

Political Parties

Chapter 8

What is a Political Party

-An organization that sponsors candidates for political office under the organization's name.

Parties select candidates through a formal nomination process

Most theorists agree democracy cannot happen without at least two parties

<http://www.3pc.net/matchmaker/quiz.html>

Party Functions

Political system- a set of interrelated institutions (like parties) that link people with government

- Nominating Candidates
- Structuring the Voting Choice
- Proposing Alternative Government Programs
- Coordinating the Actions of Official

Nominating Candidates

- Party insiders best know who would be a suitable candidate
- They recruit talented individuals to become candidates
- Ensure a minimum quality of candidate, one that is usually high

Structuring Voting Choice

1. Reduce the number of candidates on the ballot to those who have a realistic chance of winning.
2. The ability of established parties to mobilize their supporters has the effect of discouraging nonparty candidates as well as new parties

Proposing Alternative Government Programs

1. Alternative general policies the candidates will pursue if elected
2. Even if voters know nothing about the candidates they can vote rationally for candidates based on party ideology*

*Extremely bad idea

Coordinating Actions of Officials

- The President and Congressional leaders are not required to cooperate
 - Parties can help bridge gaps
1. Candidate's political fortunes are linked to their party (favors)
 2. Party members tend to share ideologies and voluntarily cooperate

First Party System Federalist vs. Dem. Republicans

- 1796 Adams (fed) had to accept Jefferson (DR) as Vice President
- 1800 first true party contest for White House
- Democratic Republicans win (sort of)
- 12th amendment said the Electoral College will vote for president and vice president separately

2nd Party System Democrats and Whigs

1828 the vote had increased by 300%

Parties now had to reach far more people

- National convention instead of closed caucus

Current Party System

Republicans start mainly as an antislavery party in 1854

1860- election of Abraham Lincoln

1. Established the parties in our 2 party system
2. First of three critical elections under the current system (gave dem. The south for 90 yrs)
3. Critical realignment- change in voting patterns that occurs after a critical election

*you don't know if it is a critical election until years later

Party Dominance Since the Civil War

Since 1860 relatively few 3rd party candidates have won any offices and no Presidential victories

- 1896 2nd critical election- turned Republicans into a true majority party (McKinley)
- (fig 8.1)
- Forges the link between Republicans and business

Party Dominance Since the Civil War

1932- 3rd Critical election FDR v. Hoover
Made Democrats the majority party till '94

3rd Parties in America

All usually start some discontent with the major parties- work for their own objectives

- Bolter parties –formed from factions that have split from other parties
- Farmer-labor parties- represent farmers and urban workers (share the wealth)
- Ideological Protest- criticizing the established system (Perot got 19%)
- Single issue parties- formed to promote one principle, not a general philosophy

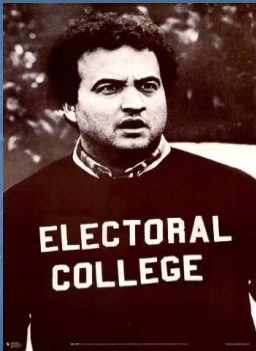
Why 2 parties?

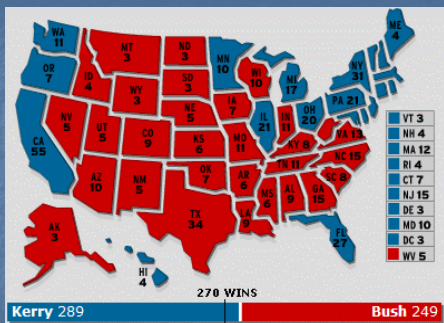
United States electoral system

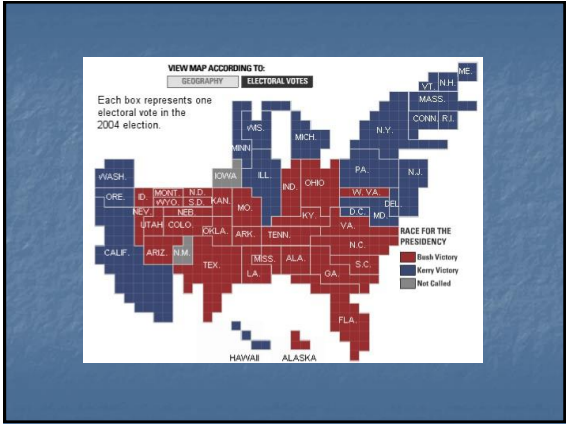
Process of Political Socialization

United States electoral system

1. Only one candidate in each race can be elected in plurality voting
2. This system tends to produce only 2 parties (like sides of the same coin)
3. Our Presidential election reinforce this in the states where the candidates must work to receive electoral votes







Party Identification in America

- The number of Rep. and Dem. combined far outnumber independents every year
- Democrats consistently outnumber Republicans (KY)
- Democrats have shrunk over time the the 3 groups much closer in size

Socioeconomic patterns are clear

1. People of lower incomes and education tend to identify themselves as democrats (and don't vote)
2. Women tend to be more Democrat than men
3. African American tend to be more Democrat
4. Jewish tend to be more Democrat
5. Protestants tend to be more Republican
6. About 1/2 adopt their parents party
7. May take years to develop party identification

Differences in Party Ideology

see page 252

Democrats

- More disposed to government spending to advance social welfare
- [equality]

Republicans

- Opposed to massive spending
- Unless it is a project they consider important (defense)
- [order (social)]

Differences in Party Ideology

Both support capitalism

Both are actually more economically conservative than other 2 party systems (no socialist)

Decentralized but Growing Stronger

- American political parties are the least centralized in the world.
- The Presidents cannot always depend on party's support
- 1. Dubai Ports deal
- 2. Rumsfeld
- 1994 marks stronger party allegiances

National Party Organization

- National Convention- every 4 years, nominate candidates and present platforms
- National Committee- governs each party between conventions. Party officials representing states and territories
- Congressional Party Conferences- done in each house for each party. Select leaders and decide committee assignments

National Party Organization

- Congressional Campaign Committees- each raises its own funds to support its candidates in congressional elections

Model of Responsible Government

1. Parties should present clear and coherent programs to voters
2. Voters should choose candidates on the basis of party programs
3. The winning party should carry out its programs once in office
4. Voters should hold the governing party responsible at the next election for executing its program
