

Reinforcing Citizenship Skills

Choose an election in your community. Outline how you would become informed on the candidates and/or the issues. Then follow your outline and become an informed voter. Share your outline and your findings with the class.

Cooperative Learning

Working in groups of four, interview one of your community's officials to learn how you can begin taking an active role in the community. Members of your group may wish to volunteer for some sort of community service, perform the service, and report your experiences to your classmates.

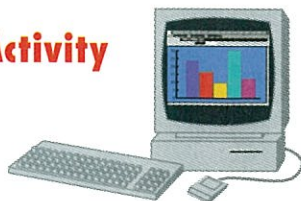
Focusing on Your Community

The types of services communities provide vary according to different factors, such as the size of the community, the money available, and the community's needs. Find out what types of services your community offers. Research the different services that are available, who is eligible to receive these services, and how much money is available to provide these services. Find out also how interested citizens can become involved in helping to provide different community services. Present your findings to the class.

Technology Activity

Using a Word Processor

Use resources in your school or public library to find the

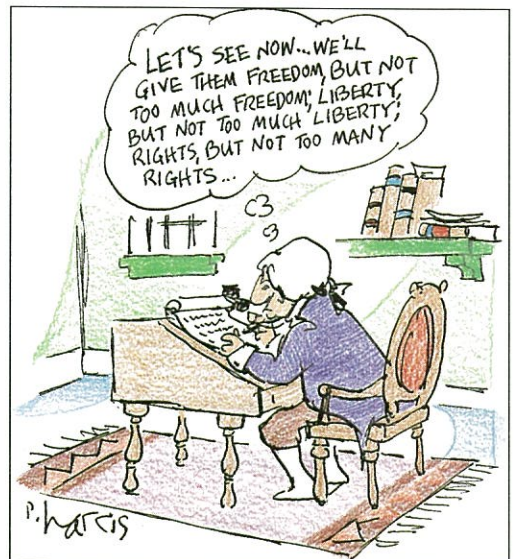


names and addresses of local not-for-profit agencies that need volunteers. Use a word processor to write one of these agencies to ask about volunteer needs. Share your findings with the class. You might also wish to follow-up with a visit to the agency and possibly volunteer to help.

Analyzing Visuals

While the democratic government of the United States guarantees a number of important rights, those rights also have limits. Study the cartoon, and then answer the questions.

1. Whom do you think the person in the cartoon represents? Why?
2. What is this person doing?
3. What do his thoughts suggest about the task faced by those involved in planning the new nation's government?



Parties and Politics

CIVIC PARTICIPATION

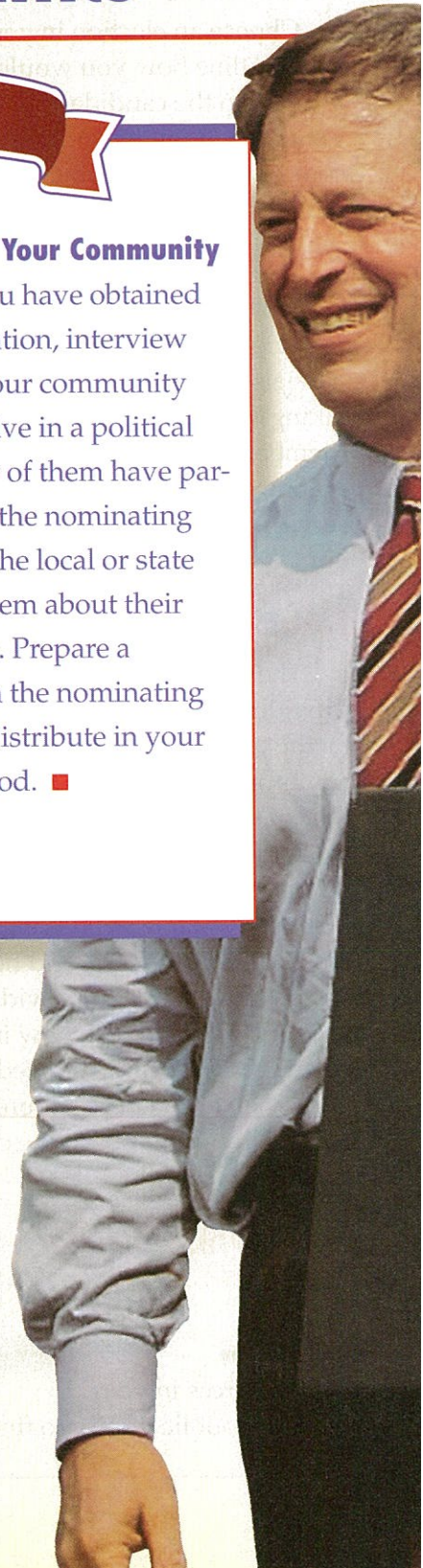
Political parties are an essential part of our democratic system of government. One of their functions is to select, or nominate, people from the party to run for elected office. Contact the local headquarters of the Democratic or Republican party. Find out how local and state candidates are nominated and who is involved in the process.

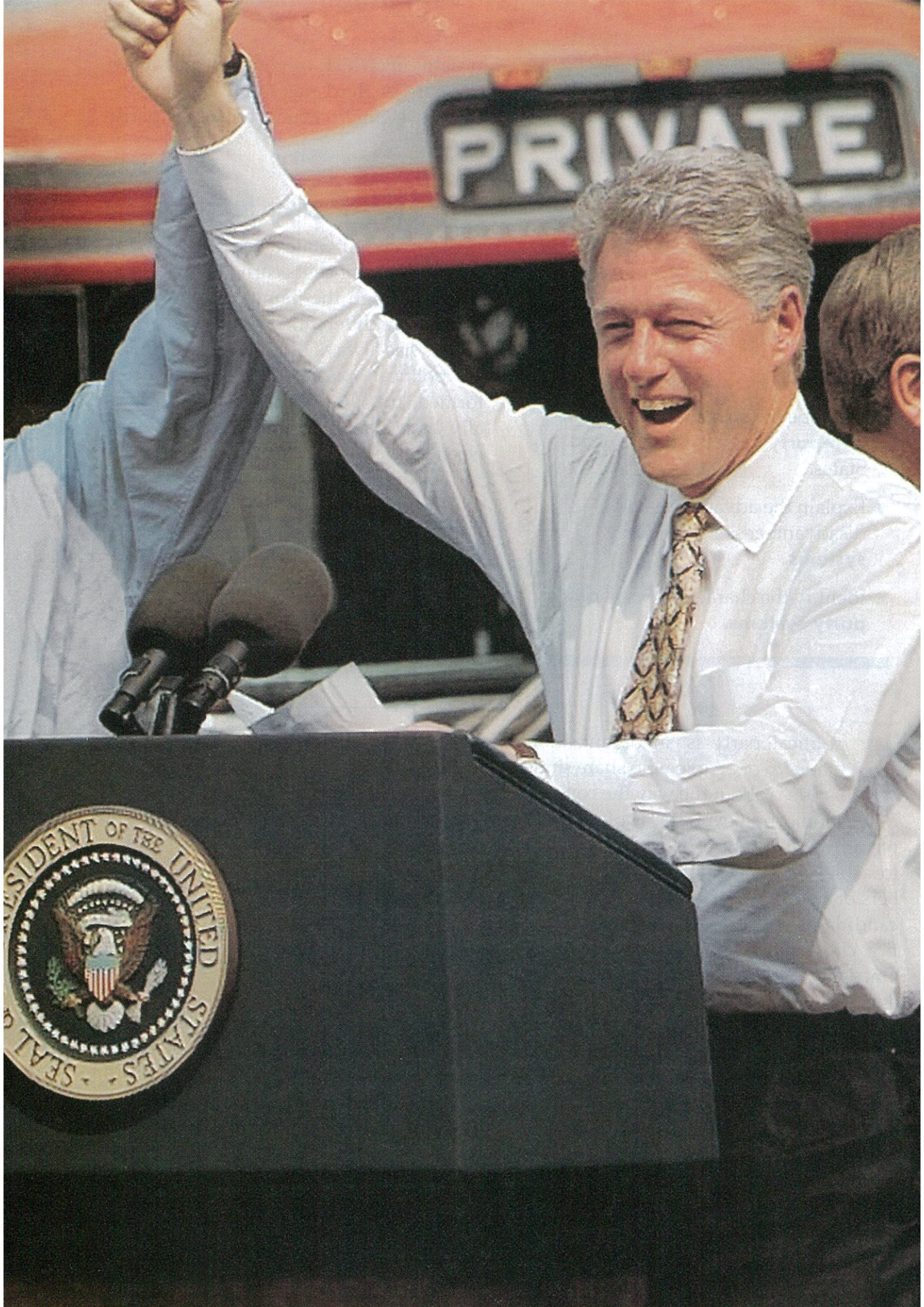
Working in Your Community

After you have obtained this information, interview people in your community who are active in a political party. If any of them have participated in the nominating process on the local or state level, ask them about their experiences. Prepare a brochure on the nominating process to distribute in your neighborhood. ■

Your Civics Journal

Find out how the Republican and Democratic parties stand on current issues. Record their positions in your civics journal. Note how your stand on an issue compares with that of each political party. Interview some classmates and add their views to your journal.







Kinds of Party Systems

FOCUS

TERMS TO KNOW

candidate, plurality, majority, coalition

OBJECTIVES

- Describe the characteristics of **the two-party system** of the United States.
- Explain the advantages and disadvantages of **multiparty systems**.
- Identify the characteristics of **one-party systems**.

A political party is an organization made up of people who share similar ideas about the way the country should be governed. It offers people an opportunity to work with others to achieve certain political goals. Members of a party work to have their party's **candidates**, people seeking elected office, chosen as the government's leaders. Once elected, these candidates organize and run the government. They also work to get laws passed to carry out their party's programs.

Political parties are not unique to the United States. They exist in most countries. In the United States, we have a two-party system in which two major parties vie with each other to run the government. Some countries have a multiparty

system in which several parties may compete. A third possibility is the one-party system in which only one party exists.

The Two-Party System

The United States has had a two-party system since its early days as a nation. Although the names of the parties have been different, one of two major parties has always been in power. Smaller political parties have also been formed, but these minor parties generally have had little impact on national elections.

For the most part, our two-party system has worked very well. If the voters are dissatisfied with the way one party is running the nation, they can elect candidates from the other party. The same process works on the state and local government levels.

Two-Party System The Republican and Democratic parties have different views on similar goals. *Which party believes the federal government should be more involved in education?*

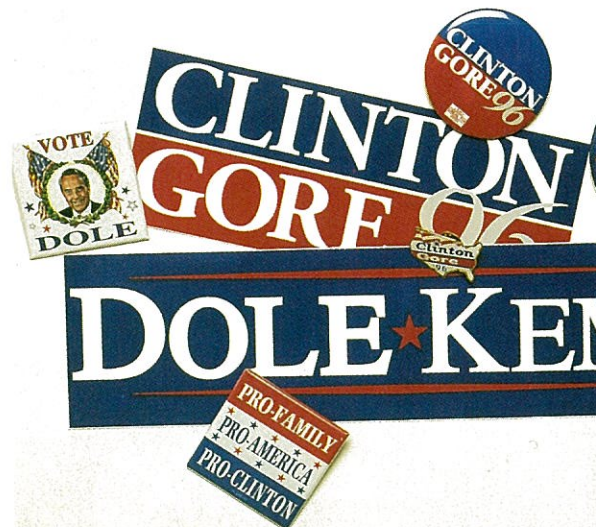




CHART STUDY

1996 Party Platforms A platform describes a party's position on important public issues. *How did the Republican and Democratic positions on taxes differ?*

Democratic Party	Republican Party
<p data-bbox="450 421 518 450">Taxes</p> <ul data-bbox="271 469 701 610" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="271 469 701 527">■ Favors tax cuts for some small businesses and the self-employed<li data-bbox="271 546 701 610">■ Favors tax credits for research and development <p data-bbox="450 662 518 691">Rights</p> <ul data-bbox="271 710 607 739" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="271 710 607 739">■ Supports a woman's right to choose <p data-bbox="436 826 532 855">Education</p> <ul data-bbox="271 875 607 991" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="271 875 607 904">■ Supports tax cuts for college tuition<li data-bbox="271 933 607 991">■ Promotes expansion of work-study programs <p data-bbox="450 1049 518 1078">Health</p> <ul data-bbox="271 1097 600 1213" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="271 1097 600 1126">■ Favors portable medical coverage<li data-bbox="271 1155 600 1213">■ Advocates shortening the approval process for new drugs <p data-bbox="415 1309 552 1338">The Economy</p> <ul data-bbox="271 1367 676 1454" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="271 1367 676 1396">■ Advocates a balanced budget<li data-bbox="271 1425 676 1454">■ Advocates better training for wage earners	<p data-bbox="985 421 1053 450">Taxes</p> <ul data-bbox="779 469 1163 556" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="779 469 1163 498">■ Favors an across-the-board tax cut<li data-bbox="779 517 1163 556">■ Promotes per-child tax credit for families <p data-bbox="985 662 1053 691">Rights</p> <ul data-bbox="779 710 1197 778" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="779 710 1197 778">■ Supports a human life amendment to protect the rights of the unborn child <p data-bbox="964 826 1074 855">Education</p> <ul data-bbox="779 875 1225 1020" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="779 875 1225 904">■ Promotes school choice at all levels of education<li data-bbox="779 933 1225 1020">■ Supports increase in student loans and assistance for families preparing for college costs <p data-bbox="985 1049 1053 1078">Health</p> <ul data-bbox="779 1097 1156 1213" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="779 1097 1156 1164">■ Advocates a health-care system in which providers respond to consumer choice<li data-bbox="779 1184 1156 1213">■ Supports portable health insurance <p data-bbox="950 1309 1087 1338">The Economy</p> <ul data-bbox="779 1367 1232 1454" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="779 1367 1232 1396">■ Advocates a balanced budget<li data-bbox="779 1425 1232 1454">■ Advocates reduction of tax burden on Americans

Republicans and Democrats

Sometimes it is difficult to tell the difference between the Republican and the Democratic parties. The parties are similar because the American people agree, to a large extent, about many political and social issues. Americans cherish their personal rights and freedoms. They believe that people should have an opportunity to get a good education and make a decent living. They also believe the government has a duty to protect the nation, preserve the environment, and help its citizens.

The essential difference between the two major parties is that they disagree on how to achieve these ends. For example, the Democrats tend to believe that the federal government should be more directly involved in providing housing, income, education, and jobs for the poor. The Republicans tend to believe that if they help the nation's economy grow, poor people will have a better chance of finding work and meeting their needs on their own.

Stability and Continuity

Our nation's Founders feared that political parties would divide the people and destroy the Republic. Our two-party system has been a stabilizing force, however. Both parties tend to stay near the center of a wide range of political opinions. Most Americans do not support extreme political ideas, such as government ownership of factories, and they do not want a completely different system of government. Because each party wants to gain the support of the largest possible number of votes, party policies are designed to appeal to many different

groups of people. The parties usually avoid extreme positions that might cause voters to reject the party.

The two-party system has also provided continuity. Because each party is in power some of the time and out of power at other times, both parties have many members who are experienced not only in the art of politics but also in the busi-

DID YOU KNOW?

The Donkey and the Elephant

Although the donkey and the elephant are now the proud symbols of the Democratic and Republican parties, they were originally created by a political cartoonist to poke fun at the two parties.

Thomas Nast was a cartoonist for a New York magazine called *Harper's Weekly* from the 1860s to the 1880s. A Republican supporter, Nast often drew the Republican party as an innocent lamb and the Democratic party as a fierce tiger. Then in the 1870s, he began to show the Republican party as a long-suffering elephant and to depict the rival Democrats as a braying donkey or, occasionally, as a fox. Over time, people forgot that Nast's symbols had been invented to make fun of both parties, and gradually the parties adopted them as their emblems.



Republican party emblem

ness of government. Thus, when a Democratic President takes over from a Republican, or vice versa, the transition is normally smooth.

Disadvantages

Two-party systems are not without disadvantages, however. The most important is that a two-party system can stifle the views of minority groups. In the United States, the news media give a great deal of coverage to the Democratic and Republican candidates for President. Candidates from other, minor parties usually receive very little attention, even though they may have important ideas to contribute.

For a minority viewpoint to be heard, it generally must be accepted and championed by one of the major parties. For example, the civil rights and woman's rights movements gained significant political power only when the Democratic party took up their ideas.

Multiparty Systems

In a multiparty system, three or more parties compete for control of the government. Multiparty systems are common in Europe and are also found in such countries as Israel and Japan.

One advantage of the multiparty system is that it provides voters with choices that represent a broader range of political ideas. Its major weakness, however, is that, with the vote divided among so many parties, it is sometimes difficult for one party to gain enough votes to form a government.

In countries where several major parties compete in each election, one party usually wins a **plurality**, that is, wins more votes or seats in the legislature than any other party. It may not, however, win a **majority** of votes, or more than half the votes cast. In most multiparty systems, a party must hold a majority before it can form a government. In that case, the top vote-getting party must form a **coalition**,

Multiparty System In a multiparty system such as Italy's, one party may not win enough votes to form a government. *How are governments often formed in multiparty systems?*





One-Party System China is a one-party state; the government is made up of members of the Communist party. *What is the main job of party members?*

or an alliance, with another party or parties so that together they command a majority of the votes.

The major problem with coalition governments is that the parties in the coalition often have very different ideas about how to run the government. These differences can become so great that the government is unable to accomplish anything and collapses. When that happens, the parties are forced to hold another election and, very likely, form another coalition. In Italy, for example, the repeated failure of coalition governments has resulted in more than 50 governments since the end of World War II, an average of about one a year.

One-Party Systems

A third type of party system is the one-party system. In such a system, the party and the government are nearly the same thing. In the People's Republic

of China, for example, only one party—the Communist party—is allowed to exist. The party allows only candidates from its own party to run for office. As a result, positions in the government are filled only with Communist party members. The role of government officials is to carry out the decisions the party makes. There is no opposition. In many one-party systems, the head of the government is the head of the party as well.

In a one-party system, the main job of party members is to recruit new members, maintain party discipline, and carry out the party's orders. In exchange for their work for the party and government, upper-level party members are sometimes rewarded with special privileges and favors, such as vacation homes and the use of private stores and hospitals. Typically, only a small part of the population actually belongs to the party. In China, for example, only about 4 percent of the population belongs to the Chinese Communist party.

★ SECTION 1 REVIEW ★

UNDERSTANDING VOCABULARY

Define candidate, plurality, majority, coalition.

REVIEWING OBJECTIVES

- 1 What are some characteristics of the two-party system of the United States?
- 2 What are the advantages and disadvantages of multiparty systems?
- 3 What are the characteristics of one-party systems?



United States Political Parties

FOCUS

TERM TO KNOW

third party

OBJECTIVES

- Describe the **development of the two-party system** in the United States.
- Identify and discuss three **third parties** in the United States.

The first political parties in the United States began to form during the debate over the Constitution. Those who desired a strong national government, the Federalists, supported the Constitution and campaigned for its acceptance. The Federalist party became the first political party in the United States. Those who favored strong state governments formed the Anti-Federalist, or Democratic-Republican, party.

Development of the Two-Party System

The two parties represented not only different ideas about the government but also different groups of the population. The Federalist party drew much of its strength from New England merchants and bankers. The Democratic-Republicans relied on the support of the nation's small farmers, planters, shopkeepers, and laborers.

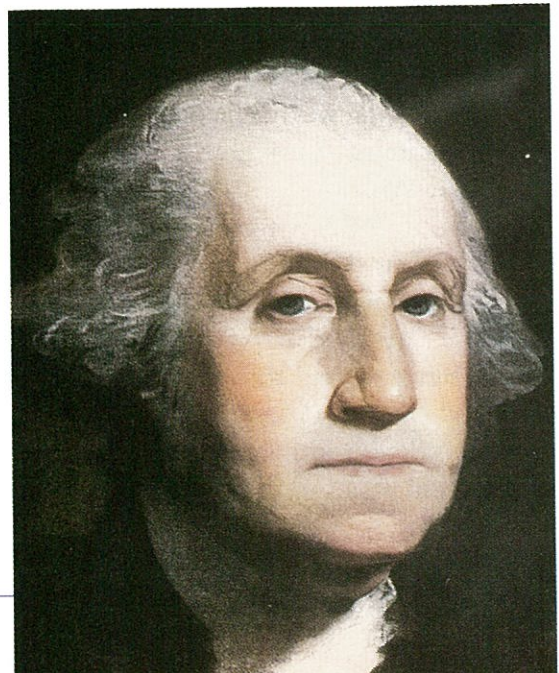
New Parties

After electing only two Presidents, George Washington and John Adams in the first years of the Republic, the Federalist party gradually disappeared. For several years, the Democratic-Republicans were unopposed. By the mid-1820s, however, the party began to break up into several groups. One group became the Democratic party, which continued to represent small farmers and working people. Another group became the Whigs, who arose to challenge the Democrats. The Whigs followed in the tradition of the Federalists and tended to represent northern bankers, merchants, manufacturers, and large plantation owners in the South.

The Republican Party

In the 1850s both parties split over the slavery issue. Proslavery voters stayed in the Democratic party, and Whigs and

George Washington The first President opposed the idea of political parties, but he supported Federalist principles. *What did the Federalist party stand for?*



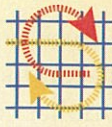
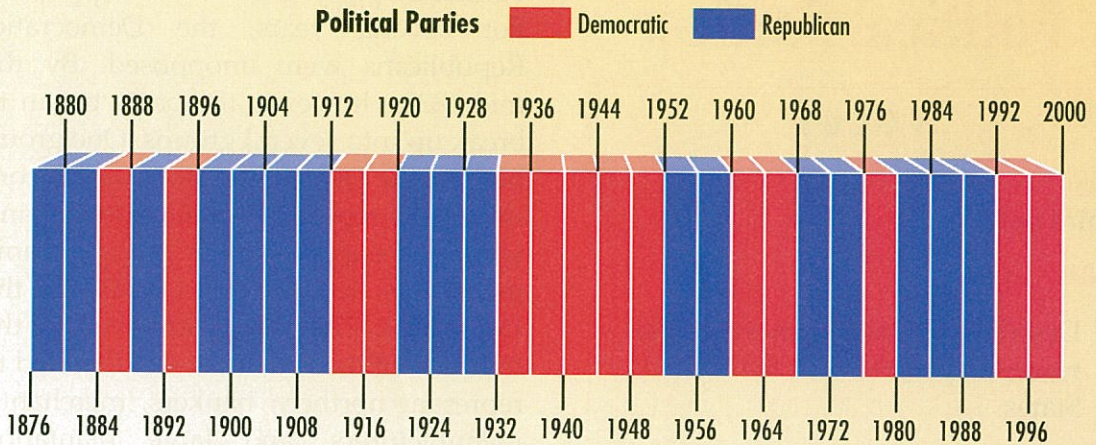


CHART STUDY

Political Parties of American Presidents 1876–2000

Since 1876 Republicans have won 17 presidential elections. Democrats have won 14. Which party held the office for 20 straight years?



antislavery Democrats formed a new party, the Republican party. In 1860 Abraham Lincoln became the first Republican to be elected President.

From the Civil War until today, the Democrats and the Republicans have remained the two major parties in the United States. After the Civil War, the Republicans emerged as the stronger of the two parties. Between 1865 and 1931, the Democrats were able to elect only two Presidents—Grover Cleveland and Woodrow Wilson.

Then, in 1932, it was the Democrats' turn. Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected President four times, and his successor, Harry S Truman, served nearly eight years. Since then, the presidency has switched back and forth between Democrats and Republicans, although the majority in Congress has usually been Democratic.

Third Parties

From time to time a minor party has arisen to challenge the Democrats and the Republicans. In the United States, we call these minor parties **third parties** because they challenge the two major parties rather than each other. No third party has ever won a presidential election. Third parties have, however, affected the outcome of some elections and influenced government and social policy.

The Populists and the Progressives

One of the most successful third parties was the Populist party of the 1890s. A coalition of farmers and working people, the Populists called for the direct election of United States senators and an eight-hour working day, as well as other



Third Parties H. Ross Perot ran as an independent candidate in the 1992 and 1996 presidential elections. *What percentage of the popular vote did he win in 1996?*

reforms. Although the Populists never won a presidential election, the two major parties eventually adopted many of their reform ideas.

Another important third party was the Progressive party, which split off from the Republicans in 1912 and ran former President Theodore Roosevelt as its candidate. Roosevelt took so many votes from the Republican candidate, William Howard Taft, that the Democratic nominee, Woodrow Wilson, won the election. In this case, the Progressive party played a “spoiler” role by taking votes away from the Republicans, the party closest to its own views.

Other Third Parties

Numerous third parties have sprung up throughout the nation’s history. Normally, several third parties run candi-

dates in every election year. In general, there are three kinds of third parties. Some are tied to a single issue, some to a particular political belief, and some to a single candidate.

The Prohibition party, formed in 1872, is a single-issue party. It opposes alcohol and would like to see it banned as it was in the 1920s. Parties such as the American Socialist party and the Libertarian party are third parties based on political beliefs. They run candidates in elections year after year, even though their political beliefs are too extreme for most Americans.

Third parties occasionally form around a single candidate when that person fails to receive support from one of the two major parties. George Wallace failed to receive the support of the Democratic party in 1968 and ran for President on the American Independent party ticket. In 1980 John Anderson lost the Republican nomination and ran as the candidate of the Independent party. In both 1992 and 1996 independent candidate H. Ross Perot challenged the ideas of both major party candidates. He won almost 19 percent of the votes in 1992 and 8 percent in 1996.

★ SECTION 2 REVIEW ★

UNDERSTANDING VOCABULARY

Define third party.

REVIEWING OBJECTIVES

- 1 How did the two-party system change and develop in the United States?
- 2 What are three American third parties?

Exploring ISSUES

The High Cost of Running for Office

Election campaigns have always cost money, but the amount of money required has increased dramatically in recent years. In 1976 the average cost of a United States Senate race was \$610,000. By 1996 some candidates spent \$15 million or more.

Although several developments explain this cost explosion, the most important is the use of television. Candidates have found that television commercials are the most effective way to win votes. Running these commercials in prime time can cost tens of thousands of dollars per minute.

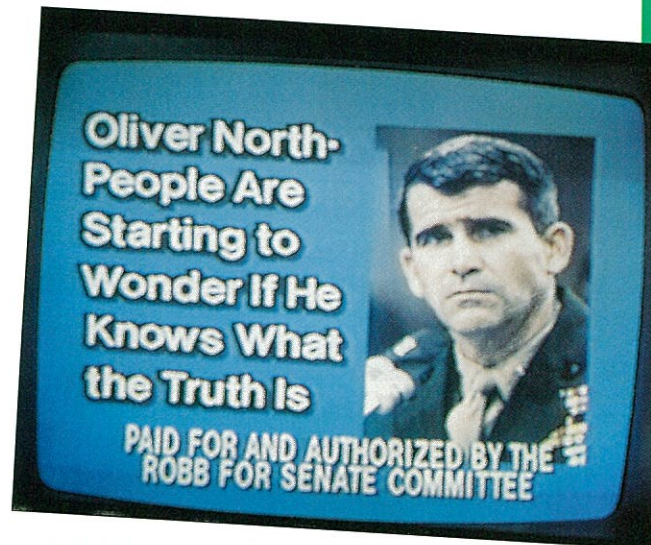
Money from Special-Interest Groups

The Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 placed campaign financing under government control. Among other things, the law limited individual contributions to a candidate to \$1,000. This limit forced candidates to look for new sources of money.

Some funds come from political action committees (PACs). These are special-interest groups—such as labor unions, corporations, and medical associations—that provide funds to candidates who favor their position on issues. However, many people think candidates receiving PAC funds owe these groups favors.

Proposals for Reform

Some people say that the government should pay for election campaigns. In the case of presidential elections, a system is already in place. Taxpayers can contribute



Television campaign

\$3 of their income taxes to a campaign fund that is used to provide matching funds to candidates who raise money from outside sources.

Another proposal is to limit the amount of money each candidate can spend. However, in *Buckley v. Valeo*, the Supreme Court ruled that such a limit is unconstitutional because it restricts the candidate's right of free speech. Thus the free-speech guarantees of the First Amendment protect campaign commercials.

DEVELOPING A POINT OF VIEW

- 1 What is the possible effect of financing by a PAC?
- 2 Why has campaign fund-raising become more difficult and more controversial?



The Organization of United States Political Parties

FOCUS

TERMS TO KNOW

nominate, campaign, patronage, precinct, political machine, platform, plank

OBJECTIVES

- Describe **what party members do** for their party.
- Explain the basic **party organization** of the Democrats and the Republicans.

In the United States, anyone can become a member of a political party. It is not necessary to pay a fee, or take a test, or even vote. In most states, it is only necessary to declare yourself a member of a party when you register to vote. Which party you choose is entirely up to you.

In general, each of the two major parties has tended to attract certain kinds of people. Historically, the Democratic party has tended to appeal more to working people, Catholics, minorities, union members, and people in favor of government involvement in social policies. The Republican party has attracted more businesspeople, Protestants, and

people against government involvement. These are only generalities, however. Each party includes members of all backgrounds, races, religions, and political beliefs. In Congress, for example, it is common to find Democrats whose political views are closer to those of some Republicans than to many of their fellow Democrats.

What Party Members Do

For most people, belonging to a political party involves little more than voting for the party's candidates on Election Day. Active party members do much more than just vote, however.

The major function of each party is to get its candidates elected to office. To achieve that goal, party members must first **nominate**, or name, the candidates they want to run for each office. Once the candidates have been chosen, each party embarks on an election **campaign**, an

Party Delegate A delegate to the national convention proclaims her support for Democratic candidates. *What is the major function of a political party?*



effort to gather support for its candidates and inform the voters of the party's stand on issues. Campaigns are a great deal of work, and many party workers and volunteers are needed to perform dozens of jobs. They may be asked to raise funds, poll voters, make telephone calls, stuff envelopes, arrange dinners and rallies, drive people to the polls, or register voters.

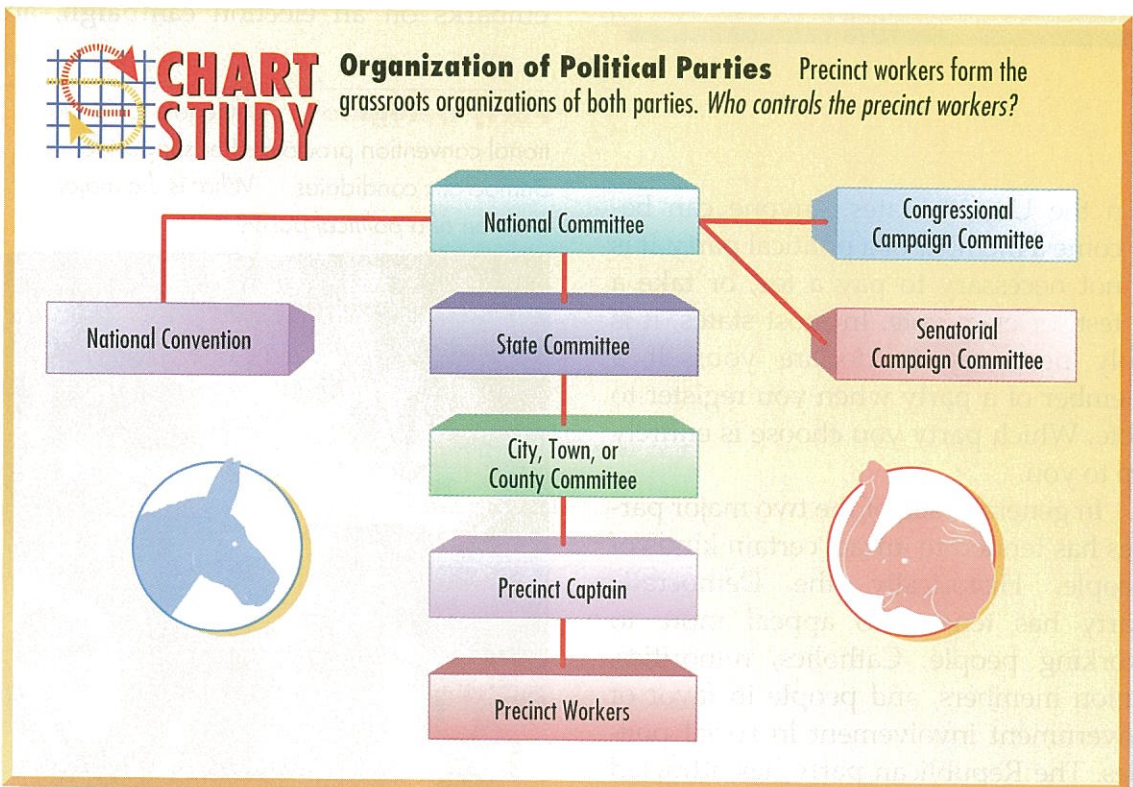
For some active party members, the work does not end when an election is over. Once a party's candidate is elected, the party helps the candidate organize and manage the government. For example, when a new President is elected, hundreds of job vacancies in the federal government must be filled. The President's party compiles lists of party members who contributed a great deal of time, energy, or money to the election campaign. The President consults these

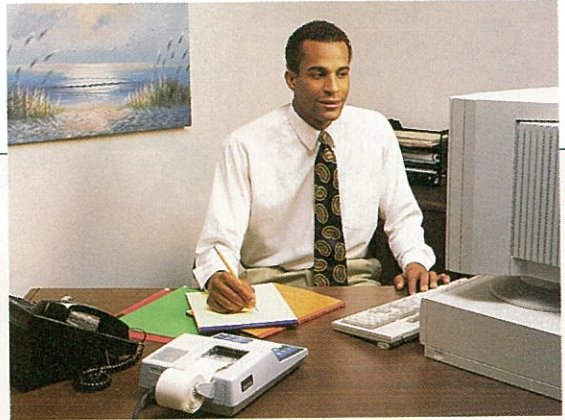
lists and often chooses people from them to fill positions in the government.

Giving jobs or special favors to party workers is called **patronage**. It is a way of rewarding people for their work and loyalty. Political patronage exists in both parties and at all levels of government and political organization. Many people work hard for their party in the hope of being rewarded with a patronage job. However, patronage has declined in importance with the rise of the civil service system, or merit appointment to government jobs.

Party Organization

The Democratic and Republican parties are organized at the local, state, and national levels, in very much the same way as the government. The local organization consists of a city, town, or county





Statistician at work

Statistician

Who will win the next election? How many consumers will buy a certain new product? People who try to answer such questions are statisticians.

curate picture by asking a sample of a few hundred people.

The Work

Statisticians work for the government gathering and interpreting data about the economy, health trends, and so on. They also work for industries and public opinion research organizations.

One way statisticians gather information is by taking samples. They cannot question all the adults in this country about their activities, but they can get a fairly ac-

Qualifications

To become a statistician, you should have an aptitude and an interest in mathematics and computers. Although

some jobs are available for people with a bachelor's degree, many jobs require a graduate degree in

mathematics or statistics. If you think you want a career in statistics, you should take business, mathematics, and science courses in high school.

School TO WORK

To learn more about the work that statisticians do, design a sample opinion poll to conduct in your school. Choose some important community issues on which to poll your classmates. Conduct the poll and share your results with the class.

committee made up of people elected by their fellow party members. Each city or county is divided into election districts, or precincts. A **precinct** is a geographic area that contains a specific number of voters. A precinct may consist of one entire town or of several adjoining neighborhoods in a large city.

For each precinct, the local party committee appoints a precinct captain, whose job is to organize the party volunteers and get out the vote within the precinct. The precinct captain sends out

volunteers to hand out literature, register voters, and try to convince voters to support the party's candidates.

The local party organization is very important because it works to elect candidates at every level of government, from school board member to President of the United States. In a well-organized local party committee, the precinct captain is expected to know approximately how many votes are likely to be cast for the party's candidate, and he or she is expected to deliver them.



"Who Stole the People's Money? 'Twas Him" Thomas Nast attacked the Tammany Hall political machine in his cartoon. How did Nast show the members of the Tammany ring answering the cartoon's title question?

Sometimes a local party organization becomes so powerful that, year after year, only its candidates are elected to public office. Such a strong party organization is called a **political machine**. Political machines exist in a number of towns, cities, and counties throughout the United States.

Although political machines are not necessarily good or bad, most people think of them as harmful. If one party is in power for too long, it might become unresponsive to the needs of the community. Its politicians might forget that the party's main function is to serve the public. At its worst, a political machine might elect corrupt leaders who seek to enrich themselves and their associates at the expense of the people they are supposed to serve. One of the most famous—or infamous—political machines was New York City's Tammany Hall. Corrupt politi-

cians controlled this organization, which ran New York in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Above the local party committees are the state party committees. State committee workers concentrate on electing candidates to state offices—the governor, the attorney general, representatives to the state legislature, and so on. They also work within their state to elect their party's candidates for national office, such as their United States senators, representatives, and the President.

Each political party also has a national committee made up of representatives from each state. The committee is headed by a national chairperson who directs the committee's staff and speaks for the party on national issues. The national committee helps raise funds for the presidential election and organizes the party's national convention.



National Convention Party members nominate their candidates for President and Vice President at their party's national convention. *What other major decisions are made at the national conventions?*

The national convention is one of the most important responsibilities of the national committee. Held only once every four years, the national convention is where party members nominate their candidates for President and Vice President of the United States. During the convention, party members also formulate the party's **platform**, the statement of its goals and positions on various public issues. Each item in the platform is called a **plank**. A plank on the party's platform might, for example, call for new programs to improve education.

In addition to the national, state, and local committees, each political party has several congressional committees, including a Senatorial Campaign Committee and a Congressional Campaign Committee for the House. These committees seek to elect and reelect party members to the United States Senate and

House of Representatives. Made up of members of Congress, the committees help out when a party member is in danger of losing a seat or when a vacant seat is up for grabs.

★ SECTION 3 REVIEW ★

UNDERSTANDING VOCABULARY

Define nominate, campaign, patronage, precinct, political machine, platform, plank.

REVIEWING OBJECTIVES

- 1 What are some of the things that party members do for their party?
- 2 What is the basic party organization of the Democrats and the Republicans?



How to Register to Vote

When you become 18 years old, you can begin to exercise one of your most important rights—the right to vote. Before you can do so, however, you must register.

Registration Procedures

The National Voter Registration Act took effect in January 1995. This law, known as the “motor voter” bill, allows citizens to get voter registration forms at motor vehicle offices when applying for a driver’s license. After completing the forms, you mail or take them to a government office in your community.

You can also register in person at a county election bureau, or by mailing in special postcards obtained from any state or county office. Sometimes local citizens’ groups hold voter registration drives at local malls, or they go door-to-door.

What the Forms Ask

Voter registration forms ask for your name, address, and age and often for your party preference. You can register as a Democrat, a Republican, an independent, or a member of some other party.

If you register as a Republican or a Democrat, you will be able to vote in primary elections, where you can choose your party’s candidates for the general election. If you register as an independent voter, you may or may not be able to vote in primary elections.



Registering young voters

Requirements and Restrictions

When registering, first-time voters must show proof of citizenship, address, and age, such as a driver’s license or a birth certificate. You can register to vote at any time, although most states have cutoff dates for specific elections.

Once registered, you are assigned to an election district according to your address. You do not need to reregister unless you change your address, name, or party. When you register, be sure to find out where your polling place will be.

CITIZENSHIP IN ACTION

- 1 What is the advantage of registering as a Republican or a Democrat?
- 2 Why do you think many citizens who are eligible to vote fail to register to vote?



The Role of Political Parties in the United States Today

FOCUS

TERMS TO KNOW

grassroots, accountable, nonpartisan

OBJECTIVES

- Discuss the five **basic functions of political parties**.
- Explain several factors that are causing a weakening of loyalty to **political parties today**.

Although the major purpose of American political parties is to elect candidates to public office, they also play an important role in helping the people of the United States practice self-government. The parties enable people to communicate with their government leaders and help ensure that government remains responsive to the people. The parties fulfill this role in a number of ways.

Basic Functions of Political Parties

Political parties have five basic functions that help them fulfill their role in government.

- They select and support candidates.
- They inform the public.
- They carry the message of the people to the government.
- They act as a watchdog over government activities.
- They serve as a link between different levels and branches of government.

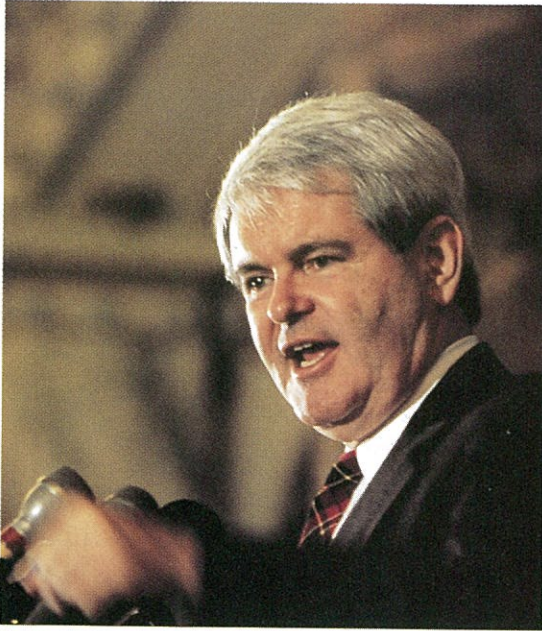
Selecting and Supporting Candidates

Because candidates for public office have to compete in elections, each party tries to put up candidates who will win as many votes as possible. Each party wants to offer attractive, able candidates who have the experience needed to fill the offices they are seeking. This competition between the parties means that the voters are usually offered a choice of two or more qualified candidates.

After the parties select candidates, the election campaign begins. The parties support their candidates by helping

Republican Views Haley Barbour, Republican National Committee Chairperson, answers reporters' questions. *What function of a political party is he fulfilling?*





Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich became speaker after Republicans gained control of the House in 1995. *How do candidates get their views across to voters?*

organize and raise money for election campaigns. They also help their candidates get their ideas and viewpoints across to as many voters as possible.

Informing the Public

In an election campaign, each party tries to tell the public what it has done and what it wants to do. It also points out what it believes the other party is doing wrong.

To get their views across, party candidates make speeches, publish and distribute pamphlets, and place ads in newspapers and magazines and on television and radio. As the parties present their views, the voters have an opportunity to learn about, compare, and make judgments about these views. In this way, the political campaign informs and educates the voters.

Carrying the People's Message

In addition to presenting their views to the people, the parties listen to what the people have to say. Voters have ideas and concerns of their own and issues they want their leaders to address.

For example, perhaps voters across the country are concerned about crime. Each party develops a position on this issue and sets certain goals for how to solve the problem. In this way, the people's message can be carried to the highest levels of government in Washington.

Sometimes people in different areas feel very strongly about an issue. They may oppose a government policy or want stronger laws to protect the environment. A political movement that begins with the people is known as a **grassroots** movement. When a grassroots movement becomes strong enough, its ideas will probably be taken over by a political party.

Acting as Watchdogs

Between elections political parties act as "watchdogs" over government activities. Although it is not possible for an individual to keep a close watch on all government officials, political parties can do this very well.

Suppose, for example, that your town council has five Democrats and two Republicans. Although the Republicans lack enough votes to control the decision making on the council, they are still part of the government. They participate in all governmental meetings, inspect town records, talk to employees, and so on. The two Republicans are able to keep close track of the actions and behavior of the Democratic officials. Although they are out of power, the Republicans are serving the public interest by bringing

mistakes, wrongdoing, and problems to light. In this way, the Republican minority is holding the Democratic majority **accountable** to the people. Officials who want to keep their jobs must explain their actions to the voters.

Of course, the Republicans are acting as watchdogs out of self-interest. They would like to have more Republicans elected to the town council in the next election. The Democrats are also acting out of self-interest. If they know the public is watching, they will try to do a good job so they can be reelected.

Serving as a Link

Just as political parties carry the people's message to the government, they also help different levels and branches of government communicate and cooperate with one another. For example, suppose both the mayor of Cincinnati, Ohio, and the governor of the state are Democrats. As public officials in the same state and members of the same party, they may

share similar goals and ideas. They may know each other well and perhaps have worked together on election campaigns or party business in the past. These connections may make it easier for them to work together on mutual problems.

Political Parties Today

Many people believe that the two major political parties are no longer as powerful as they once were. Over the last several years, they appear to have lost considerable strength and may continue to decline in the future.

Decline in Party Loyalty

Several factors have caused this decline. The primary factor is a weakening of party loyalty. People move from place to place more often, and party leaders can no longer count on stable neighborhoods and election districts where they can deliver the same number of votes each election. In addition, fewer people

Cooperation Chicago Mayor Richard Daley (left), a Democrat, greets Illinois governor Jim Edgar, a Republican. *Why is it often difficult for officials of different parties to work together?*



vote in elections now than in the past. Although the reasons for this are unclear, it seems that many people believe their votes are no longer important.

Technological changes such as television have also weakened party loyalty. Years ago many voters would have voted for a particular candidate simply because he or she was their party's choice. Now many voters decide to vote for a candidate they have seen on television because they are attracted to the candidate, not the political party. In addition, because people are more sophisticated and better educated today than they were in

the past, they are more likely to make up their own minds about candidates and issues. As a result, many voters prefer to register as independent voters. More people today are apt to split their votes between candidates of different parties. For many voters, the qualifications and personal characteristics of a candidate are as important as the political party.

Special-interest groups also have an increasing impact on voters' decisions. Dedicated to advancing a specific cause, special-interest groups support candidates who have good records for backing their causes. Some voters decide to vote

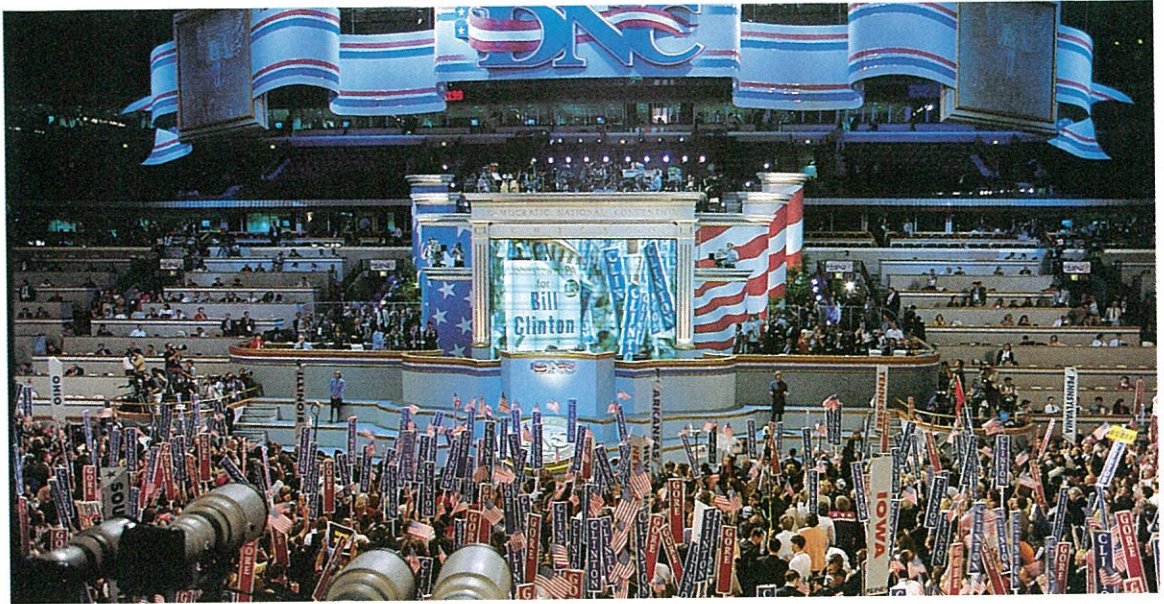


CHART STUDY

Who Votes, 1980–1996 Statisticians group voters by race, gender, age, and education to study voting trends. *In which two election years did the highest percentage of 18- to 20-year-olds vote?*

	Presidential Elections					Congressional Elections		
	1996	1992	1988	1984	1980	1994	1990	1986
Total, voting age (in millions)	193.5	185.7	178.1	170.0	157.1	190.3	182.1	173.9
Percent voting	48.8	61.3	57.4	59.9	59.2	44.6	45.0	46.0
White	51.0	63.6	59.1	61.4	60.9	46.9	46.7	47.0
African American	35.0	54.0	51.5	55.8	50.5	37.0	39.2	43.2
Hispanic American	38.0	28.9	28.8	32.6	29.9	19.1	21.0	24.2
Male	48.0	60.2	56.4	59.0	59.1	44.4	44.6	45.8
Female	49.0	62.3	58.3	60.8	59.4	44.9	45.4	46.1
18 to 20 years	31.0	38.5	33.2	36.7	35.7	16.5	18.4	18.6
21 to 24 years	33.0	45.7	38.3	43.5	43.1	22.3	22.0	24.2
25 to 34 years	35.0	53.2	48.0	54.5	54.6	32.2	33.8	35.1
35 to 44 years	49.0	63.6	61.3	63.5	64.4	46.0	48.4	49.3
45 to 64 years	58.0	70.0	67.9	69.8	69.3	56.0	55.8	58.7
65 years and over	54.0	70.1	68.8	67.7	65.1	60.7	60.3	60.9
School completed								
Elementary: 0 to 8 years	32.3	35.1	36.7	42.9	42.6	23.2	27.7	32.7
High School: 1 to 3 years	36.9	41.2	41.3	44.4	45.6	27.0	30.9	33.8
4 years	47.3	57.5	54.7	58.7	58.9	40.5	42.2	44.1
College: 1 to 3 years	62.1	68.7	64.5	67.5	67.2	49.1	50.0	49.9
4 years or more	75.4	81.0	77.6	79.1	79.9	63.1	62.5	62.5

Source: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.



The 1996 Democratic National Convention Both political parties stage elaborate conventions to nominate their presidential candidates. *How has television affected political parties?*

for a candidate because their labor union, woman's rights group, environmental organization, or business association favors that candidate.

Nonpartisan Elections

Another trend that is weakening the parties is the increase in **nonpartisan**, or nonparty, elections. Some states require that certain elections, such as school board elections, be nonpartisan. Political parties are prohibited from participating, and candidates run on the strength of their own qualifications and personal appeal. The candidates organize and run their campaigns without help from any political party. After the election these officeholders owe nothing to a political party.

Despite all these factors, our two-party system is not about to disappear. Political parties are still the most effective means of raising the large sum of money necessary to campaign for national of-

fices. In addition, state and federal election laws help preserve the two-party system by discouraging third parties and independent candidates. The two-party system is likely to remain an important part of our political system for many years to come as it has since the early years of the Republic.

★ SECTION 4 REVIEW ★

UNDERSTANDING VOCABULARY

Define grassroots, accountable, nonpartisan.

REVIEWING OBJECTIVES

- 1 What are the five basic functions of political parties?
- 2 What factors are causing a weakening of loyalty to political parties today?

Identifying Key Terms

Choose the vocabulary term that best completes each of the sentences below. Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

plurality majority coalition
platform grassroots nonpartisan

1. With 52 percent of the total vote, the candidate won by a _____.
2. During the convention, the party developed its _____, its list of all the programs it wanted to accomplish.
3. Although none of the candidates won more than 50 percent of the vote, one of them won by a _____.
4. With no political parties represented, the school board election was a _____ election.
5. The three largest parties formed a _____ government to govern the country.
6. The environmental movement was started as a _____ movement of people on the local level.

Reviewing the Main Ideas

SECTION 1

1. Explain how the two-party system works.
2. What are the major disadvantages of a two-party system and a one-party system?

SECTION 2

3. What role have third parties played in the United States political system?
4. What were the major successes of the Populist party?

SECTION 3

5. Identify different types of jobs that active party members are asked to perform.
6. What is the purpose of a party's national convention?

SECTION 4

7. Identify three ways in which parties and their candidates inform the public.
8. Explain how political parties carry the message of the people to the government.

Critical Thinking

SECTION 1

1. **Making Inferences** The United States has many different groups of people. Why has our two-party system worked despite the differences among Americans?

SECTION 2

2. **Evaluating Information** Why are third parties important in our democratic system of government?

SECTION 3

3. **Analyzing Information** Explain why political machines do not usually result in good government. How do you think political machines could be controlled?

SECTION 4

4. **Predicting Consequences** How do you think our political system would differ if all people were required to become members of a political party?

Reinforcing Citizenship Skills

Find out where you can obtain a voter registration card. Make a list of the information you will need for the card. Share your information with the class.

Cooperative Learning

Work with a partner to collect print ads that advertise a political candidate. Find out what office the candidate is running for, what political party is sponsoring the candidate, and what the candidate's views are. Share your findings with the class.

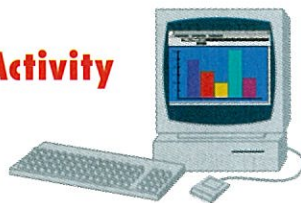
Focusing on Your Community

Investigate the political preferences of your community. Are most voters registered as Democrats or Republicans? Over the last three presidential elections, how did the majority of your community vote—Democratic or Republican? At the local level of government, which party does your community vote for most consistently? Report your findings to the class.

Technology Activity

Using E-Mail

Search the Internet for the e-mail addresses of the Democratic or Republican National Committees. You may use the following key words to focus your search: **Democratic Party; Republican Party; e-mail address, Congress.** Write

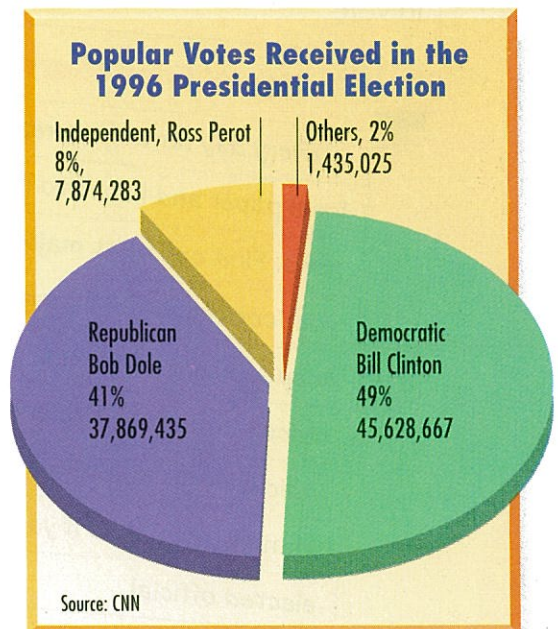


and send electronic mail to the party of your choice asking the party's position on issues that concern you and your classmates.

Analyzing Visuals

The following circle graph shows the popular votes in the 1996 presidential election. Study the graph, then answer the questions below.

1. By what margin in both the number and percentage of votes did Democratic party candidate Bill Clinton defeat Republican candidate Bob Dole?
2. What percentage of the popular vote did the third-party candidate receive?
3. How might the results have been different if there had been only two candidates?



Voting and Elections

CIVIC PARTICIPATION

The right to vote is one of the fundamental rights of citizens in a democratic society. Yet many Americans do not exercise this right. Contact the local chapter of the League of Women Voters or the county board of election commissioners to learn about the voting requirements in your state. Find out when and where a citizen can register to vote.

Find out also what forms a citizen needs to complete.

Working in Your Community

After you have obtained the information, conduct a poll in your neighborhood to learn who is registered to vote. If you have neighbors who are not registered, you might encourage them to do so and tell them the exact procedure they need to follow to register. ■

Your Civics Journal

Every day for a week, read the local paper and listen to local TV news. Find out what major issues your community is facing, and keep a record of them in your civics journal. Next to each issue, indicate your position and tell what you would do if you were an elected official.