Thank you for participating in the League of Women Voters’ series on the 2012 presidential election. It’s never too late to dive in and start learning more about your local, state and national governments. We hope that you will vote if you are registered to vote, and that you will share your knowledge with others.

**THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE**

As the election approaches, speculation increases about which ticket will reach the magic 270 electoral votes needed for a victory.

The Electoral College is an indirect method for electing the president that was established by the Founding Fathers as a compromise between letting Congress or the people elect the president. The Constitution authorizes each state to appoint a number of electors equal to the number of representatives and senators that they have in Congress for a total of 535 electors; the 23rd Amendment added three electors for the District of Columbia, bringing the total to 538. A majority is reached at 270 electoral votes.

Most states — all but Maine and Nebraska — award all of their electoral votes to the winner of the state’s popular vote. When the people of Washington state vote, we are, in effect, instructing the Washington state electors to cast all 12 electoral votes for the winner of Washington’s popular vote.

Normally, on the morning after the general election, the entire country knows who the next president will be. But the election results are not official until after the electors cast their votes in each state in December. Results are announced when Congress convenes in January.

Finally, at noon on January 20, the term of the preceding president ends and that of the incoming president begins. After being sworn in by the chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, the new president is on the job. The American people have made their choice and are looking for the president to prove them right.

**MAIL-IN BALLOT TIPS**

Read the ballot, envelope and voters’ pamphlet carefully.

- Sign the declaration on the back of the return envelope.
- Do not put multiple ballots in one envelope.
- Vote early, so there will be time to work out any problems.
- If mailing your ballot on Election Day, check the pickup times to avoid missing the last pickup.

Mailing a ballot requires a first-class stamp. To return your ballot without a stamp, use a drop box or van. For drop box locations in King County, go to http://1.usa.gov/N7yVT0. Look up elections offices outside of King County at http://bit.ly/P3TjaS.

For short how-to videos, go to http://1.usa.gov/Qhv8Du.

Lost or damaged ballot? Questions? In King County, call 206-296-VOTE (8683). Look up elections offices outside of King County at http://bit.ly/P3TjaS.


If you mail your ballot, it must be postmarked by Election Day, Nov. 6. Thousands of ballots were LATE in 2010! Check the mailbox collection time so this won’t happen to yours. Even better, vote early.

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