

# 9

# Campaigns and Voting Behavior

## Politics in Action: How Running for Office Can Be More Demanding Than Governing



ampaigning for any major office has become a massive undertaking in today's political world. Consider Barack Obama's grueling schedule for March 21, 2008, a day in a relatively low-key period of the presidential campaign:

- The senator arrives at the Benson Hotel in Portland, Oregon, after midnight, following a 2,550-mile plane ride from Charleston, West Virginia, where he had spent the previous day campaigning.
- At 7:00 AM, Obama leaves his hotel for a jog around downtown Portland.
- After returning to the hotel for a change of clothes, Obama meets privately with Governor Bill Richardson of New Mexico, who has just decided to endorse him. The pair then proceed to a scheduled rally at the Portland Memorial Coliseum, where the endorsement is publicly announced to an enthusiastic crowd of 12,800 people.
- Following the morning rally, Obama holds a press conference, taking questions from the corps of reporters traveling with him as well as from members of the Oregon media.
- Obama then hops on his campaign bus for an hour's drive down to Oregon's capital city of Salem, where he responds to questions from ordinary Oregonians at a town-hall meeting attended by about 3,000 people.

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Supporters reach out to shake hands with Barack Obama following his speech at the Portland Memorial Coliseum on March 21, 2008—one of a number of events in a long typical day on the campaign trail.



**1** **The Big Picture** Americans are generally very involved in the political process—from signing petitions to writing to congressmen—so why is voter turnout so low? Author Martin P. Wattenberg argues that the sheer number of elections that occur in the United States every year discourages citizens from voting.



**The Basics** Do you have trouble figuring out when all the elections are and who you should vote for? If you do, you are not alone. This video will help you understand why the United States has so many types of elections, what purposes they serve, and whether money and campaign staff is vital to campaign victories.



**3** **In Context** Discover how voter turnout has changed over the course of American history. Has enfranchising women, African Americans, or young people increased turnout? Columbia University political scientist Donald P. Green addresses these and other questions in this video.



**Thinking Like a Political Scientist** Discover how scholars respond when voter turnout—even in presidential elections—declines, as it did during the last half of the twentieth century. Fordham University political scientist Costas Panagopolos explores the research behind this issue, recent trends, and factors that may explain these outcomes.



**5** **In the Real World** In its controversial *Citizens United* decision, the Supreme Court ruled that money is speech and thus the courts cannot put a limit on the amount of money an individual—or a corporation—spends on an election. Real people decide whether or not they agree with that decision, and they consider some of its long-term implications.



**So What?** Evaluate the fairness of the electoral system in the United States. Author Martin P. Wattenberg discusses how factors like campaign financing and voter turnout can influence elections, and he considers possibilities for how elections could be reformed in the future.



- While in Salem, Obama manages to do six separate interviews with Oregon news organizations before getting back on the campaign bus.
- After another hour on the road, the bus pulls up in front of American Dream Pizza in Corvallis, where the candidate pops in for a slice of pizza and an impromptu chat with some pleasantly surprised fellow diners.
- Obama then re-boards his bus for another hour's ride to Eugene to address a crowd of 10,000 people at the University of Oregon's basketball arena.
- Following this evening rally, the candidate goes to the Eugene airport to board his campaign plane for a 200-mile flight to Medford, Oregon. Just after 1:00 AM, Obama walks into his hotel for the night, knowing that he has another day like this to look forward to tomorrow.

It is often said that the presidency is the most difficult job in the world, but getting elected to the position may well be tougher. As Karl Rove, George W. Bush's veteran political adviser, writes, "There are few more demanding physical activities than running for president, other than military training or athletics at a very high level."<sup>1</sup> When asked if he was exhausted by the demands of campaigning in 2008, Barack Obama simply answered, "Sometimes, yes, of course."

The current American style of long and arduous campaigns has evolved from the belief of reformers that the cure for the problems of democracy is more democracy. Whether this approach is helpful or harmful to democracy is a question that provokes much debate with respect to American political campaigns. Some scholars believe it is important that presidential candidates go through a long and difficult trial by fire. Others, however, worry that the system makes it difficult for politicians with other responsibilities—such as incumbent governors and senior senators—to take a run at the White House. This chapter will give you a better understanding of the pros and cons of having a nomination and campaign process that is so open and democratic.

The consequences for the scope of government are also debatable. Anthony King argues that American politicians do too little governing because they are always "running scared" in today's perpetual campaign.<sup>2</sup> From King's perspective, the campaign process does not allow politicians the luxury of trying out solutions to policy problems that might be immediately unpopular but would work well in the long run. The scope of government thus stays pretty much as is, given that politicians are usually too concerned with the next election to risk fundamental change. Of course, many analysts argue that officeholders' constant worry about public opinion is good for democracy and that changes in the scope of government should not be undertaken without extensive public consultation.

As you read this chapter, consider whether today's nomination and campaign process provides *too much* opportunity for interaction between the public and candidates for office, and consider whether the entire process takes too much time and costs too much money. These are very important topics of debate in American politics today.

With about half a million elected officials in this country, there is always someone somewhere running for office. One of these campaigns is for the world's most powerful office—the presidency of the United States. This chapter will focus mainly on this election campaign, although we will explore some other campaigns as well. The chapter on Congress will specifically discuss the congressional election process.

There are really two types of campaigns in American politics: campaigns for party nominations and campaigns between the two nominees. These are called *nomination campaigns* and *election campaigns*. The prize for the first is garnering a party's nod as its candidate; the prize for the second is winning an office.

# The Nomination Game

9.1

## nomination

The official endorsement of a candidate for office by a political party. Generally, success in the nomination game requires momentum, money, and media attention.

9.2

## campaign strategy

The master game plan candidates lay out to guide their electoral campaign.

9.3

9.4

## national party convention

The supreme power within each of the parties. The convention meets every four years to nominate the party's presidential and vice-presidential candidates and to write the party's platform.

9.5

9.6

9.7

9.8

9.1

Evaluate the fairness of our current system of presidential primaries and caucuses.



**nomination** is a party's official endorsement of a candidate for office. Anyone can play the nomination game, but few have any serious chance of victory. Generally, success in the nomination game requires money, media attention, and momentum. **Campaign strategy** is the way in which candidates attempt to manipulate each of these elements to achieve the nomination.

The decision to run for public office is often a difficult one. As Richard Fox and Jennifer Lawless found in their study of political ambition, "Considering a candidacy for public office involves pondering the courageous step of going before an electorate and facing potential examination, scrutiny, and rejection."<sup>3</sup> The higher the office, the greater these challenges, with the consequence being that not every politician wants to run for president. As former Speaker of the House Thomas Foley said, "I know of any number of people who I think would make good presidents, even great presidents, who are deterred from running by the torture candidates are obliged to put themselves through."<sup>4</sup> Running for president is an around-the-clock endurance test for over a year: sleep deprivation and strange hotel beds, countless plane rides, junk food eaten on the run, a lack of regular exercise, and copious amounts of stress. As 1984 Democratic nominee Walter Mondale once said, "For four years, that's all I did. I mean, all I did. That's all you think about. That's all you talk about.... That's your leisure. That's your luxury.... I told someone, 'The question is not whether I can get elected. The question is whether I can be elected and not be nuts when I get there.'"<sup>5</sup>

In most advanced industrialized countries, campaigns last no more than two months according to custom and/or law. In contrast, American campaigns seem endless; a presidential candidacy needs to be either announced or an open secret for at least a year before the election. All of the major candidates for president in 2012 had declared their candidacy and started to run at full steam ahead by the summer of 2011.

## □ Competing for Delegates

In some ways, the nomination game is tougher than the general election game; it whittles a large number of players down to two. The goal of the nomination game is to win the support of a majority of delegates at the **national party convention**—the supreme power within each of the parties, which functions to formally select presidential and vice presidential candidates and to write the party platform.

At each political party's national convention, state delegations meet to cast their votes. Today, the choices of the delegates are well known in advance, and the real contests involve the selection of the delegates from each state in the first place. However, it was not always that way. From the invention of political party conventions in the 1830s up until the late 1960s, the vast majority of the delegates were the political elite—elected officials and heads of the local party organizations. Frequently, each state had one or two party "bosses" who ran the show, such as the state's governor or the mayor of its largest city. These "bosses" could control who went to the convention and how the state's delegates voted once they got there. They were the kingmakers of presidential politics who met in smoke-filled rooms at the convention to cut deals and form coalitions.

Early in the twentieth century, the presidential primary was promoted by reformers who wanted to take nominations out of the hands of the party bosses. The reformers wanted to let the people vote for the candidate of their choice and then bind the delegates to vote for that candidate at the national convention. Although primary elections caught on quickly as a method for nominating candidates for Congress

and state government positions, the presidential primary was less quick to catch on: 35 states left the choice of convention delegates to the party elites through the 1960s.

It was not until the Democratic Party's disastrous 1968 convention that pressure mounted to rethink the traditional elite-dominated closed procedures for selecting convention delegates. As the war in Southeast Asia raged, another war of sorts took place in the streets of Chicago during the Democratic convention. Demonstrators against the war battled Mayor Richard Daley's Chicago police in what an official report later called a "police riot." Beaten up in the streets and defeated in the convention hall, the antiwar faction won one concession from the party regulars: a special committee to review the party's delegate selection procedures, which they felt had discriminated against them. Minorities, women, youth, and other groups that had been poorly represented in the party leadership also demanded a more open process of convention delegate selection. The result was a committee of inquiry, which was chaired first by Senator George McGovern and later by Representative Donald Fraser.

After a careful review of the procedures used to select delegates to the 1968 Democratic convention, the **McGovern-Fraser Commission** famously concluded that "meaningful participation of Democratic voters in the choice of their presidential nominee was often difficult or costly, sometimes completely illusory, and, in not a few instances, impossible."<sup>6</sup> In order to correct this situation, they wrote new rules to make Democratic Party conventions more representative and open to input from the public. Under these new rules, party leaders could no longer handpick the convention delegates virtually in secret. All delegate selection procedures were required to be open, so that party leaders had no more clout than college students or anyone else who wanted to participate. States were told that delegates had to be selected via a method that everyone could participate in—either a state-run primary election or an open meeting at the local level. Many states decided that the easiest way to comply with these new Democratic delegate selection procedures was simply to hold a primary to select convention delegates.<sup>7</sup> Because state laws instituting primaries typically apply to both parties' selection of delegates, the Republican Party's nomination process was similarly transformed.

Few developments have changed American politics as much as the opening of the presidential nomination process to broad-based public participation. The elite-dominated game of bargaining for the party's nomination was transformed

### McGovern-Fraser Commission

A commission formed at the 1968 Democratic convention in response to demands for reform by minority groups and others who sought better representation.



Riots at the 1968 Democratic national convention led to the establishment of more open procedures for delegate selection. These reforms have made recent party conventions more representative.

9.1

**superdelegates**

National party leaders who automatically get a delegate slot at the national party convention.

9.2

**invisible primary**

The period before any votes are cast when candidates compete to win early support from the elite of the party and to create a positive first impression of their leadership skills.

9.3

9.4

**caucus**

A system for selecting convention delegates used in about a dozen states in which voters must attend an open meeting to express their presidential preference.

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into a process in which candidates competed for tens of millions of votes. Delegates who were experienced politicians and knew the candidates were mostly replaced by delegates who had attained their seats due to their preferred candidate's ability to pull in votes.

The only remaining vestige of the old elite-dominated system are the so-called **superdelegates**—people who are awarded automatic slots as delegates based on the office they currently hold, such as being a member of Congress or of their party's national committee. In 2012, these members of the political elite made up 14 percent of the Democratic delegates and 8 percent of the Republican delegates. Theoretically, if two candidates are locked in a tight contest—as occurred in 2008 between Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton—the superdelegates could prove to be decisive and even overturn the people's verdict by giving the nomination to the candidate who received fewer popular votes. However, as political scientist William Mayer notes, the principle that nominations are decided by the voters has become so ingrained in the American psyche that even when the superdelegates have “the theoretical capacity to influence the outcome of a closely contested nomination race, they are reluctant to exercise that power.”<sup>8</sup> Thus, in practice the Democratic and Republican nominees are determined by the results of the primaries and caucuses.

**THE INVISIBLE PRIMARY** Before any votes are cast in primaries or caucuses, however, the candidates are hard at work trying to build up crucial sources of support and form positive first impressions. This stage of the nomination campaign is often referred to as “the invisible primary,” as it mostly occurs behind the scenes of public view. The major component of the **invisible primary** is the wooing of support from elected officials (most importantly, governors and members of Congress), top fundraisers, and skilled political aides. Political scientist Marty Cohen and his coauthors argue that during the invisible primary key elected officials in a party often coalesce around the candidate that they find most acceptable and via their endorsements give a crucial boost to this candidate.<sup>9</sup> In this way, Cohen and his coauthors contend, the elite of the party often set the agenda during the nomination process, smoothing the way for candidates to unify a party and influence the votes of the rank and file. The fact that Mitt Romney garnered more endorsements than any other GOP presidential candidate in 2012 clearly helped him sew up the Republican nomination.

During the invisible primary, candidates work carefully to create a positive personal image amongst the media, the political elite, and the attentive portion of the public. Because candidates within the same party generally agree more than they disagree on the issues, the personal qualifications, character, and intelligence of the candidates frequently take center stage, as such factors clearly differentiate the contenders. When candidates who are new on the national stage get scrutinized for the first time, major blunders can sink their campaign in no time flat. In 1967, George Romney (Mitt Romney's father) saw his promising bid for the Republican nomination fall apart quickly after he explained his changed stand on the Vietnam War as the result of his having originally been “brainwashed” by the generals. After all, who would want a president who admitted to having been brainwashed? In 2012, the campaign of Texas Governor Rick Perry saw the air go out of its sails when he said he would eliminate three federal cabinet departments but then could not name them, finishing up the exchange with the expression “oops.” Incidents such as these not only leave lasting negative impressions but also make it hard to mount the resources needed to succeed once the voters get to make their choices.

**THE CAUCUSES AND PRIMARIES** From January through June of the election year, the individual state parties busily choose their delegates to the national convention via either caucuses or primaries.

Since 1972, the Iowa caucuses have been the first test of candidates' vote-getting ability. Iowa is one of about a dozen mostly rural states that hold a set of meetings, known as caucuses, to select convention delegates. In a **caucus** system voters must



Televised debates are a regular feature of the presidential nomination process. The Republican candidates for the 2012 nomination participated in 27 debates. Here, Texas Governor Rick Perry is shown making a point while Mitt Romney and Rick Santorum look on.

show up at a fixed time and attend an open meeting lasting one or two hours to express their presidential preference. Because attending a caucus requires a greater time commitment than a primary election, participation in caucuses is much lower than the level of turnout for primaries. As such, caucuses represent a rather different sort of test for a presidential candidate than primaries. As Thomas Mann explains, “Caucuses test candidates’ strategic acuity, organizational strength, and intensity of support, qualities not irrelevant to performance in the general election and in the White House.”<sup>10</sup> Barack Obama’s experience as a community organizer before he entered politics is widely thought to have given him special insight into how to mobilize activists to attend a caucus. David Plouffe, Obama’s 2008 campaign manager, proudly proclaimed that their “organization and grassroots supporters understood how to win caucuses.”<sup>11</sup> Indeed, starting with a victory in Iowa, the Obama campaign won the majority of delegates at stake in every caucus state in 2008—an edge that proved crucial to Obama’s narrow victory over Clinton in the race for the Democratic nomination.

Given that the Iowa caucuses are the first test of the candidates’ vote-getting ability, they usually become a full-blown media extravaganza.<sup>12</sup> Well-known candidates have seen their campaigns virtually fall apart as a result of poor showings in Iowa. Most important, some candidates have received tremendous boosts from unexpected strong showings in Iowa. An obscure former Georgia governor named Jimmy Carter took his first big presidential step by winning there in 1976. In 2008, Barack Obama’s victory shocked the political world and landed him on the covers of the major weekly magazines, *Time* and *Newsweek*. Because of the impact that Iowa’s first-in-the-nation caucus can have, candidates spend far more time during the nomination season there than they do in the big states like California, Texas, and Florida. As the *Des Moines Register* editorialized in 2011, urging Iowans to ask the candidates tough questions, “Iowa is in the unique position to help shape political conversations and force candidates to focus on the issues that really matter to average people.”<sup>13</sup> The winner of the Iowa caucus doesn’t always go on to win the nomination, but the results from Iowa usually serve to winnow down the number of viable candidates for the primaries to come.

Most of the delegates to the Democratic and Republican national conventions are selected in **presidential primaries**, in which a state’s voters go to the polls to express their preference for a party’s nominee for president. The primary season begins during

## presidential primaries

Elections in which a state’s voters go to the polls to express their preference for a party’s nominee for president. Most delegates to the national party conventions are chosen this way.

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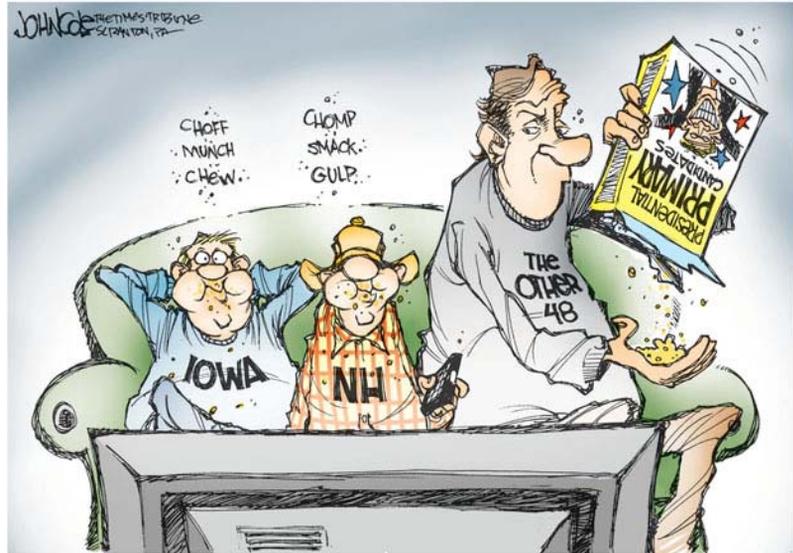
**frontloading**

The recent tendency of states to hold primaries early in the calendar in order to capitalize on media attention.

## Point to Ponder

During the nomination process, far more candidate and media attention is paid to Iowa and New Hampshire than to most other states.

**What do you think—is this a serious problem? Why or why not?**



the winter in New Hampshire. As with the Iowa caucuses, the importance of the New Hampshire primary is not the number of delegates or how representative the state is but rather that it is traditionally first.<sup>14</sup> At this early stage, the campaign is not for delegates but for images—candidates want the rest of the country to see them as front-runners. The frenzy of political activity in this small state is given lavish attention in the national press. During the week of the primary, half the portable satellite dishes in the country can be found in Manchester, New Hampshire, and the networks move their anchors and top reporters to the scene to broadcast the nightly news. In recent years, over a fifth of TV coverage of the nomination races has been devoted to the New Hampshire primary.<sup>15</sup>

With so much attention paid to the early contests, more states have moved their primaries up in the calendar to capitalize on the media attention. This **frontloading** of the process reached its high point in 2008, when two-thirds of both Democratic and Republican delegates were chosen within six weeks of the Iowa caucus. Frontloading poses two potential problems in the eyes of many commentators. First, there is a concern that with so many delegates being chosen so quickly, there may be a rush to judgment before the public can adequately learn about the candidates. Second, oftentimes states that have held late primaries have proved to be irrelevant given that one candidate had already secured the nomination by the time their primaries were held. For example, by the time Texas and California voted in 2012, Mitt Romney had already wrapped up the Republican nomination. The razor close race between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama for the Democratic nomination in 2008 is the only recent instance in which all 50 states mattered.

State laws determine how delegates are allocated, operating within the general guidelines set by the parties. The Democrats require all states to use some form of proportional representation in which a candidate who gets 15 percent or more of a state's vote is awarded a roughly proportional share of the delegates. Republicans employ three basic forms of allocating delegates: some states, like Florida, allocate all Republican delegates to whomever wins the most votes; others, like California, award delegates according to who wins each congressional district; and yet others employ

proportional representation. In an attempt to discourage frontloading in 2012, the Republicans adopted a rule eliminating winner-take-all primaries for most states voting prior to April 1.<sup>16</sup>

Week after week, the primaries serve as elimination contests, as the media continually monitor the count of delegates won. The politicians, the press, and the public all love a winner. Candidates who fail to score early wins get labeled as losers and typically drop out of the race. Usually they have little choice since losing quickly inhibits a candidate's ability to raise the money necessary to win in other states. As one veteran fund-raiser put it, "People don't lose campaigns. They run out of money and can't get their planes in the air. That's the reality."<sup>17</sup> For example, when Rick Santorum exited the Republican race in April 2012 he candidly admitted that his campaign was in debt and that his attempts to raise more money had come up empty.

## Why It Matters to You

### Early Delegate Contests

In baseball, no one would declare a team out of the pennant race after it lost the first two games of the season. But in the race for the presidential nomination, the results of the Iowa caucus and the New Hampshire primary frequently end the campaigns of many candidates after only a handful of national delegates have been selected. These contests are important not because of the number of delegates that are chosen but rather because they are the first indicators of public support. If a candidate does not do well in these first two contests, money and media attention dry up quickly.

In the 1980 delegate chase, a commonly used football term became established in the language of American politics. After George H. W. Bush scored a surprise victory over Ronald Reagan in Iowa, he proudly claimed to possess "the big mo"—momentum. Actually, Bush had only a little "mo" and quickly fell victim to a decisive Reagan victory in New Hampshire. But the term neatly describes what candidates for the nomination are after. Primaries and caucuses are more than an endurance contest, although they are certainly that; they are also proving grounds. Week after week, the challenge is to do better than expected. Learning from his father's experience, George W. Bush jokingly told the reporters on his 2000 campaign plane, "Please stow your expectations securely in your overhead bins, as they may shift during the trip and can fall and hurt someone—especially me."<sup>18</sup>

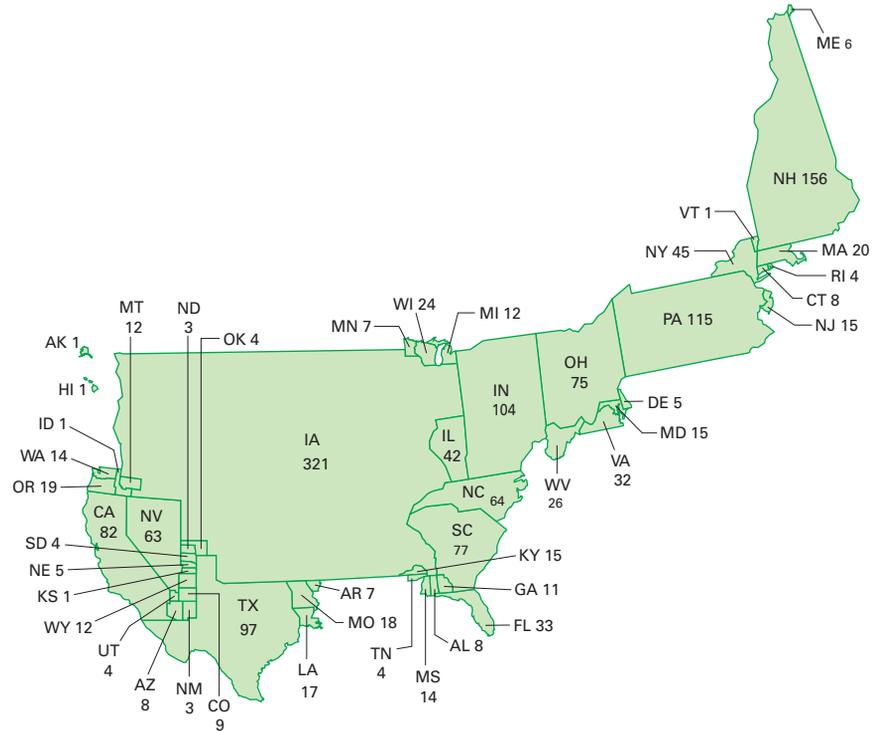
To get "mo" going, candidates have to beat people they were not expected to beat, collect margins above predictions, and—above all else—never lose to people they were expected to trounce. Momentum is good to have, but it is no guarantee of victory because candidates with a strong base sometimes bounce back. Political scientist Larry Bartels found that "substantive political appeal may overwhelm the impact of momentum."<sup>19</sup> Indeed, after being soundly trounced by John McCain in New Hampshire in 2000, George W. Bush quickly bounced back to win the big states necessary to get the Republican nomination. Eight years later, it was John McCain who bounced back to win after Mike Huckabee scored a victory in the first 2008 Republican contest, in Iowa.

**EVALUATING THE PRIMARY AND CAUCUS SYSTEM** The primaries and the caucuses are here to stay. However, many political scientists are not particularly happy with the system. Criticisms of the marathon campaign are numerous; here are a few of the most important:

- *Disproportionate attention goes to the early caucuses and primaries.* Take a look at Figure 9.1, which shows that the focus of the two major Democratic candidates

## FIGURE 9.1 A COUNT OF CLINTON AND OBAMA EVENTS DURING THE 2008 NOMINATION CAMPAIGN

In 2008, for the first time in many years, the contest for the Democratic nomination turned into a 50-state contest, with Obama and Clinton battling in a close race for every delegate. Yet, as usual, the first caucus in Iowa and the first primary in New Hampshire received far more attention from the candidates than their number of delegates would warrant. Here, you can see a map of the 50 states drawn to scale in terms of the number of events the two major Democratic candidates held in them.



**SOURCE:** *Washington Post* campaign tracker data for Jan 2007 through May 20, 2008, <http://projects.washingtonpost.com/2008-presidential-candidates/tracker/>

in 2008 was amazingly concentrated on the early contests for delegates. In particular, Iowa, with the first caucus, and New Hampshire, with the first primary, received far more attention than some of the most heavily populated states, with later contests. Although Iowa and New Hampshire are not always “make-or-break” contests, they play a key—and disproportionate—role in building momentum, by generating money and media attention.

- **Prominent politicians find it difficult to take time out from their duties to run.** Running for the presidency has become a full-time job. It is hard to balance the demands of serving in high public office with running a presidential campaign. This factor sometimes discourages well-qualified politicians from running and forces others to at least partially neglect their elected duties (such as being present for congressional roll call votes) while seeking the presidency.
- **Money plays too big a role in the caucuses and primaries.** Momentum means money—getting more of it than your opponents do. Many people think that money plays too large a role in American presidential elections.
- **Participation in primaries and caucuses is low and unrepresentative.** Although about 60 percent of adult citizens vote in the November presidential election, only about 25 percent cast ballots in presidential primaries. Participation in caucuses is even lower because attending a caucus meeting takes far more time and effort than voting in a primary election. Except for Iowa, where media attention usually boosts the turnout to about 20 percent, only about 5 percent of eligible voters typically show up for caucuses. Moreover, voters in primaries and caucuses are hardly representative of voters at large: they tend to be older and more affluent than average.

- *The system gives too much power to the media.* Critics contend that the media have replaced the party bosses as the new kingmakers. The press decides who has momentum at any given moment, and readily labels candidates as winners or losers.

Is this the best way to pick a president? Critics think not, and have come up with ideas for reforming the nomination process, including a national presidential or a series of regional primaries. For the foreseeable future, however, states will continue to select delegates in primaries and caucuses to attend the national conventions, where the nominees are formally chosen.

## □ The Convention Send-Off

Party conventions provided great drama in American politics for more than a century. Great speeches were given, dark-horse candidates suddenly appeared, and ballot after ballot was held as candidates jockeyed to win the nomination. Today, the drama has largely been drained from the conventions, as the winner is a foregone conclusion. No longer can a powerful governor shift a whole block of votes at the last minute. Delegates selected in primaries and open caucuses have known preferences. The last time there was any doubt as to who would win at the convention was in 1976, when Ford edged out Reagan for the Republican nomination.

Without such drama, the networks have substantially scaled back the number of hours of coverage. In 2012, the Democratic Party responded by cutting their convention from the traditional four days to three for the first time. Even with the condensed TV coverage, the Nielsen ratings have fallen to rather low levels. About 30 million people watched Mitt Romney's speech to the 2012 Republican convention, which was covered by all the major broadcast networks as well as the cable news channels. By contrast, 111 million people tuned in to see the Giants defeat the Patriots in the 2012 Super Bowl, which was broadcast on only one network.

One can hardly blame people for tuning out the conventions when little news is made at them. Today's conventions are carefully scripted to present the party in its best light. As Barack Obama has written, the party convention "serves as a weeklong infomercial for the party and its nominee."<sup>20</sup> The parties carefully orchestrate a massive send-off for the presidential and vice-presidential candidates. The party's leaders are there in force, as are many of its most important followers—people whose input will be critical during the general election campaign. As George W. Bush said prior to the Republican convention in 2000, "The convention system provides a system of rewards for hardworking, grass-roots people who end up being delegates. I view it as an opportunity for these people to go back home, energized to help me get elected."<sup>21</sup>

Meeting in an oversized, overstuffed convention hall in a major city, a national party convention has a traditional order of business that has been followed for over a century. The first highlight is usually the keynote speech, in which a dynamic speaker outlines the party's basic principles and touts the nominee-to-be. In 2004, John Kerry chose the little-known Barack Obama for this role at the Democratic convention, and Obama's eloquent speech instantly established him as a rising young political star.

Next, the convention's attention turns to the **party platform**—the party's statement of its goals and policies for the next four years (see the chapter on political parties for some selections from the 2012 party platforms). The platform is drafted prior to the convention by a committee whose members are chosen in rough proportion to each candidate's strength. Any time over 20 percent of the delegates to the platform committee disagree with the majority, they can bring an alternative minority plank to the convention floor for debate. In former times, contests over the platform were key tests of candidates' strength before the actual nomination. These days, party leaders fear any negative publicity that their party might incur by showing open disagreement on a hot issue. Hence, they now maneuver behind the scenes to work out compromises on the platform committee. This is yet another reason why conventions are no longer very dramatic to watch.

### party platform

A political party's statement of its goals and policies for the next four years. The platform is drafted prior to the party convention by a committee whose members are chosen in rough proportion to each candidate's strength. It is the best formal statement of a party's beliefs.

The stage is then set for the main order of business at the convention—formally nominating a candidate for president. One of each candidate’s eminent supporters gives a speech extolling the candidate’s virtues; a string of seconding speeches then follow. The roll of states is called, and the chair of each state’s delegation announces their votes. If no candidate has a majority, then the balloting is repeated as many times as necessary until someone emerges with over 50 percent. For much of American history, multiple-ballot contests involved much behind-the-scenes maneuvering and deal-making; however, the last time a convention took more than one ballot to decide a nomination was in 1952.

Once a presidential candidate is chosen, the convention also has to formally choose a nominee for vice president, though custom dictates that delegates simply vote for whomever the presidential nominee recommends. The vice-presidential candidate then comes to the podium to make a brief acceptance speech. This speech is followed by the grand finale—the presidential candidate’s acceptance speech, in which the battle lines for the coming campaign are drawn. Afterward, all the party leaders come out to congratulate the party’s ticket, raise their hands in unity, and bid the delegates farewell.

## The Campaign Game

### 9.2 Explain the key objectives of any political campaign.

**O**nce nominated, candidates concentrate on campaigning for the general election. The word *campaign* originated as a military term: generals mounted campaigns, using their limited resources to achieve strategic objectives. Political campaigns proceed in a similar fashion, with candidates allocating their scarce resources of time, money, and energy to achieve their political objectives.

Campaigns involve more than organization and leadership. Artistry also enters the picture, for campaigns deal in images. The campaign is the canvas on which political strategists try to paint portraits of leadership, competence, caring, and other characteristics Americans value in presidents. Campaigning today is an art and a science, heavily dependent—like much else in American politics—on technology.

### □ The High-Tech Media Campaign

Today, television is the most prevalent means used by candidates to reach voters. Thomas Patterson stresses that “today’s presidential campaign is essentially a mass media campaign.... It is no exaggeration to say that, for the majority of voters, the campaign has little reality apart from its media version.”<sup>22</sup> Barack Obama put this into a candidate’s perspective when he wrote, “I—like every politician at the federal level—am almost entirely dependent on the media to reach my constituents. It is the filter through which my votes are interpreted, my statements analyzed, my beliefs examined. For the broad public at least, I am who the media says I am.”<sup>23</sup>

The Internet now also plays a major role in political campaigns. Indeed, for young people the Internet rivals TV as a source of information about campaigns, as you can see in “Young People and Politics: Will the Internet Revolutionize Political Campaigns?” Thus, one of the first things presidential candidates now do is establish a Web site with detailed information about their issue stands and background, videos of their key speeches, a schedule of upcoming events, and a form enabling people to donate to the campaign online. A January 2012 survey by the Pew Research Center found that 15 percent of Americans had gone online to read or watch campaign material posted on a candidate’s Web site. The same study also found that 16 percent said they regularly receive e-mails with political content and 6 percent had followed a candidate’s updates on Facebook or Twitter.<sup>24</sup>

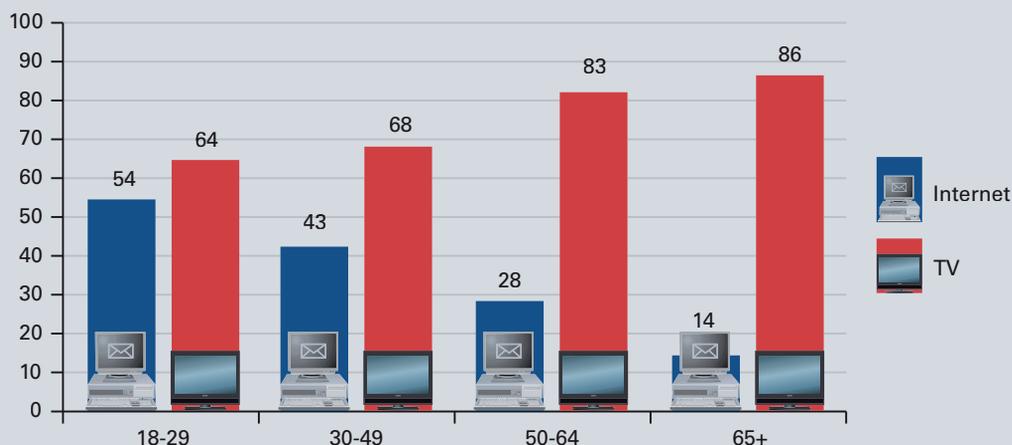
# Young People & Politics

## Will the Internet Revolutionize Political Campaigns?

When television first started to play a major role in American campaigns, it was the younger generation who took to it the fastest. Today, as people are relying more and more on the Internet to learn about politics, it is again America's youth that is leading the way. In a 2012 national survey, people were asked, "How have you been getting most of your news about the presidential election campaign?" One or two answers were recorded for each respondent. Below you can see the percentage within each age group who said that TV or the Internet was the main way they got news about the campaign.

### CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. With young people more reliant on the Internet than older people, how will campaigns have to change in order to reach them with their message?
2. Try learning about what's going in politics by first watching about 15 minutes of TV news and then browsing the Internet for the same amount of time. How did your consumption of information change between one format and the other?



SOURCE: Pew Research Center for People & the Press.

Nowhere has the impact of the Internet been greater than on political fund-raising. More people are making political donations than ever before because all it takes is a simple submission of a few pieces of information on the Internet. In both 2008 and 2012, the Obama campaign received contributions from over a million people via the Internet. Many donated repeatedly throughout the year in response to occasional e-mail requests from the Obama campaign.

Computer technology has long been used by campaigns in the form of **direct mail**, a technique for locating potential supporters by sending information and a request for money to huge lists of people who have supported candidates with similar views in the past. Conservative fund-raiser Richard Viguier pioneered the mass mailing list, including in his computerized list the names and addresses of hundreds of thousands of individuals who contributed to conservative causes. The accumulation of mailing lists enables candidates to pick an issue—be it helping the homeless, opposing abortion, aiding Israel, or anything else—and write to a list of people concerned about that issue. The ability to use e-mail has made such targeted fund-raising far easier and more cost effective. Direct mail costs roughly 40 cents for every dollar raised through solicitations sent out via the post office. On the Internet, the main expense is just the staff time to collect addresses and write up the e-mail messages. As Robert Boatright argues, "Candidates who use the Web to raise money can raise larger sums from small donors than has traditionally been the case in campaigns; they can effectively give donors an idea of how their money will be

### direct mail

A method of raising money for a political cause or candidate, in which information and requests for money are sent to people whose names appear on lists of those who have supported similar views or candidates in the past.

used; and they can more easily resolicit donors throughout the campaign.”<sup>25</sup> The e-mail list maintained by the 2012 Obama campaign reportedly exceeded 13 million addresses, to which the campaign e-mailed regularly with strategic updates and requests for further participation. Obama’s 2012 campaign even opened a first-of-its-kind campaign office dedicated to high-tech work, such as setting up Twitter feeds, Facebook pages, and other Internet applications. The high-tech campaign is no longer a luxury. Candidates *must* use the media and computer technology just to stay competitive.

The most important goal of any media campaign is simply to get attention. Media coverage is determined by two factors: (1) how candidates use their advertising budget and (2) the “free” attention they get as news makers. The first, obviously, is relatively easy to control; the second is more difficult but not impossible. Almost every logistical decision in a campaign—where to eat breakfast, whom to include on stage, when to announce a major policy proposal—is calculated according to its intended media impact.

The major item in a campaign budget is unquestionably television advertising. At least half the total budget for a presidential or U.S. Senate campaign will be used for campaign commercials. Many observers worry that we have entered a new era of politics in which the slick slogan and the image salesperson dominate. Early in the TV age, one of the first presidential candidates who made a political commercial remarked that “the idea that you can merchandise candidates for high office like breakfast cereal is the ultimate indignity to the democratic process.” Ever since, critics of political ads have bemoaned that, like ads for consumer products, political ads tend to emphasize style over substance, image over information. But is this comparison really valid? Most product ads aim to simply create an awareness of the item for sale; political ads are designed in large part to prompt people’s thinking. Product ads usually avoid conflict and take a soft-sell approach; political ads tend to heighten conflict and employ a hard-sell approach. These differences between product and political ads help explain why political scientists have found that campaign advertising is an important source of information about policy issues. In a classic study, Thomas Patterson and Robert McClure found that viewers learned a substantial amount about candidates’ issue stands from watching their ads on TV.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, a comprehensive study of 230,000 candidate ads that ran in 1998 found that spots that emphasized policy outnumbered those that stressed personal image by a 6-to-1 ratio.<sup>27</sup> Most candidates apparently believe that their policy positions are a crucial part of their campaign, and they are willing to pay substantial sums to communicate them to voters.

Candidates have much less control over the other aspect of the media, news coverage. To be sure, most campaigns have press aides who feed “canned” news releases to reporters. Still, the media largely determine for themselves what is happening in a campaign and what they want to cover. Campaign coverage seems to be a constant interplay between hard news about what candidates say and do and the human interest angle, which most journalists think sells newspapers or interests television viewers. Apparently, news organizations believe that policy issues are of less interest to voters than the campaign itself. The result is that news coverage is disproportionately devoted to campaign strategies, speculation about what will happen next, poll results, and other aspects of the campaign game. Once a candidate has taken a policy position and it has been reported, it becomes old news. The latest poll showing Smith ahead of Jones is thus more newsworthy. Roger Ailes, the president of Fox News, calls this his “orchestra pit” theory of American politics: “If you have two guys on stage and one guy says, ‘I have a solution to the Middle East problem,’ and the other guy falls in the orchestra pit, who do you think is going to be on the evening news?”<sup>28</sup> A comprehensive study of media coverage of the 2008 campaign found that far more stories dealt with the horse race and strategy than with policy and the candidates’ public records.<sup>29</sup>

## □ Organizing the Campaign

In every campaign, there is too much to do and too little time to do it. Every candidate must prepare for a seemingly endless string of speeches, media interviews, fund-raising

events, and handshaking. More important, to organize their campaigns effectively, candidates must do the following:

- **Get a campaign manager.** Some candidates try to run their own campaign, but they usually end up regretting it. A professional campaign manager can keep the candidate from getting bogged down in organizational details. This person also bears the day-to-day responsibility for keeping the campaign square on its message and setting its tone.
- **Get a fund-raiser.** Money, as this chapter will soon discuss in detail, is an important key to election victory.
- **Get a campaign counsel.** With all the current federal regulation of campaign financing, legal assistance is essential to ensure compliance with the laws.
- **Hire media and campaign consultants.** Candidates have more important things to do with their time than plan ad campaigns, contract for buttons and bumper stickers, and buy TV time and newspaper space. Professionals can get them the most exposure for their money.
- **Assemble a campaign staff.** It is desirable to hire as many professionals as the campaign budget allows, but it is also important to get a coordinator of volunteers to ensure that envelopes are licked, doorbells rung, and other small but vital tasks addressed. Many campaign volunteers are typically young people, who are the most likely to have the energy and freedom from commitments required for this sort of intensive work.
- **Plan the logistics.** A modern presidential campaign involves jetting around the country at an incredible pace. Aides known as “advance workers” handle the complicated details of candidate scheduling and see to it that events are well publicized and well attended.
- **Get a research staff and policy advisers.** Candidates have little time to master the complex issues reporters will ask about. Policy advisers—often distinguished academics—feed them the information they need to keep up with events.
- **Hire a pollster.** Professional polling firms conduct opinion research to tell candidates how the voters view them and what is on the voters’ minds.
- **Get a good press secretary.** Candidates running for major office have reporters dogging them every step of the way. The reporters need news, and a good press secretary can help them make their deadlines with stories that the campaign would like to see reported.
- **Establish a Web site.** A Web site is a relatively inexpensive way of getting a candidate’s message out. Candidates generally post position papers, videos of their speeches, and information on how to volunteer and contribute money.

Most of these tasks cost money. Campaigns are not cheap, and the role of money in campaigns is a controversial one.

## Money and Campaigning

**9.3** Outline how the financing of federal campaigns is regulated by campaign finance laws.

**C**ampaigns for office are expensive and, in America’s high-tech political arena, growing more so. Candidates need money to build a campaign organization and to get their message out. Although many people make small political donations, those who most grease the wheel of political campaigns are hardly representative of middle-class Americans, and there is much concern that wealthy campaign contributors are buying special influence over public policy decisions.

9.1

### campaign contributions

Donations that are made directly to a candidate or a party and that must be reported to the FEC. As of 2012, individuals were allowed to donate up to \$2,500 per election to a candidate and up to \$30,800 to a political party.

9.2

9.3

### independent expenditures

Expenses on behalf of a political message that are made by groups that are uncoordinated with any candidate's campaign.

9.4

9.5

### Federal Election Campaign Act

A law passed in 1974 for reforming campaign finances. The act created the Federal Election Commission and provided for limits on and disclosure of campaign contributions.

9.6

### political action committees

Groups that raise money from individuals and then distribute it in the form of contributions to candidates that the group supports. PACs must register with the FEC and report their donations and contributions to it. Individual contributions to a PAC are limited to \$5,000 per year, and a PAC may give up to \$5,000 to a candidate for each election.

9.7

9.8

### Federal Election Commission

A six-member bipartisan agency created by the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1974. The Federal Election Commission administers and enforces campaign finance laws.

There are two basic ways to contribute money to the dialogue of political campaigns in America:

1. **campaign contributions** to the candidates' campaigns and to the political parties, which go directly into their bank accounts and then can be used in any way they see fit; and
2. donations to groups that make **independent expenditures** to express political views which may aid a candidate's campaign, but that cannot coordinate with the campaign.

We will examine each of these methods in turn and then discuss some fundamental questions about the role of money in campaigns.

## □ Regulations on Campaign Contributions

In the early 1970s, as the costs of campaigning skyrocketed and the Watergate scandal exposed large, illegal campaign contributions, momentum developed for campaign finance reform. Several public interest lobbies led the drive. In 1974, Congress passed the **Federal Election Campaign Act**. The most important consequence of this law was to transform the secretive world of campaign finance into an open book for public scrutiny. It required that all candidates for federal office must disclose: (1) who has contributed money to their campaign; and (2) how the campaign funds have been spent.

In addition to requiring transparency in campaign finance, the historic legislation of 1974 also instituted limits on campaign contributions for the first time. Scandalized to find out that some wealthy individuals had contributed \$1 million to the 1972 Nixon campaign, Congress limited individual contributions to presidential and congressional candidates to \$1,000 per election. (In 2002, the McCain–Feingold Act, discussed below, increased this limit to \$2,000 and provided for it to be indexed to rise with inflation in the future; hence, the limit for 2012 was \$2,500.) Interest group donations to campaigns were also limited by the 1974 reforms via regulations on **political action committees** (PACs), which can channel contributions to candidates of up to \$5,000 per election.

In order to create a repository for campaign finance reports, as well as to enforce limits on campaign contributions, the 1974 act established the **Federal Election Commission** (FEC). Three spots on the FEC are reserved for Democrats and three for Republicans. The rules of the commission require four votes for any action, and as a result, its critics say, the FEC is all too often locked in partisan stalemate. Nevertheless, it has successfully fulfilled its mission to open up the details of campaign finance for everyone to see. Candidates and parties must file regular detailed contribution and expenditure reports with the commission, which in turn posts them at [www.fec.gov](http://www.fec.gov). Furthermore, a variety of Web sites have taken on the task of making this information easy to search through. If you want to know how much money a particular candidate for federal office has recently raised for their campaign, you can look up their most recent quarterly statement at [www.opensecrets.org](http://www.opensecrets.org). And if you want to know who among your neighbors has donated to federal campaigns, you can find this information with a simple search at [www.fundrace.org](http://www.fundrace.org). As Frank Sorauf writes, detailed reports of American campaign contributions and expenditures have “become a wonder of the democratic political world. Nowhere else do scholars and journalists find so much information about the funding of campaigns, and the openness of Americans about the flow of money stuns many other nationals accustomed to silence and secrecy about such traditionally private matters.”<sup>30</sup>

Less successful over the long run has been the system of using taxpayer dollars to pay a substantial part of the cost of presidential campaigns—this portion of the 1974 campaign finance law has withered into irrelevance. Money for public financing of presidential campaigns is still collected from taxpayers via a \$3 voluntary check-off box

on federal income tax returns. But only about 7 percent of taxpayers currently check the box, thereby limiting the amount of money available. More importantly, in order to claim the taxpayer funds, candidates have to agree to restrictions on overall spending, and these restrictions have become an unacceptable condition for any serious presidential campaign. Figure 9.2 compares what Barack Obama actually spent in 2008 to what he would have been limited to spending had he accepted federal funds. One can readily see why he turned down taxpayer dollars to have the freedom to raise as much as possible in individual donations of up to \$2,400 (the inflation-indexed contribution limit in 2008). In 2012 no presidential candidate applied for federal funds. And it is unlikely that we'll see any future candidates do so unless the restrictions on overall spending are substantially altered or repealed.

No discussion of campaign donations would be complete without some discussion of the loopholes that have been opened up (and sometimes closed) over the years. Although the 1974 campaign reform act was generally welcomed by both parties, in the 1976 case of *Buckley v. Valeo*, the Supreme Court struck down a portion of the act that had limited the amount individuals could contribute to their own campaigns. The Court reasoned that, while big campaign contributions could corrupt politicians and hence needed to be limited, one could hardly corrupt oneself by donating to one's own campaign. This Court ruling made it possible for Ross Perot to spend over \$60 million of his own fortune on his independent presidential candidacy in 1992 and for Mitt Romney to spend \$44 million out of his own pocket in pursuit of the Republican presidential nomination in 2008.

Another loophole was opened in 1979 with an amendment to the original act that made it easier for political parties to raise money for voter registration drives, for distributing campaign material at the grassroots level, and for generic party advertising. Money raised for such purposes was known as **soft money** and for a time was not subject to any contribution limits. In 2000, an unprecedented amount of money flowed into the coffers of the national parties through this loophole—a total of nearly half a billion dollars, with many of the contributions coming in increments of hundreds of thousands of dollars. AT&T alone gave over \$3 million in soft money, as did the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees. The Democratic Party raised \$32 million in soft money donations specifically for its new national headquarters building, including a \$7 million donation from Haim Saban, the billionaire creator of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.

Senators John McCain (R-AZ) and Russell Feingold (D-WI) crusaded for years to remove large soft money campaign contributions from the political system. Their efforts finally came to fruition in 2002 when their bill was passed by the Congress and signed into law by President George W. Bush. The major provision of the McCain–Feingold Act was to ban soft money contributions. Limits on contributions to political parties were set at \$25,000 and indexed to rise with inflation. In the 2003 case of *McConnell v. Federal Election Commission*, the Supreme Court ruled 5 to 4 in favor of this ban on unlimited contributions directly to the political parties. The majority concluded that this restriction was justified by the government's legitimate interest in preventing “both the actual corruption threatened by large financial contributions and ... the appearance of corruption” that might result from those contributions.

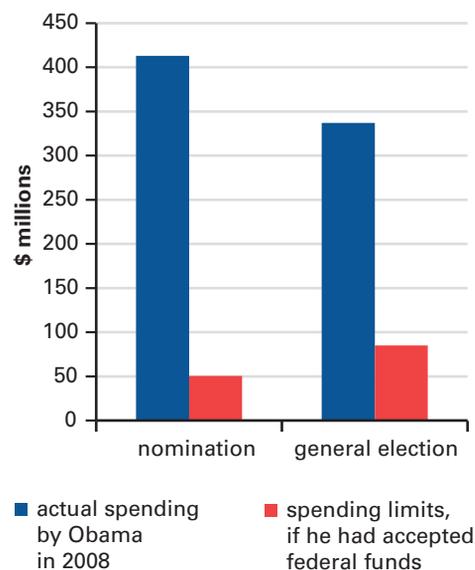
Although the McCain–Feingold's ban on soft money contributions remains in effect, it did not take long for a people who wanted to spend big money to participate in politics to find other ways to do so. Some scholars call this the “hydraulic theory of money and politics,” noting that money, like water, inevitably finds its way around any obstacle. In this instance, the way around was through independent political expenditures, which we turn to next.

### soft money

Political contributions earmarked for party-building expenses at the grassroots level or for generic party advertising. For a time, such contributions were unlimited, until they were banned by the McCain–Feingold Act.

**FIGURE 9.2 HOW OBAMA RAISED MORE CAMPAIGN MONEY BY DECLINING FEDERAL FUNDS**

In 2008, Barack Obama became the first presidential candidate to turn down federal funds for the nomination and general election campaigns since the option of public financing was instituted for presidential campaigns in the mid-1970s. The public financing system entitled him to receive matching funds for contributions of up to \$250 during the primaries and to completely finance his general election campaign with a check from the FEC. The catch would have been that he would have had limit his total spending to the amount prescribed by Congress in the 1970s, adjusted for inflation. These limits, however, are voluntary—a candidate is free to decline the federal funds. As you can see in the figure, saying “no thanks” to federal financing freed Obama to raise far more money.



SOURCE: Federal Election Commission reports.

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- 9.7
- 9.8

### 527 groups

Independent political groups that are not subject to contribution restrictions because they do not directly seek the election of particular candidates. Section 527 of the tax code specifies that contributions to such groups must be reported to the IRS.

### *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*

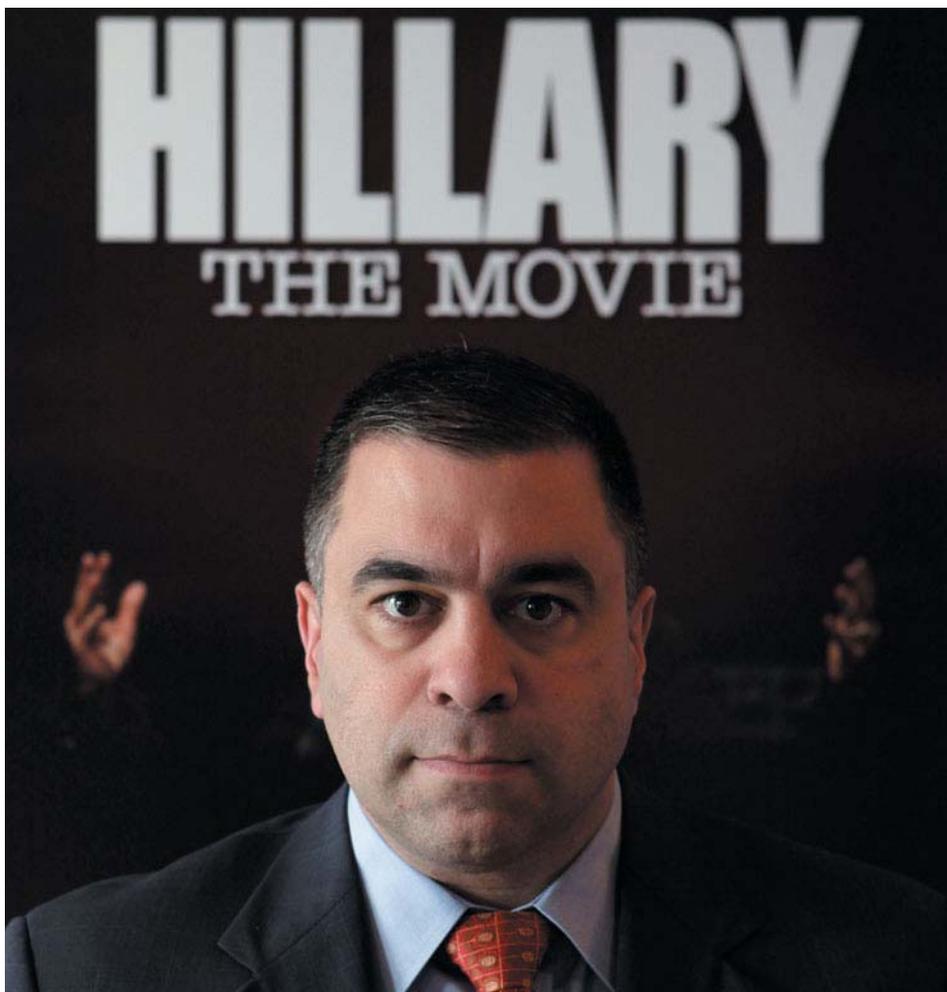
A 2010 landmark Supreme Court case that ruled that individuals, corporations, and unions could donate unlimited amounts of money to groups that make independent political expenditures.

## Regulations on Independent Political Expenditures

If you hear that rich individuals are giving million dollar contributions to candidates or political parties these days, that is technically and legally incorrect. Instead, what they are doing is giving large sums to groups that are independent of a candidate or party, and whose actions cannot be legally coordinated with them.

The authors of the 2002 McCain–Feingold Act intended that by the next presidential election big money would be removed from politics. But wealthy individuals on both sides of the political spectrum soon found that they could make unlimited contributions to what is known as **527 groups**, which are named after the section of the federal tax code that governs these political groups. In a controversial 2004 ruling, the FEC declined to subject 527 groups to contribution restrictions as long as their political messages did not make explicit endorsements of candidates by using phrases like “Vote for” and “Vote against.” The result was that many people who had in the past given big soft money contributions to the parties instead gave big donations to 527 groups, such as the anti-Kerry group Swift Boat Veterans for Truth or the anti-Bush group MoveOn.org. Although such donations were unlimited, they still had to be disclosed to the FEC.

Independent expenditures by 527 groups were partially restricted for about eight years by the McCain–Feingold Act. A major provision of this law prohibited corporations and unions from using their general treasury funds to pay for electioneering communications in the last 60 days of federal campaigns. However, in the 2010 case of *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, the Supreme



David Bossie is president of Citizens United, a conservative nonprofit organization, which in 2008 produced *Hillary: The Movie*. When the Federal Election Commission ruled that this movie was unlawful electioneering, Citizens United successfully sued, establishing the right of any group to engage in independent political expenditures.

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Court ruled 5 to 4 that this was an unconstitutional restriction on free speech. Thus, both corporations and unions can now spend as much as they like to promote their political views, as long as they do so without coordinating their message with any candidate's campaign.

Soon afterwards, **501(c) groups** emerged as vehicles for unlimited political donations that could remain anonymous. Such groups are regulated by the IRS rather than the FEC, and donations do not have to be reported unless a donor gives money specifically for a political ad. Thus, even corporations and unions can now give big sums to 501(c) groups without having any public disclosure of these donations. Presently, the only significant restriction on 501(c) groups is that they cannot spend more than half their funds on political activities, though many in Congress would like to change the law to require that donations of \$10,000 or more be disclosed.<sup>31</sup>

Many critics of the *Citizens United* decision, including President Obama, argued that the Supreme Court had opened up the floodgates to special interest money (especially that of corporations) to corrupt the electoral process. The majority of the justices did not see it this way, however. The key portion of the majority decision noted that in 10,000 pages of the record reviewing the McCain–Feingold law there were not “any direct examples of votes being exchanged for independent expenditures.” These five justices therefore concluded that “independent expenditures do not lead to, or create the appearance of, *quid pro quo* corruption.” In fact, they argued, “there is only scant evidence that independent expenditures even ingratiate.” Consequently, the Court ruled that such expenditures were protected under the Constitution as free speech.

Employing this reasoning from the *Citizens United* decision, in the case of *SpeechNow.org v. FEC* the D.C. Court of Appeals ruled that donations to a PAC that makes only independent expenditures could not be limited. Whereas a regular PAC can accept donations of no more than \$5,000 a year from each individual and can donate no more than \$5,000 per election to a candidate, the *SpeechNow* ruling made it possible for a PAC that just expresses its views to collect and spend heretofore unheard of amounts. Journalists soon realized the explosive impact these independent expenditure-only PACs could have, labeling them **Super PACs**.

In 2012, Super PACs arose to support each of the presidential candidates in both parties. Some of the wealthiest people in the country suddenly found that, although they could donate only \$2,500 to the candidate of their choice, they could now send a million dollar check to a Super PAC that would run ads on behalf of this candidate. In Table 9.1, you can see the 10 biggest contributions to the Obama and Romney Super PACs as of October 1, 2012. Critics of this new development in campaign finance

### 501(c) groups

Groups that are exempted from reporting their contributions and can receive unlimited contributions. Section 501c of the tax code specifies that such groups cannot spend more than half their funds on political activities.

### Super PACs

Independent expenditure-only PACs are known as Super PACs because they may accept donations of any size and can endorse candidates. Their contributions and expenditures must be periodically reported to the FEC.

**TABLE 9.1** THE 10 BIGGEST DONATIONS TO THE OBAMA AND ROMNEY SUPER PACS IN 2012

Amount	Donated by:	To:
\$10,000,000	Sheldon and Miriam Adelson, casino owners	Restore Our Future, supported Mitt Romney
\$10,000,000	Bob Perry, owner of Perry Homes	Restore Our Future, supported Mitt Romney
\$3,500,000	James Simmons, Renaissance Technologies	Priorities USA Action, supported Barack Obama
\$3,500,000	Fred Eychaner, Newsweb Corp.	Priorities USA Action, supported Barack Obama
\$3,000,000	Jeffrey Katzenberg, DreamWorks Animation	Priorities USA Action, supported Barack Obama
\$2,750,000	Oxbow Carbon Corp.	Restore Our Future, supported Mitt Romney
\$2,003,850	Steve Mostyn, Mostyn Law Firm	Priorities USA Action, supported Barack Obama
\$2,000,000	Jon Sryker, Architect	Priorities USA Action, supported Barack Obama
\$2,000,000	Irwin Jacobs, Qualcomm	Priorities USA Action, supported Barack Obama
\$1,500,000	Ann Chambers, Cox Enterprises	Priorities USA Action, supported Barack Obama

SOURCE: Federal Election Commission reports, as of October 1, 2012.

argued that it represented a threat to the spirit of limits on campaign contributions designed to minimize corruption in politics. Besides the unprecedented large sums, there was also criticism of how the lines between a candidate's campaign and their Super PAC were not quite so independent, what with top aides to both Obama and Romney appearing at Super PAC fundraising events. On the other side of the coin, defenders of Super PACs saw them as a vehicle for freedom of expression, as well as a way to inform the public about political issues.

It remains to be seen how these new free-spending independent political expenditures may change the answer to two perpetual questions on money and politics to which we turn to next: are campaigns too expensive, and does money buy victory?

### □ Are Campaigns Too Expensive?

The Center for Responsive Politics estimated in 2008 that the contests for the presidency and Congress cost over \$5 billion.<sup>32</sup> This seems like a tremendous amount of money. Yet American elections cost, per person, about as much as a DVD movie. Bradley Smith, who served as a commissioner on the FEC, writes that the proportion of the nation's gross domestic product spent on political activity is a mere .05 percent.<sup>33</sup> What bothers politicians most about the rising costs of high-tech campaigning is that fund-raising takes up so much of their time. Many American officeholders feel that the need for continuous fund-raising distracts them from their jobs as legislators.

Public financing of federal campaigns is often suggested as a possible solution to this problem. Some lawmakers support some sort of public financing reform; however, it will be very difficult to get Congress to consent to equal financing for the people who will challenge them for their seats. Incumbents will not readily give up the advantage they have in raising money.

### □ Does Money Buy Victory?

Perhaps the most basic complaint about money and politics is that there may be a direct link between dollars spent and votes received. Few have done more to dispel this charge than political scientist Gary Jacobson. His research has shown that the more congressional incumbents spend, the worse they do.<sup>34</sup> This fact is not as odd as it sounds. It simply means that incumbents who face a tough opponent must raise more money to meet the challenge. When a challenger is not a serious threat, as they all too often are not, incumbents can afford to campaign cheaply.

More important than having "more" money is having "enough" money. Herbert Alexander calls this "the doctrine of sufficiency." As he writes, "Enough money must be spent to get a message across to compete effectively but outspending one's opponent is not always necessary—even an incumbent with a massive ratio of higher spending."<sup>35</sup> One case in point is that of the late Paul Wellstone, a previously obscure political science professor who beat an incumbent senator in 1990 despite being outspent by 5 to 1.<sup>36</sup> Billionaire Meg Whitman spent over \$140 million of her own money in her 2010 bid for the governorship of California but was soundly defeated by Jerry Brown, whose campaign had about \$100 million less to spend.

## Why It Matters to You

### Money and Elections

As the old saying goes, "Money is the mother's milk of politics." The amount of money raised is one concrete indicator of support before the first votes are cast, and is often used by the media to judge who the leading candidates are. In addition, money provides a campaign with the ability to hire sufficient staff and advertising time to get its message out.

# The Impact of Campaigns

## 9.4 Determine why campaigns have an important yet limited impact on election outcomes.

**A**lmost all politicians figure that a good campaign is the key to victory. Many political scientists, however, question the importance of campaigns. Reviewing the evidence, Dan Nimmo concluded, “Political campaigns are less crucial in elections than most politicians believe.”<sup>37</sup> For years, researchers studying campaigns have stressed that campaigns have three effects on voters: reinforcement, activation, and conversion. Campaigns can *reinforce* voters’ preferences for candidates; they can *activate* voters, getting them to contribute money or ring doorbells as opposed to merely voting; and they can *convert*, changing voters’ minds.

Five decades of research on political campaigns leads to a single message: campaigns mostly reinforce and activate; only rarely do they convert. The evidence on the impact of campaigns points clearly to the conclusion that the best-laid plans of campaign managers change very few votes. Given the millions of dollars spent on political campaigns, it may be surprising to find that they do not have a great effect. Several factors tend to weaken campaigns’ impact on voters:

- Most people pay relatively little attention to campaigns in the first place. People have a remarkable capacity for **selective perception**—paying most attention to things they already agree with and interpreting events according to their own predispositions.
- Long-term factors, such as party identification, influence voting behavior regardless of what happens in the campaign.
- Incumbents start with a substantial advantage in terms of name recognition and a track record.

Such findings do not mean, of course, that campaigns never change voters’ minds or that converting a small percentage is unimportant. In their careful analysis of survey data, Hillygus and Shields find that a substantial number of voters are persuadable because they disagree with their preferred candidate on at least one issue (for example, pro-choice Republicans). They demonstrate how politicians use what are known as “wedge” issues—issues on which the other party’s coalition is divided—to attempt to draw supporters from the opponent’s camp into their own.<sup>38</sup> In tight races, a good campaign that targets specific constituencies for persuasion can make the difference between winning and losing.

As the campaign nears its end, voters face two key choices: whether to vote and, if they choose to, how to vote. The following sections investigate the ways that voters make these choices.

## Whether to Vote: A Citizen’s First Choice

### 9.5 Identify the factors that influence whether people vote.

**O**ver two centuries of American electoral history, federal laws have greatly expanded **suffrage**—the right to vote. Virtually everyone over the age of 18 now has the right to vote. The two major exceptions concern noncitizens and convicted criminals. There is no federal requirement stating that voters must be citizens, and it was quite common in the nineteenth century for immigrants to vote prior to attaining citizenship. However, no state currently permits residents

### selective perception

The phenomenon that people’s beliefs often guide what they pay the most attention to and how they interpret events.

### suffrage

The legal right to vote in the United States, gradually extended to virtually all citizens over the age of 18.

who are not citizens to vote. Some immigrant groups feel that this ought to at least be changed at the local level. State law varies widely when it comes to crime and voting: virtually all states deny prisoners the right to vote, about half extend the ban to people on parole, and 10 states impose a lifetime ban on convicted felons.

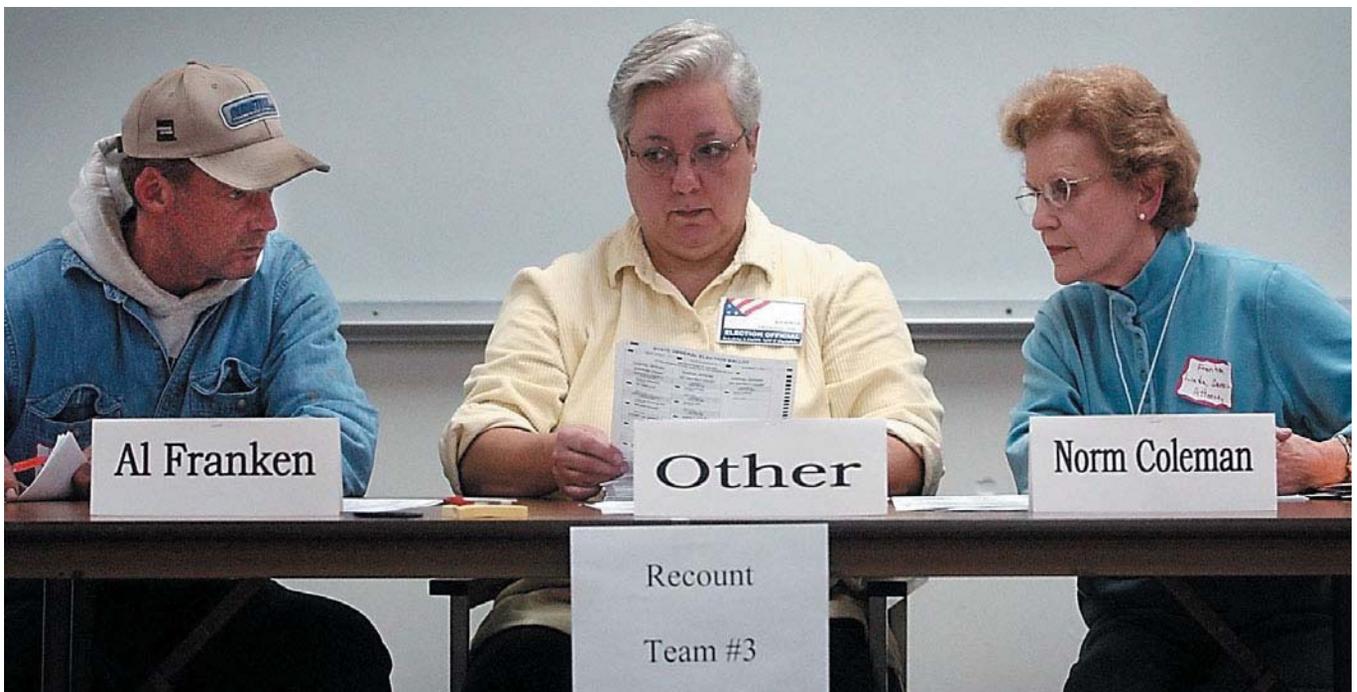
Interestingly, as the right to vote has been extended, proportionately fewer of those eligible have chosen to exercise that right. In the past 120 years, the 80 percent turnout in the 1896 election was the high point of electoral participation. In 2012, 59 percent of adult citizens voted in the presidential election, and only about 40 percent voted in the midterm congressional elections of 2010.

## □ Deciding Whether to Vote

Realistically, when over 125 million people vote in a presidential election, as they did in 2012, the chance of one vote affecting the outcome is very, very slight. Once in a while, of course, an election is decided by a small number of votes, as was the case in Florida in 2000. It is more likely, however, that you will be struck by lightning during your lifetime than participate in an election decided by a single vote.

Not only does your vote probably not make much difference to the outcome, but voting is somewhat costly. You have to spend some of your valuable time becoming informed, making up your mind, and getting to the polls. If you carefully calculate your time and energy, you might rationally decide that the costs of voting outweigh the benefits. Indeed, the most frequent reason for nonvoting given by those who were registered but didn't vote has been that they could not take time off from work or school that day.<sup>39</sup> Some scholars have therefore proposed that one of the easiest ways to increase American turnout levels would be to move Election Day to Saturday or to make it a holiday, as in many other countries.<sup>40</sup>

Economist Anthony Downs, in his model of democracy, tries to explain why a rational person would ever bother to vote. He argues that rational people vote if they believe that the policies of one party will bring more benefits than the policies of



Occasionally election outcomes are so close that all the individual ballots have to be carefully recounted. Here, an election official examines a ballot in the 2008 Minnesota Senate race, with representatives from the opposing candidates observing on either side. In the original count, Norm Coleman finished 215 votes ahead, but after the recount Al Franken won the election by 225 votes.

the other party.<sup>41</sup> Thus, people who see policy differences between the parties on the key issues that concern them are more likely to join the ranks of voters. If you are an environmentalist and you expect the Democrats to pass more environmental legislation than the Republicans, then you have an additional incentive to go to the polls. On the other hand, if you are truly indifferent—that is, if you see no difference whatsoever between the two parties—you may rationally decide to abstain.

Another reason why many people vote is that they have a high sense of **political efficacy**—the belief that ordinary people can influence the government. Efficacy is measured by asking people to agree or disagree with statements such as “I don’t think public officials care much what people like me think.” Those who lack strong feelings of efficacy are being quite rational in staying home on Election Day because they don’t think they can make a difference. Yet even some of these people will vote anyway, simply to support democratic government. In this case, people are impelled to vote by a sense of **civic duty**. The benefit from doing one’s civic duty is the long-term contribution made toward preserving democracy.

## □ Registering to Vote

Politicians used to say, “Vote early and often.” Largely to prevent corruption associated with stuffing ballot boxes, around 1900 states adopted **voter registration** laws, which require individuals to first place their name on an electoral roll in order to be allowed to vote. Although these laws have made it more difficult to vote more than once, they have also discouraged some people from voting at all. America’s registration system is, in part, to blame for why Americans are significantly less likely to go to the polls than citizens of other democratic nations (see “America in Perspective: Why Turnout in the United States Is So Low Compared to Turnout in Other Countries”).

Registration procedures currently differ from state to state. In sparsely populated North Dakota, there is no registration at all, and in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Wyoming, Idaho, Montana, New Hampshire, and Maine voters can register on Election Day. Advocates of this user-friendly procedure are quick to point out that these states all ranked near the top in voter turnout in 2012. For many years, some states—particularly in the South—had burdensome registration procedures, such as requiring people to make a trip to their county courthouse during normal business hours. This situation was changed by the 1993 **Motor Voter Act**, which made voter registration easier by requiring states to allow eligible voters to register by simply checking a box on their driver’s license application or renewal form. Nevertheless, its impact on turnout has thus far been largely disappointing. Turnout for the presidential election of 2012 was virtually the same as turnout in the 1992 election, before the act was passed.

Although it is now easier than ever to register to vote, the process for signing in to exercise one’s right to vote has recently been made more difficult in a number of states. Many legislators have expressed the view that, to prevent voter fraud, each registered voter should have to prove that they are who they say they are. Hence, some states have enacted legislation requiring people to show an official piece of identification, such as a driver’s license or a passport, when they sign in to vote. Such procedures were pioneered in Indiana and upheld as constitutional by the Supreme Court in the 2008 case of *Crawford v. Marion County Election Board*. As Governor Nikki Haley of South Carolina said when she signed her state’s new voter ID law in 2011, “If you can show a picture to buy Sudafed, if you can show a picture to get on an airplane, you should be able to show a picture to vote.” Opponents of voter ID requirements have charged that such requirements impose an unfair burden on groups such as students, racial minorities, and poor people, all of whom are less likely to have a government-sponsored photo ID. The Department of Justice under President Obama agreed with the opponents of voter IDs, and tried to block implementation of voter ID laws in states where the Voting Rights Act gave the

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### political efficacy

The belief that one’s political participation really matters—that one’s vote can actually make a difference.

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### civic duty

The belief that in order to support democratic government, a citizen should vote.

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### voter registration

A system adopted by the states that requires voters to register prior to voting. Some states require citizens to register as much as 30 days in advance, whereas others permit Election Day registration.

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### Motor Voter Act

A 1993 act that requires states to permit people to register to vote when they apply for a driver’s license.

## Why Turnout in the United States Is So Low Compared to Turnout in Other Countries

Despite living in a culture that encourages participation, Americans have a woefully low turnout rate compared to citizens of other democracies. The graph below displays the most recent election turnout rates in the United States and a variety of other nations.

There are several reasons given for Americans' abysmally low turnout rate. Probably the one most often cited is the American requirement of voter registration. The governments of many (but not all) other democracies take the responsibility of seeing to it that all their eligible citizens are on the voting lists. In America, the responsibility for registration lies solely with the individual. If we were like the Scandinavian countries, where the government registers every eligible citizen, no doubt our turnout rate would be higher.

A second difference between the United States and other countries is that the American government asks citizens to vote far more often. Whereas the typical European voter may cast two or three ballots in a four-year period, many Americans are faced with a dozen or more separate elections in the space of four years. Furthermore, Americans are expected to vote for a much wider range of political offices. With one elected official for roughly every 500 citizens, and elections held somewhere virtually every week, it is no wonder that it is so difficult to get Americans to the polls. It is probably no coincidence that the one European country that has a lower turnout rate—Switzerland—has also overwhelmed its citizens with voting opportunities, typically asking people to vote three or four times every year.

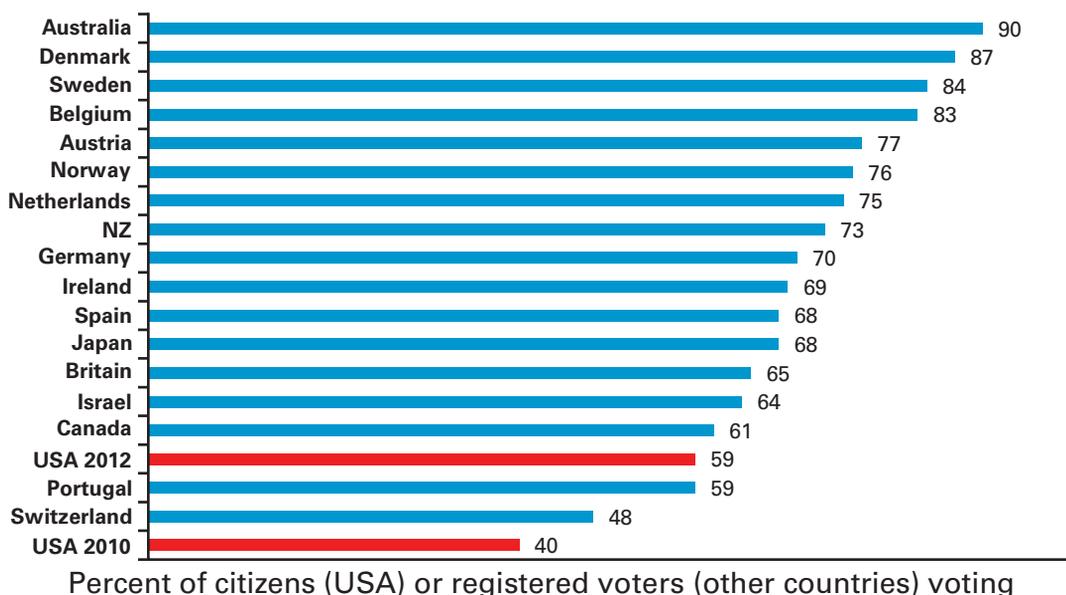
Third, the stimulus to vote is low in the United States because the choices offered Americans are not

as starkly different as in other countries. The United States is quite unusual in that it has always lacked a major left-wing socialist party. When European voters go to the polls, they are deciding on whether their country will be run by parties with socialist goals or by conservative (and in some cases religious) parties. The consequences of their vote for redistribution of income and the scope of government are far greater than the ordinary American voter can imagine.

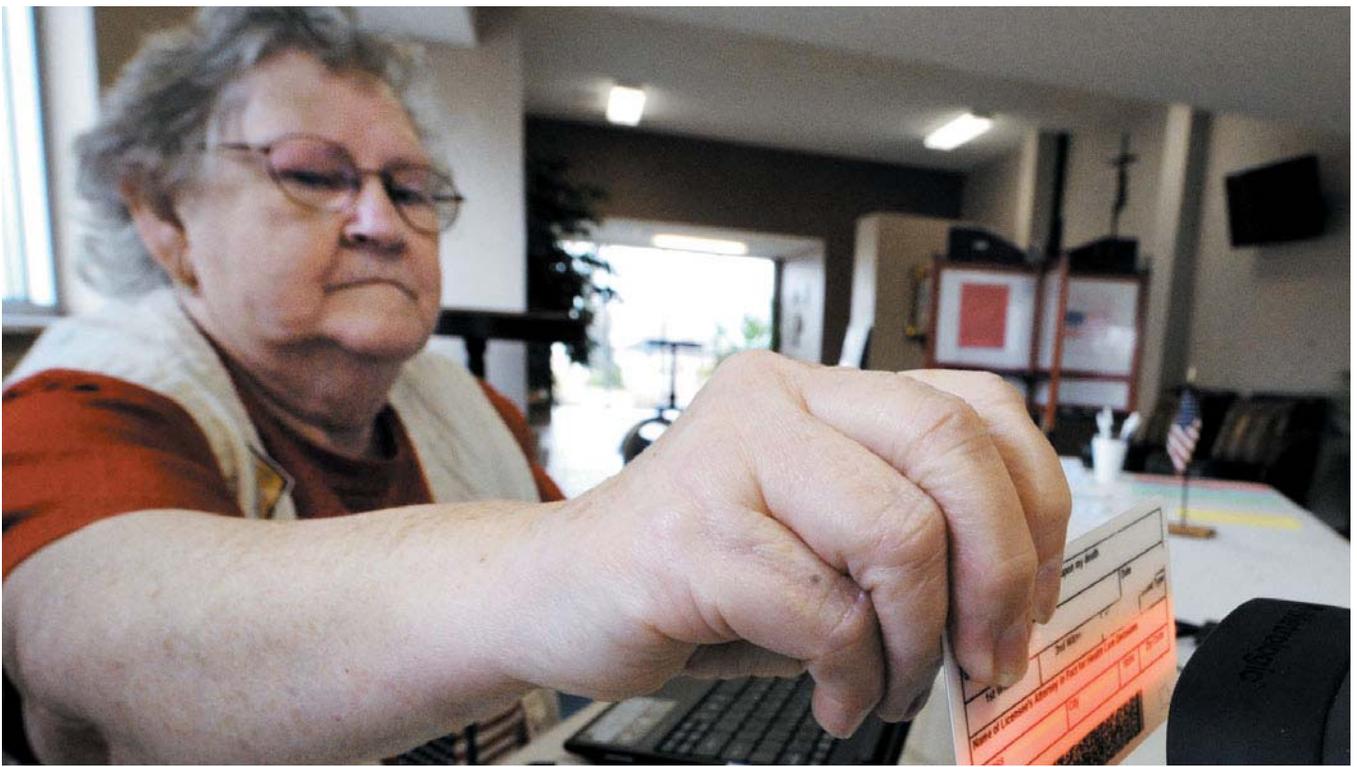
Finally, the United States is one of the few democracies that still vote midweek, when most people are working. Article I, Section III of the U.S. Constitution allows Congress to determine the timing of federal elections. Thus, Congress could certainly change the date of Election Day, if it wanted to. Comparative research has shown that countries that hold elections on the weekend have higher turnout.

### CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. Some people would like the United States to emulate other countries and have the government automatically register everyone who is eligible to vote. Others oppose this European-style system, believing that this would lead to an intrusive big government that would require everyone to have a national identity card. What do you think?
2. Do you think American turnout rates would be better if we followed the lead of most other democracies and held elections on the weekend?



**SOURCES:** In all countries except for the United States, official reports of the percentage of registered voters casting valid votes. For the United States, the percentage of citizens participating was calculated based on Census Bureau reports of the number of citizens of voting age and reports from the states regarding how many people voted.



In recent years, a number of states have adopted laws requiring voters to show a photo ID at the polls. Here, an election judge in Missouri uses a new voter registration computer system to scan a voter's driver's license.<sup>w</sup>

federal government the right to do so. In response, Texas, Florida, and Alabama filed a lawsuit, claiming that federal approval for laws like voter ID statutes should no longer be necessary.

## □ Who Votes?

Given that turnout among American citizens peaks at about 60 percent in presidential elections and usually runs at about just 40 percent in midterm congressional elections, studying nonvoters becomes especially important. Table 9.2 displays data regarding the turnout rates of various groups in the 2008 presidential election and the 2010 midterm contests. This information reveals numerous demographic factors that are related to turnout:

- **Education.** People with higher-than-average educational levels have a higher rate of voting than people with less education. Highly educated people are more capable of discerning the major differences between the candidates. In addition, their educational training comes in handy in clearing the bureaucratic hurdles imposed by registration requirements.
- **Age.** Young adults are less likely to follow politics regularly and hence often lack sufficient motivation to vote. In addition, younger people have to get themselves on the registration rolls for the first time whereas most older people are already registered to vote. Yet, even just analyzing turnout patterns among people who are registered to vote yields wide turnout differences by age group. In Iowa, for example, the secretary of state reported that among those on the registration rolls, only 24 percent of those under 25 years of age voted in 2010, as compared to 73 percent among those over 65 years of age.<sup>42</sup>
- **Race and ethnicity.** Minorities are usually underrepresented among voters relative to their share of the citizenry. This is clearly evident in the table's turnout data for Hispanics and Asian Americans. However, for the first time ever, in 2008 there was no significant difference in the turnout rates between African Americans and

**TABLE 9.2** REPORTED TURNOUT RATES FOR GROUPS OF U.S. CITIZENS IN 2008 AND 2010

	% Voting in 2008	% Voting in 2010
18–24	49	21
25–34	57	31
35–44	63	43
45–54	67	51
55–64	71	59
65 and over	70	61
No high school diploma	39	25
High school diploma	55	38
Some college	68	46
College degree	77	58
Advanced degree	83	67
White non-Hispanic	66	49
African American	65	43
Hispanic	50	31
Asian American	48	32
Men	61	45
Women	66	46
Married	70	54
Single	56	36
Government workers	76	60
Self-employed	69	54
Work in private industry	62	43
Unemployed	55	35

**SOURCE:** Authors' analysis of the 2008 and 2010 U.S. Census Bureau surveys.

## Why It Matters to You

### Youth Turnout

Young people typically have very low turnout rates in the United States. Who votes matters not only because these individuals decide who wins elections but also because politicians pay attention primarily to voters. The fact that so few young people vote means that politicians are not likely to pay too much attention to their opinions or to promote policies that will particularly help them.

white non-Hispanics, due to the historic nature of the Obama candidacy. In 2010, though, the turnout rate for African Americans was 6 percentage points below that of white non-Hispanics.

- **Gender.** In an earlier period many women were discouraged from voting, but today women actually participate in elections at a slightly higher rate than men.
- **Marital status.** People who are married are more likely to vote than those who are not. This pattern is true among all age categories and generally reflects the fact that married people are more tied into their community.
- **Government employment.** Having something at stake (their jobs and the future of the programs they work on) and being in a position to know more about government impels government workers to high levels of participation.



Since the early 1990s, Rock the Vote has sought to engage and build political power for young people in the United States, often using pop music stars to urge young people to vote. Here, DJ Mark Ronson performs at a Rock the Vote event in Chicago.

These differences in turnout rates are cumulative. Possessing several of the traits related to higher turnout rates—say, being elderly, well educated, and very religious—adds significantly to one’s likelihood of voting. Conversely, being, say, young, poorly educated, and not religious is likely to add up to a relatively low probability of voting. If you possess many of the demographic traits of nonvoters, then the interests of people like you are probably not drawing a great deal of attention from politicians—regardless of whether you personally vote or not. Politicians listen far more carefully to groups with high turnout rates, as they know their fate may well be in their hands. Who votes does matter.

#### mandate theory of elections

The idea that the winning candidate has a mandate from the people to carry out his or her platforms and politics. Politicians like the theory better than political scientists do.

## How Americans Vote: Explaining Citizens’ Decisions

9.6

Assess the impact of party identification, candidate evaluations, and policy opinions on voting behavior.

**A** common explanation of how Americans vote—one favored by journalists and politicians—is that they vote for the candidate whose policy views they prefer. Of course, the candidates have gone to a lot of time and trouble to get those views implanted in the public mind. Starting from the idea that citizens vote for the candidate whose policy views they prefer, many journalists and politicians claim that the election winner has a mandate from the people to carry out the promised policies. This premise is sometimes called the **mandate theory of elections**.

Politicians, of course, are attracted to the mandate theory. It lets them justify what they want to do by claiming public support for their policies. As President Clinton said during the final presidential debate in 1992, “That’s why I am trying to be so specific in this campaign—to have a mandate, if elected, so the Congress will know what the American people have voted for.” Immediately after declaring victory in the 2004 presidential election, President Bush forcefully asserted that he had a mandate to enact his

proposed policies over the next four years. As Bush stated, “When you win there is a feeling that the people have spoken and embraced your point of view, and that’s what I intend to tell the Congress.” And following his victory in 2008, President Obama said, “I don’t think there’s any question that we have a mandate to move the country in a new direction and not continue the same old practices that have gotten us into the fix that we’re in.”

Political scientists, however, think very little of the mandate theory of elections.<sup>43</sup> Whereas victorious politicians are eager to proclaim “the people have spoken,” political scientists know that voters’ decisions may involve various elements. Political scientists focus on three major elements of voters’ decisions: (1) voters’ party identification, (2) voters’ evaluation of the candidates, and (3) the match between voters’ policy positions and those of the candidates and parties—a factor termed “policy voting.”

## □ Party Identification

Party identifications are crucial for many voters because they provide a regular perspective through which voters can view the political world. Once established, party identification is a label that people often adhere to for a long period of time, as they do with other elements of their social identity, such as their religious affiliation, social class, or loyalty to a sports team. Party identification simplifies the political world for many voters and provides a reliable cue as to who is on their side. “Presumably,” say Niemi and Weisberg, “people choose to identify with a party with which they generally agree.... As a result they need not concern themselves with every issue that comes along, but can generally rely on their party identification to guide them.”<sup>44</sup> For example, some voters in Texas might not know anything about the issues in the race for state comptroller, but if they know which party they usually prefer, then voting based on party would probably lead to the same decision that they would reach if they were to study the issues.

In the 1950s, scholars singled out party affiliation as the best single predictor of a voter’s decision. For example, it was said that many Southern Democrats would vote for a yellow dog if their party nominated one. “My party—right or wrong” was the motto of strong party identifiers. However, following the emergence of television and candidate-centered politics, the parties’ hold on voters eroded substantially during the 1960s and 1970s and then stabilized at a new and lower level.<sup>45</sup> Today, many voters agree with the statement that “I choose the best person for the office, regardless of party,” in part because modern technology makes it easier for them to evaluate and make their own decisions about the candidates. For these so-called floating voters, election choices have become largely a matter of individual choice; their support is up for grabs in each election. Young people are particularly likely to be floating voters and open to the possibility of voting for candidates who are neither Democrats nor Republicans.

## □ Candidate Evaluations: How Americans See the Candidates

All candidates try to present a favorable personal image. Appearance is a part of personal image, and using laboratory experiments, political psychologists Shawn Rosenberg and Patrick McCafferty showed that it is possible to manipulate a candidate’s appearance in a way that affects voters’ choices. Holding a candidate’s policy views and party identification constant, they find that when good pictures are substituted for bad ones, a candidate’s vote-getting ability is significantly increased. Although a laboratory setting may not be representative of the real world, Rosenberg and McCafferty conclude that “with appropriate pretesting and adequate control over a candidate’s public appearance, a campaign consultant should be able to significantly manipulate the image projected to the voting public.”<sup>46</sup>

To do so, a consultant would need to know what sort of candidate qualities voters are most attuned to. Research by Miller, Wattenberg, and Malanchuk shows that the three most important dimensions of candidate image are integrity, reliability, and

competence.<sup>47</sup> In 2000, one of the key factors that helped George W. Bush was that he was rated more positively on integrity than was Al Gore, earning better ratings for his perceived honesty and morality. Reliability comprises such traits as being dependable and decisive. When the Bush campaign repeatedly labeled John Kerry a “flip-flopper” during the 2004 campaign, Kerry’s image of reliability clearly suffered. The personal traits most often mentioned by voters, though, involve competence. In 2008, competence ratings favored Obama over McCain, as voters rated Obama substantially higher on the specific trait of intelligence.<sup>48</sup>

Such evaluations of candidate personality are sometimes seen as superficial and irrational bases for judgments. Miller and his colleagues disagree with this interpretation, arguing that voters rely on their assessments of candidates’ personalities to predict how they would perform in office. If a candidate is perceived as too incompetent to carry out policy promises or as too dishonest for those promises to be trusted, it makes perfect sense for a voter to pay more attention to personality than policies. Interestingly, Miller and his colleagues find that college-educated voters are actually the most likely to view the candidates in terms of their personal attributes and to make important issue-oriented inferences from these attributes (for example, that a candidate who is unreliable may not be the right person to be the commander in chief of the armed forces). As Maureen Dowd, a Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist, has remarked, “When I first started writing about politics for the *Times*, I got criticized sometimes for focusing on the persona and not simply the policy. But as a student of Shakespeare, I always saw the person and the policy as inextricably braided. You had to know something about the person to whom you were going to entrust life and death decisions.”<sup>49</sup>

## □ Policy Voting

**Policy voting** occurs when people base their choices in an election on their own issue preferences. True policy voting can only take place when four conditions are met. First, voters must have a clear sense of their own policy positions. Second, voters must know where the candidates stand on policy issues. Third, they must see differences between the candidates on these issues. And finally, they must actually cast a vote for the candidate whose policy positions coincide with their own.

Given these conditions, policy voting is not always easy—even for the educated voter. Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde analyzed responses to seven questions about policy issues in the 2008 National Election Study. They found that on the average issue, 61 percent of the respondents met the first three informational criteria for policy voting. When these criteria were met—when respondents had a position and knew the candidates’ stances and saw differences between them—they voted for the candidate closest to their own position 71 percent of the time.<sup>50</sup> Of course, we should never expect all votes to be consistent with policy views, as many people will prefer one candidate on some policies and another candidate on other policies.

One regular obstacle to policy voting is that candidates often decide that the best way to handle a controversial issue is to cloud their positions in rhetoric. For example, in 1968 both major party candidates—Nixon and Humphrey—were deliberately ambiguous about what they would do to end the Vietnam War. This made it extremely difficult for voters to cast their ballots according to how they felt about the war. The media may not be much help, either, as they typically focus more on the “horse race” aspects of the campaign than on the policy stands of the candidates. Voters thus often have to work fairly hard just to be informed enough to potentially engage in policy voting.

In today’s political world, it is easier for voters to vote according to policies than it was in the 1960s. The key difference is that candidates are now regularly forced to take clear stands to appeal to their own party’s primary voters. As late as 1968, it was still possible to win a nomination by dealing with the party bosses; today’s candidates must appeal first to the issue-oriented activists in the primaries. Whatever the major issues are in the next presidential election, it is quite likely that the major contenders

### policy voting

Electoral choices that are made on the basis of the voters’ policy preferences and where the candidates stand on policy issues.

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for the Democratic and Republican nominations will be taking stands on them in order to gain the support of these activists. Thus, what has changed is not the voters but the electoral process, which now provides much more incentive for candidates to clearly delineate their policy differences. In particular, George W. Bush took strong and clear policy stances on tax cuts, the war on terror, appointing conservative judges, and many other areas. Many scholars feel that as a result, he became a polarizing figure whom voters either loved or hated.<sup>51</sup> Rather than cloud his rhetoric in ambiguity like Presidents Eisenhower or Nixon, George W. Bush took pride in being straightforward and plainspoken. Part of what made Bush such a polarizing figure was stylistic, but also involved was the necessity for any modern candidate to appeal to his or her party's ideologically motivated activists in the primaries. Indeed, President Obama faced these same constraints, and in January 2012 the Gallup Poll reported that his approval ratings were the most polarized along party lines for any third-year president in history.<sup>52</sup>

## □ 2012: A Battle for the Middle-Class Vote

A year before the election, President Obama's chief political strategist, David Axelrod, was frank in saying the president's reelection was going to be a "titanic struggle" in light of the tough economic circumstances. As he put it, "We don't have the wind at our backs in this election. We have the wind in our face because the American people have the wind in their faces." What informed observers knew long in advance of the election was that the party holding the White House suffers in election returns when the economy suffers. Given the anemic economic growth rate of just 1.8 percent during the first three quarters of 2012, there was no way to run a "feel-good" campaign around a claim that the middle class was much better off than four years before, like the highly successful reelection campaigns of President Reagan in 1984 and President Clinton in 1996. At best, Obama could hope only to replicate the sort of argument that George W. Bush had made before his narrow reelection in 2004—namely, that he had done as well as could be expected under the circumstances and had chosen the best course for public policy.

To challenge President Obama, the Republicans nominated Mitt Romney, the former governor of Massachusetts. A highly successful businessman, Romney was one of the wealthiest individuals ever to be nominated by a major political party for president. He argued that the skills he had honed in business, including taking over companies and making them more profitable, could be applied to fixing the economy and creating millions of new jobs. In keeping with the Republican Party's conservative principles, Romney pledged a smaller and simpler government that would regulate less and foster a climate allowing businesses to increasingly prosper. This approach to the scope of government was received favorably; 51 percent of respondents in the national voter exit poll said the government was doing too much, compared to only 43 percent who said it should do more. Among Romney's specific proposals for reducing the scope of government was his pledge to repeal Obama's health care reforms and replace them with a smaller program that would allocate more responsibility to the states. Again, the exit poll showed that this was a net plus with the voters, as 49 percent wanted to see the 2010 health care law repealed at least in part, compared to 44 percent who wanted to keep it.

In response, President Obama argued that his policies were much more beneficial to middle-class Americans than those of Governor Romney, whom the Obama campaign portrayed as an out-of-touch plutocrat who would favor the interests of the wealthy. The exit poll data confirmed that this was a winning message for Obama; voters were 10 percent more likely to say his policies would favor the middle class than Romney's policies. Furthermore, a majority of the respondents agreed with the claim that Romney would favor the rich. And Obama's proposal to raise taxes on the wealthy met with the approval of 47 percent of respondents, with another 13 percent saying that income tax rates should go up for all taxpayers; only 35 percent agreed with Romney's stance that no income tax rates should be increased.



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President Obama, Vice President Biden, and their wives celebrate the reelection of the Obama-Biden ticket at the Democrats' victory party in Chicago.

Among the other major advantages that the exit poll found for President Obama were his immigration policy, his perceived ability to handle an international crisis, and his approach to Medicare. In particular, many political pundits noted that Obama gained crucial support when he issued an executive order allowing young illegal immigrants who had graduated from a U.S. high school to obtain work permits, thereby enabling them to stay in the country legally. In contrast, Mitt Romney famously said that his answer to the immigration problem was “self-deportation,” by which people decide to return to their home country when they find they lack legal documentation necessary to obtain work. The national exit poll found that voters preferred Obama’s immigration policy by a wide margin, and it helped him earn record levels of support from voters of Hispanic and Asian descent.

The people’s verdict in 2012 was to give President Obama four more years in the White House. He carried 51 percent of the popular vote, compared to 48 percent for Romney and 1 percent for third party candidates. As shown in Figure 9.3, this translated into a 332–206 margin in the Electoral College, with the Republicans winning only two states that they had lost in 2008—Indiana and North Carolina. Figure 9.3 also displays some basic data regarding what sort of voters were most likely to cast their ballots for Obama. As you can see, Obama’s coalition was heavily reliant on young people, racial minorities, women, Jews, those without a religious affiliation, and people with relatively low incomes.

The results of the 2012 election show how important it is to understand how the Electoral College works. In presidential elections, once voters make their decisions, it is not just a simple matter of counting ballots to see who has won the most support nationwide. Instead, the complicated process of determining Electoral College votes begins.

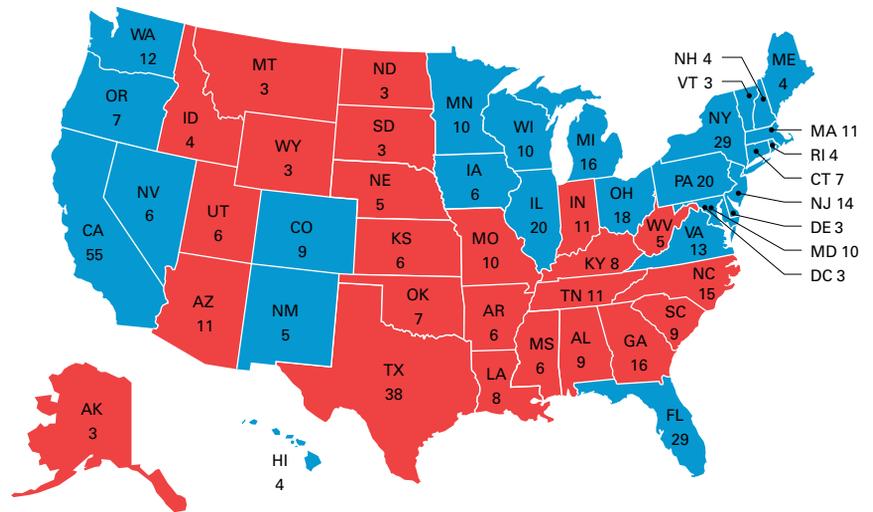
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## Electoral College

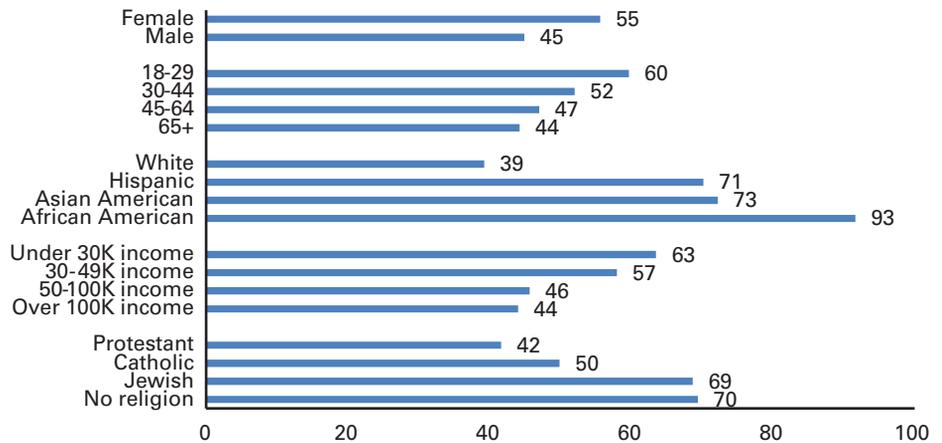
A unique American institution created by the Constitution, providing for the selection of the president by electors chosen by the state parties. Although the Electoral College vote usually reflects a popular majority, less populated states are overrepresented and the winner-take-all rule concentrates campaigns on close states.

**FIGURE 9.3** ELECTORAL COLLEGE AND EXIT POLL RESULTS FOR 2012

The map shows the number of votes each state had in the Electoral College in 2012 and which states were carried by the Democrats (blue) and Republicans (red). After the map you'll find some selected data from the 2012 national exit poll, which demonstrate some of the individual demographics that were related to voting behavior.



**% Voting for Obama in 2012**



SOURCE: 2012 National Exit Poll.

## The Last Battle: The Electoral College

**9.7** Evaluate the fairness of the Electoral College system for choosing the president.

**I**t is the **Electoral College**, not the popular vote, that actually determines who becomes president of the United States. The Electoral College is a unique American institution, created by the Constitution. The American Bar Association once called it “archaic, undemocratic, complex, ambiguous, indirect, and dangerous.”<sup>53</sup> Many—but certainly not all—political scientists oppose its continued use, as do most voters.

Because the Founders wanted the president to be selected by the nation's elite, not directly by the people, they created the Electoral College, a body of electors who are charged solely with the task of voting for the president and vice president. However, political practice since 1828 has made the vote of members of the Electoral College responsive to popular majorities. Today the electors almost always vote for the candidate who won their state's popular vote.

This is how the Electoral College system works today:

- Each state, according to the Constitution, has as many electoral votes as it has U.S. senators and representatives.<sup>54</sup> The state parties select slates of electors, positions they use as a reward for faithful service to the party.
- Forty-eight out of the fifty states employ a winner-take-all system in which all their electors are awarded to the presidential candidate who wins the most votes statewide.
- In Maine and Nebraska, an elector is allocated for every congressional district won, and whoever wins the state as a whole wins the two electors allotted to the state for its senators. In 2008, Obama won the congressional district around Omaha, Nebraska, whereas McCain won the other two districts and the overall state vote. Therefore, Nebraska's electoral vote ended up being split with four for McCain and one for Obama.
- Electors meet in their states in December, following the November election, and then mail their votes to the vice president (who is also president of the Senate). The vote is counted when the new congressional session opens in January and is reported by the vice president. Thus, Joe Biden had the duty of announcing the reelection of Barack Obama in January 2013.
- If no candidate receives an Electoral College majority, then the election is thrown into the House of Representatives, which must choose from among the top three electoral vote winners. A crucial aspect of the House balloting to note is that each state delegation has one vote, thus giving the one representative from Wyoming an equal say with the 53 representatives from California. Although the Founders envisioned that the House would often have to vote to choose the president, this has not occurred since 1824.

The Electoral College is important to the presidential election for two reasons. First, it introduces a bias into the campaign and electoral process. Because each state gets two electors for its senators regardless of population, the less populated states are overrepresented. One of the key reasons that George W. Bush won the Electoral College vote in 2000 without winning the popular vote was that he did better in the small states. A second reason for the importance of the Electoral College is that the winner-take-all norm means candidates will necessarily focus on winning a relatively small number of **battleground states**, where the polls show that the contest is likely to be closest. The residents of these states are much more likely to see the candidate's ads and to have the candidates and their top surrogates come by to court them during the campaign. As President Obama's 2008 campaign manager wrote:

∴ Most of the country—those who lived in safely red or blue states—did not truly witness the 2008 presidential campaign. The real contest occurred in only about sixteen states, in which swing voters in particular bumped up against the campaign at every turn—at their doors; on their phones; on their local news, TV shows, and radio programs; and on the Internet. In these states, we trotted out the candidate and our surrogates, built large staffs and budgets to support our organizational work, and mounted ferocious and diversified advertising campaigns. They were the canvas on which we sketched the election.<sup>55</sup>

You can see which select states got the vast majority of attention from the Obama and Romney campaigns during the final phase of the 2012 presidential campaign in “You Are the Policymaker: Should We Make Every State a Battleground by Electing the President by a National Popular Vote?”

### **battleground states**

The key states that the presidential campaigns focus on because they are most likely to decide the outcome of the Electoral College vote.

9.1

9.2

9.3

9.4

9.5

9.6

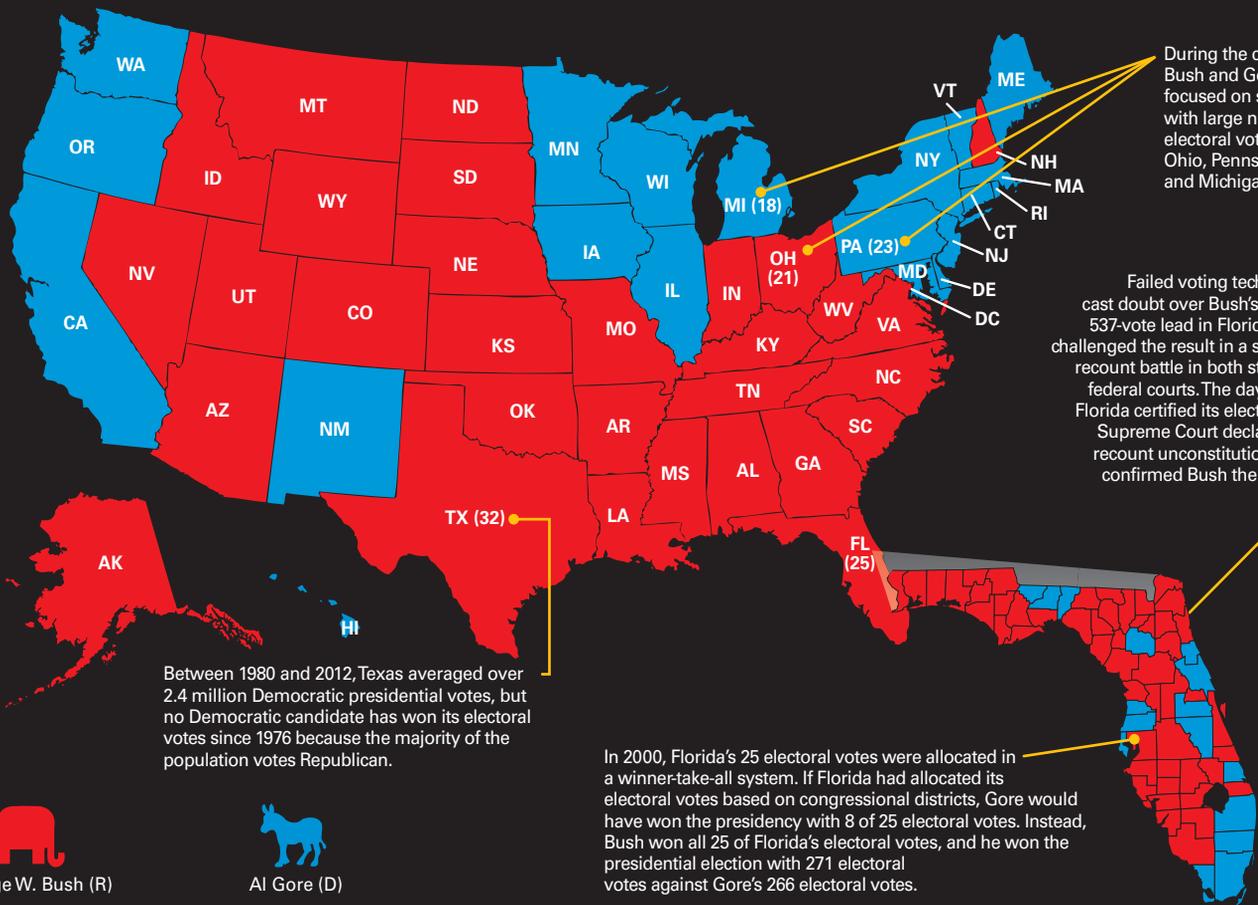
9.7

9.8

# Is the Electoral College Democratic?

In 2000, George W. Bush won the presidency despite the fact that over 500,000 more Americans voted for Al Gore. The result set off a renewed debate about the Electoral College's role in presidential elections. In the Electoral College, each state is assigned a number of "electors" equal to the total number of the state's U.S. senators and representatives. In most states, the winner of the state's popular vote takes all of the electoral votes. The candidate with the most *electoral votes* becomes president. In 2000, the presidential election came down to the state of Florida, which Bush won by 537 popular votes.

## The Electoral College Across the United States in 2000

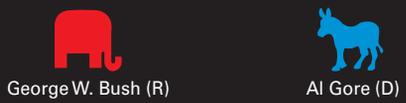


During the campaign, Bush and Gore focused on states with large numbers of electoral votes like Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Michigan.

Failed voting technology cast doubt over Bush's narrow 537-vote lead in Florida. Gore challenged the result in a six-week recount battle in both state and federal courts. The day before Florida certified its electors, the Supreme Court declared the recount unconstitutional and confirmed Bush the winner.

Between 1980 and 2012, Texas averaged over 2.4 million Democratic presidential votes, but no Democratic candidate has won its electoral votes since 1976 because the majority of the population votes Republican.

In 2000, Florida's 25 electoral votes were allocated in a winner-take-all system. If Florida had allocated its electoral votes based on congressional districts, Gore would have won the presidency with 8 of 25 electoral votes. Instead, Bush won all 25 of Florida's electoral votes, and he won the presidential election with 271 electoral votes against Gore's 266 electoral votes.



SOURCE: Data from Election Data Services and U.S. Census Bureau.

## Investigate Further

**Concept** What is the difference between the popular vote and the Electoral College vote? The popular vote is an example of direct democracy, in which every citizen's vote makes a difference. If more people vote for one candidate, then that candidate becomes president. The Electoral College vote is an example of indirect democracy, in which the president is voted on by representatives.

**Connection** How do electoral votes lead to controversy? Using the Electoral College in winner-take-all elections makes candidates focus on states with more electors. Winner-take-all allocations in large states can also result in millions of individual votes having no direct impact on the election outcome. People vote but have no influence on the election if the majority votes for the other candidate.

**Cause** How might the Electoral College be more democratic? Allocating electoral votes in winner-take-all systems silences voters who are in the minority. If more states were to allocate electoral votes via congressional district, political minorities would have a greater impact on the presidential race.

# You Are the Policymaker

## Should We Make Every State a Battleground by Electing the President by a National Popular Vote?

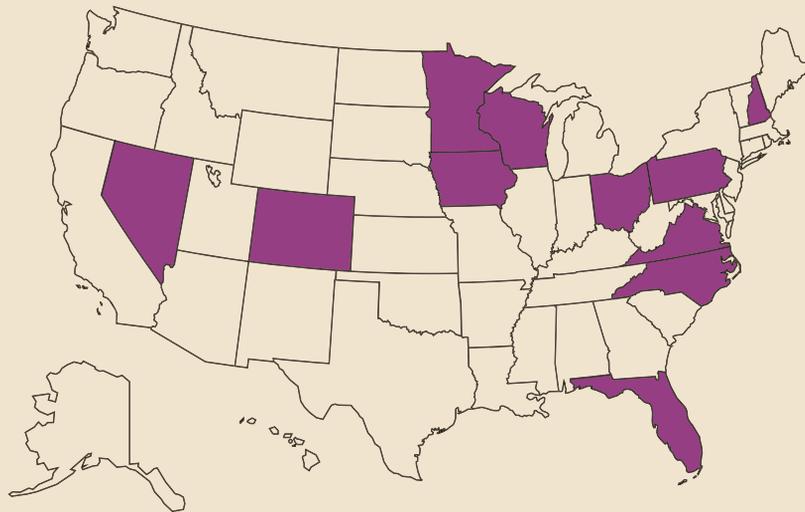
Under the Electoral College system it makes no sense for candidates to allocate scarce resources to states they either cannot win or are certain to win. The purple states in the map below were identified by the Obama and/or the Romney campaigns in 2012 as battleground states. All the other states were regarded by both campaigns as safely in the pocket of one candidate or the other.

Direct election of the president via the national popular vote would change the incentives for presidential campaigns. As each extra vote gathered would be of equal importance, candidates would no longer confine their efforts to just a relatively small set of battleground areas. In that sense, direct election of the president would promote political equality. An extra vote in a currently safe state like Texas would count just as much as one in a current battleground state like Florida. It would also give the parties an incentive to organize throughout the country and get the vote out everywhere. Thus, many analysts

believe that it would serve to increase the nation's overall level of election turnout.

On the other hand, critics of direct election worry that candidates would jet from one big city to another throughout the campaign, bypassing rural areas and small towns. It is true, they say, that the Electoral College creates an incentive for campaigns to focus on a limited number of battleground states in each election. But under direct popular election of the president, the focus would always be on the *same areas*, whereas battlegrounds change over time. For example, in 1992 some of the most closely fought states were Texas, Georgia, and New Jersey—none of which were battleground states in 2012.

**What do you think?** Would you favor direct election of the president by popular vote in order to make the whole country a battleground, or would you stick with the Electoral College system?



## Understanding Campaigns and Voting Behavior

9.8

Assess the advantages and disadvantages of the U.S. system of campaigns and elections.

**E**lections serve many important functions in American society. They *socialize* and *institutionalize* political activity, making it possible for most political participation to be channeled through the electoral process rather than bubbling up through demonstrations, riots, or revolutions. Because elections provide *regular access to political power*, leaders can be replaced without being overthrown. This feature gives elections *legitimacy* in the eyes of people; that is, elections are accepted as a fair and free method of selecting political leaders.



Explore on **MyPoliSciLab Simulation**: You Are a Voting Registration Volunteer

Throughout the history of American politics, election campaigns have become longer and longer as the system has become increasingly open to public participation. Reformers over the decades have maintained that the solution to the problems of American democracy is yet more democracy—or, as John Lennon sang, “Power to the people.” In principle, more democracy always sounds better than less, but in practice it is not such a simple issue.

## □ Are Nominations and Campaigns Too Democratic?

If one judges American campaigns solely by how open they are, then certainly the American system must be viewed favorably. In other countries, the process of leadership nomination occurs within a relatively small circle of party elites. Thus, politicians must work their way up through an apprenticeship system. In contrast, America has an entrepreneurial system in which the people play a crucial role at every stage, from nomination to election. As a result, party outsiders can get elected in a way virtually unknown outside the United States. By appealing directly to the people, a candidate can emerge from nowhere to win the White House. For example, former one-term governor Jimmy Carter was scarcely known outside of his home state a year before his election to the presidency. After serving a number of terms as governor of Arkansas, Bill Clinton was only in a slightly better position than Carter in terms of name recognition when he announced his first campaign for the presidency in 1991. In this sense, the chance to win high office is open to almost any highly skilled politician with even a small electoral base.

There is a price to be paid for all this openness, however. The process of selecting American leaders is a long and convoluted one that has little downtime before it revs up all over again. Barack Obama had scarcely started his second term when potential Republican candidates for 2016 started to schedule visits to Iowa and New Hampshire. Some have even called the American electoral process “the permanent campaign.”<sup>56</sup> Many analysts wonder if people would pay more attention to politics if it did not ask so much of them. Given so much democratic opportunity, many Americans are simply overwhelmed by the process and stay on the sidelines. Similarly, the burdens of the modern campaign can discourage good candidates from throwing their hats into the ring. One of the most worrisome burdens candidates face is amassing a sufficient campaign war chest. The system may be open, but it requires a lot of fund-raising to be able to take one’s case to the people.

Today’s campaigns clearly promote individualism in American politics. The current system of running for office has been labeled by Wattenberg as the “candidate-centered age.”<sup>57</sup> It allows for politicians to decide on their own to run, to raise their own campaign



The final chapter of any presidential campaign is the swearing in of the winner at noon on the following January 20. Here, Barack Obama takes the oath in 2009. The original photograph this collage is based on was taken by a *Washington Post* photographer, and the individual pixels that comprise the collage were assembled from thousands of photos taken at the inauguration.

funds, to build their own personal organizations, and to make promises about how they specifically will act in office. The American campaign game is one of individual candidates, by individual candidates, and for individual candidates.

## □ Do Elections Affect Public Policy?

Whether elections in fact make the government pay attention to what the people think is at the center of debate concerning how well democracy works in America. In the hypothetical world of rational-choice theory and the Downs model, elections do in fact guide public policy; however, over a generation of social science research on this question has produced mixed findings. It is more accurate to describe the connection between elections and public policy as a two-way street: elections, to some degree, affect public policy, and public policy decisions partly affect electoral outcomes. There will probably never be a definitive answer to the question of how much elections affect public policy, for it is a somewhat subjective matter. The broad contours of the answer, however, seem reasonably clear: *the greater the policy differences between the candidates, the more likely voters will be able to steer government policies by their choices.*

Of course, the candidates do not always do their best to clarify the issues. One result is that the policy stands are sometimes shaped by what Benjamin Page once called “the art of ambiguity,” in which “presidential candidates are skilled at appearing to say much while actually saying little.”<sup>58</sup> Occasionally sidestepping controversial questions and hedging answers is indeed part of becoming a professional politician, as you can observe at any presidential press conference. As long as politicians can take refuge in ambiguity (and the skimpy coverage of issues in the media does little to make them clarify their policy stands), the possibility of democratic control of policy is lessened.

## □ Do Campaigns Lead to Increases in the Scope of Government?

Today’s long and vigorous campaigns involve much more communication between candidates and voters than America’s Founders ever could have imagined. In their view, the presidency was to be an office responsible for tending to the public interest as a whole. They wished to avoid “a contest in which the candidates would have to pose as ‘friends’ of the people or make specific policy commitments.”<sup>59</sup> Thus, the Founders would probably be horrified by the modern practice in which political candidates make numerous promises during nomination and election campaigns.

Because states are the key battlegrounds of presidential campaigns, candidates must tailor their appeals to the particular interests of each major state. In Iowa, for instance, promises are typically made to keep agricultural subsidies high, federal programs to help big cities are usually announced in New York, and oil industry tax breaks are promised in Texas. To secure votes from each region of the country, candidates end up supporting a variety of local interests. Promises mount as the campaign goes on, and these promises usually add up to new government programs and money. The way modern campaigns are conducted is thus one of many reasons why politicians often find it easier to expand the scope of American government than to limit it.

Elections also help to increase generalized support for government and its powers. Because voters know that the government can be replaced at the next election, they are much more likely to feel that it will be responsive to their needs. When people have the power to dole out electoral reward and punishment, they are more likely to see government as their servant instead of their master. As Benjamin Ginsberg writes, “Democratic elections help to persuade citizens that expansion of the state’s powers represents an increase in the state’s capacity to serve them.”<sup>60</sup>

Therefore, rather than wishing to be protected from the state, citizens in a democracy often seek to benefit from it. It is no coincidence that “individuals who believe they can influence the government’s actions are also more likely to believe, in turn, that the government should have more power.”<sup>61</sup> Voters like to feel that they are sending a message to the government to accomplish something. It should be no surprise that as democracy has spread, government has come to do more and more, and its scope has grown.

## Review the Chapter



Listen to **Chapter 9** on **MyPoliSciLab**

### The Nomination Game

**9.1** Evaluate the fairness of our current system of presidential primaries and caucuses, p. 290.

The current system of presidential primaries and caucuses, which leads to nomination at the national party conventions, allows tens of millions of Americans to participate in the selection of the Democratic and Republican parties' nominees for president. The system gives some states much greater influence than others. In particular, Iowa, with the first caucus, and New Hampshire, with the first primary, have disproportionate power stemming from the massive media attention devoted to these early contests and the momentum generated by winning them. Some other common criticisms of the nomination process are that money plays too big a role, that turnout rates are lower than in the general election, and that the mass media exercises too much power in determining which candidates are considered to be serious contenders.

### The Campaign Game

**9.2** Explain the key objectives of any political campaign, p. 298.

Political campaigns involve the allocation of scarce resources of time, money, and energy to achieve the goal of winning elections for political office—an allocation that requires effective organization and effective use of high-tech media. One of the most important goals of any campaign is simply to get attention. Campaigns seek to control the political agenda, getting the media and the public to focus on the issues that they wish to emphasize.

### Money and Campaigning

**9.3** Outline how the financing of federal campaigns is regulated by campaign finance laws, p. 301.

There are two ways to contribute money to the dialogue of American political campaigns—direct contributions made to candidates and parties, and independent expenditures to express views that may help a campaign. Federal election law restricts direct contributions to federal campaigns to \$2,500 for individuals. Groups that make independent expenditures may accept donations of any size (including from corporations and unions) as a result of the Supreme Court's ruling in the 2010 case of *Citizens United v. FEC* and its application in the subsequent case of *SpeechNow v. FEC*. Candidates, parties, and groups that are mainly political in nature must file periodic reports with the Federal Election Commission detailing (1) the donations they have received and (2) how they have spent their funds.

### The Impact of Campaigns

**9.4** Determine why campaigns have an important yet limited impact on election outcomes, p. 307.

In general, politicians tend to overestimate the impact of campaigns; political scientists have found that campaigning serves primarily to reinforce citizens' views and to activate voters rather than to change views. Factors such as selective perception, party identification, and the incumbency advantage tend to weaken the ability of campaigns to influence voters' decisions.

### Whether to Vote: A Citizen's First Choice

**9.5** Identify the factors that influence whether people vote, p. 307.

In order to exercise their right to vote, citizens must go through the registration process. Although registration reform has been touted as the answer to America's low turnout problems, the Motor Voter Act of 1993 has yet to produce the benefit of greater voter participation that most people hoped for. Turnout in 2012 was virtually identical to what it was in 1992, and in 2010 only about 40 percent of the eligible electorate voted. Among the factors that make people more likely to vote are being better educated, older, and married.

### How Americans Vote: Explaining Citizens' Decisions

**9.6** Assess the impact of party identification, candidate evaluations, and policy opinions on voting behavior, p. 313.

Party affiliation is the best predictor of voting behavior as it represents a standing decision to vote with one's party, all else being equal. Candidate evaluations and policy opinions are two factors that can sometimes sway people to defect from their preferred party, and play an especially important role in decision making among Independents (voters do not identify with a party). Candidate evaluations usually involve important performance-relevant factors such as competence, integrity, and reliability. Policy voting often becomes important when voters see clear differences between the candidates and can determine whose stands on the issues best represents their own opinions.

## The Last Battle: The Electoral College

9.7

Evaluate the fairness of the Electoral College system for choosing the president, p. 318.

The Electoral College gives voters in the less populated states somewhat greater weight in choosing the president. As a result, the winner of the national popular vote does not always prevail in the Electoral College, as happened most recently in the 2000 contest between Bush and Gore. Because all but two states allocate all their electors in a winner-take-all fashion and because many states lean solidly toward one party or the other, the candidates focus much of their energies on winning about 15 so-called battleground states. These states, such as Florida and Ohio, receive a lot of attention in the general election campaign, whereas

others, such as California and New York, are largely taken for granted by the candidates.

## Understanding Campaigns and Voting Behavior

9.8

Assess the advantages and disadvantages of the U.S. system of campaigns and elections, p. 321.

American election campaigns are easily the most open and democratic in the world—some say too open. They are also extraordinarily long, perhaps excessively burdening politicians and leading politicians to make many promises that increase the scope of government. On the other hand, long campaigns give little-known candidates a chance to emerge and provide a strenuous test for all the candidates.

## Learn the Terms



**Study** and **Review** the **Flashcards**

nomination, p. 290  
campaign strategy, p. 290  
national party convention, p. 290  
McGovern-Fraser Commission, p. 291  
superdelegates, p. 292  
invisible primary, p. 292  
caucus, p. 292  
presidential primaries, p. 293  
frontloading, p. 294  
party platform, p. 297  
direct mail, p. 299

campaign contributions, p. 302  
independent expenditures, p. 302  
Federal Election Campaign Act, p. 302  
political action committee, p. 302  
Federal Election Commission, p. 302  
soft money, p. 303  
527 groups, p. 304  
*Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, p. 304  
501(c) groups, p. 305  
Super PACs, p. 305

selective perception, p. 307  
suffrage, p. 307  
political efficacy, p. 309  
civic duty, p. 309  
voter registration, p. 309  
Motor Voter Act, p. 309  
mandate theory of elections, p. 313  
policy voting, p. 315  
Electoral College, p. 318  
battleground states, p. 319

## Test Yourself



**Study** and **Review** the **Practice Tests**

1. A key difference between caucuses and primaries is
  - a. early caucuses are more important than early primaries.
  - b. the media cover early caucuses more than early primaries.
  - c. caucuses are worth more delegates than primaries.
  - d. participation in caucuses is much lower than the level of turnout for primaries.
  - e. caucus participants are more representative of the national electorate than are voters in primaries.

2. The New Hampshire primary is especially important because it helps whittle down the number of viable candidates for the primaries that follow it.

True \_\_\_\_\_ False \_\_\_\_\_

3. Evaluate today's primary and caucus system. What are some of the major criticisms of the current system? In your opinion, is the current system the best way to pick a president? If so, why? If not, what alternatives might be better?

4. Why is a campaign manager important to a well-organized campaign?
  - a. to help ensure the candidate's compliance with campaign finance laws
  - b. to assist the candidate in responding to reporters' questions
  - c. to tell the candidate how he or she is viewed by voters
  - d. to feed the candidate the information needed to keep up with events
  - e. to keep the candidate from getting bogged down in organizational details

5. Imagine that you are a campaign manager and want to create a winning image for your client. What qualities would you emphasize and how would you go about organizing your campaign to ensure that voters embrace the image you have painted of your client?

**6.** According to the text, the main benefit of campaign finance laws has been to

- a. provide for full disclosure of who gives money to campaigns and how it is spent.
- b. limit spending by candidates.
- c. educate the public about politics.
- d. limit unregulated money spent in campaigns.
- e. make American political campaigns more fair.

**7.** Donations to Super PACs can be in unlimited amounts as long as they are disclosed to the FEC.

True \_\_\_\_\_ False \_\_\_\_\_

**8.** Research concerning the impact that political campaigns have on voters shows that campaigns

- a. reinforce preferences, activate voters, and convert voters.
- b. reinforce preferences, but rarely activate or convert voters.
- c. reinforce preferences and activate voters, but rarely convert voters.
- d. convert voters, but rarely reinforce preferences or activate voters.
- e. activate voters, but rarely reinforce preferences or convert voters.

**9.** What are the primary factors that weaken the impact of campaigns on voters? Based on your understanding of these factors, which is most important in your opinion and why?

**10.** Which of the following is NOT true about Americans' voting behavior?

- a. A college graduate is more likely to vote than a high school graduate.
- b. A single person is more likely to vote than a married person.
- c. Women are more likely to vote than men.
- d. A public-sector employee is more likely to vote than a private-sector employee.
- e. A 50-year-old is more likely to vote than a 22-year-old.

**11.** Registered voters who have a high sense of political efficacy are more likely to actually vote than registered voters who do not.

True \_\_\_\_\_ False \_\_\_\_\_

**12.** Imagine that you are charged with writing a brief report that outlines the possible causes of low turnout in the United States and offers some possible solutions. Specifically address possible causes and solutions for low turnout among different age groups: older, middle-aged, and, especially, younger voters.

**13.** Which of the following statements best characterizes how party identification influences Americans' voting behavior?

- a. Party identification encourages voting based on cost-benefit analysis.
- b. Party identification often puts voters in a tough situation of choosing between their party and their favored candidate.
- c. Party identification encourages voting based on a candidate's specific policy positions and achievements.
- d. Party identification simplifies the political world for many voters.
- e. none of the above

**14.** College-educated voters are most likely to view political candidates in terms of their personal attributes.

True \_\_\_\_\_ False \_\_\_\_\_

**15.** What is policy voting, when is it likely to occur, and who is likely to be a policy voter? Why is policy voting unlikely to occur for many voters?

**16.** With the Electoral College, states with small populations

- a. get less weight than they would if the president were directly elected.
- b. get approximately the same weight they would if the president were directly elected.
- c. get more weight than they would if the president were directly elected.
- d. are necessarily crucial to the outcome.
- e. are never battleground states due to the small weight they have in the Electoral College.

**17.** The Electoral College encourages candidates to campaign in large battleground states. Do you think that this aspect of the Electoral College detracts from the fairness of democratic elections? Why or why not?

**18.** Which of the following is NOT an important function of elections in American democracy?

- a. to facilitate the expansion of the scope of government
- b. to socialize political activity
- c. to institutionalize political activity
- d. to provide regular access to political power
- e. to give elections legitimacy in the eyes of the people

**19.** Based on what you know about elections and voting behavior, what do you believe are the two greatest strengths and the two greatest weaknesses of the U.S. electoral system? Be specific and support your answer with examples.

# Explore Further

## WEB SITES

[www.fec.gov](http://www.fec.gov)

The Federal Election Commission's reports on campaign spending can be found at this site.

[www.fundraze.org](http://www.fundraze.org)

This site allows one to look up donations from particular individuals and to map contribution patterns for particular areas.

[www.electionstudies.org](http://www.electionstudies.org)

The National Election Studies are a standard source of survey data about voting behavior. You can find information about these studies, as well as some of the results from them, at this site.

<http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/index.html>

The Census Bureau's studies of registration and turnout can be found at this address.

## FURTHER READING

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*Change and Continuity in the 2008 and 2010 Elections.*

Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 2012. A good overview of voting behavior in recent elections, which also focuses on recent historical trends.

**Cohen, Marty et al.** *The Party Decides: Presidential Nominations*

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*Look at 2008.* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009. The campaign managers for all the 2008 presidential candidates gathered at Harvard to discuss their experiences in the primaries and the general election.

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A useful set of articles on how campaigns are taking advantage of innovative new technologies.

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Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002. A good review of the reasons for declining voter turnout, as well as what can be done about it.