

AP U.S. Government & Politics

Slide 1



Though conventions used to have more of an influence on the choice of candidate, they have long been pep rallies. Here, Michigan delegates show their support for Mitt Romney in 2012.

Slide 2

Learning Objectives 11

What were some of the problems with the political "machines" of the Golden Age of 1860 to 1932? Pages 307-308

What were James Madison's fears about political parties in Federalist Paper #10? Page 308

How does one become a delegate to a national convention? Page 312

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Slide 3

Learning Objectives 11

What is the structure of national political parties and where does their power come from? Pages 310-312

What are minor parties in the United States and what keeps them from assuming more power as the major parties become less popular over time? Pages 323-324


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Slide 4

Roots of the Two-Party System 11.1

- The Development of the Political Parties, 1800–1824
- Jacksonian Democracy, 1824–1860
- The Golden Age, 1860–1932
- The Modern Era
- Citizen Support and Party Realignment



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We've had political parties in American politics almost since our founding. The Federalists and the Democratic-Republicans were the first two parties to develop.

The Democratic Party held the first national presidential convention in 1832, and the Whig Party formed to oppose President Andrew Jackson. Eventually, the Whig Party dissolved and was replaced by the Republican Party. From 1860 until today, these two parties—Democratic and Republican—have formed what has become our two-party system.

Slide 5

The Development of Political Parties, 1800–1824 11.1

- James Madison's on political parties in Federalist Paper #10.
- Ratification of the U.S. Constitution
 - Federalists supported strong central government
- Election of 1800
 - Thomas Jefferson versus John Adams
 - Political parties intended to be temporary, not long-term structures



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When the Framers were designing the U.S. Constitution, they were opposed to permanent political parties. However, the American political party system actually took root during the drafting and ratification of the Constitution. Those who supported the Constitution and its provisions for a strong, central government eventually became the Federalist Party, while the future Democratic-Republicans wanted a system that allowed greater power for the states.


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James Madison warned about factions in the Federalist papers. He feared a single dominant faction that would oppress others. His solution was to spread representation among many members of Congress with the belief that there would enough competition to insure rights for all.

Slide 6

**Jacksonian Democracy,
1824–1860**

11.1



- Political party influence
 - Decreased at the national level
 - Increased at the state level due to expansion of the electorate
- Whigs and Democrats
 - Gave the United States the first broadly-supported two-party system in the Western World

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Political parties were not as important at the national level during this time as they had been during the quarter century before. But political parties did grow at the state level, fueled in part by the growth in the eligible voting population that took place between 1820 and 1840. That's when many states got rid of the requirement that voters be property owners.


Andrew Jackson's Democratic Party attracted most of the new voters, and he was the first tenant of the White House to be chosen by a truly national, popularly based political party. Jackson's Democrats, and the Whigs who coalesced in their opposition to Jackson, strengthened and gave the United States the first broadly-supported two-party system in the Western world.

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Slide 7

The Golden Age, 1860–1932 11.1

- **Party Stability**
 - Characterized by the dominance of party organizations
 - Era from end of Reconstruction until reforms of the Progressive Era
- **Political Machines**
 - Organizations that use tangible incentives such as jobs and favors to win loyalty among voters
 - Provided upward social mobility



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When historians consider the so-called "Golden Age" of politics, they note party stability, the dominance of political party associations in local and state governments, and the effect of those organizations on voters. This era, which lasted from the end of Reconstruction until the Progressive Era, featured surprising stability in the evolution and identity of both the Republican and Democratic Parties.


This was in part due the the existence of political machines, organizations that used tangible benefits, such as jobs and favors, to win loyalty among voters. A side effect of political machines was the opportunity for upward social mobility, especially for immigrants.

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Slide 8

The Modern Era 11.1

- Elections and social services changes
 - Ballot printing, other elections duties handled by government instead of parties
 - Roosevelt's New Deal put social services in hands of government, not parties.
- Candidate-centered politics
 - Shift to focus on candidates, their issues, and character rather than on party affiliation




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Between 1900 and the 1930s, the government gradually took over a number of important functions previously performed by the parties, such as printing ballots, conducting elections, and providing social welfare services. These changes had a major impact on party loyalty and strength. Beginning in the 1930s with Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, social services began to be regarded as a right of citizenship rather than as a privilege extended in exchange for a person's support of a party. This weakening of the parties also led to more candidate-centered politics and elections, in which the focus was on individual candidates, their particular issues and character, rather than party affiliation.

Slide 9

Citizen Support and Party Realignment 11.1

- Party realignments
 - Dramatic shifts in partisan preference that drastically alter the political landscape
 - Existing party affiliations subject to upheaval
- Critical elections
 - May polarize voters around new issues or personalities
- Secular realignments
 - More gradual shifts in party coalitions



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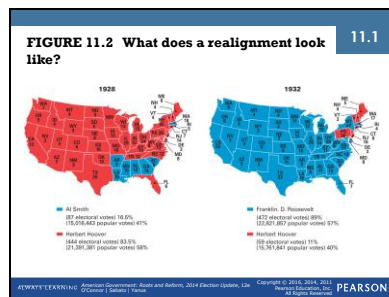
The type of stability observed in the Golden Age, and for a time beyond, would not last forever, and voters began showing dramatic shifts in their beliefs. During such party realignments, existing party affiliations experience upheaval as voters may change parties. Before such shifts, historians may observe one or more critical elections that may polarize voters in reaction to

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developments such as war or an economic depression.

Several such shifts have already occurred in American politics: Thomas Jefferson formed the Democratic-Republican party to opposed the Federalists, the Whig Party dissolved and the Republican Party gained strength over the issue of slavery, and voters turned away from Republicans in favor of Democrats in response to the New Deal. More gradual shifts in party coalitions are called secular realignments, and they may be caused by the shrinking of a party's base of support.

Slide 10



The map on the left shows the Electoral College results of the 1928 election, won by Republican Herbert Hoover. The map on the right shows the results of the 1932 election, won by Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt. The numbers in the maps represent the number of Electoral College votes allocated to each state. Note the obvious increase in the number and percentage of "blue states."

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Slide 11

The Organization of American Political Parties 11.2

- The National Party
- The National Convention
- State and Local Parties
- Informal Groups

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The national party organization sits at the top of the party system. A chairperson leads the national party, and every four years the national committee of each party organizes a convention to nominate a candidate for the presidency. These national organizations also play a crucial role in fundraising for individuals' campaigns.

Yet it is at the state and local levels where the heart of party activism can be found.

Slide 12



American political parties are national in scope, but their real roots—and power—lie in state and local party organizations. Thus, the organization of political parties in America is often presented as a pyramid, with identifiers and voters as the "base" and the national chair as the top.

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Slide 13

The National Party Structure 11.2

- The national chairperson
 - Often selected by president or newly nominated presidential candidate
 - Chief fundraiser and spokesperson
- The national committee
 - Coordinates national convention and presidential campaign
 - Democratic National Committee (DNC)
 - Republican National Committee (RNC)



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Each national party has a chairperson. Often, that person is selected by the president or the newly nominated presidential candidate. The chairperson fills many roles. He or she primarily acts as the chief fundraiser and spokesperson for the party. But the job doesn't end there. The chairperson must keep the peace within the party, and find common ground among different factions.

Slide 14

The National Convention 11.2

- Every four years
 - Present a positive image of the candidate
 - Serve as pep rallies
- Delegates
 - How delegates to a national convention are chosen
- Superdelegates
 - Allow Democratic Party some control



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National conventions can be exciting to watch. Every four years, each major party holds its convention in order to formally nominate a candidate for the office of president. Because the nominees are known ahead of time, the real purpose of conventions these days is to present a positive image of the candidate to the country and to energize voters by holding a pep rally.

Delegates attend the convention to select the nominee. Delegates used to be picked by party leaders, but now generally are elected in local primary elections. Superdelegates are Democratic Party officials whose vote at the convention is unpledged to a candidate.

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Slide 15

State and Local Parties 11.2

- Roots of the party
 - Virtually all government regulation of political parties is handled by the states.
 - Vast majority of party leadership positions are held at state and local level.
- Precinct
 - Smallest voting unit
 - Fundamental building block of the party
- State executive committee

WASHINGTON STATE DEMOCRATS



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The state parties are organized into precincts, which are the fundamental building blocks of the party, and number over 100,000 in the United States. The precinct committee members are the foot soldiers of the party, and they are supported by the state executive committee, plus party committees at the city, county, and other levels.

Slide 16

Activities of American Political Parties 11.3

- Running Candidates for Office
- Formulating and Promoting Policy
- Organizing Government
- Furthering Unity, Linkage, and Accountability



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For over 200 years, the two-party system has served as the mechanism American society uses to organize and resolve social and political conflict. Political parties often are the chief agents of change in our political system. They provide vital services to society, and it would be difficult to envision political life without them. They are mainly involved in running candidates for office, getting out

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the vote, facilitating electoral choice, providing leadership in policy formulation, and organizing institutions of government, such as congressional committees.

Slide 17

Minor Parties in the the American Two-Party System

11.5

- The formation and role of minor parties
- Barriers to minor-party success

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Minor parties play an interesting and important role in American politics, and often that role involves struggle. They have seen their popular ideas co-opted by one of the two major parties eager to secure the minor party's supporters. Much of American politics, including the winner-take-all system and the Electoral College, makes it especially hard for minor parties to gain real traction in the U.S. system.

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Slide 18

The Formation and Role of Minor Parties 11.5

- Obstacles
 - Transitioning from social movement to party is difficult
- Minor parties have had influence
 - Dixiecrats
 - Green Party



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While many social movements have been powerful and influential, few have made the jump to becoming a political party. That transition's difficult; political parties don't just support public policies and change; they also run candidates for office. Those movements that did transition to minor, third parties have, in fact, influenced the political landscape. The Dixiecrats, who favored Southern states' rights, pulled away from the Democrats in 1948, and the Green Party has been influential in pushing for environmental issues.

Slide 19

TABLE 11.3 What are some of America's minor parties? 11.5

TABLE 11.3 WHAT ARE SOME OF AMERICA'S MINOR PARTIES?

Minor Party	Year Founded	Primary Purpose
Liberty/Free-Soil	1840	Abolition of slavery
Prohibition	1880	Prohibition of alcohol sale and consumption
Progressive/Bull Moose	1912	Factionalism in Republican Party; gave Theodore Roosevelt the platform to run for the presidency
American Independent	1968	States' rights; opposition to desegregation
Libertarian	1971	Opposition to governmental intervention in economic and social policy
Reform	1996	Economic issues; tax reform; national debt; federal deficit
Green	2000	Environmentalism and social justice

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This table describes some of America's minor parties, such as the Libertarian and Green Parties.

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Slide 20

Barriers to Minor-Party Success 11.5

- Proportional representation
 - Apportions legislative seats according to percentage of votes a party receives
- Winner-take-all system
 - Party that receives at least one more vote wins the election



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Many European countries have political systems more favorable to minor parties. That's because those countries have a system based on proportional representation, which apportions legislative seats according to the percentage of votes a political party receives.

The United States, however, uses a single-member, plurality electoral system, often called the "winner-take-all" system. Under this system, the party that receives at least one more vote than any other party wins the election. This approach makes it harder for third parties to gain power. The Electoral College and the rules of public financing also make it harder for minor parties to play a significant role in American politics.


Slide 21

Further Review 11

Complete your study guide questions.

Answer test prep questions on Naviance.

Study with table group members.



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