

Parties and Elections in America, Fourth Edition
Chapter One

Outline

1 Elections and Political Parties

I. An Examination of Elections in the United States

II. The Role of Elections in Democratic Theory

A. Modes of Elections

1. Direct Elections

2. Indirect Elections

B. Implications for Representation

1. Representatives' Perspectives

2. The Public's Perspective and the Role of Parties in Representation

III. Definitions of "Political Party" and "Party Systems"

IV. Politicians View the Party System

Key Concepts

CADRE PARTIES

Parties dominated by politically elite groups of activists

COMPETITIVE TWO-PARTY SYSTEM

A system dominated by the two main political parties, Republicans and Democrats

DECENTRALIZATION

Power and decision making are removed from the most central locus in a political system and spread to regional and local officials

EQUAL PROTECTION CLAUSE

The phrase in section 1 of the Fourteenth Amendment to the US Constitution that guarantees that no state may deny any person within its jurisdiction the "equal protection of the laws"

LEGISLATIVE TERM LIMITS

Fixed limitations on the number of terms of office that members of a legislature may serve

LEGITIMACY

Acceptance of the right of public officials to hold office and to promulgate policies because of the means by which they were chosen

LINKAGE

That which connects one actor or set of actors in a polity with others

MASS MEMBERSHIP PARTIES

Political parties characterized by large memberships that determine party direction; tend to have ideological positions and play an educational role in the system; concern is with governing more than electing

PARTISAN ELECTIONS

Elections in which those on the ballot are identified by their political party affiliation; by contrast, in nonpartisan elections no designation appears next to a candidate's name

PARTY IN GOVERNMENT

Members of a political party who are serving in an official capacity in the government

PARTY IN THE ELECTORATE

Those who support a political party at the polls—the loyal followers

PARTY ORGANIZATION

The formal structure of a political party's professional and volunteer workers

PARTY UNITY SCORES

The percentage of time a legislator votes with his or her party on those votes on which a majority of one party votes against a majority of the other party

PARTY UNITY VOTE

A vote in a legislature in which a majority of one party votes in opposition to a majority in the other party

PARTY SYSTEMS

Electoral arrangements in which two or more parties compete for support of the electorate and control of the government and take each other into account as they set various electoral and governing strategies

POLITICAL CULTURE

Norms, expectations, and values concerning political life in a particular polity or region

POPULAR SUPPORT

Public approval of the officials running the government and, by implication, of the policies they are pursuing

REAGAN REVOLUTION

Changes in policy direction, reversing liberal policies with conservative alternatives, thought to follow from the election of President Reagan in 1980

SOFT MONEY

Money raised for political purposes that is outside of the constraints specified under the Federal Election Campaign Act, unregulated money not to be used directly for federal campaigns

THIRD PARTIES

Political parties that enter into electoral contests without having a realistic chance of winning an election; at times these parties do affect the outcome of the contest between the two major parties

Questions for Discussion

1. Concerning citizen input into government decisions through elections, do you think it is preferable to have more elections (with the electorate asked to decide fewer questions each time) or fewer elections (with more items on the ballot each time citizens are asked to vote)? What factors should you consider in making this judgment?
2. Ideally, would you prefer American political parties of the mass membership type or the cadre type as identified by Duverger? Why? What is it about a political system that would make one variety of party more appropriate?
3. How would you describe the level of party competition in your hometown? In your state? What criteria did you use to come to this judgment?
4. How effective do you think elections are in “controlling” political officeholders? Do you think those who have been elected to represent you think about how their decisions will affect their chances for reelection? Do you know how your local

representatives or those who represent you in Washington stand on the issues that you care most about?