

CITIZENS BELIEFS AND BEHAVIORS



UNIT 3

PAY ATTENTION



LESSON 14 204-215

Political Opinions and Public Opinion

HOW DO WE GET OUR POLITICAL OPINIONS AND VALUES?

- Political socialization refers to the process by which we acquire our political beliefs

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SOURCES (AGENTS) OF POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

FAMILY

- Strongest
- Correlation between parent's party affiliation and child's party affiliation
- Less of a correlation on civil liberties and racial issues
- Fairly equal influence of mother and father
- When parents differ, child tends to associate w/beliefs of parent with whom he/she more closely identifies

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SOURCES (AGENTS) OF POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

SCHOOLS

- Convey basic values (e.g., civic duty, patriotism)

RELIGION

- Protestant
 - Generally more conservative
 - Evangelicals, especially, are most conservative on social issues
- Catholic
 - Traditionally more liberal
 - Greater acceptance of Catholics, greater inclusion into mainstream of society, and increasing importance of various social issues (abortion, gay rights) >> greater degree of conservatism. A majority of Catholics voted for Clinton, but Bush 43 won Catholic vote in 2004
- Jewish
 - Liberal influence, support for the Democratic Party

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SOURCES (AGENTS) OF POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

MASS MEDIA

- Wide exposure to papers, Internet, movies, TV
- Media provides link between individuals and values/behavior of others
- In 2000 attention was directed to problems of voting systems, Electoral College

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AWARENESS AND INTEREST

VARYING LEVELS OF INTEREST IN POLITICS

- Elites
 - Those w/disproportionate amounts of political resources
 - Raise issues and help set national agenda
 - Influence the resolution of issues
- Attentive public: those with an active interest in gov't and politics - 25 percent of the American public (better educated)
- Mass: those with little interest in gov't and politics
 - Nonvoters - 35 percent of the American public (subset "political know-nothings")

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AWARENESS AND INTEREST

VARYING LEVELS OF INTEREST IN POLITICS

- Political efficacy - belief that one can make a difference in politics by expressing an opinion and acting politically
 - Internal efficacy - the belief that one can understand politics and therefore participate in politics
 - External efficacy - the belief that one is effective in making a difference when participating in politics, for example that the government will respond to one's demands

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WHAT IS PUBLIC OPINION?

DEFINITIONS

- Public opinion is the distribution of individual preferences for or evaluations of a given issue, candidate, or institution within a specific population
- Distribution means the proportion of the population that holds one opinion or viewpoint as compared to those with opposing opinions or those with no opinion at all
- Individual preference means that when we measure public opinion, we are asking individuals about their opinions

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MEASUREMENT OF PUBLIC OPINION

- By elections: deceiving – does not tell us WHY people voted as they did
- By straw polls – inaccuracies
- By scientific polls
 - Through random means: where each person in universe has an equal chance of being selected (most important for getting an accurate measure of public opinion)
 - National polls typically require ~1,500-2,000 respondents
 - Margin of error: expressed in +/- terms
 - Can reduce margin of error by adding more respondents, but at some point diminishing returns set in
 - Questions must avoid a bias

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MEASUREMENT OF PUBLIC OPINION

- Uses of polls (remember - polls are a snapshot of opinion at a point in time)
 - Informing the public
 - Informing candidates
 - Informing office-holders
 - Making election night projections through the use of exit polls
- Abuses of polls
 - "Horse race" mentality emphasized during campaigns at expense of issues
 - Pandering to whims of public by candidates and office-holders
 - Early projections from exit polls may discourage voter turnout, esp. in West

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TYPE OF OPINIONS

- Stable: change very little (e.g., death penalty)
- Fluid: change frequently (e.g., presidential popularity)
- Latent: dormant, but may be aroused (e.g., military draft)
- Salient: have some personal importance to individuals (e.g., Brady and gun control)
- Consensus: shared by 75% of the people or more (e.g., having a balanced budget)
- Polarized: shared by less than 75% (e.g., gun control, ERA)

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Political Ideology

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POLITICAL IDEOLOGY AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS GOVERNMENT

IDEOLOGY

- Integrated set of beliefs and values that shape a person's views.

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LIBERALISM (GENERALLY DEMOCRATS)

CARDINAL ATTRIBUTES OF LIBERALISM

- Positive uses of government to bring about justice and equality of opportunity (larger government) such as social programs in the past
- Emphasis on protection of individual rights and liberties
- Emphasis on human rights in issues regarding foreign aid
- Less emphasis on military spending
- Higher taxes for the rich than for the poor
- Larger government

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LIBERALISM (GENERALLY DEMOCRATS)

CARDINAL ATTRIBUTES OF LIBERALISM

- Believe in possibility of progress, better future, equality of opportunity, minimum income level
- Liberals charge that conservatives act in self-interest, concerned with rich; Liberals concerned government should take care of weak
- Liberal view holds all people equal; wish to *lessen impact* of great inequalities of wealth
- Corporations seen as chief threat to liberty; Need for a strong central gov't to "smooth out the rough edges of capitalism."
- Set up programs to help criminals

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LIBERALISM (GENERALLY DEMOCRATS)

CRITICISMS OF LIBERALISM

- Too much reliance on governmental solutions, higher taxes, and bureaucrats
- Forgets that government has to be limited
- When government grows too big, it tends to start dictating us
- Too many governmental controls and too much taxation undermine the self-help ethic
- Welfare and regulatory state pushed by liberals will destroy true equality of economic opportunities

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CONSERVATISM (GENERALLY REPUBLICANS)**CARDINAL ATTRIBUTES OF CONTEMPORARY CONSERVATISM**

- Private property rights and belief in free enterprise (free market economy)
- Keep government small except in the area of national defense
- Government needs to ensure order; more pessimistic about human nature
- Preference for the status quo and desire change only in moderation
- Taxes should be low for everyone
- Prayers in public schools should not be banned

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CONSERVATISM (GENERALLY REPUBLICANS)**CARDINAL ATTRIBUTES OF CONTEMPORARY CONSERVATISM**

- Abortion is the murder of a fetus
- Strong defense budget
- Don't make America a welfare state
- Lock up criminals for crimes
- Human needs cared for by families/charities

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CONSERVATISM (GENERALLY REPUBLICANS)**CARDINAL ATTRIBUTES OF CONTEMPORARY CONSERVATISM**

- Emphatically pro-business
- Favor dispersing power broadly to avoid concentration of power at the national level
- Subordinate economic and social equality to liberty and freedom
- Government social activism has been expensive and counterproductive
- In 2000 campaign, Bush built upon churches in providing aid to needy but also tried to avoid hostility to all government assistance ("compassionate conservatism")

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CONSERVATISM (GENERALLY REPUBLICANS)**CRITICISMS OF CONSERVATISM**

- Hostility to government as counterproductive and inconsistent
- Conservatives have a selective opposition to government
- Government deficits grew during the 1980s when conservatives were in control
- Insensitivity to the social needs of the homeless and mentally ill
- Too much faith in our market economy
- Failure to acknowledge and endorse policies that deal with racism and sexism

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LIBERTARIANISM

- An ideology that cherishes individual liberty and insists on a sharply limited government (Federal government should only be used for national defense)
- Preaches opposition to government and just about all its programs
- Opposes all government regulation
- End government subsidies for businesses and farmers
- No gun laws, no drug laws, no gambling laws

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SOCIALISM

- An economic and governmental system based on public ownership of the means of production and exchange
- American socialists favor a greatly expanded role for the government, favor stepped-up efforts toward greater equality in property rights; would cut defense spending

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COUNTING VOTES

VOTING

- Political activity most often engaged in by Americans
- Originally the Constitution left the individual states free to determine the question of who could vote; eligibility standards for voting have been expanded by legislation and constitutional amendments
 - Religion (eliminated by state legislatures)
 - Property (eliminated by state legislatures)
 - Race (eliminated by 15th Amendment)
 - Gender (eliminated by 19th Amendment)
 - Income (eliminated by 24th Amendment banning poll tax)
 - Literacy (eliminated by Voting Rights Act of 1965)
 - Minimum of age 21 (eliminated by 26th Amendment)

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CURRENT QUALIFICATIONS TO VOTE

- Citizenship
- Residency
- Age
- Registration (in all states but ND)

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VOTER TURNOUT IN U.S. AS COMPARED TO FOREIGN NATIONS

- One of the lowest of any industrialized nation
- U.S.: < 50% in presidential elections, 30% - 40% in midterm congressional elections
- A decline since 1960
- Comparable industrialized nations in the West: as high as 90%
- Deceiving because the U.S. doesn't penalize for not voting

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REASONS FOR LOW VOTER TURNOUT

- Institutional barriers
 - *Registration*
 - Voter registration discourages voting
 - Registration laws vary by state, but is required in order to vote
 - The most important provision of voter registration is the closing date (no state can stop registration more than 30 days before election)
 - Effect of "motor voter" bill?
 - Allows people to register when applying for a renewal of driver's license
 - States can also use schools/libraries/city/county offices as registration sites
 - States can permit mail registration
 - Most registered claim to be Independents - thus neither party helped
 - Does not appear to have increased turnout

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REASONS FOR LOW VOTER TURNOUT

- Institutional barriers
 - *Long ballot*
 - *Weekday voting*
 - *Weakness of parties in mobilizing voters*
 - *Type of election*
 - General election turnout > primary election turnout
 - Chief executive election turnout > legislative election turnout
 - Presidential elections have highest turnout
 - National election turnout > state election turnout

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REASONS FOR LOW VOTER TURNOUT

- Institutional barriers
 - *Difficulties in obtaining absentee ballots*
 - *Too many elections*
 - *Voting in 19th century was filled with fraud – turnout may have been overstated – Progressive reforms (registration, Australian ballot) may have reduced fraud and therefore "turnout"*

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REASONS FOR LOW VOTER TURNOUT

- Political reasons
 - Lack of Political Efficacy
 - “Costs” of voting seem to outweigh benefits to many
 - Dissatisfaction with candidates, parties, and politics in general
 - Young people tend to have the lowest turnout. When the 26th Amendment was ratified, turnout “naturally” declined

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TURNOUT

- Turnout is highest in presidential general elections
- Turnout is higher in general elections than in primary elections and higher in primary elections than in special elections
- Turnout is higher in presidential general elections than in midterm general elections and higher in presidential primary elections than in midterm primary elections
- Turnout is higher in elections in which candidates for federal office are on the ballot than in state elections in years when there are no federal contests
- Local elections have lower turnout than state elections, and local primaries have even lower rates of participation

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WHO VOTES?

- Educational level
 - High levels of educational achievement are more likely to vote than those with low levels
 - Greatest predictor of voting that cuts across other factors
- Race
 - Whites vote at a higher rate than Blacks
 - Blacks vote at a higher rate than Hispanics
- Gender
 - Women voters exceed that of men

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WHO VOTES?

- Income and career
 - Higher family incomes are more likely to vote than those with lower incomes
 - Higher-status careers are more likely to vote than those with lower-status jobs
- Age
 - Older people, unless they are very old and perhaps infirm, are more likely to vote than younger people
 - Persons 18 to 24 years of age have a poor voting record; so do persons over 70

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OTHER FORMS OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION (INVOLVEMENT OTHER THAN VOTING)

- Petitions
- Demonstrations/marches/rallies
- Local party meetings
- Making campaign contributions
- Writing letters to the editor (or the internet equivalent)
- Trying to persuade others

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Voting Choices: Factors Affecting Voter Behavior

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VOTING ON THE BASIS OF POLITICAL PARTY AFFILIATION

- Party Identification – Our sense of identification or affiliation with a political party
- Probably the strongest predictor of voting
 - Geography (Red States & Blue States)
 - South: Increasingly Republican (because of Civil Rights Acts in 60s)
 - Great Plains: Republican
 - Rocky Mountain Region: Republican (Colorado swinging Democratic)
 - New England: Democratic
 - West Coast: Democratic
 - Great Lakes Region: Swing
 - Metropolitan/Urban Centers: Democratic
 - Rural Areas: Republican

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VOTING ON THE BASIS OF CANDIDATES

- Candidate appeal – how voters feel about a candidate's background, personality, leadership ability, and other personal qualities
- More people now "vote the man, not the party" than in the past
→ increase in Independents
 - In the past - *Straight ticket voting*
 - Voting for candidates from the same political party for every office on the ballot
 - Easier to do with party-column ballot
 - Decline in recent years ("vote the man, not the party")
 - In the present - *Split ticket voting*
 - Voting for candidates from two different political parties
 - Harder to do with office-column ballot
 - Increase in recent years ("vote the man, not the party")

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VOTING ON THE BASIS OF ISSUES

- Issues (state of the economy -> can be good or bad; war -> RALLY POINT is good)
- RETROSPECTIVE VOTING: looking back on whether or not things have gotten better or worse since the last election
- PROSPECTIVE VOTING: looking at the candidates' views on the issues, and how they will accordingly handle the office if elected

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VOTING BASED ON OTHER FACTORS

- Gender
 - Women are more likely to vote Democratic, especially if they are single
 - More liberal on issues such as military action, capital punishment, gun control, social programs such as Social Security, education funding, and environmental initiatives
 - Men are more likely to vote Republican
 - Sex-sensitive issues (e.g., abortion, pornography, gun control, war) provoke different views among the sexes
 - GENDER GAP – in voting refers to the difference in the percentage of women and the percentage of men voting for a given candidate.

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VOTING BASED ON OTHER FACTORS

- Race
 - Whites: more conservative, greater support for Republicans
 - Blacks: more liberal, STRONGEST SUPPORTERS of Democratic Party (>90% Dem. in recent presidential elections)
 - Hispanics:
 - Mexican-Americans and Puerto Ricans more liberal and supportive of Democrats
 - Cubans more conservative and supportive of Republicans
 - Asians: supportive of Democrats (Obama won 62% in 2008 and 73% in 2012 elections)

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VOTING BASED ON OTHER FACTORS

- Social class
 - Lower: more likely than upper to vote Democratic
 - Upper: more likely than lower to vote Republican
- Religion
 - Protestant: more likely to vote Republican
 - Catholic: more likely to vote Democratic, but some slippage in recent years
 - Jewish: more likely to vote Democratic

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Elections and Running for Congress

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FIXED, STAGGERED, AND SOMETIMES LIMITED TERMS

- Electoral system is based on fixed terms, meaning that the length of a term in office is set, not indefinite
 - The term of office for the U.S. House of Representatives is two years (can be elected as many times as they want)
 - The term of office for the Senate is six years (can be elected as many times as they want)
 - The term of presidency is four years (can only serve two full terms – 22nd amendment)

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REGULARLY SCHEDULED ELECTIONS

- Elections are held at fixed intervals that cannot be changed by the party in power.
 - National government establishes WHEN they will be held
 - States determine HOW the voting will occur
- It does not make any difference if the nation is at war, as we were during the Civil War, or in the midst of a crisis, as in the Great Depression; when the calendar calls for an election, the election is held.

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REGULARLY SCHEDULED ELECTIONS

- Elections for members of Congress occur on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November of even-numbered years.
- Although there are some exceptions (for special elections or peculiar state provisions), participants know *in advance* just when the next election will be.
- The predetermined timing of elections is one of the defining characteristics of democracy in the United States.

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FIXED, STAGGERED, AND SOMETIMES LIMITED TERMS

- Our electoral system has staggered terms for some offices, meaning that not all offices are up for election at the same time
 - All House members are up for election every two years
 - Only one-third of the senators are up for election at the same time
 - President is elected every four years

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FIXED, STAGGERED, AND SOMETIMES LIMITED TERMS

- Our electoral system has limits on the number of terms a person can hold a particular office
 - The Twenty-second Amendment limits presidents to two terms
 - Despite their popularity, proposals for term limits have repeatedly lost when they have come to a vote in Congress
 - If term limits are to be imposed on Congress, it will have to be done either by an amendment to the U.S. Constitution since the Supreme Court has ruled term limits for congressional offices (as set by the states) unconstitutional

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WINNER-TAKES-ALL

- The candidate with the most votes wins
- Most American election districts are single-member districts, meaning that in any district for any given election, the voters choose one representative or official
- When a single-member district is combined with the winner-takes-all rule, there is a powerful push to sustain a two-party system
- In contrast to the winner-takes-all rule, proportional representation rewards minor parties and permits them to participate in government

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RUNNING FOR CONGRESS

PRIMARY ELECTIONS

- Definition – elections in which the voters choose which candidate will represent their political party in the general election (Democrat vs. Democrat; Republican vs. Republican)
- **Closed**
 - Used in most states
 - Only registered party members can vote for partisan offices, no crossing of party lines
- **Open**
 - Independents may vote, voters get ballot of any one party they wish
 - Crossing of party lines allowed >> danger of “raiding”
- **Blanket (“free love”)**
 - Independents may vote, voters can “mix and match” their votes
 - i.e. vote for candidates of different parties for different offices
 - Unconstitutional

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FACTORS AFFECTING OUTCOMES OF CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS

- **Inc incumbency: The Greatest Influence**
 - Scope of incumbency advantage
 - +90% of Congressmen who run are reelected, +80% of Senators
 - Lack of competitiveness >> charges of “permanent congress” and the call for congressional term limits (ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court)

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FACTORS AFFECTING OUTCOMES OF CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS

- **Inc incumbency: The Greatest Influence**
 - Advantages of Incumbents
 - Franking Privilege
 - Staff already in place
 - Patronage
 - Casework done for constituents
 - Gerrymandered Districts (Safe Seats)
 - Name Recognition
 - Pork Barrel projects for the district
 - “War Chest” built up to discourage challengers from running

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FACTORS AFFECTING OUTCOMES OF CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS

- Coattail effect – The extent of presidential popularity affects both House and Senate elections
 - President’s party generally gains seats in the House and Senate in presidential election year
 - President’s party generally loses seats in the House and Senate in midterm election year
- Media, especially in Senate elections
- Party affiliation – still a strong predictor of voting behavior
- Issues – House seats lost relates to presidential popularity/economic conditions

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THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

- Inc incumbent campaigns; In 2000, 98% of House incumbents were successful
- Weak challenger campaigns (don’t have perks such as franking privilege)
- Strong challenger campaigns (due to incumbent vulnerability and challenger wealth)
- Open seat campaigns (through death, retirement, redistricting-promotes some turnover)

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THE SENATE

- The six-year term and the national exposure make a Senate seat competitive
- The essential tactics of Senate races are much like those for the House
- Incumbency is an advantage for senators, although not as much as for representatives
- Competitive elections increase in number when Senate only controlled by a few votes

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Running for President

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STAGE 1: THE NOMINATION PHASE

- Primary
 - Used by more than three-fourths of the states
 - More power to the people because of increased use of primaries (more direct form of democracy)
 - Political parties have less control over nominations
 - More money is spent on elections to win peoples' votes

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STAGE 1: THE NOMINATION PHASE

- Primary
 - The main feature of a presidential primary is that the voters of a particular state are deciding which "delegates" they will send to the national party convention
 - Delegates may be selected on a proportional basis or
 - Delegates maybe selected on a "winner-takes-all" basis
 - Superdelegates
 - Used by the Democrats
 - Party leaders and party officeholders (Reps, Senators, Governors) and others
 - Not pledged (can vote for whoever they want)
 - Designed to pick candidate with best chance to win the general election

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STAGE 1: THE NOMINATION PHASE

- ### Primary
- Importance of the New Hampshire Primary: 1st state to hold primary each election year
 - "Super Tuesday" – Date in which many southern states held their primaries early in the election season
 - "Front Loading" trend – primaries are held earlier and earlier in the year (California moved primary to March 2000 – since moved back) for states to be more relevant

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STAGE 1: THE NOMINATION PHASE

- Caucus
 - Some states use caucus (also called convention or conference) method of sending delegates to National Convention
 - A caucus is a meeting of party members and supporters of various candidates; it centers on the party organization
 - The process starts at local meetings open to all party members, who take positions on candidates and issues and elect delegates to represent their views at the next level; this process repeats until national nominating convention delegates are chosen
 - Local Caucuses >> District Convention >> State Convention >> National Convention. Each level selects delegates to attend higher level.
 - Importance of Iowa Caucuses – first in nation (even before New Hampshire primary)

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STAGE 2: THE NATIONAL CONVENTION

- The national party convention - Convention of a political party (held in July or August) usually composed of delegates chosen by state primaries or caucuses
- Selection of presidential nominee
 - Candidate that wins the majority of the overall delegate vote is the party's nominee
 - A mere formality since the winner is known well ahead of time
 - Emphasis on "image" instead of "scrimmage" - "ratification rather than nomination"
- Selection of Vice-President Nominee
 - Chosen by the Presidential nominee and rubber stamped by the convention
 - "Balancing the Ticket"
- Development of Party Platform
- Reconciliation and unification of party by the end of the convention ("healing the wounds")

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STAGE 3: THE GENERAL ELECTION

- Fall Campaign**
 - Debates
 - Advertising and campaigning in "swing states"
- Election Day**
 - First Tuesday after the first Monday in years divisible by four
 - November 8, 2016
- Electors Election**
 - First Monday after the second Wednesday in December
 - December 19, 2016
- Inauguration Day**
 - Established by the 20th Amendment (used to be March 4)
 - January 20 (2017)

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ANALYSIS OF PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATING SYSTEM

- Pro:**
 - Highly participatory: caucuses, primaries, conventions
 - Highly representative
 - Weeds out weaker candidates
- Con:**
 - Low rates of turnout
 - Too lengthy
 - Does not test candidates for qualities they need as President. Too much emphasis on media game – horse race.
 - Delegates at caucuses and conventions tend to be unrepresentative: more ideological, more activist, more educated, less moderate, much more wealthy. "Selectorate" replaces the "electorate."
 - Voters in primaries tend to be better educated and more affluent than those in general elections -> more ideological

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THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

RATIONALE FOR SUCH A SYSTEM AT THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

- Poor communication >> common people would lack essential information
- Desire to have the nation's elite select the President. Fear that demagogues might sway the common people (mobocracy).
- A compromise by those who wanted direct election and those who wanted the Congress to elect the President

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ALLOTMENT OF ELECTORAL VOTES TO THE STATES

- Each state has as many electoral votes as it has members of Congress
- Minimum Number = 3
- Washington D.C. has 3 votes by virtue of Amendment 23
- Total of 538 Votes
- California has the highest number (55)
- Implications of movement of people from "Rust Belt" to "Sun Belt" – California and other western states picked up votes in Census 2000 and Census 2010

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THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

SELECTION OF ELECTORS

- Each party develops a "slate" of electors prior to the election
- Typically loyal party members

WINNING OF ELECTORAL VOTES

- Candidate with most popular votes (plurality) wins all of that state's electoral votes (winner-take-all) >> concentration of campaigning in large, competitive states (swing states)
- Electors meet in state capitals in December to cast ballots

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THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

WINNING THE ELECTION

- Majority of Electoral Votes (270) needed to win
- If no candidate has majority – 12th amendment
 - House selects President among top 3 candidates
 - Each state has 1 vote
 - Done in 1800 and 1824
 - Senate selects V.P. from among top two candidates
 - Every senator casts a vote

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THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

PROS OF THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

- Represents our federal system, with its emphasis on the states and their representatives.
- Every state to have a voice, including the small states. These states might be overlooked if the election was decided by the results of the popular vote.
- Prevents sectionalism by requiring a winning candidate to have support from throughout the country.
- Contributed to political stability by promoting the two-party system. That system encourages the major parties to represent a wide range of interests.
- May strengthen the power of organized interest groups, such as women voters or minority voters. These groups can play a powerful role in deciding the outcome of close elections.

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THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

CRITICISMS

- Concentration of campaigning in a few large, swing states to tip the balance of the electoral college
- The allocation of electoral votes in the winner-take-all system exaggerates the margin of victory
- President can be elected with only a plurality, rather than a majority, of popular votes, especially with presence of strong 3rd party candidates
- Possibility of a "minority" President (1824, 1876, 1888, 2000)
- "Faithless Electors" - no Federal law requires electors to vote the way they are "supposed" to vote
- Small states proportionally over-represented
- Small states ridiculously over-represented if election goes to the House (Alaska would have same voting power as California)
- Inhibits development of third parties

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THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

ALTERNATIVES

- Direct Election: Everyone's vote would be worth the same
- District System: Candidate who wins a Congressional District wins that district's electoral vote; Candidate who wins the overall state popular vote wins the two "Senate" electoral votes (Maine and Nebraska currently use this system)
- Proportional System (Candidate gets same % of electoral votes as popular votes)
- Keep electoral votes but abolish the electors themselves

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MOVED TO UNIT 4

Money in U.S. Elections

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EFFORTS TO REFORM

Strategies to prevent abuse in political contributions

- Imposing limitations on giving, receiving, and spending political money
- Requiring public disclosure of the sources and uses of political money
- Giving governmental subsidies to PRESIDENTIAL candidates, campaigns, and parties, including incentive arrangements

The Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA)

- limited the amount that candidates for federal office can spend on media advertising
- established a fund for public donations to presidential campaigns (not done for congressional campaigns)
- set up rules for the disclosure of all campaign financing and spending information
- established limits on personal contributions to presidential and congressional candidates
- created a fund for public donations to congressional campaigns
- established the Federal Election Commission to regulate campaign financing

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EFFORTS TO REFORM

Post-Watergate reforms

- 1974 amendments to FECA established realistic limits on contributions and spending, tightened disclosure, and provided for public financing of presidential campaigns; the amount of public subsidy rises with inflation
- The law had to be amended after the 1976 *Buckley v. Valeo* decision, but the basic outline of the act remained unchanged
- *Buckley v. Valeo*
 - SC case that challenged most of the provisions in the Federal Election Campaign Act, as amended in 1974.
 - SC upheld the law's requirements that candidates, parties, PACs and groups engaging in express advocacy disclose their fund-raising and spending.
 - SC also affirmed voluntary public financing and limits on individual contributions.
 - SC struck down, as infringements on free speech, limits on campaign spending (unless the candidate accepts public financing), limits on contributions by candidates to their own campaigns (unless publicly financed) and limits on independent expenditures (election spending by outside interest groups not coordinated with candidates or their committees).

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EFFORTS TO REFORM

Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002 (BCRA)

- Enacted in 2002, BCRA constituted the first major revision of campaign finance law in more than 25 years.
- Bans unlimited soft money contributions to the national political parties and prohibits federal officeholders from soliciting soft money.
- Barred special interest groups from spending soft money on so-called "issue ads" that identify a specific federal candidate within 60 days of a general election or 30 days of a primary election. Such ads were widely viewed as thinly veiled attempts to support or oppose a candidate's election with unlimited funds.
 - January 2010, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that prohibition was unconstitutional in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*.

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EFFORTS TO REFORM

Soft money

- Definition – Funds given to state and local parties by political parties, individuals, or PACs for voter registration drives and party mailings
- Federal law does not require disclosure of its source or use
- Although soft money is supposed to benefit only state and local parties, it influences federal elections
- Mostly illegal now; Soft money >> purchased access to elected officials >> influence and the possibility or appearance of corruption

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RESISTING REFORM

Issue Advocacy

- Definition – Promoting a particular position or an issue paid for by interest groups or individuals but not candidates
- SC ruled that groups were free to run ads during the campaign season as long as the ads did not use words such as "vote for" or "vote against" a specific candidate, "defeat" or "elect"
- Interest groups found ways to avoid disclosure or to communicate an electioneering message

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RESISTING REFORM

Independent expenditures

- Definition – Money spent by individuals or groups not associated with candidates to elect or defeat candidates for office
- Current finance laws do not constrain independent expenditures by groups or individuals who are separate from political candidates due to free speech
- Political parties have the same rights to make independent expenditures afforded to groups and individuals

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RESISTING REFORM

Super PACs

- Definition – Type of organization that can receive unlimited money from individuals, unions, and corporations
- *Citizens United v. FEC*
 - SC rejected longstanding ban on unions and corporations using their general funds on ads about the election or defeat of a candidate
- Independent expenditures only – cannot coordinate directly with a candidate running for office

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CONTINUING PROBLEMS WITH CAMPAIGN FINANCE***Rising costs of campaigns***

- Since the FECA became law in 1972, total expenditures by candidates for the House have more than doubled after controlling for inflation, and they have risen even more in Senate elections

Declining competition

- The high cost of campaigns dampens competition by discouraging individuals from running for office (challengers in both parties are underfunded)

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CONTINUING PROBLEMS WITH CAMPAIGN FINANCE***Dependence on PACs for congressional incumbents***

- PACs do not want to offend politicians in power, and politicians in power want to stay in office
- Politicians turn to individual donors who can contribute \$500 or \$1,000 to their campaigns
- Donors want access and politicians to respond to their concerns and/or pass certain policies
- PAC defenders argue there is no proven link between contributions and legislators' votes
- Candidates' personal wealth
- Growth in individual contributions and use of the internet to fund campaigns

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