GIS: US Election 2000

Summary

This lesson allows students to explore many variables which play a role in the 2000 election process: racial and ethnic composition of the voting age population by state, voter registration and actual voting history by state, electoral votes by state, and political party composition of both the House of Representatives and of the Senate by state.

Materials

ArcView 2.1 or above for Windows or Macintosh installed and operating, with one computer per two to four students

Student Activity Pages from this document, one per student

blank U.S. outline maps, one per student

U.S. Time Zone map

contents of "Y2KELECT" directory

"lsn_el00.pdf" document

"elect_00.apr" ArcView project

\data\states: 50 states plus D.C. from ArcView sample data

\data\vote0011.dbf: database file of the projected voting-age populations as of November 2000 per state, by state, age group, sex, race, and Hispanic origin, from data published by the U.S. Bureau of the Census (http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/voting.html)

\data\vote00.dbf: database file of the Electoral College votes, and voting tabulations for 1992, 1994, and 1996 from data published by the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration and the Bureau of the Census

\data\elect00.dbf: database file of the composition of U.S. Senate and U.S. House, state by state, by political party (http://www.senate.gov/senators/) and (http://clerkweb.house.gov/106/mbrcmtee/members/mbrsstate/Unoflmbr.htm)

Intended Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this activity, students will:

be able to identify states with large numbers of electoral votes

be able to describe some recent voting history patterns in the US

be able to identify some particularly strong age groups or racial/ethnic groups in surrounding states

be able to provide some "ballpark" predictions for home state voter participation and results from Congressional and Senate races.

Instructional Procedures

PROCEDURES:

Teacher: Ask students to identify some factors which they believe have affected Presidential campaign strategies. What prompts candidates to visit particular states or pay attention to special issues in particular states? Suggestions: total population, state voting patterns, particularly close or important congressional races. Have the students identify on their own maps the ten states to which they feel Presidential candidates might have been paying most attention.

Teacher: Have students move into their groups and seek consensus about the states being courted by the Presidential candidates. If appropriate, ask students to identify the states using 2-

character postal codes.

Teacher: Have students engage ArcView and load ELECT_00.APR project on each computer. The project opens to display one view, one chart, and one table. (Macintosh users may have to re-position the table.)

Teacher and students: Follow the activities of the STUDENT ACTIVITY PAGE. The activity asks students to do some speculation, some guided exploration, some analysis, and some unguided exploration. It is important for students to "follow the script" where it is specific, in the early stages of the activity.

Teacher: Coordinate their exploration to highlight other class activities. This may mean extending the activity over multiple days, spending more time on particular steps or engaging in debate because of some of the interpretations of the data involved.

Extensions

Explore the detail of local elections for various states as available from the USA Today's web site "http://www.usatoday.com/news/politics/campfront.htm"

Create a table of election results and compare the voter participation patterns and party strength with previous patterns.

Assessment Plan

Distribute the empty U.S. maps and have students identify eight of the top states with the largest number of electoral votes.

Have students write a single summary sentence which explains the spatial pattern they noticed which describes voter participation.

Have students indicate with R/D/X whether your state and surrounding states have a Senate seat up for election.

Have students write a paragraph summarizing the relationship of time zones and news media's reporting, focusing on potential impact on western voters from early reporting of eastern results.

Bibliography

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Utah LessonPlans