

*Parties and Elections in America, Fourth Edition*  
*Chapter Nine*

**Outline**

9 Presidential Elections

I. From the Convention to the General Election

II. Organizing for the General Election

A. Structuring the Campaign Organization

1. The Campaign Headquarters
2. The National Committee
3. The Mobile Headquarters
4. Division and Integration of Authority and Responsibility

B. Functions of a Presidential Campaign Organization

1. Grassroots Politics
2. Staffing the Candidate's Plane
3. Staffing the Campaign Headquarters

C. Directing the Campaign Organization

1. The Inner Core
2. Expanding the Core
3. Co-opting the Losers

D. Setting a Campaign Strategy

III. Strategies for the General Election

A. Geographic Determinations

B. Coalition Strategies

C. Issue Strategies

1. Campaign Themes
2. Character as a Campaign Issue
3. The Issues Raised during a Campaign

D. The Strategic Use of Incumbency

IV. Tactics for the General Election

A. Tactical Considerations of Where to Go

B. Tactical Considerations of Media Use

- C. Tactical Considerations of Which Issues to Discuss
- D. The Tactics of Presidential Debates
- V. Third-Party Candidates in Presidential Elections
- VI. Politicians View the Campaigns

### ***Key Concepts***

#### **DIXIECRATS**

Southern Democrats who walked out of the 1948 Democratic National Convention in protest over the party's civil rights plank and ran Strom Thurmond as their candidate for president

#### **ELECTORAL COLLEGE**

The indirect means through which US presidents and vice presidents are chosen

#### **ELECTORAL VOTES**

The actual votes cast for president and vice president by the electors, members of the electoral college, chosen for that purpose alone

#### **EQUAL TIME PROVISION**

Regulation requiring that regulated media provide an equal amount of time to any candidate in an election in which they have given time to another candidate

#### **FEDERAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN ACT OF 1971**

Reform of the way in which the financing of elections is regulated that was the precursor to the current legislation

#### **FOCUS GROUPS**

Technique used by pollsters to explore deeper aspects of public opinion

#### **INFOMERCIAL**

Long television commercials, exemplified by those used by H Ross Perot, that purport to provide voters with enough information to make informed choices

#### **POPULAR VOTE**

Direct vote for a candidate as opposed to an indirect method such as the electoral college

#### **ROLLING SAMPLE**

Technique used by pollsters to gauge public opinion by continuously replacing one portion of the group they are polling each night with a newly selected group

#### **SOFT MONEY**

Campaign money raised and spent but not regulated by limitations of the FECA

**STRATEGY**

The overall design of a campaign

**TACTICS**

The specific techniques used to implement the overall strategic design

**THIRD-PARTY CANDIDATES**

Candidates on the ballot representing any parties other than the two major parties

**TRIANGULATION**

The effort to position oneself between extreme positions so as to draw support from both sides

***Questions for Discussion***

1. What is your understanding of the electoral college system? Specifically, what difference does it make that our presidents are elected by the electoral college and not popularly? Do you think campaigns would be run differently were this not the case? How?
2. This chapter began by noting that in recent years many candidates' nominating campaigns have seemed to run more efficiently than their general election campaigns. How do you explain this? Can you think of ways in which candidates could assure that the transition from nominating politics to general election politics flowed more smoothly?
3. How can presidential campaigns pursue more than one strategy at the same time? What does that mean in terms of resource allocation? What are the conflicts that would arise in a dual-strategy campaign?

4. Do third-party candidates contribute positively or negatively to presidential campaigns? What distinguishes third-party candidates who seem to have an impact from those whose names merely appear on the ballot?
  
5. We have given little consideration to the role of political parties in this chapter, mostly because presidential campaign organizations run independently of the parties, as a result of federal campaign law. Do you think that this is appropriate? Or should parties play a more central role? One proposal would be to give public campaign funding to the national committees for the general election, not to the candidates. How would you evaluate that proposal?