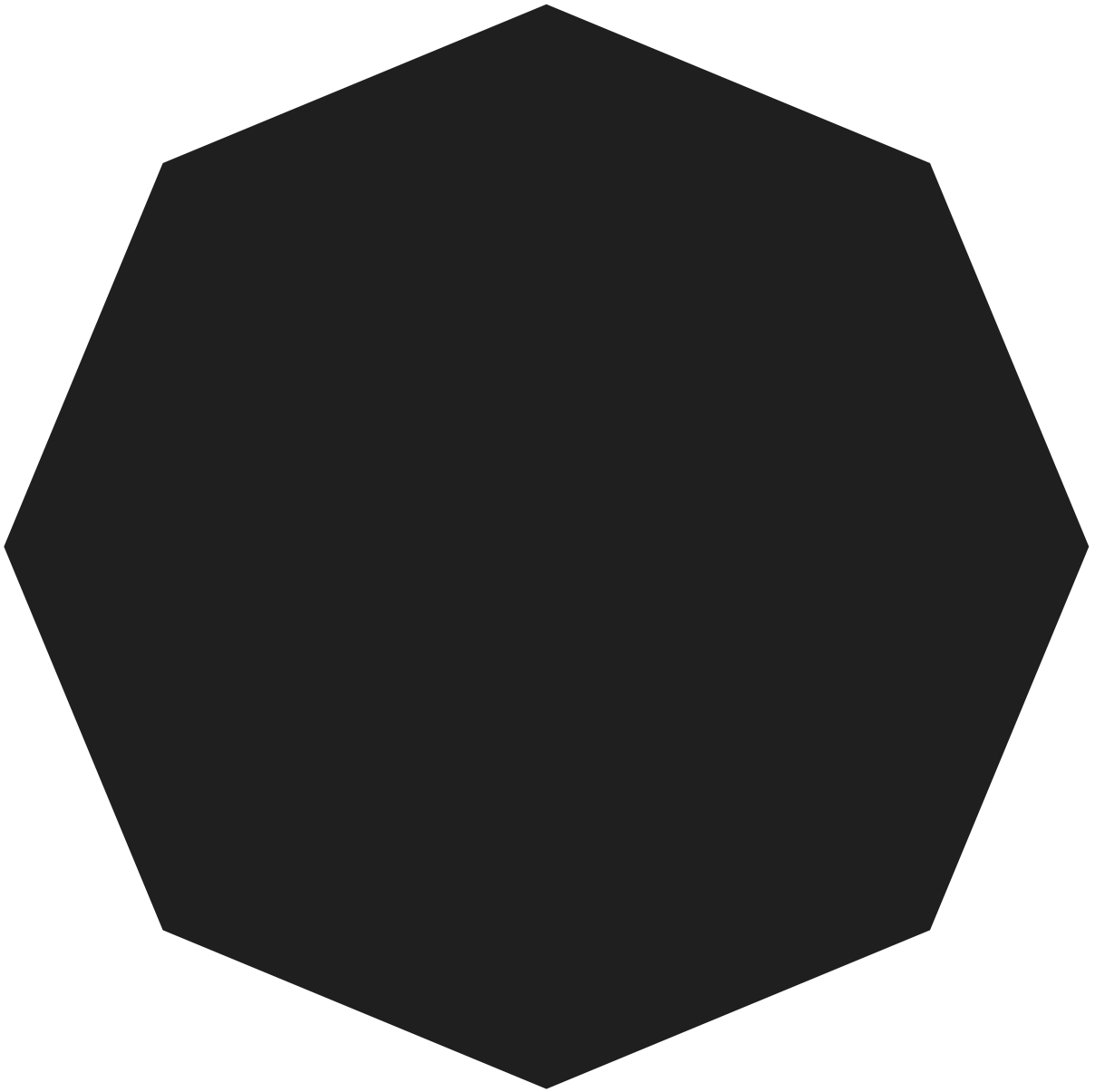


# Natural Law





**Peace and  
Freedom**





**American  
Independent**





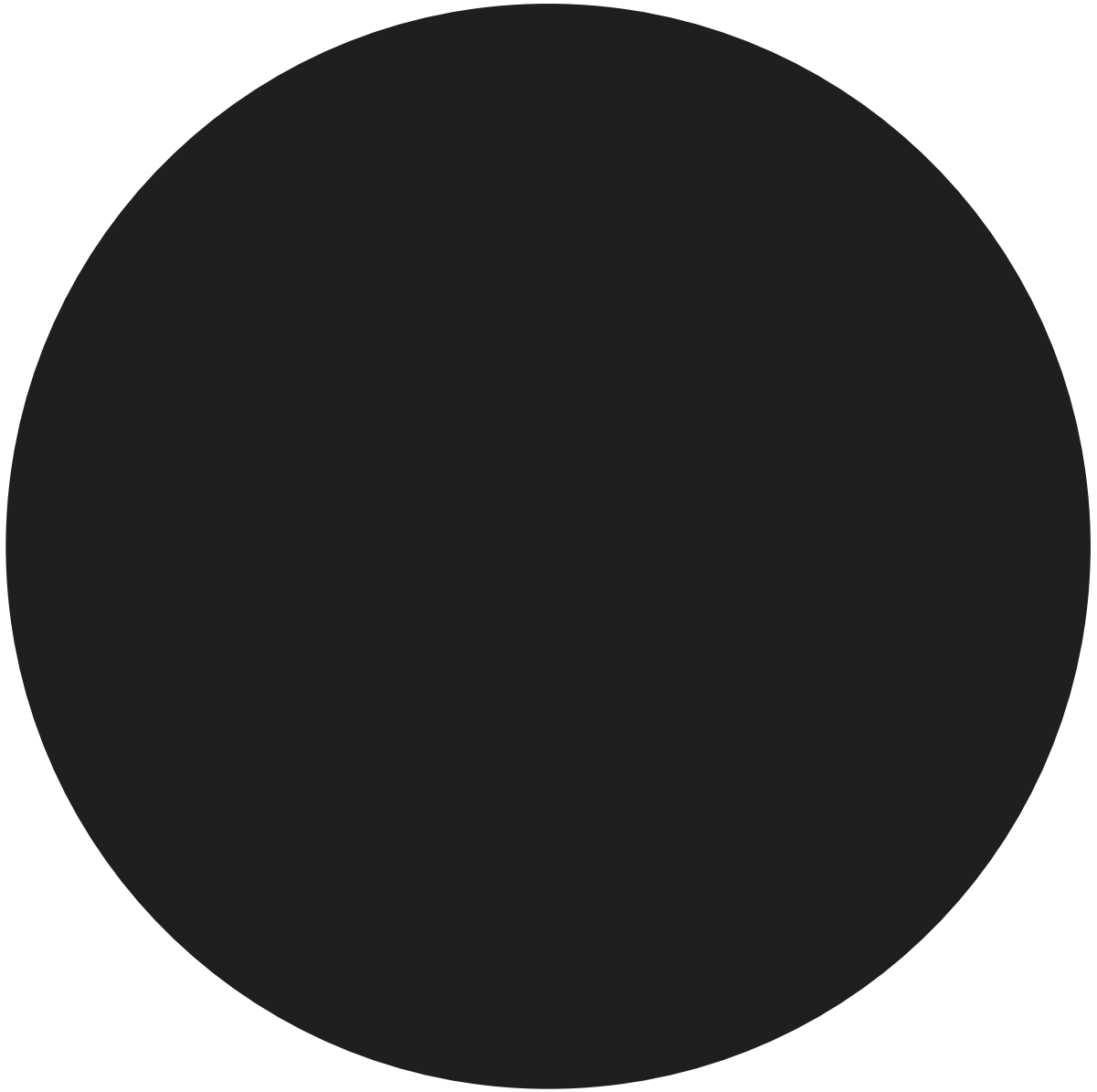


**Green**



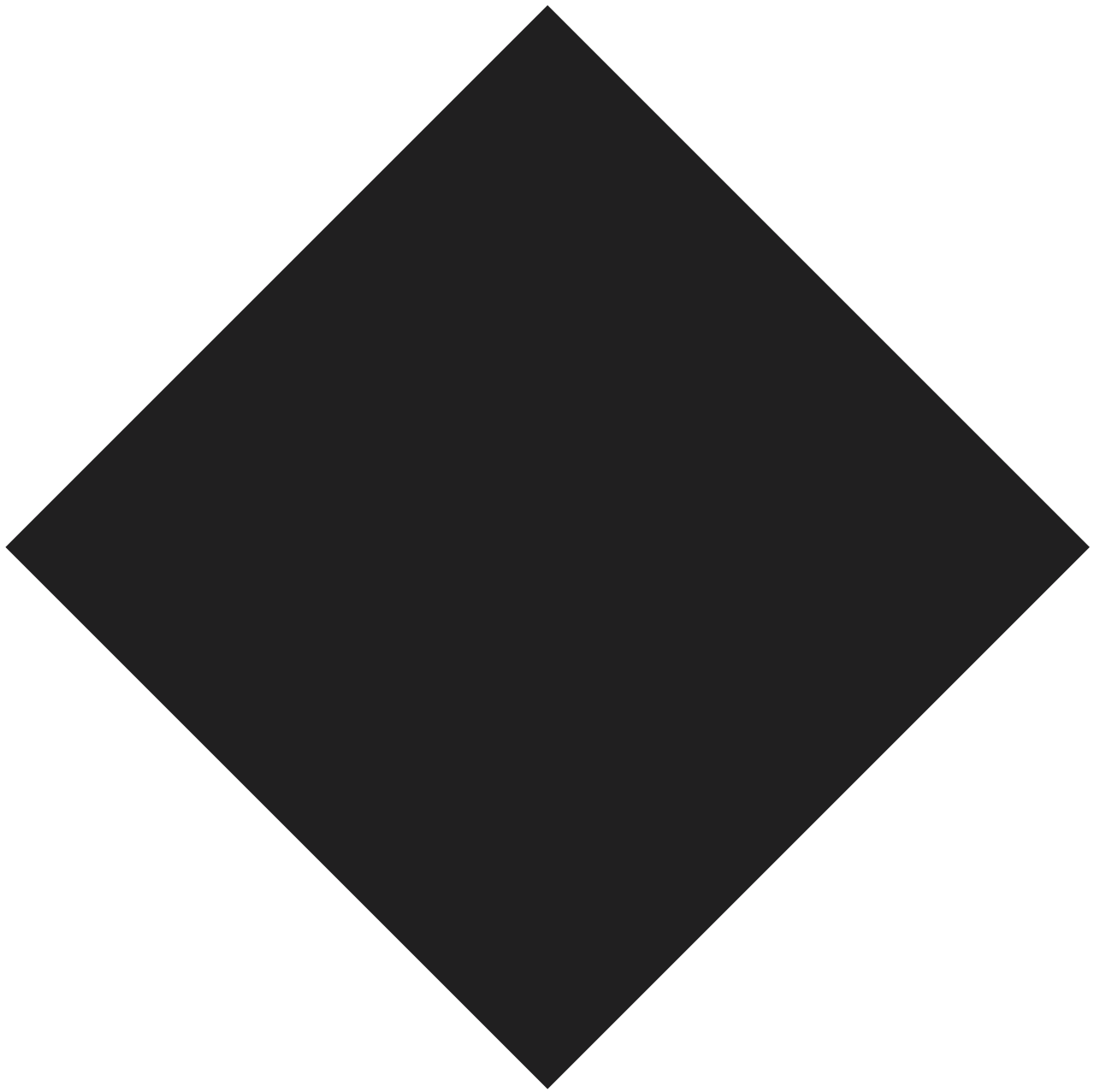


**Republican**





**Democrat**





**Libertarian**





**(Decline to  
State)**

