What is Law Day?
In 1961, Congress passed a joint resolution designating May 1 as the national day set aside to celebrate the rule of law. Law Day underscores how law and the legal process contribute to the freedoms that all Americans share.

What is the 2014 theme?
“American Democracy and the Rule of Law: Why Every Vote Matters.” This theme calls on every American to reflect on the importance of a citizen’s right to vote and the challenges we still face in ensuring that all Americans have the opportunity to participate in our democracy. For more information on the theme, see www.LawDay.org

Why is the theme important?
The right to vote is the very foundation of government by the people. For this reason, striving to establish and protect every citizen’s right to vote has been a central theme of American legal and civic history. Much of the struggle for voting rights began decades ago, but the work is far from complete, and a citizen’s right to cast a ballot remains at risk today.

Prepared by Rachel E. Marshall, Public Education & Community Outreach Administrator
U.S. Courts, Thomas F. Eagleton U.S. Courthouse, St. Louis, Missouri

See www.MOED.uscourts.gov or www.JudicialLearningCenter.org for a PDF version of this packet
Activity for ELEMENTARY students

Grade Level: K-5

Suggested Time: 30-40 minutes

A. Theme: American Democracy and the Rule of Law: Why Every Vote Matters

B. Main Points:
   • Voting is a fair way to make decisions.
   • When you vote, your opinion matters.
   • America uses elections so that citizens can give their input and have their voices heard.

C. Focus Questions:
   • What is voting, and how does it work?
   • Why is it fair?
   • How can voting be used to make decisions in the classroom?
   • How is voting used to make decisions for the city, state, and country?
   • Who can vote in America?

D. Activity Summary: This activity will introduce basic ideas about the importance of voting as a fair way to make group decisions. The presenter will engage the group in a brief introductory discussion, and will read aloud from a story book about voting.

E. Supply List:
   • Story book – “If I Ran for President”
   • Guide sheet for reading story book
   • Optional tally sheet and coloring sheets

F. Step-by-Step Procedure:
   a. Ask – If you had to choose, do you prefer to use crayons or colored pencils when you work on art projects?
   b. Say – Raise your hand if you prefer crayons. Count the hands.
   c. Say – Raise your hand if you prefer colored pencils. Count the hands and declare a winner.
   d. Ask – What is this called? (voting)
   e. Direct students to imagine you can only have one or the other in the classroom.
      i. Ask – Do you think voting is a fair way to decide which one?
      ii. Why or why not?
      iii. Are there other ways to make the decision?
      iv. Ask for one or two volunteers to name other decisions at school that could be made fairly by taking a vote.
   f. Ask - Does anyone know how voting is used to make decisions for the city, state, and country? Give an example of an election for president or other government official if a hint is needed.
   g. Introduce the story book by holding it up. Instruct the group to please pay attention as you read.
      i. Read the story out loud.
      ii. Use suggested talking points from the guide sheet as appropriate.
   h. Make summary points – Voting is a very important part of living in America. We have the right to vote, so that our voice will be heard. We also have the responsibility to vote, so that our government can continue to work. All citizens have the right to vote once they turn 18.
G. EXTENSION IDEAS FOR ELEMENTARY TEACHERS:

Hold a classroom election. Students can campaign, see attached blank campaign posters. Use the attached tally sheet to count votes and declare a winner.

Schedule time for your students to read “If I Ran for President” to younger students.

Assign research reports on famous people who played a part in the struggle for voting rights. Examples include: Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Representative John Lewis, etc.

Assign an art project with theme of voting or elections.

Ask students to interview an adult about voting and report back to the class.

H. RESOURCES FOR ELEMENTARY TEACHERS:

Law Day 2014
www.lawday.org

The U.S. Courts Law Day page
www.uscourts.gov/educational-resources/get-inspired/annual-observances/law-day.aspx

The Judicial Learning Center in St. Louis
www.JudicialLearningCenter.org

Kids Voting Missouri
www.kidsvotingmissouri.org

Project Vote Smart
votesmart.org/education/classroom#.U0RKtlea9PM

iCivics (“Cast Your Vote” game, plus many resources for teachers)
www.icivics.org

http://bensguide.gpo.gov/

Scholastic Lesson Plans (search for “voting”) 
www.scholastic.com/teachers/lesson-plans/free-lesson-plans

I. Attachments

- Book guide sheet
- Tally sheet
- Coloring sheets (from www.LawDay.org)
BOOK GUIDE SHEET
If I Ran for President
By Catherine Stier, Illustrated by Lynne Avril

15-20 minutes

Introduction – Hold up the book and say the title and author out loud. Ask if anyone has ever thought of running for President?

The first page is a good description for older students (grades 4-5)
It should be skipped for grades K-1
It should be summarized, or skipped, for grades 2-3

Summary of first page –
Our country has only a few requirements for someone to be president.
  - Must be 35 years old or older
  - Must be a natural born citizen of the United States
  - Must have lived in the country for at least 14 years
Elections for President and Vice-President are in November, every four years
These rules are set by the Constitution of the United States

As you read, hold the book up and ad lib questions about the illustrations.
Ask students to notice things on the pages, and possibly comment.

EXAMPLES –
On the page with kids at Mt. Rushmore, ask if someone can name a former President?
On page with large question mark and dog, ask if anyone in the class thinks they could do the job?
On page showing the crowd at the convention, ask the students if they have an idea for the country, or a “platform”?

And so on....

For grades K-1, and possibly grade 2, skip the two lengthy pages
  - page about caucuses and primaries, with candidate shaking hands
  - page about the convention, skip the text on the left hand side about the convention, but include the text right about your “platform” if you’d like
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On election day people vote at voting booths on paper ballots or at machines.