

Political Participation

Voting rights have significantly expanded over time

suffrage – the right to vote

in absence of Constitutional law, states determine right to vote

15th amendment

Protects right to vote regardless of race, color, or creed

17th amendment

provides for the direct election of Senators

previously elected by state legislatures

19th amendment

women guaranteed the right to vote

24th amendment

prohibited poll taxes

26th amendment

dropped the minimum voting age to 18

previously 21 in the 14th amendment

Factors affecting voting

Linkage Institutions

Political Parties, Interest Groups, Media, Elections

Types of voters

issues vs. image voters

rational-choice voters

voting based on individual interest

retrospective voters

voting to reelect based on recent past

prospective voters

voting based on predictions for future performance

party-line voters

voting always for the same political party in all elections

alternative is independent voters

cross-pressured voters

Age

younger = liberal

older = conservative

Education

more formal education = conservative

less formal education = liberal

Economics

poor = liberal

wealthy = conservative

Cultural Background

minorities = liberal

WASP males = conservative

Why don't some people vote?

Voting requirements

age

residence

length of time required determined by state

citizenship

naturalization – the process of becoming a citizen

must file application and fee with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

must pass English and Civics test

must submit fingerprints for background check

must pass interview with gov. official

registration

periodic vs. permanent

ghost voting

Apathy

Lack of Knowledge

Too difficult to vote

How could voter turnout be increased?

Elections on weekends

Election holiday

Uniform voting hours across time zones

simplify the ballot, registration process

Fine non-voters

Some states have increased citizen involvement in democracy

Initiative

Direct – laws passed directly by voters, bypassing legislature

Indirect – voters pass only if legislature fails to pass

Referendum

Optional – legislature decides what bills to put before voters

Mandatory – law requires certain bills to be put before voters

Recall

allows voters to remove officeholder before end of term

Political Parties

groups of likeminded people who run candidates for office

Functions of political parties

recruiting and nominating candidates

educating the public

simplifying political choice

operating the government

acting as the opposition party

party that isn't in power

helping to reduce conflict

Organization of political parties

decentralized

no national control, many localized branches

candidates have become increasingly independent recently

National Nominating Convention

meets once every four years

nominates President & VP, writes party platforms

National Committee

organizes the party

plans conventions

organizes fund-raisers

coordinates advertising campaigns

State Committee

nominates and elects statewide party members

Precinct

local organization on county or city level

Patronage

system of rewards and favors given to those who assist the party

The Two Party Tradition

Why has the U.S. always had two major political parties?

Consensus

helps to simplify political choice

tradition

Federalists vs. Anti-Federalists

Republicans vs. Democrats today

single member district

plurality wins most elections

Third parties occasionally arise to challenge ideas of major parties

Types

single issue parties

Prohibition, Green

total change parties

Communists, Socialists, Libertarians

person party

Bull Moose(TR), Reform(Perot)

Impact

raise new issues and can swing elections

Problems

lack money, visibility, and organization

Election Campaigns

Campaign Organization

Candidate

Campaign Manager

Speechwriters, Public Relations, Finance, Voter Research

State & Local Organizations

Campaign Finance

Hard Money

Attempt at regulation by federal government

Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act – 2002

required “Stand by your Ad” provision

\$2000/candidate

\$40,000/party

\$50,000/campaign season total

Soft money (see below) banned

candidates who play by limits receive matching funds

must disclose money publicly on regular basis

Soft Money

money spent by “private” organizations

Political Action Committees (PAC’s)

protected by 1st Amendment

Buckley v. Valeo

Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission – 2010

Court removed restrictions from business contributions

Court allowed unlimited soft money

Organizations (business, labor) now donate to non-profits

Non-profits don’t have to release list of donors

Dark Money

contribute unlimited funds

SuperPACs – FEC vehicle for this spending

How do political parties select candidates for office?

Nomination methods

Petition

everyone who has certain number of signatures qualifies

Caucus

small number of party leaders select candidate

Nominating convention

see below

Direct Primary

election to see who will run for election ☺

closed primary

only party members vote

open primary

any registered voter eligible

runoff primary

if majority is necessary

Selecting Presidential Candidates

Republicans and Democrats have state primaries

most states have direct primaries

Iowa has caucus

electors are chosen to represent state at national convention

- states determine the date of primaries
- President & Vice-President nominated at Convention
 - four day televised event
 - Public speeches set tone and attempt to connect with voters
 - Keynote speaker (Wed) and nominating speaker (Thur)
 - prominent speeches that can launch careers
 - Rules Committee
 - sets rules for balloting of nominations
 - The Platform Committee
 - writes the party platform
 - consists of many “planks”
 - outlines party position on key issues
 - Nomination is determined by state by state balloting
 - most delegates must vote as instructed on 1st ballot
 - laws can vary by state
 - free agents after 1st ballot if no majority
 - dark-horse candidates
 - superdelegates
 - at large prominent party members
 - members of Congress, etc
 - Vice President is selected by the Presidential nominee
 - balancing the ticket
 - geography, age, military experience, philosophy
 - Thursday night candidates give acceptance speeches
 - mending fences within the party
- Presidential Candidates must win Electoral College to become President
 - elections held 1st Tuesday after 1st Monday in November every four years
 - popular vote determines electoral college vote
 - winner take all vs. proportional system
 - most states have winner take all electoral college votes
 - candidates need 270 out of 538 possible to win election
 - if there is no majority, House of Representatives chooses President
 - Senate chooses Vice President
 - each state gets one vote total in each House of Congress
- Presidents are sworn into office on January 20th of the following year
 - spend interim building cabinet and getting briefed