



## Who Influences You?????



### **Brainstorm.....**

When you have an important decision to make, who or what helps you to decide?

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### **Think About It.....**

During the time leading up to the presidential election, every American citizen needs to make a decision about which candidate will get his or her vote. There are many people, situations, and factors that will influence this decision and we need to be aware of how they affect our thinking.

An important term to consider as you think about these influences is "**bias.**" When something that we read or hear about is **biased**, that means **it is presented in a slanted manner to purposefully encourage the audience to believe or react in a certain way.** For example, a commercial on TV is trying to persuade the consumer to buy a product, so the information is presented in a way designed to influence the viewer to do this. As you read over different factors that might influence the voter, think about whether they are presented in a biased manner.

### **Influential Factors....**

- The candidates themselves and their stands on important issues are factors. As they campaign, the candidates present a certain image to the voter. Issues are shared through public appearances, speeches, debates, and media, such as newspaper and magazine articles, television and radio shows and advertisements.
- Party affiliation is another possible reason for a voter's choice. Candidates align themselves with political parties that take positions on certain issues. In our country the Republican Party generally takes a more conservative stand on issues, whereas the Democratic Party is more likely to be more open-minded to consider changes to existing policies. Both parties promote their candidates and have their own websites, which serve to influence the voter. The Reform Party and other independent candidates also present their views and can influence voting choices.
- The opinions of family and friends can be important in deciding to some voters. People who are important in our lives can be very influential in our thinking and decisions can be made based on their ideas and views.
- The media's increasing presence in our society can have impact on voters' decisions. The amount of bias presented through media depends upon the format. Television and radio advertisements are obviously created to persuade. News reports present the facts, although there is debate over the possibility of bias existing in the way some news companies present this information. The audience needs to consider the information presented and be aware of this possibility.

An informed voter gets information from a variety of sources. By gathering the information and carefully considering its value, you can make a confident decision.

