

# You and the U.S.



## In The News:



Every four years the people of the United States choose a President. An election takes place on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. In 2012, Americans will go to the polls on **November 6th**. But the election process begins nearly ten months earlier! [Read more ...](#)

## Coming Up:

**Martin Luther King Day** will next be celebrated on **16th January 2012** in the US. Dr Martin Luther King Jr. was a leader of the civil rights movement in the U.S., which meant that he hoped that black people and white people would begin to live together peacefully, with equal rights for all. [Read more ...](#)

## You Want To Know:

How The Groundhog Got Its Day. [Let's find out ...](#)

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It takes a lot of work and many months to be elected President of the United States of America and it all begins on January 3<sup>rd</sup> 2012 when the state of Iowa holds its **caucus**. A week later, New Hampshire's **primary** takes place. But, what is a caucus? What is a primary? **Here are some useful words to help you!**

**ballot** - a list of people trying to get elected

**campaign** - when people act together to try to get a candidate elected to a job

**candidate** - a person who is trying to get elected

**caucus** - a meeting that happens in some states to choose candidates for the political party's convention (only members of the political party can go to these meetings)

**convention** - meeting where a political party chooses their candidate

**debate** - a formal meeting where the candidates discuss and argue about the things that they think are important . Debates are on television in the U.S.

**Democrat** - someone who belongs to the Democratic Party

**Democratic Party** - one of the two major political parties in the U.S. The party color is **BLUE** and the party symbol is the **DONKEY**

**election** - when people choose the person they want to do the job

**electoral votes** - the number of votes each state has (based on the number of people who live in that state)

**political party** - people who share similar political beliefs and ideas

**polling station** - place where people vote

**primary** - an election that happens in some states to choose candidates for the political party's convention (only members of the party can vote in these elections)

**Republican** - someone who belongs to the Republican Party

**Republican Party** - one of the two major political parties in the U.S. The party color is **RED** and the party symbol is the **ELEPHANT**

**running mate** - a candidate who is running with another candidate

**term** - amount of time someone is elected for

## MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was born in Atlanta, Georgia, on January 15<sup>th</sup> 1929.

He dedicated his life to achieving equality and justice for all Americans of all colors. Dr. King believed that peaceful and non-violent refusal to obey unjust and discriminatory laws was the best way to bring about social change in the U.S.

Dr. King, who was also an ordained Baptist church minister, is rightly considered to be one of the greatest orators in American history.

Throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s, Dr. King led black American men, women and children in boycotts, on marches, and sit-ins to demand equal treatment under the law and an end to racial prejudice. Dr. King was arrested for this several times, and even served time in jail. But he never backed down in his stand against injustice and racism.

The high point of the **civil rights movement** came on August 28, 1963, when more than 200,000 people of all races gathered in front of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., to hear Dr. King speak these stirring words:

*"I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slaveholders will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood....I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character."*

Not long after this historic speech, the U.S. Congress passed laws prohibiting discrimination in voting, education, employment, housing, and public accommodations. Dr. King himself was awarded the **Nobel Peace Prize** in 1964.

The world was shocked when Dr. King was assassinated in 1968.

Ever since, special memorial services have marked his birthday on **January 15**. By vote of Congress, the third Monday of every January, beginning in 1986, is now a federal holiday in Dr. King's honor.

## How the Groundhog Got Its Day

The lowly **groundhog**, also called a **woodchuck**, is the only mammal to have a day named in his honor. The groundhog's day is **February 2**. It's not a legal holiday, so nobody gets a day off work or school. But still, to have a day named after you is quite an achievement. So, how did the groundhog come by this honor?



It stems from the ancient belief that hibernating creatures were able to predict the **arrival of springtime** by their emergence from their **dens and burrows**. In Europe it was a hedgehog that was watched with hope that he'd not see his shadow. When settlers arrived in America, there were no hedgehogs to be found. So they adopted the groundhog as the **New World's weather forecaster**.

The groundhog was chosen because it wintered underground like the hedgehog and because the Native Americans in the region respected the animal greatly. They considered the groundhog to be a wise and sensible animal.

**Traditionally**, the groundhog is supposed to awaken on **February 2, Groundhog Day**, and come up out of his burrow. If he sees his **shadow**, he will return to the burrow for six more weeks of **Winter**. If he doesn't see his shadow, he remains outside and starts his year, because he knows that **Spring** has arrived early.

In the U.S., the "official" groundhog lives in a burrow in the town of **Punxsutawney**, in the state of Pennsylvania. Every February 2, amid noisy celebrations early in the morning, "**Punxsutawney Phil**", as the groundhog is called, is ceremoniously pulled from his den by his keeper, who wears a special top hat and tail coat for the occasion. Punxsutawney Phil then whispers his **weather prediction** into the ear of his keeper, who then announces it to the anxiously-awaiting crowd.



Of course, this is all just for show, because Punxsutawney Phil's keeper has already secretly decided what the little creature's weather forecast will be before he even wakes him up. But it's still a lot of fun and Groundhog Day remains a much loved tradition in the U.S.

Besides, Spring always begins on or near March 21, so whether the groundhog decides to go back to sleep in his den or remain above ground, we will all have to wait at least six more weeks anyway!