

Parties and Elections in America, Fourth Edition
Chapter Six

Outline

6 State and Local Nominations

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 3. Louisiana: An Exception
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Key Concepts

BLANKET PRIMARY

Primary election in which all names appear on one ballot, and each voter selects one candidate running for each race on the ballot; the candidates with the highest totals in each party qualify for the general election ballot

CAUCUSES

Local meetings of party members, often used to elect delegates to conventions; used to endorse or nominate candidates in some states

CHALLENGE PRIMARY

Primary election held after a nominating convention at which the convention's nominee can be challenged by a defeated candidate who must meet some specified criteria

CLOSED PRIMARIES

Primaries in which only voters enrolled in a particular party may participate

CONVENTIONS

Meetings of party members to endorse or nominate candidates for office, adopt platforms, and establish party rules

CROSS-FILING

Nominating system that permits a candidate to seek the nomination of more than one political party

CROSSOVER VOTING

Practice of members of one political party voting in the other party's primary, presumably to nominate the weaker candidate

DELEGATES

Party members who are elected to a convention to participate in doing the party's business

GERRYMANDERING

Drawing district lines to achieve certain political purposes

MAJORITY

Receiving one half plus at least one of the votes cast

MAJORITY MINORITY DISTRICTS

Districts in which a majority of the citizens or voters are members of a minority race

MAJORITY RULE

An election system in which a candidate must receive one half plus at least one of the votes cast in order to be declared the victor

NONPARTISAN PRIMARY

Primary used only in Louisiana in which all of the candidates appear on one primary ballot and any candidate who polls a majority of the votes is declared the winner without competition in the general election

ONE PERSON-ONE VOTE

Principle that reapportionment and redistricting must be accomplished in such a manner that each district has, to the extent possible, the same population and, therefore, each person's vote counts equally

OPEN PRIMARY

Primary in which each voter may choose one party's ballot or the other

OPEN SEATS

Seats in which no incumbent is running for reelection

PLURALITY

Receiving more votes than any other candidate

PLURALITY RULE

An election system in which a candidate receiving a plurality of the votes is declared the winner

PREPRIMARY CONVENTIONS

Party conventions held in advance of a primary to endorse one of the candidates running in that primary

QUALIFIED CANDIDATES

Candidates who are thought by experts to have the characteristics necessary to run a strong campaign

REAPPORTIONMENT

The reallocation of districts among the states after each census so that each state receives at least one representative in Congress and all other state delegation sizes reflect population

REDISTRICTING

The redrawing of the lines for legislative districts that takes place after decennial censuses

RUNOFF PRIMARY

Primary between the top two finishers in states that require majority votes in order to nominate

Questions for Discussion

1. Who benefits from open primaries as opposed to closed primaries? Blanket primaries? What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of each system?
2. Describe the nominating process in your state. Why do you think your state has developed that kind of system as opposed to one of the others? What do you think would happen if the system were drastically changed?
3. The Republican U.S. Senate primary in California pitted an ideological conservative against a more moderate candidate in a contest to face the very liberal Democratic incumbent, Barbara Boxer. Do you believe that California's blanket primary system helped the Republicans field the candidate with the best opportunity to beat Boxer? Do you think the system was best designed to help Republicans settle internal ideological conflicts?
4. New York State law was recently amended to make access to the ballot somewhat easier. An opponent of stringent ballot access requirements claimed proudly that he used to live in a state in which all one needed was fifty signatures to get on the ballot. What are the advantages and disadvantages of easier versus harder requirements to get on the primary ballot?
5. In states as diverse as Rhode Island, Virginia, and Utah, political parties play an important formal role in winning a primary election. In other states, like New Hampshire, Maryland, and Wyoming, that role is much less important. What role does party play in your state? What are the advantages and disadvantages of an increased party role?

6. Most incumbents win renomination either without opposition or quite easily. Thus it could be argued that the system is stacked in their favor—and thus is undemocratic. It could also be argued that the system merely gives popular officeholders a chance to retain their position. What do you think?