

# A power shift in Australia

Labor candidate Kevin Rudd defeated incumbent John Howard to become Australia's next prime minister.

## BASIC

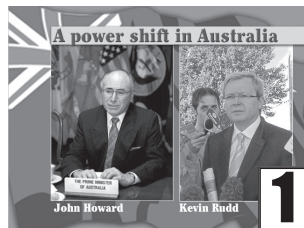
These two men were candidates to become the next leader, or prime minister, of a country very far away. **Who can name it? (Australia.) Where is Australia?** (*The South Pacific Ocean.*) The challenger, Kevin Rudd, defeated John Howard, who has been Australia's prime minister for more than 10 years. In some ways, Australia's elections are very different from American elections. For one thing, the campaign only lasted six weeks, compared to American presidential campaigns that can last more than a year. **Which way do you think is better? Why?**

## GENERAL

On November 24, Australia held its national elections. **Where in the world is Australia?** (*In the South Pacific Ocean.*) Challenger Kevin Rudd defeated Prime Minister John Howard, who has held that title since 1996. Australia's two main political parties are the Labor Party and the Liberal Party. The outgoing Prime Minister John Howard is a member of the Liberal Party, and Kevin Rudd is a member of the Labor Party. On many issues, Australia's Liberal Party is in line with President Bush and his political party in the United States. **Which political party does President Bush belong to?** (*Republican.*) Now that Kevin Rudd and the Labor Party are in charge, Australia is expected to part ways with President Bush on some issues. **How do you think this will affect relations**

## ADVANCED

On November 24, Australia held its federal elections, including an election for the nation's prime minister. **Does anyone know who won the election?** (*Challenger Kevin Rudd defeated incumbent John Howard.*) Howard had held the office of prime minister since 1996. He was a member of the Liberal Party. In Australian politics, the Liberal Party favors the ideals of economic liberalism, such as a free market economy, lower taxes, and less regulation. Socially, however, the Liberal Party is conservative. The Labor Party in Australia describes itself as a social democratic party. Ideologically, Labor favors regulation and government programs to rectify perceived injustices caused by the free market system. Australia under Howard and the Liberal Party was a strong supporter of President Bush's foreign policy. With



Another difference is that in Australia, voting is compulsory. This means that every Australian citizen over 18 years old must vote. Anyone who doesn't vote is penalized and must pay a small fine of about \$20. **Do you think the United States should have a rule like this? Why or why not?** Let's take a look at what some of the biggest issues were in Australia's national election. NEXT

## between Australia and the U.S.?

There are a few big differences between Australian elections and American elections. One key difference is that Australian campaigns are much shorter than American campaigns. For example, the recent campaign for prime minister in Australia lasted only six weeks. In recent years, U.S. presidential campaigns have been getting longer and longer. **When is the next presidential election?** (*November 2008.*) **Do you think American presidential campaigns are too long? Why or why not?** Another difference between Australia's system and the American system is that voting in Australia is compulsory. This means that every Australian over 18 years old must vote, or pay a fine of about \$20. **Do you think this is a good system? Why or why not?** NEXT

the Labor Party coming to power, Australia is expected to distance itself from the U.S. on several key issues. **Which issues do you think these might be? How do you think this will affect international relations between the U.S. and Australia?**

There are a few marked differences between Australia's electoral system and the American system. For example, the campaign for Australia's recent federal elections lasted only six weeks, as compared to the U.S. current presidential race, which will last for well over a year. **Do you think a six-week campaign would work in the U.S.? Why or why not?** Another key difference is that in Australia, voting in federal elections is compulsory. Any eligible adult who doesn't vote faces a small fine. **What do you think are the pros and cons of compulsory voting?** NEXT