

Parties and Elections in America, Fourth Edition
Chapter Two

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Key Concepts

AUSTRALIAN BALLOT

The form of secret ballot that came into use in the United States during the Progressive era

CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964

An important piece of legislation, passed as a tribute to President Kennedy after his assassination, that included among its major provisions equal access to public accommodations without regard to race

CIVIL SERVICE SYSTEM

The system of filling government positions through tests of merit rather than allegiance to a political party, instituted in the United States after the assassination of President Garfield

CONGRESSIONAL CAUCUS

The meeting of all members of Congress affiliated with one party; used during the early period to nominate candidates for president

“CORRUPT BARGAIN”

The claim that Henry Clay threw his support in the House of Representatives in the 1824 presidential election to John Quincy Adams, thereby ensuring Adams’s election, in exchange for Clay’s appointment as secretary of state

CRITICAL ELECTION

An election in which there is a sharp alteration of preexisting cleavages within the electorate

DECRUITMENT

The effort of party officials to discourage an individual from seeking a particular party nomination

DEMOCRATIC CONGRESSIONAL CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE (DCCC, or “D triple C”)

The Democrats’ party committee that is charged with raising money for and aiding in the campaigns of candidates for the House of Representatives

DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEE (DNC)

The ruling body for the Democratic party between national conventions

DEMOCRATIC SENATORIAL CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE (DSCC)

The Democratic party committee that is charged with raising money for and aiding in the campaigns of candidates for the US Senate

DIRECT PRIMARY ELECTION

A preliminary election where delegates or nominees are chosen directly by voters

DIVIDED GOVERNMENT

A political system in which the executive branch and the legislative branch represent opposing political parties

ELECTORAL VOTE

The votes cast by electors in the indirect system used for choosing the president of the United States; each state is allotted a number of electors equivalent to the number of representatives in Congress plus the number of senators; states determine how the electors will be selected; the winner is the candidate with a majority of the electoral votes

FACTIONS

Divisions within the population, forming at first over economic interests, that were the precursors of American political parties

FEDERALIST PARTY

One of the first American political parties, composed of the followers of George Washington and the architect of his administration's policies, Alexander Hamilton

FREE SOIL PARTY

Another of the pre-Civil War parties that focused on the issue of slavery

GRASSROOTS

The rank-and-file voters or party members

HILL COMMITTEES

The name applied to the four party committees, one for each party in each house, charged with aiding candidates for Congress

INITIATIVE

The process through which citizens can bring a proposed law to a vote by the electorate without legislative approval

JEFFERSONIAN (OR DEMOCRATIC) REPUBLICANS

The party of Thomas Jefferson that formed around opposition to many of the policies proposed by Alexander Hamilton

KING CAUCUS

The domination of the nominating process by the legislative caucus

LIBERTY PARTY

One of the pre-Civil War parties that brought the issue of slavery into the forefront of the nation's political agenda

LINE OF CLEAVAGE

Dividing line that separates supporters of one party from those of another

LOCAL PARTY ORGANIZATIONS

The level of party organization, composed of precinct and ward leaders, that is geographically closest to the voters; in age of strong parties such organizations were cemented together by material incentives controlled by powerful leaders

MATERIAL INCENTIVES

Tangible rewards for work well done

NATIONAL CHAIRS

The heads of the national committees, charged with the day-to-day functioning of the national parties

NATIONAL COMMITTEES

The pinnacle of the national party organizations, comprised of delegates from the states and from groups important to the political parties

NATIONAL PARTY CONVENTION

A means of nominating presidential candidates by delegates from each state; replaced the congressional caucus as part of democratizing reforms of the Jacksonian era

NATIONAL REPUBLICAN CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE (NRCC)

The Republicans' party committee that is charged with raising money for and aiding in the campaigns of candidates for the House of Representatives

NATIONAL REPUBLICAN SENATORIAL COMMITTEE (NRSC)

The Republican party committee that is charged with raising money for and aiding in the campaigns of candidates for the US Senate

NEW DEAL COALITION

A diverse collection of groups of voters who supported the US Democratic party from 1932 until 1964, making it majority party at that time

NONPARTISAN ELECTION

Elections that are determined without reference to a candidate's party affiliation

PARTY REFORMS

The efforts to change the rules and proceedings of the political parties to make them more democratic and responsive to the citizenry

PARTY RENEWAL

The effort to change the way in which political parties operate so that they can play a more important role in the electoral process

PATRONAGE

Jobs or other material incentives given to party campaign workers after a successful election

PATRONAGE SYSTEM

An incentive-and-reward system through which those loyal to, and working for, a political party benefit materially when that party wins elections and holds office

PERSONAL VOTE

A measure of the vote cast for a candidate because of his or her personal following as opposed to his or her partisan following, thus an important contributor to the electoral advantage held by incumbents

POLITICAL BOSSES

Derogatory characterization of the leaders of a local party organizations

POLITICAL MACHINE

A group that controls the activities of a political party

POPULAR VOTE

An election in which the winner is decided by the number of citizens casting their votes directly for particular candidates

REALIGNING ELECTIONS

Elections in which the lines of cleavage on which the electorate is divided shift, resulting often, but not always, in a new majority party; see page 489 for discussion of CONVERTING ELECTIONS, MAINTAINING ELECTIONS, and DEVIATING ELECTIONS

REALIGNMENTS

Fundamental changes in the party system signaled by a new line of cleavage and significant shifting of individuals' party identification; see page 489 for discussion of SECULAR REALIGNMENT

RECALL

A procedure through which citizens by petition can call for a vote on removing an elected official from office before the end of his or her term

RECRUITMENT

Effort by party officials to find candidates to run for various offices

REFERENDUM

An election in which the citizens are asked to vote directly on passage of a piece of legislation

REPUBLICAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE (RNC)

The highest-ranking body in the Republican party, though party rules restrict its power in ways in which the DNC cannot

REPUBLICAN PARTY

The political party, formed in 1854, that emerged as the major alternative to the Democrats on the issue of the spread of slavery and has remained one of the two parties dominating American politics since that time

SENATORIAL COURTESY

The right of any US senator to veto (and as a practical matter to approve) any appointee from that senator's state if the appointment requires senatorial confirmation

SEVENTEENTH AMENDMENT

The amendment to the US Constitution that calls for the direct election of US senators; prior to its adoption in 1913, senators had been appointed by state legislatures

SPLIT TICKET VOTING

Casting votes for candidates of more than one party in the same election—for example, voting for the Democratic candidate for president and the Republican candidate for the US House

SPOILS SYSTEM

Reward system under which the spoils of victory, that is, patronage, went to the party workers from the winning party, at the expense of workers for the losing party

VOTING RIGHTS ACT OF 1965

Critical piece of civil right legislation that permitted the federal government to impose federal registrars on voting districts in which a minority of black citizens were registered to vote

WHIGS

Political party that succeeded the Federalists and competed with the Democratic Republicans through much of the pre–Civil War period

Questions for Discussion

1. What theoretical value do we derive from dividing the development of American political parties into distinct party systems?
2. How did the reforms of the Progressive Era fundamentally change the power of the parties over the electoral process?
3. Critical elections of the past have revolved around pressing issues of the day. In 1992 H. Ross Perot tried to make dissatisfaction with the way today's politicians were handling the business of governing a central issue in an election that would see the emergence of a new party. Why didn't his appeal work?
4. Can you think of any issues that are so important to citizens today that they could divide the country in a critical election? What do you think would cause an issue to reach that level of importance?

5. Given your understanding of the historical development of American parties, assess the “strength” of the Democratic and Republican parties in 2004. In your opinion, are parties on a trajectory of decline? Are parties rebounding in organizational strength and electoral value?