OUTLINE

- What Parties Do for Democracy
- A Brief History of American Political Parties
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Some years ago, a community college district in Los Angeles held a nonpartisan election for its trustees in which any registered voter could run if he or she paid the $50 filing fee and gathered 500 valid signatures on a petition. A total of 133 candidates ran, and each voter could cast up to seven votes in the election. Political parties were not allowed to nominate candidates, and party labels did not appear on the ballot to help orient voters to the candidates.

How did people vote in an election without parties? Candidates were listed alphabetically, and those whose names began with the letters A to F did better than those later in the alphabet. Being well known helped. Endorsements by the *Los Angeles Times* also influenced the outcome, as did campaigning by a conservative group. A Mexican American surname also helped. In this election, an important voting cue was absent: incumbency. Because the board of trustees was newly created, none of the candidates were incumbents. Candidates who are incumbents have an advantage because they are generally better known and have developed an identity related to the position by providing services or generating activity.[1]

Rarely do American voters face such unorganized and plentiful choices, because parties give structure to national and state elections. E. E. Schattschneider, a noted political scientist, once said, "The political parties created democracy, and modern democracy is

POLITICAL PARTIES
ESSENTIAL TO DEMOCRACY

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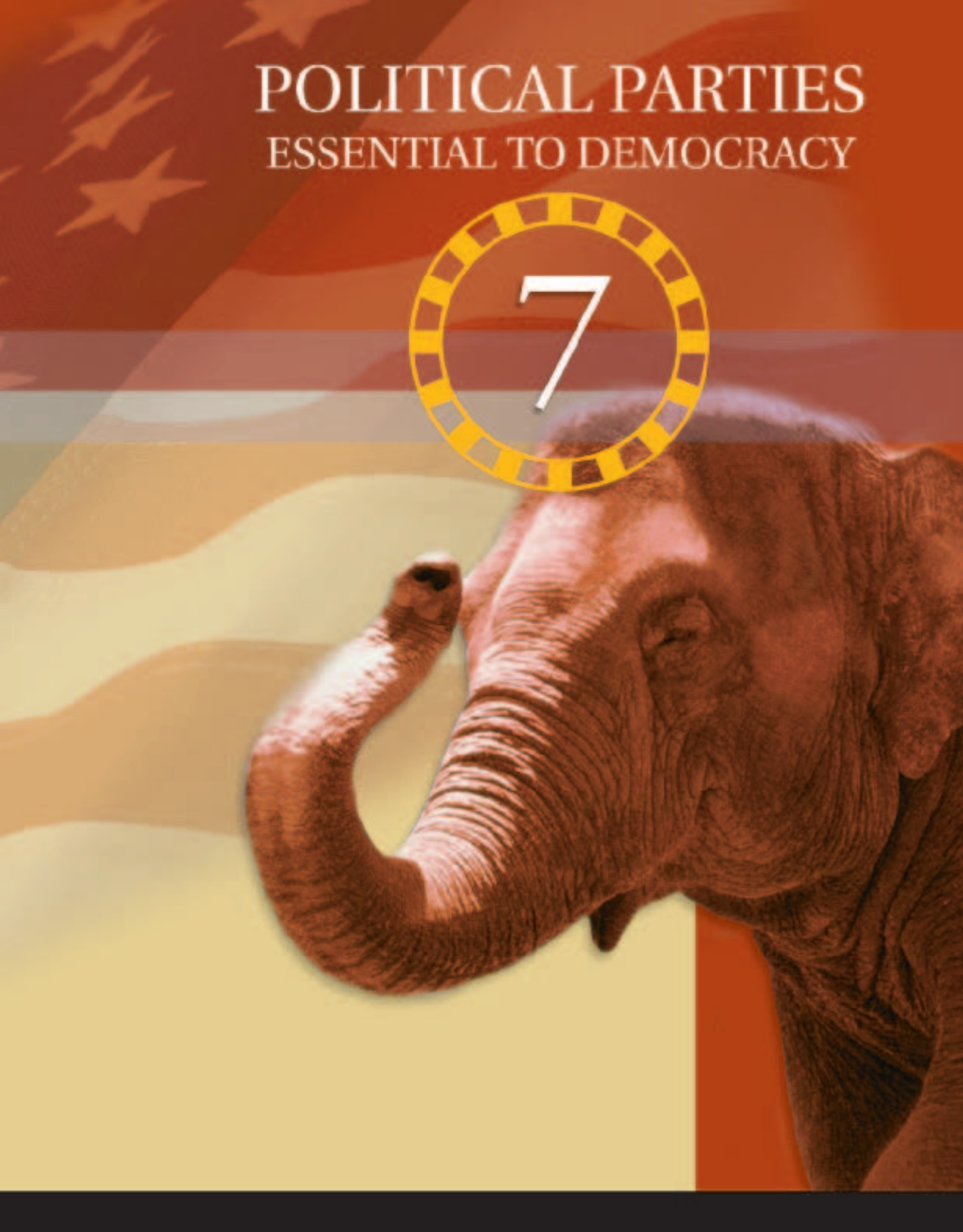


TIME LINE

POLITICAL PARTIES

1796	Thomas Jefferson guides creation of "Democratic-Republican party"
1824	First partisan realigning election, others in 1860 and 1896
1828	Andrew Jackson's election ushers in the first party based on popular support
1836	Martin Van Buren is the first Democrat to be elected president
1860	Abraham Lincoln is the first Republican to be elected president
1905	Wisconsin creates the first primary election
1912	Theodore Roosevelt's "Bull Moose party" splits the Republican vote—a Democrat is elected
1932	Last partisan realigning election
1948	Strom Thurmond creates States' Rights party to combat desegregation
1968	Democratic convention in Chicago is overrun by protests and riots
1971	Libertarian party is created
1984	Geraldine Ferraro is the first woman nominated as vice president by a major party
1992	Billionaire Ross Perot creates United We Stand, predecessor of the Reform party
1994	Republicans regain control of the House of Representatives for first time in 40 years
2002	Soft money for federal party committees banned by Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA)

unthinkable save in terms of the parties."[2] This provocative statement is true, but such a favorable evaluation of political parties runs counter to a long-standing and deep-seated American fear and distrust of them. Experience has taught us that free people create political parties to promote their own goals. Even though our founders hoped to discourage them, political parties quickly became an integral part of our political system.

Parties serve many functions, including the important one of narrowing the choices for voters.[3] They are both a consequence of democracy and an instrument of it. Parties need not be strong and cohesive like those in Britain and most European democracies, but there are few, if any, democratic systems that do not have political parties. Elections serve the vital task of deciding who can legitimately exercise political power, and parties are an integral part of making national and state elections work. We Americans take for granted the peaceful transfer of power from one elected official to another and from one party to another, yet in new democracies, the transfer of power following an election is often problematic. In such democracies, the holding of power may be more important than the principle of democratic competition. Well-established parties help stabilize democracy.

This chapter begins by examining the purposes parties serve that make them so vital to the functioning of democracy. We then examine the evolution of American political parties. Although American political parties have changed over time, they remain important in three different settings: as institutions, in government, and in the electorate. It is important to understand how parties facilitate democracy in all three settings. Finally, we turn to a discussion of the strength of parties today and the prospects for party reform and renewal.

WHAT PARTIES DO FOR DEMOCRACY

Party Functions

Political parties are organizations that seek political power by electing people to office so that their positions and philosophy become public policy. American political parties serve a variety of political and social functions, some obvious and some not so obvious. They perform some functions well and others not so well, and how they perform them differs from place to place and time to time.

political party
An organization that seeks political power by electing people to office so that its positions and philosophy become public policy.

ORGANIZE THE COMPETITION One of the most important functions of parties is to organize the competition by designating candidates to run under their label. Parties exist primarily as an organizing mechanism to win elections and thus win control of government. For some races, parties recruit and nominate candidates for office; they register and activate voters; and they help candidates by training them, raising money for them, providing them with research and voter lists, and enlisting volunteers to work for them.[4] For more visible contests, especially ones where there is a real chance of winning, multiple candidates often compete with each other for the nomination, often without party efforts to recruit them. Recently, campaign consultants rather than party officials have taken over some of these responsibilities; we explore this topic at some length in Chapter 10.[5]

The ability of parties to influence the selection of candidates varies by the type of nominating system used in the state. A few states use a *caucus* or *convention system,* which permits party leaders to play a role in the selection of nominees by placing their selection in the hands of people willing to attend party meetings called caucuses or conventions. Most people are not willing to invest this much time in a nomination process. Other states hold *primary elections* where voters cast ballots on who the party nominees should be. As more and more states turn to primary elections, the ability of party leaders to influence who runs under their party label is reduced. Candidates with little party experience but with well-known names or ample personal funds can often win in a primary over a person with a known track record of prior party service or success in a less visible office. New Jersey Senator Jon Corzine had never run for office and was not well known in the state before spending $60 million in his successful 2000 campaign. Not

all little-known, self-financed candidates win; in fact, they are often defeated. For example, Steve Forbes spent a combined $129 million in unsuccessful bids for the Republican presidential nomination in 1996 and 2000. Examples of former athletes who made successful candidates include Jim Bunning, a former baseball player and now Senator from Kentucky; Univeristy of Nebraska football coach Tom Osborne, now in the House of Representatives; and former NFL football player Jack Kemp, who served in the House of Representatives and was the Republican nominee for vice president in 1996.

A party's ability to organize the competition is also influenced by how states organize their ballots. In many states, candidates are listed in party columns—on a **party column ballot**—which makes it easier for voters to vote a *straight ticket* for all the party candidates. Straight-ticket voting is also more likely in voting systems that permit flipping one switch or punching one spot on the computer card to vote for all candidates from one party. Other states organize the ballot by office—the **office block ballot**—which makes straight-ticket voting harder. Even though many voters cast votes for candidates in more than one party, the party label of a candidate means something to most voters and is important in their voting decision.

Local and judicial elections in most states are **nonpartisan elections**, which means no party affiliation is indicated. Such systems make it more difficult for political parties to operate—precisely why many jurisdictions have adopted this reform. Proponents of nonpartisan local and judicial elections contend that party affiliation is not important to being a good judge or school board member. As with our example of the community college board at the beginning of this chapter, many voters in these nonpartisan elections rely more on how recognizable the name of a candidate is, or whether he or she now holds office (incumbency).

UNIFY THE ELECTORATE Parties are often accused of creating conflict, but they actually help unify the electorate and moderate conflict, at least within the party. There is a strong incentive in both parties to fight out their differences inside the party but then come together to take on the opposition. Moreover, in order to win elections, parties need to reach out to voters outside their party and gain their support. This action also helps unify the electorate, at least into the two large national political parties in our system.

Parties have great difficulty building coalitions on controversial issues like abortion or gun control. Not surprisingly, candidates and parties generally try to avoid defining themselves or the election in single-issue terms. Rather, they hope that if voters disagree with the party's stand on one issue, they will still support the party because they agree with it on other issues. Deemphasizing single issues in this way helps defuse conflict and unify the electorate.

HELP ORGANIZE GOVERNMENT Although political parties in the United States are not as cohesive as in some other democracies, parties are important when it comes to organizing our state and national governments. Congress is organized along party lines. The political party with the most votes in each chamber elects the officers of that chamber, selects the chair of each committee, and has a majority on all the committees. State legislatures, with the notable exception of Nebraska, are also organized along party lines. The 2004 election enlarged the Republican majorities in the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives. In the Senate, the GOP rose from 51 to 55 members, but this number remained below the number needed to override a filibuster. Republicans continued to control all committee chairs, but due to party rules, there was some rotation among Republicans. The Senate Judiciary Committee chairmanship, for example, switched in 2005 from Orrin Hatch (R.–Utah) to Arlen Specter (R.–Penn.).

The party that controls the White House, the governor's mansion, or city hall gets **patronage**, which means it can select party members as public officials or judges. Such appointments are limited only by civil service regulations that restrict patronage typically to the top posts, but these posts, which number about 4,000 in the federal government, are also numerous at the state and local levels. Patronage provides an incentive for people to become involved in politics and gives the party leaders and elected politicians loyal partisans in key positions to help them achieve their policy objectives. Patronage has declined dramatically over time in the United States.

party column ballot
Type of ballot that encourages party-line voting by listing all of a party's candidates in a column under the party name.

office block ballot
Ballot on which all candidates are listed under the office for which they are running, making split-ticket voting easier.

nonpartisan election
A local or judicial election in which candidates are not selected or endorsed by political parties and party affiliation is not listed on ballots.

patronage
The dispensing of government jobs to persons who belong to the winning political party.

TRANSLATE PREFERENCES INTO POLICY One of the great strengths of our democracy is that even the party that wins an election usually has to moderate what it does in order to win reelection. For that reason, public policy does not change dramatically with each election. Nonetheless, the party that wins the election has a chance to enact its policies and implement its campaign promises.

American parties have had only limited success in setting the course of national policy, especially when compared with countries with strong parties. The European model of party government, which has been called a *responsible party system,* assumes that parties discipline their members through their control over nominations and campaigns. Officeholders in such party-centered systems are expected to act according to party wishes or they will not be allowed to run again under the party label. Moreover, candidates run on fairly specific party platforms and are expected to implement those policies if they win control in the election.

Although we lack a European-type party system, most but not all Democrats in Congress vote together, as do most but not all Republicans. There are times, however, when a president of one party receives more congressional votes from the opposing party than from his own, as President Bill Clinton did in 2000 on legislation granting China permanent normal trade relations status with the United States.[6] And when the House passed the Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act of 2002, which President Bush wanted, nearly twice as many Democrats voted yes—182, compared to 92 yes votes from the Republicans.[7]

Because American parties do not control nominations, they are less able to discipline members who express views contrary to those of the party.[8] The American system is largely *candidate-centered;* politicians are nominated largely on the basis of their qualifications and personal appeal, not party loyalty. In fact, it is more correct to say that in most contests, we have *candidate* politics rather than *party* politics. As a consequence, party leaders cannot guarantee passage of their program, even if they are in the majority.

Even though parties cannot exert tight control over candidates, their ability to raise and spend money has had a significant influence. Through the 2002 election, parties played an important role in competitive federal elections through their **soft money** expenditures.[9] In the 2002 South Dakota Senate race, for example, the party committees and allied interest groups spent a combined $12 million, equaling what the two major party candiates spent in that race.[10]

The Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA), which took effect in the 2003–04 election cycle, abolished soft money donations to political parties at the federal level. Soft money consisted of contributions given to the political parties by individuals, corporations, labor unions, and political action committees (PACs) for "party-building" purposes that came to be used for candidate promotion. Because such contributions were unlimited, parties put a premium on raising them. The ads soft money paid for were often candidate centered and focused on themes important to that race.[11]

soft money
Money raised in unlimited amounts by political parties for party building purposes. Now largely illegal except for limited contributions to state or local parties for voter registration and get-out-the-vote efforts.

Political parties responded to the soft money ban by raising more of the limited **hard money** from individuals and political action committees. BCRA made this easier by raising the contribution limits for individuals from $1,000 to $2,000.[12] In an election cycle, an individual who wanted to give the maximum possible to candidates and parties could give $95,000, up from $50,000.[13] Both parties raised record-setting amounts of hard money in 2003–2004, surpassing what they had raised in hard and soft money combined in 1999–2000 or 2001–2002. Party hard money in 2004 was spent on a range of activities including get-out-the-vote efforts, contributions to candidates, and advertising. Parties are also allowed to contribute $5,000 of hard money to House candidates and $35,000 to Senate candidates per election cycle, and additional money in hard money coordinated expenditures. Political partes are also allowed to spend limited amounts of hard money on campaign activities that are coordinated with the candidate and in which the candidate pays part of the cost. Between 1996 and 2004, parties had scaled back their coordinated spending and contributions to candidates, instead focusing on soft money.

hard money
Political contributions given to a party, candidate, or interest group that are limited in amount and fully disclosed. Raising such limited funds is harder than raising unlimited funds, hence the term "hard" money.

Political parties also could spend unlimited amounts of hard money on **independent expenditures** for or against candidates. The Supreme Court gave parties and groups the same right to independent expenditures in a 1996 Supreme Court Decision,

independent expenditure
The Supreme Court has ruled that individuals, groups, and parties can spend unlimited amounts in campaigns for or against candidates as long as they operate independently from the candidates. When an individual, group, or party does so, they are making an independent expenditure.

Colorado Republican Federal Campaign Committee v. *FEC*.[14] In 2003–04, with soft money not an option and with more success in raising hard money, both parties made substantial independent expenditures. For example, in the 2004 special election in South Dakota, the two parties combined spent nearly $3 million, mostly in independent expenditures.[15]

PROVIDE LOYAL OPPOSITION Accountability in a democracy comes from the party out of power closely monitoring and commenting on the actions of the party in power. When national security issues are involved or the country is under attack, parties restrain their criticism, as the Democrats in Congress did for some time after September 11, 2001. There is usually a polite interval following an election—known as the **honeymoon**—after which the opposition party begins to criticize the party that controls the White House, especially when the opposition party controls one or both houses of Congress.[16] The length of the honeymoon depends in part on how close the vote was in the election, on how contentious the agenda of the new administration is, and on the leadership skills of the new president. Early success in enacting policy can prolong the honeymoon; mistakes or controversies can shorten it.

The Nomination of Candidates

From the beginning, parties have been the mechanism by which candidates for public office are chosen. The **caucus** played an important part in pre-Revolutionary politics. Elected officials organized themselves into groups or parties and together selected candidates to run for higher office, including the presidency. This method of nomination operated for several decades after the United States was established.

As early as the 1820s, however, charges of "secret deals" in "smoke-filled rooms" were made against this method. Moreover, it was not representative of people from areas where a party was in a minority or nonexistent, since only officeholders took part in the caucus. Efforts were made to make the caucus more representative of rank-and-file party members. The *mixed caucus* brought in delegates from districts in which the party had no elected legislators.

Then, during the 1830s and 1840s, a system of **party conventions** was instituted. Delegates, usually chosen directly by party members in towns and cities, selected the party candidates, debated and adopted a platform, and built party spirit by celebrating noisily. But the convention method soon came under criticism that it was subject to control by the party bosses and their machines.

To involve more voters and reduce the power of the bosses to pick party nominees, states adopted the **direct primary**, in which people could vote for the party's nominees for office. Primaries spread rapidly after Wisconsin adopted them in 1905—in the North as a Progressive era reform and in the South as a way to bring democracy to a region that had seen no meaningful general elections since the end of Reconstruction, due to one-party rule by the Democrats. By 1920, direct primaries were the norm for some offices in almost all states.

Today the direct primary is the typical method of picking party candidates. Primaries vary significantly from state to state. They differ in terms of (1) who may run in a primary and how one qualifies for the ballot; (2) whether the party organization can or does endorse candidates before the primary; (3) who may vote in a party's primary—that is, whether a voter must register with a party in order to vote; and (4) how many votes are needed for nomination—a plurality, a majority, or some other number determined by party rule or state law. The differences among primaries are not trivial; they have an important impact on the role played by party organization and on the strategy used by candidates.

In states with **open primaries**, any voter, regardless of party, can participate in whichever primary he or she chooses. This kind of primary permits **crossover voting**—Republicans and Independents helping determine who the Democratic nominee will be, and vice versa. Other states use **closed primaries**, in which only persons already registered in that party may participate. Some states, like Washington and California, experimented with *blanket primaries,* in which all voters could vote for any candidate, regardless of party. Blanket primaries permitted voters to vote for a candidate of one party for one office and for a candidate from another party for another office, something that is not

honeymoon
Period at the beginning of a new president's term during which the president enjoys generally positive relations with the press and Congress, usually lasting about six months.

caucus
A meeting of local party members to choose party officials or candidates for public office and to decide the platform.

party convention
A meeting of party delegates to vote on matters of policy and in some cases to select party candidates for public office.

direct primary
Election in which voters choose party nominees.

open primary
Primary election in which any voter, regardless of party, may vote.

crossover voting
Voting by a member of one party for a candidate of another party.

closed primary
Primary election in which only persons registered in the party holding the primary may vote.

permitted under either closed or open primaries. In 2000, the Supreme Court held that California's blanket primary violated the free association rights of political parties, in part because blanket primaries permit people who have "expressly affiliated with a rival" party to have a vote in the selection of a nominee from a different party.[17] In a detailed study of California's blanket primary, political scientists found that fewer than 5 percent of voters associated with one party actually voted for nominees from another party. More broadly, they concluded that the rules of a primary are important in determining the winner.[18]

Along with modern communications and fund-raising techniques, direct primaries have diminished the influence of leaders of political parties. Many critics believe that this change has had more undesirable than desirable consequences. Party leaders now have less influence over who gets to be the party's candidate, and candidates are less accountable to the party both during the election and after it.

Direct primaries are used to nominate most party candidates for most offices. Yet in some states, local caucuses choose delegates to attend regional meetings, which in turn select delegates to state and national conventions, where they nominate party candidates for offices. The Iowa presidential caucuses, in which 122,000 Iowans participated in 2004,[19] are highly publicized as the first important test of potential presidential nominees.[20]

In a few states, conventions still play a role in the nominating process for state and federal candidates. In Connecticut, for example, convention choices become the party nominees unless they are challenged. Candidates who attain at least 15 percent of the vote in the convention have an automatic right to challenge the winner at the convention, but they do not always exercise this right.[21] In Utah, if a candidate gets 60 percent of the delegate vote at the convention, there is no primary election vote for that office. Should no candidate reach 60 percent, only the top two candidates are listed on the primary ballot. In other states, convention nominees are designated as such on the primary ballot; they may or may not receive help from the party organization. Conventions are also used to invigorate the party faithful by enabling them to meet with their leaders.

In most states, candidates can get their names on the ballot as an Independent or minor party candidate by securing the required number of signatures on a nomination petition. This is hard to do, but it can be done, as Ross Perot demonstrated in 1992. He spent his own money to build an organization of volunteers who put his name on the ballot in all 50 states. Minor party gubernatorial candidates like the Minnesota Reform party's Jesse Ventura in 1998 or the Green party's presidential candidate Ralph Nader in

A precinct captain takes a head count during the caucus in Burlington, Iowa, on January 19, 2004. John Kerry easily won the precinct.

2000 secured their nominations as candidates of existing minor parties. Ralph Nader was on the ballot in 34 states and the District of Columbia as an independent candidate in 2004. Democrats successfully challenged his efforts to qualify for the ballot in Ohio, Arizona, and Pennsylvania. Some Republicans supported Ralph Nader's efforts to be on the ballot in more states, a move Democrats suspected was intended to draw support from John Kerry. Ballot access remains a major hurdle for minor party candidates.

Party Systems

Ours is a two-party system; most other democracies have a multiparty system. Although we have many minor parties, only the two major parties have much of a chance to win elections. Multiparty systems are almost always found in countries that have a parliamentary government, in contrast to our presidential system. This is, however, not always

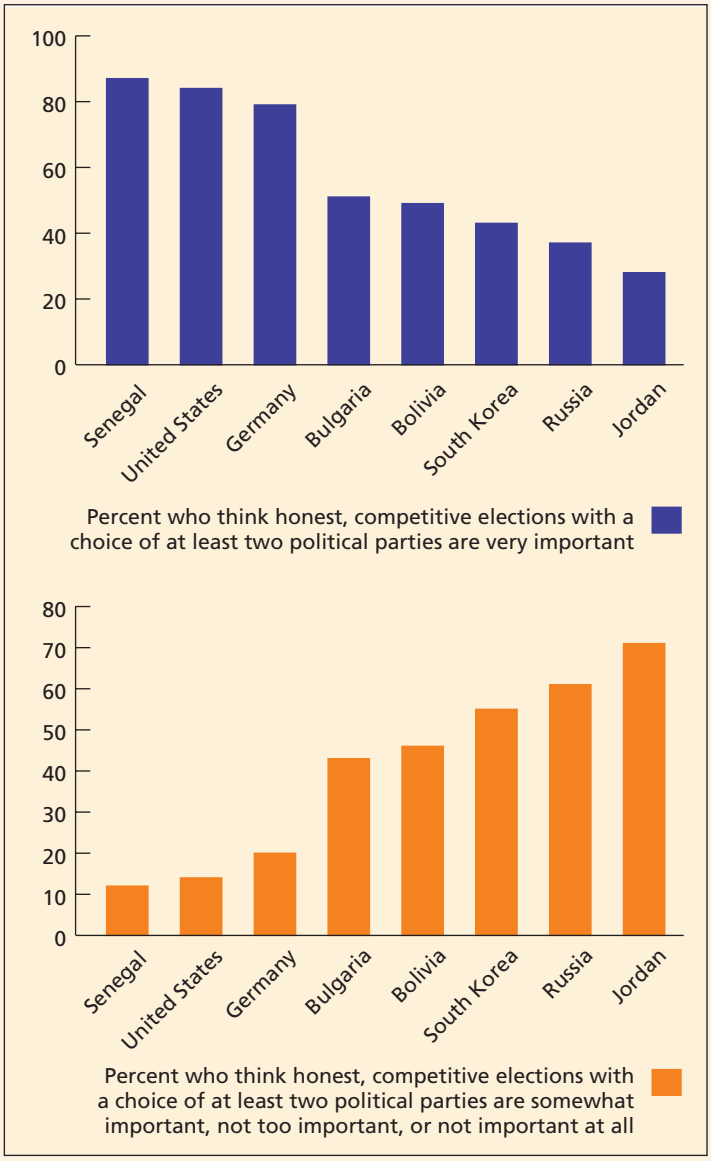
GLOBAL *Perceptions*

QUESTION: How important is it to you to live in a country where honest elections are held regularly with a choice of at least two political parties? Is it very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not important at all?

An idea that citizens of the United States take for granted, like the need for at least two political parties, is not seen as important in all countries. For example, in countries like Bolivia, South Korea, and Jordan, less than half of the public thinks having two parties is very important. In the United States, by contrast, 84 percent say having a choice between at least two parties is important.

In the Pew Global Attitudes Project, respondents were also asked how they felt about American ideas about democracy (see Chapter 1 box). In most cases the attitudes on one question predict the attitudes in the other. But in the Philippines, Turkey, Argentina, Brazil, and Pakistan, much higher proportions say "having two parties is important" than say they "like American ideas about democracy." In Turkey, for example, 75 percent think having two parties is very important but only 33 percent like American ideas about democracy. The reverse is true in Ghana, where 80 percent like American ideas about democracy but only 58 percent think having two parties is important. This reinforces the point that in the minds of people in some countries democracy is distinguishable from their views of democracy in the United States.

SOURCE: The Pew Research Center, *Views of a Changing World,* 2003, p. T-67.



IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

ISRAEL'S COALITION GOVERNMENT

Israel has a multiparty system. Though Israelis vote for prime minister and parliament separately, the prime minister must still have the support of the majority of the members of parliament. If he doesn't, he is in danger of facing a parliamentary vote of no confidence. A vote of no confidence leads to new elections for prime minister and parliament. Because there are many parties, it is difficult—if not impossible—for any one party to gain a majority of the seats in the Knesset, the Israeli parliament. Usually one party can get only a plurality of the seats. A party with only a plurality of seats must form a coalition with other parties in order to maintain power. Certain concessions must be made to those parties to convince them to join. If the ruling party loses the support of its coalition partners, the prime minister and his party must form a new coalition, or else their government will be toppled by a parliamentary vote of no confidence.

The conflict with the Palestinians and disagreement over how best to coexist with them has been a source of destabilization to Israeli coalition governments. In July 2000, Prime Minister Ehud Barak, after upsetting rightist parties within his coalition by having peace talks with the Palestinians, exercised his authority to call an early election for prime minister in order to avoid a vote of "no confidence." Ariel Sharon, an outspoken critic of Barak, soundly defeated him in the election.

The conflict between Israel and the Palestinians has escalated since 2002 and, ironically, Sharon is in a plight similar to Barak's. In early 2004, Sharon shocked rightist members of his coalition by making known that he would unilaterally withdraw all Israeli settlements from the Gaza strip along with some other settlements on the West Bank. As a result, he has faced heated opposition not only from members of the Knesset within his coalition but even within his cabinet.* In order to save his faltering government, Sharon invited the leftist Labour party to join what had been a rightist coalition.† Sharon's own Likud party voted against letting Labour into their coalition in August 2004. Sharon continued to seek help from Labour to implement his disengagement policy. This illustrates the scrambling and compromise that often occur within countries that have a multiparty system.

*Gil Hoffman, "Sharon: Settlements in Gaza Cannot Remain," *The Jerusalem Post*, February 3, 2004, p. 1.
†Greg Myre, "Sharon Invites His Favorite Dove to Help Build a Coalition," *The New York Times*, July 13, 2004, p. 4.

true. For example, England has a parliamentary system but also a strong two-party system.

Parliamentary systems usually have a *head of the nation,* often called the president, but they also have a *head of the government,* often called the prime minister or chancellor, who is the leader of one of the large parties in the legislature. In democracies with multiparty systems, such as Israel and Italy, because no one party has a majority of the votes, *coalition* governments are necessary. Minor parties can gain concessions—positions in a cabinet or support of policies they want implemented—in return for their participation in a coalition. Major parties need the minor parties and are therefore willing to bargain. Thus the multiparty system favors the existence of minor parties by giving them incentives to persevere.

In some multiparty parliamentary systems, parties run slates of candidates for legislative positions, and winners are determined by **proportional representation**, in which the parties receive a proportion of the legislators corresponding to their proportion of the vote. In our **winner-take-all system**, only the candidate with the most votes in a district or state takes office.[22] Because a party does not gain anything by finishing second, minor parties in a two-party system can rarely overcome the assumption that a vote for them is a wasted vote.[23] Even if a third-party candidate can keep either major party candidate from receiving more than 50 percent (a *majority*) of the vote, the candidate with the most votes (a *plurality*) wins.

In multiparty systems, parties at the extremes are apt to have more influence than in our two-party system, and in nations with a multiparty system, their legislatures more accurately reflect the full range of the views of the electorate. Political parties in multiparty systems can be more doctrinaire than ours because they do not have to appeal to masses of people. Even though parties that do not become part of the governing coalition may have little to say in setting government policy, they survive because they appeal

proportional representation
An election system in which each party running receives the proportion of legislative seats corresponding to its proportion of the vote.

winner-take-all system
An election system in which the candidate with the most votes wins.

to some voters. Under such a system, an incentive exists for third, fourth, or additional parties to run because they may win some seats. In contrast, our two-party system tends to create *centrist* parties that appeal to moderate elements and suppress the views of extremists in the electorate. Moreover, once elected, our parties do not form as cohesive a voting bloc as ideological parties do in multiparty systems.

Multiparty parliamentary systems often make governments unstable as coalitions form and collapse. In addition, swings in policy when party control changes can be quite dramatic. In contrast, two-party systems produce governments that tend to be stable and centrist, and as a result, policy changes occur incrementally.

Minor Parties: Persistence and Frustration

Although we have a primarily two-party system in the United States, we also have **minor parties**, sometimes called *third parties*. Those that arise around a candidate usually disappear when the charismatic personality does. Examples of such parties are Theodore Roosevelt's Bull Moose party and George Wallace's American Independent party. Wallace's party polled more than 13 million votes and won 46 electoral votes in 1968. Ross Perot won 19 million votes, 19 percent of the total vote in 1992.[24] He did only about half as well in 1996, despite having organized a political party. Without Ross Perot to lead it, the Reform party was badly divided in 2000. Its presidential candidate, Pat Buchanan, failed to reach 1 percent of the national popular vote and thus lost the Reform party much of the ground it had gained under Ross Perot in terms of ballot access and federal campaign funding. More visible than the Reform party was the Green party, which, although not on the ballot in seven states, mounted a major effort to reach 5 percent of the popular vote for presidential candidate Ralph Nader and thereby qualify the party for federal funding in the 2004 elections. The effort failed. The Green party mustered only 3 percent of the popular vote. In 2004, Nader, running as an independent, but endorsed by the Reform party, received one-third of 1 percent of the vote.

Minor parties that are organized around an *ideology* usually persist over a longer time than those built around a particular leader. Communist, Prohibition, Libertarian, Right to Life, and Green parties are of the ideological type. Minor parties of both types come and go, and there are usually several minor parties running in any given election.[25] Some parties arise around a single issue, like the Right to Life party active in states like New York.

Minor parties have been criticized by major parties as "spoilers," diverting votes away from the major party candidate and costing that candidate the election. Green party candidate Ralph Nader was accused of doing this to Al Gore in 2000. Interest groups identified with environmental issues ran ads urging voters not to waste their vote on Nader, who could not win the election. The closeness of the 2000 election and the perception that Nader may have cost Al Gore the White House meant that Democrats aggressively tried to block access to the ballot for Nader in 2004 and stressed his potential to be a spoiler again in 2004. Early in the campaign, John Kerry and Ralph Nader met and the candidates were on good terms. This later dissipated as Nader criticized the Democratic party and lack of differences between the major party candidates.

Minor parties have had an indirect influence in our country by drawing attention to controversial issues and by organizing such groups as the antislavery and the civil rights movements.[26] Ross Perot, for example, elevated the importance of balanced budgets in 1992 and made it more difficult for George Bush to attack Bill Clinton on character issues.[27] However, they have never won the presidency or more than a handful of congressional seats (see Table 7–1).[28] They have done somewhat better in gubernatorial elections.[29] They have never shaped national policy from *inside* the government, and their influence on national policy and on the platforms of the two major parties has been limited.[30]

Examples of minor parties operating in recent elections include the Libertarian, Green, and Reform parties. The **Libertarian party** (www.lp.org) places heavy emphasis on individual liberties, personal responsibility, and freedom from government. Its agenda calls for an end to the federal government's role in education and crime control. Libertarians believe that "if government's role were limited to protecting our lives, rights and property, then America would prosper and thrive as never before." Libertarians also

In 2004, independent presidential candidate Ralph Nader received one-third of 1 percent of the popular vote.

minor party
A small political party that rises and falls with a charismatic candidate or, if composed of ideologies on the right or left, usually persists over time; also called a *third party.*

Libertarian party
A minor party that believes in extremely limited government. Libertarians call for a freemarket system, expanded individual liberties such as drug legalization, and a foreign policy of non-intervention, free trade, and open immigration.

YOU DECIDE

IS A VOTE FOR A THIRD-PARTY CANDIDATE WITH LITTLE CHANCE OF WINNING A WASTED VOTE?

In several recent close elections, including the 2000 presidential election, the vote cast for one or another minor party, if cast for the likely second choice of those voters, would have changed the outcome of the election. In such a situation, should voters care more about influencing who wins an election or more about casting a vote for a candidate whose views are closest to their own, even if that candidate has little chance of winning?

believe that "every service supplied by the government can be provided better *and* cheaper by private business." Libertarians favor, in their terms, "re-legalizing" drugs and prostitiuton and also support open immigration. In 2004, a total of 278 Libertarians ran for office.[31]

The **Green party** (www.greenpartyus.org) takes its name from other pro-environment parties throughout Europe. In the United States, the Greens not only embrace pro-environment positions but are also committed to social justice, decentralization, respect for diversity, community-based economics, nonviolence, feminism, ecological wisdom, grassroots democracy, and personal and global responsibility. The party's 2004 presidential candidate, David Cobb, called for public campaign financing, greater environmental protection, and affordable housing. The party seeks to achieve social justice, eliminate discrimination, and promote self-reliance.

The **Reform party** (www.reformparty.org) was organized in 1995 by Ross Perot. It focuses on national government reform, fiscal responsibility, and political accountability. In 1996, Perot won 9 percent of the popular vote in the presidential election and qualified the party for official party status. In 2000, Pat Buchanan ran as the Reform party's presidential nominee and managed to win only 1 percent of the vote. Recently, the Reform party has been characterized by internal strife; a number of state organizations withdrew from the party, and many of the top party leaders resigned in 2002. As noted, the Reform party endorsed Ralph Nader for president in 2004.

Green party
A minor party dedicated to the environment, social justice, nonviolence, and a foreign policy of nonintervention. Ralph Nader ran as the Green party's nominee in 2000.

Reform party
A minor party founded by Ross Perot in 1995. It focuses on national government reform, fiscal responsibility, and political accountability. It has recently struggled with internal strife and criticism that it lacks an identity.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF AMERICAN POLITICAL PARTIES

Our First Parties

To the founders of the young Republic, parties meant bigger, better-organized, and fiercer factions, and they did not want that. Benjamin Franklin worried about the "infinite mutual abuse of parties, tearing to pieces the best of characters." In his Farewell

TABLE 7–1 MINOR PARTIES IN THE UNITED STATES

Year	*Party*	*Presidential Candidate*	*Percentage of Popular Vote Received*	*Electoral Votes*
1832	Anti-Masonic	William Wirt	8%	7
1856	American (Know-Nothing)	Millard Fillmore	22	8
1860	Democratic (Secessionist)	John C. Breckinridge	18	72
1860	Constitutional Union	John Bell	13	39
1892	People's (Populist)	James B. Weaver	9	22
1912	Bull Moose	Theodore Roosevelt	27	88
1912	Socialist	Eugene V. Debs	6	0
1924	Progressive	Robert M. La Follette	17	13
1948	States' Rights (Dixiecrat)	Strom Thurmond	2	39
1948	Progressive	Henry A. Wallace	2	0
1968	American Independent	George C. Wallace	14	46
1980	National Unity	John Anderson	7	0
1992	Reform	Ross Perot	19	0
1996	Reform	Ross Perot	8	0
2000	Reform	Pat Buchanan	0	0
2000	Green	Ralph Nader	3	0
2004	Reform	Ralph Nader	0	0

Address, George Washington warned against the "baneful effects of the Spirit of Party." And Thomas Jefferson said, "If I could not go to heaven but with a party, I would not go there at all."[32]

How, then, did parties get started? Largely out of practical necessity. The same early leaders who so frequently stated their opposition to political parties also recognized the need to organize officeholders who shared their views so that government could act. To get its measures passed by Congress, the Washington administration had to fashion a coalition among factions. This job fell to Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton, who built an informal Federalist party, while Washington stayed "above politics."

Secretary of State Jefferson and other officials, many of whom despised Hamilton and his aristocratic ways as much as they opposed the policies he favored, were uncertain about how to deal with these political differences. Their overriding concern was the success of the new government; personal loyalty to Washington was a close second. Thus Jefferson stayed in the cabinet, despite his opposition to administration policies, during most of Washington's first term. When he left the cabinet at the end of 1793, many who joined him in opposition to the administration's economic policies remained in Congress, forming a group of legislators opposed to Federalist fiscal policies and eventually to Federalist foreign policy, which appeared "soft on Britain." This party was later known as Republicans, then as Democratic-Republicans, and finally as Democrats.[33]

Realigning Elections

American political parties have evolved and changed over time, but some underlying characteristics have been constant. Historically, we have had a two-party system with minor parties. Our parties are moderate and accommodative, meaning that they are open to people with diverse outlooks. Political scientist V. O. Key and others have argued that our party system has been shaped in large part by **realigning elections**, turning points that define the agenda of politics and the alignment of voters within parties during periods of historic change in the economy and society. Realigning elections are characterized by intense electoral involvement by the voters, disruptions of traditional voting patterns, changes in the relations of power within the community, and the formation of new and durable electoral groupings. They have occurred cyclically, not randomly. These elections tend to coincide with expansions of the suffrage or changes in the rate of voting.[34] We focus here on four realigning elections: 1824, 1860, 1896, and 1932.

1824: ANDREW JACKSON AND THE DEMOCRATS Party politics was invigorated following the election of 1824, in which the leader in the popular vote—the hero of the battle of New Orleans, Democrat Andrew Jackson—failed to achieve the necessary majority of the electoral college and was defeated by John Quincy Adams in the runoff election in the House of Representatives. Jackson, brilliantly aided by Martin Van Buren, a veteran party builder in New York State, later knitted together a winning combination of regions, interest groups, and political doctrines to win the presidency in 1828. The Whigs succeeded the Federalists as the opposition party. By the time Van Buren, another Democrat, followed Jackson in the White House in 1837, the Democrats had become a large, nationwide movement with national and state leadership, a clear party doctrine, and grassroots organization. The Whigs were almost as strong; in 1840, they put their own man, General William Henry Harrison ("Old Tippecanoe"), into the White House. A two-party system had been born, and we have had that two-party system ever since—one of few such systems worldwide.

1860: THE CIVIL WAR AND THE RISE OF THE REPUBLICANS Out of the crisis over slavery evolved a new party: the second Republican party—ultimately dubbed the "Grand Old Party" (GOP).[35] Abraham Lincoln was elected in 1860 with the support not only of financiers, industrialists, and merchants but also of large numbers of workers and farmers. For 50 years after 1860, the Republican coalition won every presidential race except

THINKING IT THROUGH

How you answer this question depends on what you want to accomplish with your vote. For those who see the vote as a largely symbolic exercise, then voting for a minor party candidate with little chance of winning provides that opportunity. The problem is that the more electable candidate who is clearly preferred over the other more competitive alternative may not win office at all if a voter does not consider electability. The winner-take-all system makes this trade-off more consequential. In a system where proportional representation is possible, a voter is more likely to be able to translate policy preferences into a vote for representatives. But in our system, voters must often vote for their second choice in order to avoid their third choice winning office. Interest groups, like environmental groups, often find themselves not endorsing a minor party candidate who may be closer to their views because they want to avoid helping elect a competitive alternative candidate whose views they abhor.

One alternative that would lessen the influence of these candidates would be requiring a run-off election if no candidate got a majority, with only the top two vote getters in the run-off. While this would force another election in some instances, it would force people who vote to decide among the more viable options. A counter-argument is that many people who support minor party candidates would opt out of an election without this chance to express their preferences, and so such a run-off is already accomplished with the plurality winner system we already have.

realigning election
An election during periods of expanded suffrage and change in the economy and society that proves to be a turning point, redefining the agenda of politics and the alignment of voters within parties.

FACTS ABOUT AMERICAN POLITICAL PARTIES

- Parties began in this country as soon as people started taking sides in the debate over ratifying the U.S. Constitution, although it took a few years for them to organize into formal bodies.
- Political parties, and especially our two-party system, have persisted over the course of our history.
- Ours has almost always been a two-party system, differentiating us from most nations, which have a one-party or multiparty system.
- Since 1830, we have witnessed reasonably effective competition in our national party system.
- Our parties have historically been decentralized and fragmented. Parties are organized around states, congressional districts, counties, and cities, with state parties the most important units.
- Winning office and power has been more important to party leaders than specific issues or platforms; political parties in the United States are primarily organized to win and hold political power.
- Our parties can be characterized as moderate, centrist, and pragmatic, with only modest ideological cohesion and voting discipline, especially when compared to European political parties.

for Grover Cleveland's victories in 1884 and 1892. The Democratic party survived with its durable white male base in the South.

1896: A PARTY IN TRANSITION The Republican party's response to industrialization and hard times for farmers changed it in the late 1800s. A combination of western and southern farmers and western mining interests sought an alliance with workers in the East and Midwest to "recapture America from the foreign moneyed interests responsible for industrialization. The crisis of industrialization squarely placed an agrarian-fundamentalist view of life against an industrial-progress view."[36] The two parties also differed over whether U.S. currency should be tied to a silver or gold standard, with Republicans favoring gold and Democrats silver. William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic candidate for president in 1896, was a talented orator but lost the race to William McKinley.[37] The 1896 realignment differs from the others, however, in that the party in power did not change hands. In that sense it was a *converting realignment* because it reinforced the Republican majority status that had been in place since 1860.[38]

The Progressive era, the first two decades of the twentieth century, was a period of political reform led by the Progressive wing of the Republican party. Much of the agenda of the Progressives focused on the corrupt political parties. Civil service reforms shifted some of the patronage out of the hands of party officials. The direct primary election took control of nominations from party leaders and gave it to the rank-and-file. And in a number of cities, nonpartisan governments were instituted, totally eliminating the role of a party. With the ratification of the Seventeenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1913, U.S. senators came to be popularly elected. Women obtained the right to vote when the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified in 1920. Thus within a short time, the electorate changed, the rules changed, and even the stakes of the game changed. Democrats were unable to build a durable winning coalition during this time and remained the minority party until the early 1930s, when the Hoover administration was overwhelmed by the Great Depression.

1932: FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT AND THE NEW DEAL ALIGNMENT The 1932 election was a turning point in American politics. In the 1930s, the United States faced a devastating economic collapse. Between 1929 and 1932, the gross national product fell over 10 percent per year, and unemployment rose from 1.5 million to more than 15 million, with millions more working only part time. Herbert Hoover and the Republican majority in Congress had responded to the Depression by arguing that the problems with the economy were largely self-correcting and that their long-standing policy of following **laissez-faire economics**, a hands-off approach, was appropriate.

Voters wanted more. Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Democrats were swept into office in 1932 by a tide of anti-Hoover and anti-Republican sentiment. Roosevelt rode this wave and promised that his response to the Depression would be a "New Deal for America." He rejected laissez-faire economics and instead relied on **Keynesian economics**, which asserted that government could influence the direction of the economy through fiscal and monetary policy. After a century of sporadic government action, the New Dealers stepped in and fundamentally altered the relationship between government and society.

The central issue on which the Republicans and Democrats disagreed in the New Deal period was the role of government with respect to the economy. Roosevelt Democrats argued that the government had to take action to pull the country out of the Depression, but Republicans objected to enlarging the scope of government activity and intruding it into the economy. This basic disagreement about whether the national government should play an active role in regulating and promoting our economy remains one of the most important divisions between the Democratic and Republican parties today, although, with time, the country and both parties accepted many of the New Deal programs.

For the two decades following the 1932 election, the Republican party was relegated to watching the majority Democrats—a new coalition of union households, immigrant workers, and people hurt by the Great Depression—implement their domestic policies. During World War II, both parties cooperated in embracing a bipartisan foreign policy.

laissez-faire economics
Theory that opposes governmental interference in economic affairs beyond what is necessary to protect life and property.

Keynesian economics
Theory based on the principles of John Maynard Keynes, stating that government spending should increase during business slumps and be curbed during booms.

We have gone a long time since the last critical or realigning election. You will note that each realignment lasted roughly 36 years, or a couple of generations. Some political scientists anticipated that we were ripe for realignment in 1968 or 1972, but it did not happen. A shift in party allegiances among many southern whites, from the Democratic to the Republican party, coincided with the enfranchisement of southern blacks, who largely identify with the Democratic party. But this was more important regionally and did not constitute a national realignment. Now, as memories of the New Deal fade and the agenda of American politics shifts, the alignments of the 1930s and 1940s hold less and less relevance. Yet, to a surprising degree, the parties are stable and closely competitive, as recent elections demonstrated. Whether one party can seize the agenda of politics and fashion itself as the new majority party is one of the interesting political questions for the future.

Divided Government

Major shifts in the demographics of the parties have occurred in recent decades. The once "Solid South" that the Democrats could count on to bolster their legislative majorities and help win the White House has now become the "Solid Republican South" in presidential and increasingly in congressional elections as well. Republican congressional leaders—House Majority Leader Tom DeLay of Texas and Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist of Tennessee—came from states that once rarely elected Republicans. Further evidence of partisan change in the South is the sweep of U.S. Senate victories Republicans had in 2004 in Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, picking up seats that had been held by Democrats going into the 2004 elections. This shift in the South is explained by the movement of whites out of the Democratic party, largely as a result of the party's position on civil rights. The rise of the Republican South reinforced the shift to conservatism in the Grand Old Party. This shift, combined with the diminished ranks of conservative southern Democrats, made the Democratic party, especially the congressional Democrats, more unified and more liberal than in the days when more of its congressional members had "safe" southern seats.

Since 1953, **divided government**, with one party controlling Congress and the other the White House, has been in effect twice as long as one-party control of both legislative and executive branches, and at other times Congress has had divided control with one party having a majority in the House and the other in the Senate. Until the 1992 and 1994 elections, the Republicans' strength had been in presidential elections, where they often won with landslide margins. Part of the explanation was their ability to attract popular candidates like Dwight Eisenhower and Ronald Reagan, but Republicans also reaped the rewards of Democratic party divisiveness and generally weaker Democratic presidential candidates. Evidence that voters are inclined to favor divided government came in the 1990s, when voters elected a Republican congressional majority in 1994 and then retained it in 1996 and 1998. Building on the Republicans' securing unified party control of government in 2002, the GOP in 2004 expanded its congressional majorities. This was especially the case in 2005 when the Republican majority in the U.S. Senate climbed to 55 Republicans versus 44 Democrats, and 1 Independent.

Republican victories in presidential elections between 1952 and 1992 were achieved with the support of some elements of Roosevelt's New Deal coalition. New Deal programs that benefited these voters had expanded the middle class and made possible the conservative "hold onto what we've got" thinking of voters in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000. One way to interpret the closeness of the 2000, 2002, and national elections is that the country is evenly divided.

The 2000, 2002 and 2004 Elections: Into the New Century

Neither party could claim a mandate after the tightly contested 2000 elections, which resulted in a 50–50 partisan tie in the Senate, a slim Republican majority in the House, and a presidential contest whose outcome was unresolved for weeks as ballots were recounted in Florida. Although the outcome was essentially a tie, the breakdown of the vote was anything but random. The 2000 presidential results and exit polls revealed a divided nation. Al Gore carried the Northeast and Pacific states and a few urban states in

divided government
Governance divided between the parties, as when one holds the presidency and the other controls one or both houses of Congress.

the nation's midsection. George W. Bush carried the South and interior of the country, minus a few states like New Mexico. Demographically, the Democrats received large majorities of votes from African Americans, Hispanics, union households, Jews, and gays. Republicans did well among white males, religious conservatives, gun owners, and higher-income voters.[39]

The 2002 election departed from historic patterns in several respects. First, the long-standing pattern had been for the party of the president to lose seats in the House of Representatives. Since 1934, in only two elections—1998 and 2002—have the president's party gained seats. In 2002, the Republicans picked up seats in both the House and Senate, returning to the majority in the Senate and expanding their majority in the House. President George W. Bush campaigned aggressively for Republican candidates. In the last five days before the election, President Bush traveled 10,000 miles to 17 cities in 15 states. Bush and his White House political team had been deeply involved in 2002: They recruited some candidates and urged others not to run or to seek other office, they traveled to key districts and states and hosted fundraisers, and they raised party soft money for the competitive races. The net effect was a more Bush-friendly Congress, heightened political credibility, and better reelection chances in 2004. Not everything went the Republicans' way in 2002. Democrats won some key gubernatorial elections, making the number of Democratic and Republican governors nearly equal.

George W. Bush not only secured reelection in 2004 but his party picked up seats in the Senate and House. Most of the open and competitive seats in 2004 were in predictably Republican states in terms of presidential voting, such as Alaska, Oklahoma, and South Dakota. Bush carried all of these states by wide margins. In all of these states, the Senate Republican candidate won, including in South Dakota, where Senate Democratic Leader, Tom Daschle, was defeated by John Thune. Republicans also swept the open Senate seats in Florida, South Carolina, Georgia, and North Carolina. All of these seats were held by Democrats going into 2004. Democrats picked up a Republican Senate seat in 2004 with the election of Ken Salazar. Democrats also picked up a net gain of three state legislative majorities in 2004.

AMERICAN PARTIES TODAY

Americans typically take political parties for granted.[40] If anything, most people are critical or even fearful of the major parties. Parties are, in a word, distrusted. Some see parties as corrupt institutions, interested only in the spoils of politics. Critics charge that the parties evade the issues, they fail to deliver on their promises, they have no new ideas, they follow public opinion rather than lead it, or they are just one more special interest.

Still, Americans understand that parties are necessary. They want party labels kept on the ballot, at least for congressional and presidential elections as well as for statewide offices. Most voters think of themselves as Democrats or Republicans and typically vote for candidates from their party. They even contribute millions of dollars to the two major parties. Far more individual contributions go to the Republicans than to the Democrats.[41] Thus Americans appreciate, at least vaguely, that you cannot run a big democracy without parties.

Both the Democratic and Republican national parties and most state parties are moderate in their policies and leadership.[42] Successful party leaders must be diplomatic; to win presidential elections and congressional majorities, they must find a middle ground among more or less hostile groups. Members of the House of Representatives, in order to be elected and reelected, have to appeal to a majority of the voters from their own district. As more House districts have become "safe" for incumbents, the House of Representatives has become less moderate and the home of partisan ideological clashes to a greater extent than the Senate or the White House.

Although each party usually takes its extremist supporters more or less for granted and seeks out the voters in the middle, both parties retain some ideological diversity. The Democratic coalition includes the conservative Coalition for a Democratic Majority, the moderate Democratic Leadership Council (dominated by an array of southern governors

and senators), a new group in 2004 called "Democrats for the West" composed of moderate western Democrats, and the liberal Americans for Democratic Action. The Democratic coalition embraces activists in the civil rights and other liberal-left movements. Republicans, while more homogeneous, have their contentious factions as well. On the more conservative side are the Religious Right, staunch supporters of the right to bear arms, and antitax activists, but also young professionals who are conservative economically but moderate or liberal on social issues like abortion and gay marriage.

As noted in Chapter 5, a gender gap exists in voting in presidential and congressional elections, with women voting Democratic more than men. As political scientist Virginia Sapiro has written, "Women and men may still be socialized to think about politics somewhat differently, or at least some groups of women and men are. The two sexes play different kinds of roles in society and family life and thus have different kinds of experiences."[43] Some interest groups also seek to reinforce the gender gap, emphasizing issues like reproductive rights, gun control, or the environment as they relate to women and often urging women to vote Democratic. Some individual Republican candidates have been successful in narrowing the gender gap.

Among Republican elected officials, the split has been between more liberal northeastern Republicans like Senator Lincoln Chafee of Rhode Island and Governor George Pataki of New York and the dominant conservative wing. Democratic officeholders also have substantial policy differences. Examples include a group of U.S. House members who are called "Blue Dog Democrats." The moniker is derived from the old reference to "yellow dog Democrats," a description of party loyalty, where a person would supposedly vote for a yellow dog before voting for a Republican. The "blue dogs" were representatives whose "moderate-to-conservative-views had been 'choked blue' by their party in the years leading up to the 1994 election."[44] Former Georgia Governor and U.S. Senator Zell Miller, also a conservative Democrat, endorsed President George W. Bush and gave an impassioned speech at the 2004 Republican National Convention. He described the Democrats running for president in a *Wall Street Journal* article as indistinguishable. He said, "Look closely, there's not much difference among them. I can't say there's 'not a dime's worth of difference' because there's actually billions of dollars' worth of difference among them. Some want to raise our taxes a trillion, while the others want to raise our taxes by several hundred billion. But, make no mistake, they all want to raise our taxes."[45]

Religion is sometimes linked to partisanship. In reality, devoutly religious people are found in both major parties.

Parties as Institutions

Like other institutions of American government—Congress, the presidency, and the courts—political parties have rules, procedures, and organizational structure. What are the institutional characteristics of political parties?

NATIONAL PARTY LEADERSHIP The supreme authority in both major parties is the **national party convention,** which meets every four years for four days to nominate candidates for president and vice president, to ratify the party platform, and to adopt rules.

In charge of the national party when it is not assembled in convention is the *national committee*. In recent years, both parties have strengthened the role of the national committee and enhanced the influence of individual committee members. The committees are now more representative of the party rank-and-file. But in neither party is the national committee the center of party leadership.

Each major party has a *national chair* as its top official. The national committee formally elects the chair, but in reality it is the choice of the presidential nominee. For the party that controls the White House, the chair actually serves at the pleasure of the president and does the president's bidding. Party chairs often change after elections. During the 2004 election cycle the Republican National Committee (RNC) Chair was Ed Gillespie. Mr. Gillespie had been an important staff person for House Republicans, was the strategist for the Elizabeth Dole Senate campaign in North Carolina in 2002, and was the Bush spokesperson during the contentious recount in Florida in 2000.[46] He was a visible and frequently cited leader of the Republicans in 2004.

national party convention
A national meeting of delegates elected in primaries, caucuses, or state conventions who assemble once every four years to nominate candidates for president and vice president, ratify the party platform, elect officers, and adopt rules.

2004 Democratic National Committee Chairperson Terry McAuliffe.

Terry McAuliffe, the Democratic National Committee (DNC) Chair, was elected after the Democratic presidential election defeat in 2000. McAuliffe had previously served as Finance Director at both the DNC and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC), the party committee for House Democratic candidates. McAuliffe chaired the Clinton/Gore reelection committee in 1996 and also chaired the 2000 Democratic National Convention. As the head of a party out of power, he was a visible spokesperson for the Democrats. He also led efforts to rebuild the party headquarters and expand its hard money fundraising base.[47]

The chair of the party without an incumbent president has considerable independence yet works closely with the party's congressional leadership. The national committee often elects a new head after an electoral defeat. Although chairs are the heads of their national party apparatus, they remain largely unknown to the voters. The chair may play a major role in running the national campaign; after the election, the power of the national chair of the victorious party tends to dwindle.

National party organizations are often agents of an incumbent president in securing his renomination. When there is no incumbent president seeking reelection, the national party committee is generally neutral until the nominee is selected. Although heated primary contests often preclude having a united party in the general election, national and state parties can attempt to dissuade candidates but in the end cannot prevent them from running.[48]

In addition to the national party committees, there are also congressional and senatorial *campaign committees.* In recent years, congressional and senatorial campaign committees have become much more active—recruiting candidates, training them, and assisting with campaign finance.[49] Senatorial campaign committees are composed of senators chosen for two-year terms by their fellow party members in the Senate; congressional campaign committees are chosen in the same manner by the House. Chairs of campaign committees are nominated by their party leadership and typically ratified by their party caucus. For information on the party committees and their leadership, go to www.nrcc.org, www.nrsc.org, www.dccc.org, and www.dscc.org. These committees have a lot of say about which candidates get party campaign funds. With the abolition of soft money, the power of the party committees was presumed to lessen. In fact, the party committees continued to be active in competitive races and battleground states through independent expenditures. While this spending did not rival the old soft money, it was substantial in 2004.

PARTY PLATFORMS While national party committees exist primarily to win elections and gain control of government, policy goals are also important. Every four years each party formulates and adopts a platform at the national nominating convention. The typical party platform—the official statement of party policy—is often a vague and ponderous document that hardly anyone reads. Platforms are ambiguous by design, giving voters few obvious reasons to vote against the party. This generalization about party platforms does not mean that political parties do not stand for anything. Most business and professional people believe the Republican party best serves their interests, while working people tend to look to the Democrats to speak for them. The proportion of voters discerning important differences between the parties has increased sharply as the parties have become more polarized (See Figure 7–1).[50]

Many politicians contend that platforms rarely help elect anybody, but platform positions can hurt a presidential candidate. Because the platform-writing process is not always controlled by the nominee, it is possible for presidential candidates to disagree with their own party platform. But the platform-drafting process gives partisans, especially those motivated by particular issues, an opportunity to express their views, and it serves to identify the most important values and principles on which the parties are based. Once elected, politicians are rarely reminded of what their platform position was on a given issue. One major exception to this was former President George Bush's promise not to raise taxes if elected in 1988 with his memorable quote, "Read my lips—no new taxes." He was forced to eat those words when taxes were raised.[51] In reality, the winning party actually seeks to enact much of its party platform.[52]

Party platforms in 2004 were carefully controlled by the Bush and Kerry campaigns. The Republican platform played to the conservative base of the party on such issues as

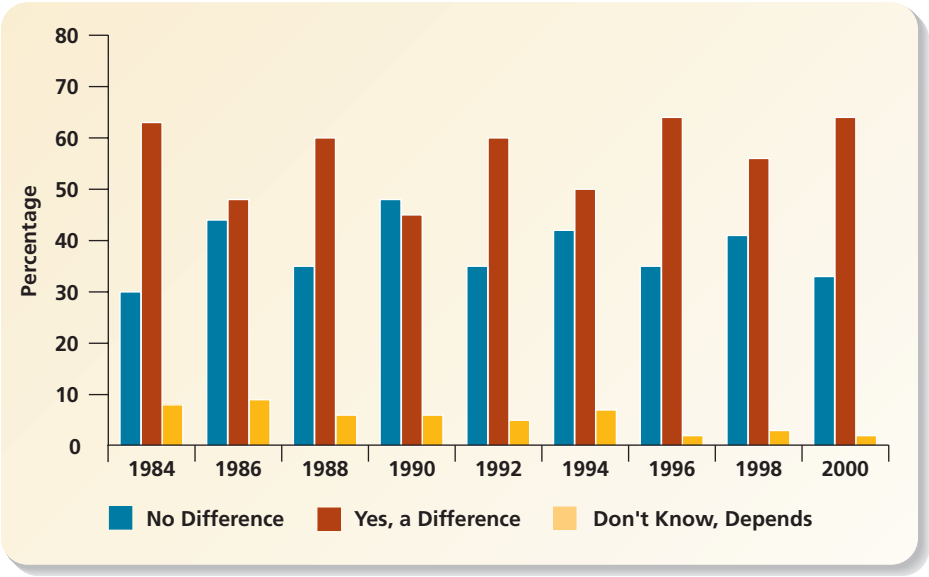


FIGURE 7–1 Important Difference in What Democratic and Republican Parties Stand for, 1984–2000.
SOURCE: *2002 National Election Study,* "Important Difference in What Democratic and Republican Parties Stand for, 1952–2000," (Center for Political Studies, University of Michigan, 2002).

abortion, gay marriage, and taxes. The Democratic platform, like the Democratic convention, sought to reassure the country that the party was strong on national security while also retaining its longstanding commitment to seniors, education, and social justice.

PARTIES AT THE STATE AND LOCAL LEVELS The two major parties are decentralized, organized around elections in states, cities, or congressional districts. They have organizations for each level of government, national, state, and local. Party organization at the state and local levels is structured much like the national level. Each state has a *state committee* headed by a *state chair.* State law determines the composition of the state committees and sets rules regulating them. Members of state committees are usually elected from local areas. Party auxiliaries such as the Young Democrats or the Federation of Republican Women are sometimes represented as well. In many states, these committees are dominated by governors, senators, or coalitions of locally elected business and ethnic leaders. State chairs are normally elected by the state committees, although in approximately one-quarter of the states they are chosen at state conventions. When the party controls the governorship, chairs are often agents of the governor.[53]

Some powerful state parties have developed in recent years. Despite much state-to-state variation, the trend is toward stronger state organizations, with Republicans typically being much better funded.[54] In some states, third and fourth parties play a role in local elections. New York, for instance, has both a Liberal party and a Conservative party in addition to the Democratic and Republican parties. The role minor parties play in statewide elections can be important, even though they rarely win office themselves.

Below the state committees are *county committees,* which vary widely in function and power. The key role of these committees is recruiting candidates for such offices as county commissioner, sheriff, and treasurer. The recruiting job often involves finding a candidate for the office, not deciding among competing contenders. For a party that rarely wins an election, the county committee has to struggle to find someone willing to run. When the chance of winning is greater, primaries, not the party leaders, usually decide the winner.[55] Many county organizations maintain a significant level of activity, distributing campaign literature, organizing telephone campaigns, putting up posters and lawn signs, and canvassing door-to-door. Other county committees do not function at all, and many party leaders are just figureheads.

Through the 2002 election, state party organizations were the means by which millions of dollars in soft money were spent. Rulings of the Federal Election Commission made it advantageous for national parties to spend their soft money through the state

parties. The focus of these expenditures was candidate promotion. In many instances, broadcast ads paid for with soft money did not even mention the party.[56] Soft money was largely banned by the BCRA enacted in 2002.

It is not clear that soft money helped build stronger parties at the state and local levels. Some soft money spending may have enhanced such party activities as building a list of active partisans in the state or district or improving the computer technology of the party offices or may have had secondary benefits when party supporters were mobilized for a U.S. Senate or House race. But for most soft money spending, state parties simply became local bank accounts for national party committee candidate-centered campaign communications. Even after the scores of millions of dollars of soft money spent by party committees, strong local party organization is rare at the city, town, ward, and precinct levels. Most local party committees are poorly financed and inactive except during the few weeks before election day.[57] In a few places, local ward and precinct leaders still do favors for constituents, from getting more police patrols in a neighborhood to organizing clambakes or obtaining horse-racing passes in a state like Arkansas.

What then was the impact of BCRA on party activity in 2004? The Democrats, who were more dependent on soft money and who had been slower to build a large hard money donor base, were the most affected. While their hard money fundraising was more successful than ever, it did not make up for the loss of soft money. Party committees for both parties spent some of their hard money in 2004 as independent expenditurs in the relatively few competitive races that existed. What did make up for much of the difference was nonparty groups that raised and spent money on advertising, mail, phones, and voter mobilization. These groups, often called **527 organizations**, after the section of the tax code under which they are organized, were especially active on the Democratic side in 2004. (See Chapter 6 for a fuller disscussion of these and related groups.) Republicans had fewer allied groups campaigning for them, but they also had more hard money, which they deployed on the full range of campaign tactics, especially voter registration and mobilization. The Republican voter mobilization effort in 2002, called the 72 Hour Task Force, built on the successful mobilization effort in 2000.[58] The impact of the soft money ban was even more pronounced for the congressional campaign committees in both parties, but especially for the Democrats.

Parties in Government

Political parties are central to the operation of our government. They help bridge the separation of powers and facilitate coordination between levels of government in a federal system.

IN THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH Members of Congress take their partisanship seriously, at least while they are in Washington. Their power and influence are determined by whether their party is in control of the House or Senate; they also have a stake in which party controls the White House. The chairs of all standing committees in Congress come from the majority party, as do the presiding officials of both chambers. Members of both houses sit together with fellow partisans on the floor and in committee.

Members of congressional staffs are also partisan. From the volunteer intern to the senior staffer, members of Congress expect their staff to be loyal first to them and then to their party. Should you decide to go to work for a representative or senator, you would be expected to identify yourself with that person's party, and you would have some difficulty working for the other party later. Employees of the House and Senate—from elevator operators to the Capitol Hill police and even including the chaplain—hold patronage jobs. With few exceptions, such jobs go to persons from the party that has a majority in the House or the Senate.

527 organization
Interest groups organized under Section 527 of the Internal Revenue Service code may advertise for or against candidates. If their source of funding is corporations or unions, they have some restrictions on broadcast advertising. 527 organizations were important in the 2000 and 2004 elections.

IN THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH Presidents select almost all senior White House staff and cabinet members from their own party. Presidents, however, typically surround themselves with advisers who have campaigned with them and have proved their party loyalty.

Partisanship is also important in presidential appointments to the highest levels of the federal bureaucracy. The party that wins the White House has around 5,000 noncareer positions to fill.[59] Included in these positions are cabinet-level appointments and

PEOPLE & POLITICS *Making a Difference*

BLAISE HAZELWOOD

During the highly contested 2004 elections the Republican National Committee (RNC) political director was Blaise Hazelwood. Her involvement in politics began at the age of 10 when she canvassed door-to-door for her father, who was running for precinct committeeman. Her interest in "grassroots" politics continued in the 2000, 2002, and 2004 election cycles, in which she was a leader in organizing the Republican voter mobilization efforts.

Hazelwood's work at the Republican National Committee began soon after she graduated from Vassar College. Ironically, after the 1994 election she and other staff were urged to seek more permanent employment. "Blaise had set her mind to stay at the RNC and began arriving at work at 6:00 A.M. and briefing Anderson (Curt Anderson, the Political Director at the time) on the news and current events. This display of determination convinced Anderson to keep her."* Hazelwood has played a variety of roles at the RNC, including Deputy Chief of Staff and Director of Coalitions for Victory 2000, which included work with pro-life groups, Latinos, Catholics, and many ethnic American groups.

Republicans came out of the 2000 election feeling a need to counteract the Democrats' voter mobilization strategy. Hazelwood has been instrumental in that effort. She and others organized the "72 Hour Task Force" in 2002 and 2004. This effort deployed large numbers of people, including what Hazelwood calls "paid volunteers," into key districts. Hazelwood described her approach as "fewer leaflets and more volunteers."† These individuals delivered person-to-person contact in the critical final phases of the 2002 and 2004 elections. In some areas the task force increased voter turnout by 2 to 3 percent.‡ According to her husband and direct mail consultant, Dan Hazelwood, "Blaise brought back the culture of grassroots campaigns into the Republican party making grassroots campaigns as important as TV, mail, and phone."§ The Republican ground game was widely seen as having been important to the reelection of President Bush in 2004.

* Dan Balz, "Getting the Votes—And the Kudos: Hazelwood Helped GOP to Victory with an Emphasis on Shoe Leather." *Washington Post,* January, 1 2003, p. A17.
†www.abcnews.go.com/sections/politics/TheNote/TheNote_July25.html.
‡Dan Balz and David S. Broder, "Close Election Turns on Voter Turnout," *The Washington Post,* November 1, 2002, page A01.
§Dan Hazelwood, phone interview by David Magleby, August 3, 2004.

ambassadorships around the world. Party commitment, including making campaign contributions, is expected of those who seek these positions.

IN THE JUDICIAL BRANCH The judicial branch of the national government, with its lifetime tenure and political independence, is designed to operate in an expressly nonpartisan manner. Judges, unlike Congress, do not sit together by political party. But the appointment process for judges has been partisan from the beginning. The landmark case establishing the principle of judicial review, *Marbury* v. *Madison* (1803), concerned the efforts of one party to stack the judiciary with fellow partisans before leaving office.[60] Today party identification remains an important consideration in the naming of federal judges. Although the party affiliation of a judicial nominee is not called for on any form, the individuals responsible for screening and evaluating candidates do take party and ideology into account. Appointees must be acceptable to certain power centers in the party. For example, Republicans in the Ronald Reagan and George Bush administrations insisted on conservative judges; Bill Clinton, although nominating Democrats, placed more importance on gender and race than on ideology in selecting judges. The confirmation process has also become increasingly partisan. Republicans claimed that Democrats were delaying hearings for George W. Bush's judicial nominees, and Democrats countered that they were responding in kind to what Republicans did to Clinton nominees when the GOP controlled the Senate.

AT THE STATE AND LOCAL LEVELS The importance of party in the operation of local government varies among states and localities. In some states, such as New York and Illinois, local parties play an even stronger role than they do at the national level. In others, such as Nebraska, parties play almost no role. In Nebraska, the state legislature is expressly nonpartisan, though factions perform like parties and still play a role. Parties are likewise unimportant in the government of most city councils. But in most states and many cities, parties are important to the operation of the legislature, governorship, or mayoralty. Judicial selection in most states is also a partisan matter. Much was made by the 2000 Bush campaign of the fact that six of the seven Florida Supreme Court justices deciding the 2000 ballot-counting case in favor of Gore were Democrats. Democrats noted that the five U.S. Supreme Court justices who decided the election in favor of Bush were Republicans.

Parties in the Electorate

Political parties would be of little significance if they did not have meaning to the electorate. Adherents of the two parties are drawn to them by a combination of factors, including their stand on the issues; personal or party history; religious, racial, or social peer grouping; and the appeal of their candidates. The emphases among these factors change over time, but they are remarkably consistent with those identified by political scientists more than 40 years ago.[61]

PARTY REGISTRATION For citizens in most states, "party" has a particular legal meaning—**party registration**. At the time voters register to vote in these states, they are asked to state their party preference. They then become registered Democrats, Republicans, Libertarians, or whatever. Voters can subsequently change their party registration. The purpose of party registration is to limit the participants in primary elections to members of that party and to make it easier for parties to contact people who might vote for their party.

PARTY ACTIVISTS Activists tend to fall into three broad categories: party regulars, candidate activists, and issue activists. *Party regulars* place the party first. They value winning elections and understand that compromise and moderation may be necessary to reach that objective. They also realize that it is important to keep the party together as much as possible, because a fractured party only helps the opposition.

Candidate activists are followers of a particular candidate who see the party as the means to place their candidate in power. Candidate activists are often not concerned with the other operations of the party—with nominees for other offices or with raising money for the party. For example, people who supported Pat Buchanan in his unsuccessful run for the presidency as a Reform party candidate in 2000 would be classified as candidate activists. Buchanan, a television commentator and unsuccessful candidate for the Republican nomination in 1996, built a personal following. Reform party members who traced their roots in the party to Ross Perot found Buchanan so repellent that they split from him and nominated their own candidate for president. Buchanan fared poorly in the 2000 election, getting less than 1 percent of the vote and as a result losing millions of dollars in federal subsidies for the 2004 elections.

Issue activists wish to push the parties in a particular direction on a single issue or a narrow range of issues: the war in Iraq, abortion, taxes, school prayer, the environment, or civil rights. To issue activists, the party platform is an important battleground because they seek party endorsement for their position. Issue activists are also often candidate activists if they can find a candidate willing to embrace their position.

Both issue activists and candidate activists insist on making their "statement" regardless of the electoral consequences. They would rather lose the election than compromise. Party activists thus include a diverse group of people who come to the political party with different objectives. It is not surprising, then, that some of the most interesting politics are over candidate selection and issue positions within the political parties. Fights over strategy and party position are conducted in open meetings and under democratic procedures. Political parties foster democracy not only by competition *between* the parties but *within* the parties as well.

party registration
The act of declaring party affiliation; required by some states when one registers to vote.

CHANGING FACE OF AMERICAN POLITICS

PORTRAIT OF THE ELECTORATE

	Republican	Democrat	Independent	Other
Sex				
Male	32%	32%	32%	4%
Female	31	35	26	7
Race				
White	36	29	30	6
Black	7	70	20	3
Hispanic	23	38	35	4
Age				
18–34	30	32	32	6
35–45	37	30	25	7
46–55	28	36	30	6
56–64	29	36	31	4
65+	32	37	27	5
Income				
$0–$14,999	20	47	27	10
$15,000–$34,999	25	41	30	17
$35,000–$49,999	29	31	33	17
$50,000–$64,999	35	31	28	12
$65,000–$84,999	36	30	26	25
$84,999+	40	27	29	16
Religion				
Protestant	46	29	22	3
Catholic	30	37	31	2
None/Atheist/Agnostic	13	38	38	13
Other/Jewish	19	40	28	13
Ideology				
Liberal	9	55	30	5
Moderate	20	35	20	5
Conservative	48	20	28	4
Region				
Northeast	30	34	33	3
North-Central	33	33	27	7
South	32	35	28	5
West	32	32	29	8
Total	31	33	28	7

SOURCE: *2002 National Election Study* (Center for Political Studies, University of Michigan, 2002). *Note: Numbers may not add up to 100 due to rounding.*

Party Identification

Party registration and party activists are important, but many voters are not officially registered with a political party. Most Americans are mere spectators of party activity. They lack the partisan commitment and interest needed for active party involvement. This is not to say that parties are irrelevant or unimportant to them. For them, partisanship is

"Very Republican. I love it."

what political scientists call **party identification**—an informal and psychological attachment with a political party that most people acquire in childhood, a standing preference for one party over another.[62] This type of voter may sometimes vote for a candidate from the other party, but in the absence of a compelling reason to do otherwise, most will vote according to their party identification. Peers and early political experiences reinforce party identification, generally acquired from parents. It is part of the political socialization process described in Chapter 4.

Party identification is the single best predictor of how people will vote. Unlike candidates and issues, which come and go, party identification is a long-term element in voting choice. The strength of party identification is also important in predicting participation and political interest. Strong Republicans and strong Democrats participate more actively in politics than any other groups and are generally more knowledgeable and informed. Pure Independents are just the opposite; they vote at the lowest rates and have the lowest levels of interest and awareness of any of the categories of party identification. This evidence runs counter to the notion that persons who are strong partisans are unthinking party adherents.[63]

Partisan Realignment and Dealignment

With the exception of the shift of southern whites to the Republican party and the enfranchisement of blacks who remain Democrats, the current system of party identification is built on a foundation of the New Deal and the critical election of 1932, events that took place nearly three-quarters of a century ago. How can events so removed from the present still be important in shaping our party system? When will there be another realignment—an election that dramatically changes the voters' partisan identification? Or has such a realignment already occurred? The question is frequently debated in the literature of political science. Most scholars believe that we have not experienced a major realignment since 1932.[64] Partisan identification has been stable for more than four decades, and even though new voters have been added to the electorate—minorities and 18- to 21-year-olds—the basic nature of the party system has trended slightly Republican but not changed dramatically. Table 7–2 presents the party identification breakdown for the period from the 1950s to 2002.

Evidence of a possible voting realignment came in the early 1980s, when Republicans won several close Senate elections and gained a majority in that body.[65] Democrats, however, won back the Senate in 1986, and until 1994 they appeared to have a permanent majority in the House. All that changed with the 1994 election, as Republicans were swept into office on a tidal wave of victories. Republicans made major inroads in the South and strengthened their share of the vote among white males.

In presidential voting, Republicans have done well, winning seven of the last ten presidential elections. Their success ratio masks a much more evenly divided electorate. Indeed, in recent years, the country has been evenly divided in partisan preferences. Democrats would also be quick to point out that their party won the popular vote in 2000, only reinforcing the point that the country is evenly divided. Why have the Republicans done better than Democrats in winning presidential elections? The answer is that they have been more effective in activating their core supporters and those few undecided voters in recent elections. Republicans also have a larger set of states they can predictably count on, forcing Democrats to win most of the populous states, which are often more competitive. The fact that Republicans have won more than they have lost in the last forty years is not yet an indication of a realignment toward the GOP.

We may therefore conclude from recent national elections that American voters overall have no consistent preference for one party over the other. In a time of such electoral volatility and low turnout, the winners and losers are determined by the basics of politics: who attracts positive voter attention, who strikes themes that motivate voters to participate, who does a better job in communicating with voters. Party identification remains important for those voters who come out to vote, and strength of partisanship remains positively correlated with turnout.

party identification
An informal and subjective affiliation with a political party that most people acquire in childhood.

TABLE 7–2 PARTY IDENTIFICATION, 1950s–2002

Decade	Strong Democrat	Weak Democrat	Independent-Leaning Democrat	Independent	Independent-Leaning Republican	Weak Republican	Strong Republican	Apolitical
1950s*	23%	23%	8%	7%	7%	15%	13%	4%
1960s	22	25	8	10	7	15	12	2
1970s	17	24	12	14	10	14	9	2
1980s	18	26	11	12	11	14	11	2
1990s	18	19	13	10	12	15	13	1
2000s	18	16	14	9	13	14	15	1

SOURCE: *2000 and 2002 National Election Study* (Center for Political Studies, University of Michigan, 2002).

NOTE: Data may not sum to 100 percent due to averaging.

*1950s percentages based on years 1952, 1956, and 1958.

Thus there are few signs of voter realignment but stronger signs of voter disengagement. Some observers feel that we are experiencing a rejection of partisanship in favor of becoming Independents, and there has indeed been an increase in the number of persons who characterize themselves as Independents. Journalist Hedrick Smith expresses a widespread view: "The most important phenomenon of American politics in the past quarter century has been the rise of independent voters, who have at times outnumbered Republicans."[66]

The **dealignment** argument—that people have abandoned both parties to become Independents—would be more persuasive were it not that two-thirds of all self-identified Independents are really partisans in their voting behavior and attitudes. One-third of those who claim to be Independents lean toward the Democratic party and vote Democratic in election after election. Another third of Independents lean toward Republicans and just as predictably vote Republican. The remaining third, who appear to be genuine Independents and who do not vote predictably for one party, turn out to be people with little interest in politics. Despite the reported growth in Independents, there are proportionately about the same number of Pure Independents now as there were in 1956.[67] There are, in short, at least three types of Independents, and most of them are predictably partisan. Table 7–3 summarizes voting behavior in recent contests for president and the House of Representatives.

Why has realignment moved so slowly? Why aren't all conservatives now happily ensconced in the Republican party and all liberals gladly lodged in the Democratic party?

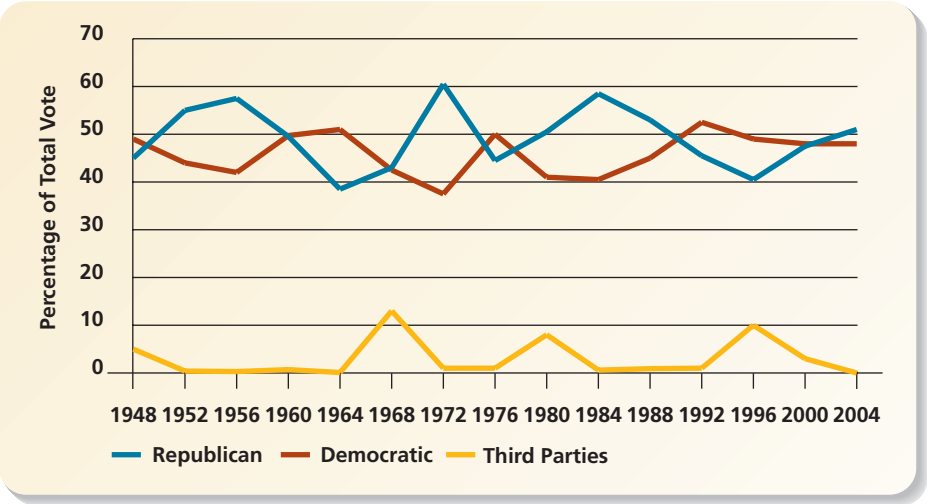


FIGURE 7–2 Presidential Vote by Party.
SOURCE: Data obtained from CQ Voting and Elections Collections, at library.cqpress.com/elections/.

dealignment
Weakening of partisan preferences that points to a rejection of both major parties and a rise in the number of Independents.

HOW PARTY IDENTIFICATION IS MEASURED

Party identification is commonly measured by political scientists and political pollsters using the answers to the following questions:

- Generally speaking, in politics do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?

Persons who answer Republican or Democrat to this question are then asked:

- Would you call yourself a strong or a not very strong Republican/Democrat?

Persons who answered Independent to the first question are asked this follow-up question:

- Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or the Democratic party?

Persons who do not indicate Democrat, Republican, or Independent to the first question rarely exceed 2 percent of the electorate and include those who are apolitical or who identify with one of the minor political parties. Because of their consistently small numbers, they are typically not important to election outcomes. In a close race, like the 2000 presidential contest, Green party supporters became an important target for both Al Gore and Ralph Nader.

The party identification questions produce seven categories of persons: strong Democrats, weak Democrats, Independent-leaning Democrats, Pure Independents, Independent-leaning Republicans, weak Republicans, and strong Republicans. Over the nearly 50-year period during which political scientists have been conducting such surveys, the partisan preferences of the American public have remained remarkably stable.

TABLE 7–3 VOTING BEHAVIOR OF PARTISANS AND INDEPENDENTS, 1992–2002

	Percent Voting Democratic							
	President			U.S. House				
	1992	1996	2000	1994	1996	1998	2000	2002
Strong Democrats	93%	96%	97$	88%	87%	77%	90%	89%
Weak Democrats	68	82	89	73	70	57	73	71
Independent-leaning Democrats	70	76	72	68	69	63	73	67
Pure Independents	41	35	44	55	41	41	50	35
Independent-learning Republicans	11	20	13	25	21	24	26	27
Weak Republicans	14	20	14	21	21	25	18	25
Strong Republicans	3	5	2	7	3	7	12	8

SOURCE: *2002 National Election Study* (Center for Political Studies, University of Michigan, 2002).

Americans do not casually cross party lines. If you grew up in a conservative New Hampshire family whose forebears voted Republican for a century, you are pretty much conditioned to stay with the GOP. Even if that party took a direction you disliked, you might continue to register as a Republican but quietly vote Democratic to avoid friction in the family. Or if you come from a "yellow dog" Democratic family in Texas, you might continue to vote for Democrats locally even though you disliked various Democratic candidates for president or senator. This pattern was once common throughout the South.[68]

Another reason for slow realignment is the local nature of the parties. For decades, conservative Democrats in the South have been voting for Republican candidates for president—not just George W. Bush and Ronald Reagan but also Richard Nixon and even Dwight Eisenhower—without changing their identification from the Democratic Party to the Republican.[69] Why? Partly because they still see themselves as Democrats, but also because the Democratic party remains stronger at the state and local levels in many southern states. So if candidates and voters want to have an impact on local politics, in which the only meaningful elections may be in the Democratic primaries, they retain their Democratic affiliation.

ARE THE POLITICAL PARTIES DYING?

Critics of the American party system make three allegations against it: (1) parties do not take meaningful and contrasting positions on most issues, (2) party membership is essentially meaningless, and (3) parties are so concerned with accommodating the middle of the ideological spectrum that they are incapable of serving as an avenue for social progress. Are these statements accurate? And if they are accurate, are they important?

Some analysts fear that parties are in a severe decline or even mortally ill. They point first to the long-run adverse impact on political parties of the Progressive movement reforms early in this century, reforms that robbed party organizations of their control of the nomination process by allowing masses of independent and "uninformed" voters to enter the primaries and nominate candidates who might not be acceptable to party leaders. They also point to the spread of nonpartisan elections in cities and towns and the staggering of national, state, and local elections that made it harder for parties to influence the election process.

Legislation limiting the viability and functions of parties was bad enough, say the party pessimists, but parties suffer from additional ills. The rise of television and electronic technology and the parallel increase in the number of campaign, media, and

direct-mail consultants have made parties less relevant in educating, mobilizing, and organizing the electorate. Television, radio, the Internet, and telephones have strengthened the role of candidates and lessened the importance of parties. (See Chapter 10 for more on the media in this role.)

Advocates of strong parties concede that parts of this diagnosis may be correct: the demise of political machines at the local level, the decline in strong partisan affiliations, the weakness of grassroots party membership. Yet they also see signs of party revival, or at least the persistence of party. The national party organizations—the national committees and the congressional and senatorial campaign committees—are significantly better funded than they were in earlier days; they even own permanent, modern headquarters buildings in Washington, D.C., located a few blocks from the U.S. Capitol. Moreover, the parties through 2002 were capable of providing assistance to candidates in competitive races and to state and local party organizations because of their financial base, especially from soft money contributions. However, the new campaign finance reforms will likely lessen party activity. Advocates hope that strong national parties will exercise some leverage over the positions that candidates and officeholders take on party issues.[70]

Since the first years of the Reagan administration, both the Republican and Democratic parties have demonstrated a remarkable cohesiveness in Congress. This trend can be measured by the *party unity score,* defined as the percentage of members of a party who vote together on roll call votes in Congress on which a majority of the members of one party vote against a majority of the members of the other party. During the 107th Congress (2001), House and Senate Republicans voted together 90 percent of the time. Democrats were only slightly less united at 85 percent, tying their previous unity record.[71] These numbers demonstrate the growing partisanship within the two chambers. Thus while rank-and-file voters do not display strong partisan ties, party organizations and the party in government do show significant signs of strength.[72]

Reform Among the Democrats

In Chicago in 1968, the Democratic National Convention saw disputes inside the hall and riots outside, largely because of protests against the country's policy in Vietnam. Responding to the disarray and to disputes about the fairness of delegate selection procedures, members of the party agreed to a number of reforms. They established a process that led to greater use of direct primaries for the selection of delegates to the national convention and greater representation of younger voters, women, and minorities as elected delegates. Another reform was the abolition of the rule that a winner of a state's convention or primaries got all the state's delegates (the *unit rule*). This rule was replaced by a system of *proportionality* in which candidates won delegates in rough proportion to the votes they received in the primary election or convention in each state.

Chicago's former mayor Richard J. Daley, father of the current mayor of Chicago, and many other party stalwarts argued that these reforms would make the party reflective of the views of minorities within the party, such as college professors and intellectuals who would have time and resources to invest in the political process, and not working-class people, unionists, the elderly, and elected officials who depend more on group leaders to make their case. The new process also meant that elected officials who wanted a voice in determining presidential candidates had to run for delegate to the national convention. Responding to this criticism, the party created "superdelegate" positions for elected officials and party leaders who were not required to run for election as delegates.

Reform Among the Republicans

Republicans have not been immune to criticism that their party conventions and party procedures were keeping out the rank-and-file. They did not make changes as drastic as those made by the Democrats, but they did give the national committee more control over presidential campaigns, and state parties were urged to encourage broader participation by all groups, including women, minorities, youth, and the poor.

The Republican party has long had a party organization superior to that of the Democrats. In the 1970s, the GOP emphasized grassroots organization and membership

recruitment. Seminars were held to teach Republican candidates how to make speeches and hold press conferences, and weekend conferences were organized for training young party professionals. The Democrats have become better organized and more professional. Both parties now conduct training sessions for candidates on campaign planning, advertising, fund raising, using phone banks, recruiting volunteers, and campaign scheduling.[73] But Republicans have cultivated a larger donor base and have been less reliant on the large-donor soft money contributions that became so controversial in recent elections.

Campaign Finance Reform and Political Parties

Following the 1976 election, both parties pressed for amendments to the Federal Election Campaign Act, claiming that campaign finance reforms resulted in insufficient money for generic party activities like billboard advertising and get-out-the-vote drives. The 1979 amendments to the act and the interpretations of this legislation by the Federal Election Commission permitted unlimited contributions to the parties by individuals and PACs for these party-building purposes. Corporations and unions could also give the parties soft money from their general funds, something they could not do in support of candidates or other party activities. With the 1996 election cycle, both parties found ways to spend this soft money in unlimited amounts to promote the election or defeat of specific candidates, effectively circumventing the campaign finance reform rules.[74]

In the 1998, 2000, and 2002 elections, congressional campaign committees, following the lead of the national party committees in the 1996 presidential election, raised unprecedented amounts of soft money. In 2000 all party committes combined raised $500 million in soft money, a figure equaled in 2002, a year without a presidential election. Soft money was spent in the most competitive races where it could help determine which party controlled Congress or the most competitive states in the 1996 and 2000 contests for the White House. This is why banning soft money became such a dedicated cause for Arizona Senator John McCain, a cosponsor of the McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform legislation. McCain, who beat George W. Bush in the New Hampshire presidential primary, in part on the basis of his challenging the party establishment on soft money, eventually lost to Bush in the 2000 nomination fight. Despite repeated defeats in one or both houses of Congress over 15 years, Congress passed the BCRA in 2002. Table 7–4 shows the effects of BCRA on the parties.

What were the implications of this surge in soft money in presidential and congressional elections? First, because soft money contributions were unlimited, the priority given to raising soft money elevated the importance of large contributors. Parties came to rely heavily on these large donors. Among the largest soft money donors to the Democrats were the Affiliated Federal State County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), the Service Employees International Union, and the Communications Workers of America. The largest Republican soft money donors were Phillip Morris and AT&T.

Central to the arguments for BCRA was the contention that the ability of individuals and groups to donate unlimited amounts of money to the parties gives these donors extraordinary access to and influence over elected officials. Since party leaders often were the ones asking for the unlimited soft money contributions, the potential for corruption was cited by a majority of the Supreme Court as justification to uphold the 2002 BCRA legislation. The Court majority noted, "there is substantial evidence in these cases to support Congress' determination that such contributions of soft money give rise to corruption and the appearance of corruption. For instance, the record is replete with examples of national party committees' peddling access to federal candidates and officeholders in exchange for large soft-money donations."[75]

One uncertainty following BCRA was whether soft money donors would attempt to find another way to spend money on electing or defeating candidates. Some donors abandoned large donations altogether, instead making the limited and disclosed PAC or individual contributions. As we noted in Chapter 6, 2004 saw growth in PAC contributions. Other donors and some new contributors, however, pursued an alternative way to spend unlimited sums on the 2004 elections. As we have seen, they typically did this through groups formed under Section 527 of the tax code or other groups, which allowed

TABLE 7–4 EFFECTS OF THE 2002 CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORMS

	Before 2002 Reform	*After 2002 Reform*
Party contributions to candidates	$5,000 per election or $10,000 per election cycle	National Party Committees are limited to $5,000 per election, although there are special limits for Senate candidates. National committees and Senate campaign committees share a contribution limit of $35,000 per campaign.
Party-coordinated expenditures with candidates	*Senate:* State voting age population times 2 cents, multiplied by the cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), or $20,000 multiplied by the COLA, whichever is greater	*Senate:* State voting age population times 7.462 cents, multiplied by the COLA, or $74,620 multiplied by the COLA, whichever is greater.
	House: $10,000 multiplied by the COLA; if only one representative in the state, same as the Senate limit	*House:* $37,310 multiplied by the COLA; if only one representative in the state, the spending limit for the House nominee is $74,620, the same as the Senate limit.
Party soft money contributions to the national party committee	Unlimited	Banned
Soft money to national or state and local parties for voter registration and get-out-the-vote drives	Unlimited	Limit of $10,000 per group to each state or local party committee (Levin Amendment)
Contributions to parties for buildings	Unlimited	Banned
Party-independent expenditures	Unlimited	Unlimited, except if ad falls under "electioneering communications definition." Then source of funding is subject to FECA regulations and limits, and the ad may not be broadcast within 30 days of a primary or 60 days of a general election. Parties may choose either independent expenditures or coordinated but not both.
Individual contributions to candidates per two-year election cycle	$2,000	$4,000
Aggregate individual contribution limit to candidate or parties per two-year election cycle	$50,000	$95,000

SOURCE: www.fec.gov/pages/bcra/bcra_update.htm.

Senators John McCain (left) and Russ Feingold (right) hold a news conference to announce Senate approval of the McCain-Feingold Campaign Finance bill, aimed at reducing the influence of soft money on political campaigns.

THE POLITICAL HORIZON

This simulation examines party ideologies and the changes that have occurred in America's political parties. People affiliate with a party in part because of their stands on particular issues. Based on your beliefs and opinions, find out with which political party you agree most.

Go to Make It Real, "The Political Horizon."

them to spend unlimited amounts on voter registration, mobilization, mail and phone communications, and in the period prior to the two months before the general election or one month before the primary election to run ads on television. Section 527 group activity was more pronounced on the Democratic side of the 2004 election. Democratic 527 groups like the Media Fund and MoveOn advertised heavily against President Bush, especially in the period between March and September 2004. Republican groups like Swift Boat Veterans for Truth and Progress for America advertised later but were highly visible. Other groups like America Coming Together (ACT) were geared toward voter registration and mobilization of Democratic voters. Although these outside groups were more important to the Democratic effort, in the end they were important to both sides. A lot of the funding for these groups came from wealthy individuals.

Critics of BCRA had long contended that banning soft money would drive soft money to groups with less disclosure of their activity. It was clearly the case in 2004 that following Section 527 group activity was more difficult than following soft money had been in the past. Voters tend to assume that candidates are responsible for all communications in their election contests. Whether it made much difference to them if an ad was from the Ohio Democratic Party or America Coming Together is doubtful. In both cases they would have assumed that the Democratic candidate was responsible.[76]

It is unclear whether soft money had a positive effect on the parties. In competitive contests, parties have become major players, mounting their own campaigns, often against the other party's candidate. Most party spending has been on ads placed on television and radio, sent through the mail, or delivered over the telephone. To a lesser extent, parties have worked to register voters and mobilize them on election day. This latter type of activity is the only one to have an enduring effect on state and local parties. BCRA provides for limited contributions to state and local party committees; individuals and groups may donate up to $10,000 per party committee. This provision has the potential to encourage parties to continue to invest in mobilizing voters.

While the particular role parties play in financing elections may be changing, the broader roles of organizing electoral competition, simplifying voter choices, and providing an enduring psychological identification for voters have not changed. Parties are also remarkably permeable organizations that provide citizens who want to influence the course of their government an accessible and often consequential way to get involved. Finally, parties continue to reinforce federalism through the distinctive nature of many state parties.

SUMMARY

1. Political parties are essential to democracy—they simplify voting choices, organize the competition, unify the electorate, help organize government by bridging the separation of powers and fostering cooperation among branches of government, translate public preferences into policy, and provide loyal opposition.
2. Political parties help structure voting choice by nominating candidates to run for office. Before the advent of direct primaries, in which voters determine the party nominees, the parties had more control over who ran under their label. States determine the nomination rules. While most states employ the direct primary, some use a caucus or mixed caucus system where more committed partisans have a larger role in the decision of who gets nominated. Recently, some states adopted a blanket primary in which voters could vote for a candidate from any party. These primaries were declared unconstitutional.
3. American parties are moderate. Bringing factions and interests together, they are broad enough to win the presidency and other elections. Third parties have been notably less successful. One reason for this is our single-member-district, winner-take-all election rules. In systems with proportional representation or multimember districts, there is a greater tendency for more parties to form and consequently a need to assemble governing coalitions of several parties.
4. American parties have experienced critical elections and realignments. Most political scientists agree that the last realignment occurred in 1932. In recent years, there has been divided government and an increase in the number of persons who call themselves Independents. This trend is sometimes called dealignment, but most Independents are closet partisans who vote fairly consistently for the party toward which they lean.
5. For half a century, it has been routine to have divided government, with one party in control of the presidency and the other in control of one or both houses of Congress. Successful presidents have found ways to cope with divided government and enact important parts of their agenda. The 2002 election gave Republicans unified government with control of both houses of Congress and the White House. Republican control of national government was strengthened by the 2004 elections.
6. Parties are governed by their national and state committees, and the focal points of

party organization are the national and state party chairs. When the party controls the executive branch of government, the executive (governor or president) usually has a determining say in selecting the party chair. With the rise of soft money in recent elections, parties had more resources to spend on politics. In 2002, Congress banned soft money except for some narrowly defined and limited activities.

7. Party platforms are vague and general by design, giving the other party and voters little to oppose.
8. Parties are vital in the operation of government. They are organized around elected offices at the state and local levels. Congress is also organized around parties, and judicial and many executive branch appointments are based in large part on partisanship.
9. Parties are also active in the electorate, seeking to organize elections, simplify voting choices, and strengthen party identification.
10. Frequent efforts have been made to reform our parties. The Progressive movement saw parties, as then organized, as an impediment to democracy and pushed direct primaries as a means to reform them. Following the 1968 election, the Democratic party took the lead in pushing primaries and stressing greater diversity among the individuals elected as delegates. Republicans have also encouraged broader participation, and they have improved their party structure and finances.
11. The Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA) significantly changed the role of party committees by banning soft money and raising hard money contribution limits to the parties. One consequence of BCRA was a renewed emphasis on building a large individual donor base. Donors wanting to spend more than the BCRA limits did so in 2004 through a range of interest groups, many of which were allied 527 groups that ran parallel campaigns with the candidates and parties in 2004.
12. Compared to some European parties, ours remain organizationally weak. There has been some party renewal in recent years as party competition has grown in the South and the parties themselves have initiated reforms.

KEY TERMS

political party
party column ballot
office block ballot
nonpartisan election
patronage
soft money
hard money
independent expenditures
honeymoon
caucus
party convention
direct primary
open primary
crossover voting
closed primary
proportional representation
winner-take-all system
minor party
Libertarian party
Green party
Reform party
realigning election
laissez-faire economics
Keynesian economics
divided government
national party convention
party registration
party identification
dealignment
527 organization

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