



# party

*It is true that for many people, watching a political debate is probably far from their first choice of activities. However, watching a debate can be a really great experience for people of all ages to engage in the political process! Debate watch parties are events designed to get your peers talking about the candidates and issues. The idea is simply a way to get small groups together in living rooms, community centers, schools, libraries, and other venues to watch political debates and discuss them. While planning your own debates, forums, or candidate fairs can be great voter education opportunities, they do require extensive preparation and planning. Debate watch parties are a good compromise; you still get to hear directly from the candidates and get a chance to discuss what you've heard, but they are much more informal and easier to organize!*



## **PLAN YOUR PARTY**

*A few weeks before your event, secure a location for it. You can have the event at someone's house or at a public venue like a library or community recreation center. Just make sure the venue has a TV and plenty of comfortable seating for viewing the debate.*

*One to two weeks before the debate invite neighbors, colleagues, friends, and peers to your event. Send a presidential themed e-vite to let friends know about the party.*

*Presidential debates are broadcast widely on television and should be available in nearly all areas. Statewide and more local races are regularly available on local news stations or public access television. Most news channels will advertise scheduled debates but if you are unsure when debates are airing, the participating campaigns will be able to point you the right direction as well!*



## **EVENT LOGISTICS**

*Arrive early to set up for the event. Be sure that all the proper technology is working properly, and arrange seating so that everyone will be able to see the television easily.*

*Create a patriotic atmosphere by decorating with red, white, and blue.*

*Before the fun begins and while guests are arriving, ask trivia questions about the candidates to test their knowledge.*

*Have beverages and snacks available. You can also turn your debate watch party into a potluck by asking attendees to bring snacks or beverages.*

*Consider making nametags for participants, especially if it is likely that group members won't know each other.*



## DISCUSS

*As soon as the debate ends, turn the television off and take a short break for refreshments.*

*Explain that this is a discussion and that there is no right or wrong answers; they are there to share their reactions and to learn from one another. Consider starting off the discussion with a brief period where everyone introduces themselves and explains their interests or why they decided to come to the event.*

*Your discussion can really take whatever shape the group wants to follow. It is a good idea to have a set of questions prepared in advance, but don't be afraid to let the group steer the conversation.*

*Move on to a new question when the conversation is waning or comments are getting repeated. However keep in mind that some people like to take a little more time than others before they respond.*

*Be sure to give everyone an opportunity to talk. Everyone should have an equal voice in the discussion, so be sure the conversation isn't dominated by one or two individuals.*

## sample questions

*What role does politics/policy play in your everyday life?*

*What were your expectations of the debate? Were they met?*

*What did you learn about the candidates or issues that you didn't know before watching the debate?*

*How, if at all, did the press coverage of previous debate(s) influence your attitudes about the candidates or the issues in this debate?*

*Did the debate influence your attitudes about the issues or the candidates?*

*Were there any issues of interest that were not discussed during the debate?*

*How do the issues that were raised in the debate affect you?*

*How can you influence the issues at the local, state, or national levels?*