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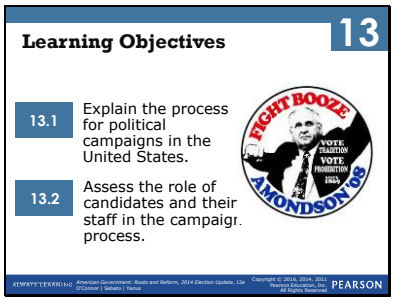
Slide 1

Presidential campaigns leave indelible marks on the nation. In this chapter, we will examine the campaign process closely.

Slide 2



In this chapter we we'll take a close look at presidential campaigns and how they are run.

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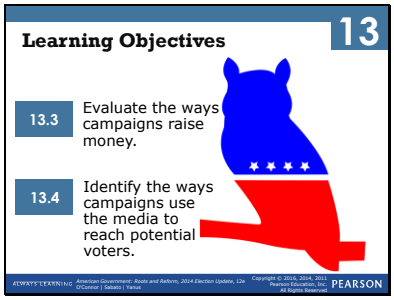

AP U.S. Government & Politics

Slide 4

Campaigns are both unique and similar. How can that be? The candidates, the issues, the technology, the scandals, and the results all change from campaign to campaign, but the structure remains the same.

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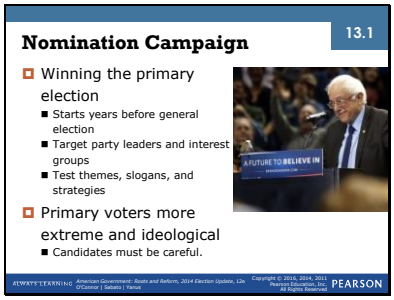


Before a candidate can run in the general election, he must win his party's primary election. The primary campaign starts years before the general election, with potential candidates testing the waters, targeting party leaders and interest groups to see if they can build a base of support. Candidates also test out themes, slogans, and strategies at this time.

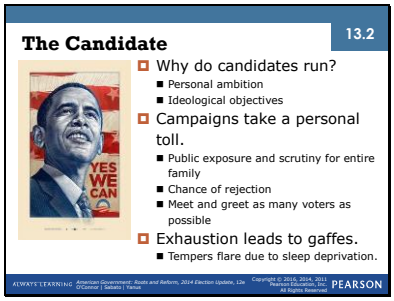
Very few citizens vote in primary elections, and those that do tend to be ideologically-driven partisans. Candidates who shift too far to the right or left to appeal to primary voters may find themselves perceived as too extreme in the general election.

AP U.S. Government & Politics

Slide 6

Candidates must switch gears when they win their party's nomination. In the general election campaign, they are running against nominees from other parties. Most partisan voters are unlikely to change their party loyalty so the candidates in the general election are competing for the few undecided voters in the middle of the political spectrum who could vote for either party. The whole general election campaign is geared to wooing these undecided voters.

Slide 7



The decision to run for political office is not an easy one. Candidates run for office for any number of reasons, including personal ambition, the desire to promote ideological objectives or pursue specific public policies, or simply because they think they can do a better job than their opponents.

Regardless of their reasons for taking the plunge, a campaign for public office takes a massive personal toll on candidates and their families, who are subjected to intense public exposure and scrutiny.

It is impossible for candidates to meet more than a tiny fraction of the voters, but they must try. Still, candidates maintain grueling schedules in their efforts to come face-to-face with as many voters as possible. They also must engage in continual fundraising throughout the campaign. Sleep is a luxury, and sleep-deprived candidates become increasingly short-tempered as campaigns progress, which can lead to mistakes that could cost them the election.

Slide 8

Both paid staff and an army of volunteers work on political campaigns. Most state and national campaigns have a campaign manager. The campaign manager works closely with the candidate, traveling with the candidate and making most of the day-to-day decisions related to campaign logistics and strategy.

The finance chair handles the financial and accounting aspects of the campaign, spearheading fundraising, filing required paperwork, and tracking income and expenditures.

The communications director also has a crucial role, developing the media strategy for the campaign, including supervision of advertisements. Well-funded campaigns will also hire a press secretary, who interacts with journalists, acting as primary spokesperson for the campaign. This job includes responding to attacks and delivering bad news. The Internet plays an increasingly large role in political campaigns, and some staff are devoted just to managing the candidate's online presence.

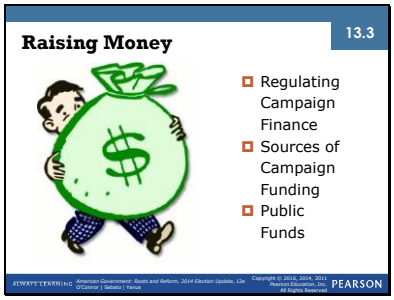
AP U.S. Government & Politics

Slide 9

Candidates rely on a variety of consultants, particularly pollsters, to give them up-to-the-minute information on where they stand with voters and to gauge the potential reaction to various positions and advertisements.

Last but not least, volunteers are the lifeblood of political campaigns. Volunteers canvass; that is, go door-to-door soliciting votes.

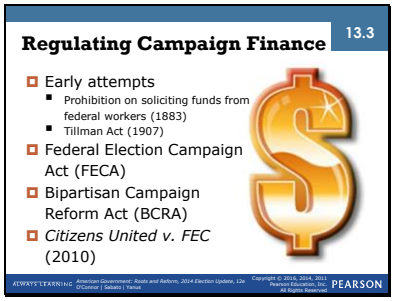
Slide 10



Modern political campaigns are staggeringly expensive. The Democratic and Republican parties raised over $2 billion for the 2012 presidential election campaign. Congress has made some attempts to regulate campaign finance, but these efforts have been unsuccessful in curbing the growing role of money in political campaigns. In this section, we will briefly look at some of these campaign finance reform efforts and consider sources of campaign funding.

AP U.S. Government & Politics

Slide 11

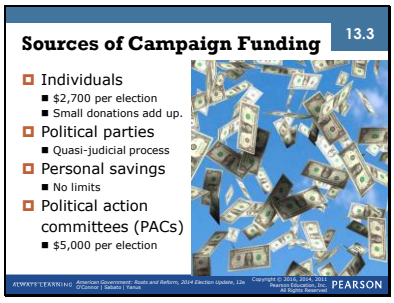


Early attempts to regulate campaign finance included a prohibition on soliciting funds from federal workers, passed in 1883 along with other early civil service reforms, and the Tillman Act of 1907, which prohibited corporations from making direct contributions to candidates for federal office.

The first serious legislation came in the 1970s. The Federal Election Campaign Act created a program to provide public funding for presidential candidates, and the Federal Election Commission was created to enforce election laws.

In 2002, a bipartisan law was passed that set new limits on contributions and advertising. Most significantly, the Court's decision in Citizens United v. FEC held that spending money on a campaign is a form of free speech and thus cannot be legally restricted. This ruling gutted campaign finance reform and has led to the unchecked expansion of campaign spending since.

Slide 12



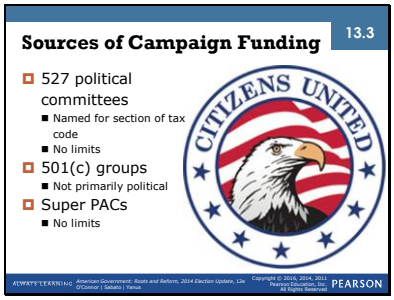
As you saw in the preceding table, individuals are limited to contributing no more than $2,700 per candidate per election. Primary and general elections are considered separately. Individual donors provide most campaign funding. In 2012, Obama raised over $600 million for his re-election campaign, with 34% coming from small donors.

Parties also give money to their nominees. They can contribute up to $5,000 for a House candidate and $43,100 to a Senate candidate. Parties

provide about 20% of a candidate's campaign funds.

PACs are fund-raising organizations created by economic or ideologically-driven groups. PACs are controversial because they are viewed as special interests buying politicians.

Slide 13



527s are named for the section of the tax code that covers them. They do not contribute directly to candidates but conduct electioneering activities on behalf of their interests. In 2012, 527s spent $343 million on electoral activities.

501(c) interest groups are not primarily political and may not spend more than half of their funds on campaign politics.

Super PACs are the fasting growing actor in electoral politics. They are a special type of PAC that spends money independently of individual campaigns. They do not give money directly to candidates and they are not subject to expenditure limits. In 2012, Super PACs spent over $600 million.

AP U.S. Government & Politics

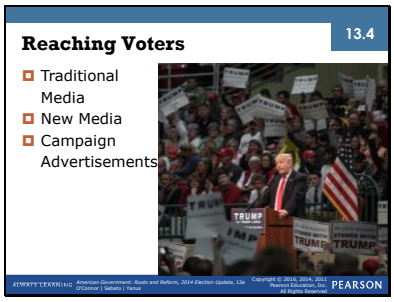
Slide 14

Public campaign funds are donations from general tax revenues to candidates for public office. If a presidential candidate raises at least $5,000, he can apply for federal matching funds. Third party candidates only get funds after the election if they earned more than 5% of the vote.

These funds come from the Presidential Election Campaign Fund, which collects $3 each from the taxes of those who check the donation box on their tax return.

Candidates who accept public funds must use them as the sole source of funding for their campaign. The current cap is $91.2 million. In 2008, Barack Obama became the first candidate to opt out of public financing.

Slide 15



The media have almost complete control over what you, the voter, see and hear about political candidates. Both traditional and new media are important for campaign coverage today. Candidates have little control over how they are portrayed in the media, except for the content of their own campaign advertisements. In this section, we will explore the roles of traditional media, new media, and campaign advertising.

AP U.S. Government & Politics

Slide 16

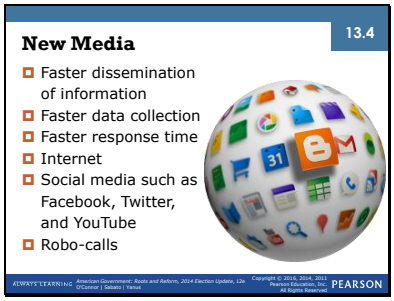
The news media report what they view as newsworthy—"fit to print," as they say. They report on candidates' speeches and other campaign activities, as well as any unflattering personal details that may emerge. Much to the annoyance of the candidates, the main focus of the media at election time tends to be on the horse race: who is ahead, and by how many percentage points. This is a problem because reports of even tiny fluctuations in public opinion can have a major influence on the financial and practical support a candidate receives. It can even influence how people vote.

Candidates employ some strategies to try to obtain favorable media coverage. Their staff often seek to isolate them from the press to avoid gaffes. They also stage media events to portray their candidate in the way they want him to be perceived. Spin control is a major part of the job of campaign staff. Candidates also appear on talk shows, comedy shows, and other non-news programs to present themselves in a more informal and appealing way to voters.

In the last half century, debates have become an expected part of presidential races, as well as senatorial and gubernatorial elections. Debates are used by voters not so much to learn candidates' positions on issues, as to assess their suitability for office.

AP U.S. Government & Politics

Slide 17



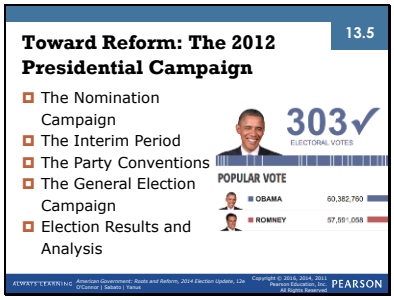
New media have revolutionized campaigning, particularly the dissemination of information and the gathering of data. Candidates can also respond to breaking news, scandals, or other issues quickly and flexibly.

Over the last 20 years, the Internet has become a vital tool used by virtually all candidates for public office. Social media is increasingly important in reaching different demographic groups.

Slide 18

Candidates employ several different types of advertisements in their arsenal of campaign strategies. Positive ads stress the candidate's qualifications while negative ads focus on attacking the opponent's qualifications, character, or policy views. Contrast ads compare the candidates, with an obvious bias for the candidate sponsoring the ad. Inoculation ads attempt to anticipate attacks and deflect them.

Slide 19



When the incumbent president is running for reelection, the outcome is partly a referendum on his performance of the past four years. This was the case in the 2012 presidential election, which is the subject of the final section of this chapter.

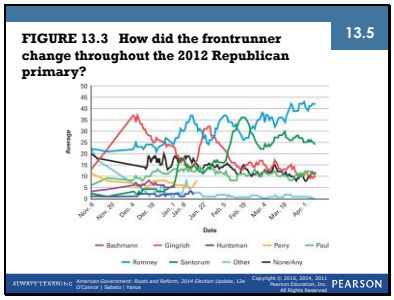
AP U.S. Government & Politics

Slide 20

President Obama did not face any challengers for the Democratic nomination, but Republican candidate Mitt Romney competed against a large field to secure the Republican nomination.

The first three primaries featured three different winners, so his victory was far from assured in the early stages of the primacy season. But after Super Tuesday in March, only Rick Santorum remained as a serious challenger, and Romney won sufficient states by early April that it became clear he was going to win the nomination.

Slide 21

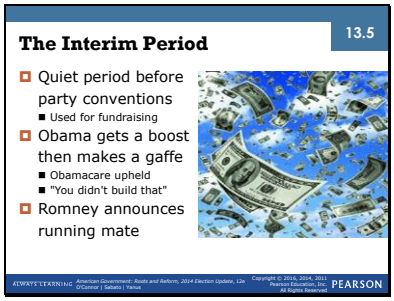


Reflecting the diversity of the Republican field, many candidates appeared to be the "flavor of the week" during the nomination campaign. From November 2011 to April 2012, however, three candidates separated themselves from the field—Mitt Romney, Newt Gingrich, and Rick Santorum. This figure tracks the rise and fall of each candidate's popularity, as well as that of several other Republican candidates.

SOURCE: Data from http://www.gallup.com/poll/154337/2012-republican-presidential-nomination-race.aspx.

AP U.S. Government & Politics

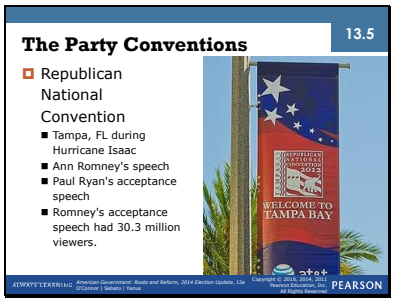
Slide 22



Both Obama and Romney used the interim months before their party conventions to fundraise. Obama received a boost to his campaign when the individual mandate of the "Obamacare" legislation was upheld by the Supreme Court as constitutional.

In August, Romney announced that his running mate would be 42-year-old Representative Paul Ryan of Wisconsin. This pick was calculated to bolster Romney's credentials with conservatives and it worked.

Slide 23



The Republican National Convention got off to a windy start as Hurricane Isaac blew through Tampa, Florida. After the brief weather delay, Ann Romney gave a speech calculated to make her husband appeal to women voters. Paul Ryan's acceptance speech was criticized for numerous factual errors. The convention concluded with Romney's acceptance speech, which was viewed by an estimated 30.3 million people.

The Democratic National Convention was held in Charlotte, NC. A minor controversy erupted on opening day about the absence of God from the party platform. This "oversight" was "remedied" and the program began with a speech from First Lady Michelle Obama. Candidates' wives give speeches to humanize the candidates and get the public to warm up to them, not to talk about their policy views.

Bill Clinton gave a well-received speech formally nominating President

Obama for reelection, but the candidate's acceptance speech had to be moved indoors due to rain, reducing the live audience from 72,000 to 20,000. About 35.7 million people are thought to have viewed Obama and Vice President Biden speak.

Slide 24

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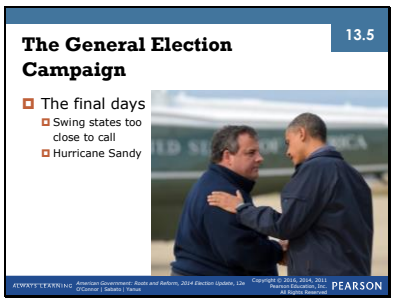
AP U.S. Government & Politics

Slide 25

The economy dominated the general election campaign. Critics charged that Obama could no longer blame Bush for the stagnant economy and high unemployment because he had now had four years to fix it. The fatal attack on the U.S. embassy in Benghazi, Libya, on the anniversary of the 9/11 attacks was also extremely damaging to the Obama campaign.

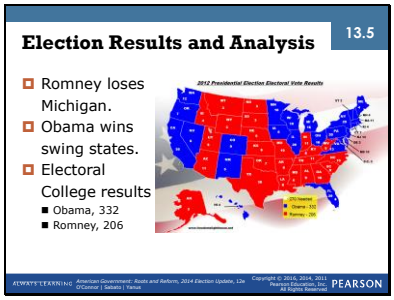
The candidates debated on live television three times. Romney won the first debate, which was seen by more than 67 million viewers. Obama's lackluster performance garnered much criticism and lowered his poll numbers. Obama stepped up his game in the second debate, watched by 66 million viewers. Both candidates were perceived as performing well, although the nod went to Obama this time. Obama also narrowly won the third debate, but fewer viewers tuned in and it did not raise his poll numbers, leaving the race tight.

Slide 26



In the final days of the campaign, the swing states such as Wisconsin, Florida, Ohio, New Hampshire, Virginia, and Colorado were all too close to call. Hurricane Sandy caused the cancellation of several campaign events in the final week of the race. The storm caused over $50 billion in damage and provided opportunities for President Obama to appear in the news media pledging relief to storm victims and viewing the damage. Bipartisan efforts to assist the beleaguered states also showed the president in a positive light.

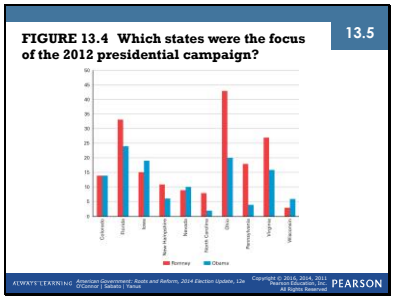
Slide 27



Election night was tense for supporters of both candidates as the race was too close to call. The evening began to go badly for Romney when he lost his home state of Michigan. Obama ended up winning all of the key swing states.

When all states' votes were tallied, President Obama received 332 Electoral College votes and challenger Romney received 206. Obama received 8 million fewer votes than in 2008, and Romney won two states that had voted for Obama in 2008.

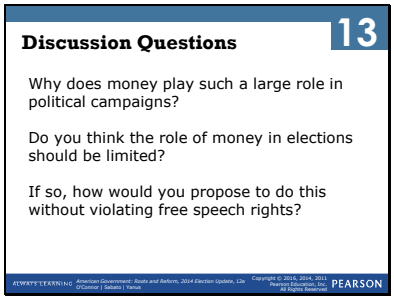
Slide 28



The majority of candidate visits were concentrated on a small number of swing states that were viewed as up for grabs in the 2012 presidential election. During the campaign, President Obama visited the above ten battleground states 131 times and Mitt Romney visited them 179 times. The remaining 40 states received Obama 81 times and Romney 106 times.

SOURCE: Data from http://www.cnn.com/election/2012/campaign-tracker/.

Slide 29



Slide 30