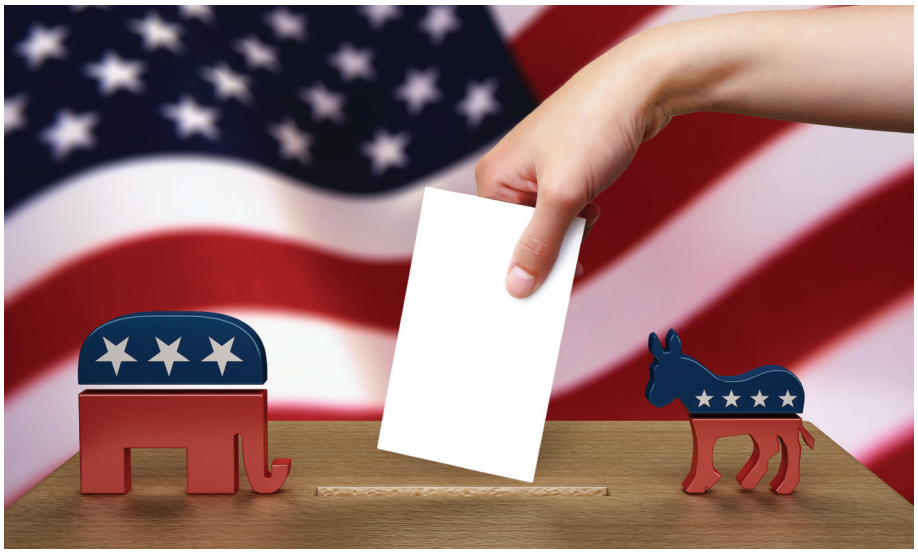
Political Parties: Connecting Us to the Electoral Process

CHAPTER 6



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Chapter Outline

Learning Objectives

When you have completed this chapter, you should be able to:

- Define political parties.
- Explain why America's two-party system is consistent with its electoral mechanisms and public opinion.
- Identify third parties as either ideological, single-issue, or splinter parties, and explain why they rarely compete successfully for elected offices.
- Define the term *party system*, and identify the key characteristics of the five party systems that have arisen since parties emerged in the late eighteenth century.
- Identify the relationship between realignments and the demise of party systems.
- Explain why the post-1960s political era may be understood as a period of dealignment.
- Distinguish between the party in government and the party in the electorate.

6.1 Introduction

L.O. Define political parties.

What exactly is going on in the photo below? It's the serious business of formally ratifying the selection of a candidate who will seek to become the most powerful person in the world and crafting the positions on which he will campaign. So, why is this person wearing an Uncle Sam costume? Because politics in America is and always has been a blend of fun and responsibility, spectacle and power, sideshow and serious deal making.

This individual was among many who streamed into Cleveland for the 2016 Republican National Convention. His outfit may not exactly seem presidential, but it allows him to get involved in the fun of politics. If the essence of democracy is self-expression, then political party conventions like this one are bastions of democracy. It may not always be dignified, but you can probably see how political parties can provide an important link between ordinary people and the political process.

political party: An organized group of individuals with common interests seeking to gain power in government by electing officials to public office.

A **political party**, in the words of political scientist Leon Epstein, is "any group, however loosely organized, seeking to elect government officeholders under a given label."[1] There are other definitions as well, but they hold in common the idea that parties are organized groups that share the desire to win power by contesting elections. If you take away the requirement about trying to elect officeholders, and instead talk about organized groups that try to influence the political process, you'll end up with something closer to the interest groups we'll be talking about in Chapter 8. Parties are about political competition, about winning and losing, and through our involvement in that competition, they can connect us to the electoral process.

electorate: The portion of the public eligible to vote in elections.

Even though political parties are organized groups, that doesn't mean that they're tightly integrated. Parties exist at all levels of our federal system, and state and local parties can exercise a fair amount of autonomy from national parties. There are also different venues for parties, where they perform unrelated functions: in government, where Republicans and Democrats want to fulfill different legislative agendas, and among ordinary people in the **electorate**, where Republicans, Democrats, and a host of smaller parties run campaigns to compete in elections. So, it's fair to say that parties are organizations, but not hierarchical ones.

A participant displays his patriotic feelings at the 2016 Republican National Convention.
Source: a katz/Shutterstock, Inc.

In the United States, two parties dominate the political landscape. That's not the case in other countries, though, and we're going to take a look at why. In fact, two parties have competed in elections in this country since its founding, and we're going to take a look back at that history to lend some perspective to where today's parties come from. Once we do that, we'll talk about the government and campaign venues where parties do most of their work, to get a sense of how they're set up and how they operate.

Since a big part of party activity is running political campaigns and competing in elections, we'll also take some time to look at how that works. Campaigns are complex, multistage enterprises that engage political parties and the mass media, and therefore require a lot of attention and explanation. So, we'll devote Chapter 7 to examining them.

6.2 Why Two Parties?

L.O. Explain why America's two-party system is consistent with its electoral mechanisms and public opinion.

There's something that seems natural about the idea of two parties in competition, like two baseball or basketball teams facing off against each other. But, in truth, two political parties competing against each other is something that doesn't happen in most nations. Great Britain has three parties: two major ones and an active minor one. Twelve parties won seats in the 2013 Israeli parliamentary election. Italy boasts more than one dozen parties. You can find an overview of the wide range of viable political parties competing for power in governments around the world in Global Topics: Other Political Systems.

So, what is it about the United States that supports just two parties in regular competition? There are several explanations.

6.2a Winner-Take-All Elections

What would happen in a basketball game if we decided to award a partial victory to the team that scored the second-largest number of points? Suddenly, you wouldn't have to

GLOBAL TOPICS

Other Political Systems

Five parties? Seven parties? You can find nations around the globe boasting many actively engaged political parties that participate in elections with the expectation that they will share in governing. Zero parties? You can find that too (notice nations in the Middle East where political parties are forbidden to form). What you can't find much of is what we have in the United States—two parties competing against each other in a system where no other party has a realistic chance of governing.

Likewise, there is no apparent relationship between the size of a nation and the number of political parties it has. Tiny Iceland has multiple parties. So does Haiti. But, China only permits one party, as did the former Soviet Union.

Look at Figure 6.1 and notice how many political systems either clamp down on the formation of political parties or have a large number of functioning small parties. It should give you a sense that a system of two major parties competing for power is unusual, even though it feels natural to many Americans.

win in order to be competitive. If we extended the rule to award a partial victory, say, to any number of teams that could score at least fifty points, we might end up with a lot of basketball teams on the same court trying to score their points before the clock ran out.

Sound silly? Perhaps—but that's pretty much the way election rules work in nations with **proportional representation**, where voters select the party of their choice, and representation in the legislature is awarded in rough equivalency to each party's percentage of the total. Proportional representation systems feature **multimember districts**, meaning several people, typically of different parties, represent one district. Any party receiving more than a minimum percentage of the vote—which may be as low as 10 percent—is eligible for representation in the legislature, so it makes sense that many parties will take a shot at electoral competition. Proportional representation systems are popular in Europe, which helps explain why so many European nations have **multiparty systems**, with a large number of active parties successfully competing for a role in government.

The United States does things differently. The American **two-party system** discourages many parties from forming because the standard for being represented in government is nothing short of complete electoral victory. Unlike proportional representation systems, the American **winner-take-all system** awards all the representation to the candidate of the party that wins a **plurality** of votes, which simply means that the candidate has to win the most votes. He or she doesn't even need to win a **majority** of votes or more than half. In a winner-take-all system, just win one more vote than the next candidate, and you get to be the lone representative from your **single-member district**, which is represented only by the candidate of that winning party.

There's a pronounced difference between winner-take-all rules and proportional representation rules. Take a look at Table 6.1, where five fictional parties are competing in a hypothetical legislative district. The voting between the top two parties was close, with only a handful of votes separating the first-place Centrist Party from the second-place Conservative Party. The remaining three parties lagged behind.

If a proportional representation system with multiple-member districts were in place, several people would have the opportunity to represent the district. For the sake of example, let's say the district would have six representatives. Assume also that any party with at least 10 percent of the vote would be eligible for representation. Based on the proportion of the vote won by each party, the first-place Centrist Party and the second-place Conservative Party would each be awarded two seats and would be able to send two of their members to serve in the legislature. The third-place Labor Party and fourth-place Green Party would each get to send one of their members to the legislature because each party received close to one-sixth of the vote and cleared the 10 percent threshold for representation. Only the last-place Socialist Party, with 7 percent of the vote, would be shut out entirely.

proportional representation: Electoral systems that encourage the participation of many parties by awarding representation on the basis of the share of the vote won by each party in an electoral district.

multimember district: The structure of electoral districts in proportional representation systems, in which each electoral district sends several representatives to the legislature.

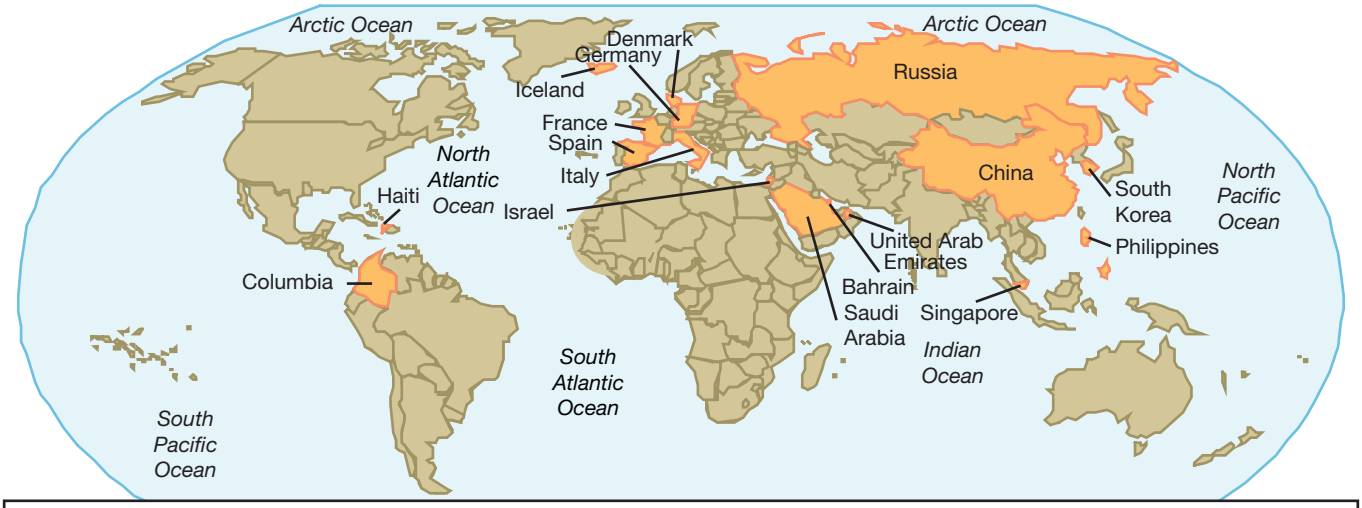
multiparty system: Political systems in which more than two parties have a realistic chance to win representation in government.

two-party system: A political system, like ours in the United States, in which only two parties have a realistic chance to win most elections.

winner-take-all system: The electoral system in use in the United States, whereby the candidate of the party receiving the most votes in an electoral district gets to represent that district.

plurality: Winning the most votes in an election, or at least one more vote than the next closest candidate or party.

majority: Winning more than half the votes in an election, or 50 percent plus one.



Bahrain: Bahrain does not allow political parties.

China: China's political party is the Communist Party of China.This party allows so-called democratic subparties, but all of their functions are handled by the primary party.

Colombia: Columbia's parties include the Social Party of National Unity, the Columbian Liberal Party, the Columbian Conservative Party, and the Democratic Center, among others.

Denmark: Denmark's parties include the Social Democrats, the Danish People's Party, the Venstre, and the Socialist People's Party, among others.

France: France's parties include the Socialist Party, Republicans, the National Front, the Centrist Alliance, the Christian Democrats, the Greens, and the Communist Party, among many others.

Germany: Germany's parties include the Social Democrats, the Christian Democrats, the Greens, and the Free Democrats,among others.

Haiti: Haiti's parties include Patriotic Unity, PHTK, the Christian Movement, the Christian National Union, the Democratic Alliance, and many others.

Iceland: Iceland's parties include the Independence Party, the Social Democratic Alliance, the Progressive Party, and Bright Future, among others.

Italy: Italy's parties include Forward Italy, the Liberal Popular Alliance, Conservatives and Reformists, Lega Nord, and Communist Refoundation, among many others.

Israel: Israel's parties include Likud, Labor, Zionist Union, Kalanu, Meretz, and Shas, among others.

Philippines: The Philippines' parties include the Philippine Democratic Party, the National People's Coalition, the Liberal Party, the Nationalist Party, and many others.

Russia: Russia's parties include United Russia, the Communist Party, the Liberal Democratic Party, A Just Russia, and many others.

Saudi Arabia: Saudi Arabia does not allow political parties.

Singapore: Singapore's parties include the People's Action Party, the Worker's Party, and the Singapore Democratic Alliance, among others.

South Korea: South Korea's parties include the Saenuri Party, the Democratic Party of Korea, the People's Party, and NCPR, among others.

Spain: Spanish parties include the People's Party, the Spanish Socialist Worker's Party, United We Can, Citizens, and the Basque Nationalist Party, among others.

United Arab Emirates: The United Arab Emirates does not allow political parties.

FIGURE 6.1 Other Political Systems

single-member district: The structure of electoral districts in winner-take-all electoral systems, in which each electoral district sends only one representative to the legislature.

If the American winner-take-all system were in place, the same results would produce a radically different outcome. With only 34.5 percent of the vote, the candidate of the Centrist Party would win the right to be the sole representative for the district, taking 100 percent of the representation, despite the fact that almost two-thirds of the voters preferred someone else. Furthermore, because the winner takes everything, small shifts in support can produce dramatically different results. Had the Conservative Party managed only a handful of votes separating the first-place Centrist Party from the second-place Conservative Party. The remaining three parties lagged behind.

6.2b Election Laws

If the electoral system discourages competition from minor parties, election laws compound this inequity by stacking the deck in favor of Republicans and Democrats. Candidates running under a major party label are guaranteed a spot on the ballot. Candidates of

TABLE 6.1 Change the Rules, Change the Outcome

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION SYSTEM				
Party	**Number of Votes**	**Percentage of Votes**	**Number of Legislative Seats Won**	**Percentage of Representation**
Centrist Party	3,450	34.5%	2	33.3%
Conservative Party	3,375	33.8%	2	33.3%
Labor Party	1,275	12.8%	1	16.7%
Green Party	1,200	12.0%	1	16.7%
Socialist Party	700	7.0%	0	0.0%
TOTALS	**10,000**	**100.1% (rounding)**	**6**	**100.0%**
WINNER-TAKE-ALL SYSTEM				
Party	**Number of Votes**	**Percentage of Votes**	**Number of Legislative Seats Won**	**Percentage of Representation**
Centrist Party	3,450	34.5%	1	100.0%
Conservative Party	3,375	33.8%	0	0.0%
Labor Party	1,275	12.8%	0	0.0%
Green Party	1,200	12.0%	0	0.0%
Socialist Party	700	7.0%	0	0.0%
TOTALS	**10,000**	**100.1% (rounding)**	**1**	**100.0%**

smaller parties often have to earn their way on by collecting signatures from a sufficient number of voters to demonstrate their viability. The effort and expense required to do this discourage poorly organized and poorly financed third parties from trying.[2] In order to qualify for his third-party presidential run in 1992, businessman Ross Perot needed to file petitions in all fifty states, an enormous undertaking that required money, coordination, legwork, and legal assistance in interpreting the fifty individual state election laws in place across the country.

In 1980, Republican Representative John Anderson lost out to Ronald Reagan for the nomination of his party but decided to run as an independent candidate against Reagan and incumbent Democrat Jimmy Carter. Like Perot, Anderson had to overcome election laws designed to discourage this kind of insurgent candidacy. Unlike Perot, Anderson could not self-finance the effort to qualify on fifty state ballots, and the money it took simply to get into the game left him with limited resources to run a general election campaign.

The problems Anderson faced weren't restricted to money, either. By the time he had made the decision to run as an independent in late April 1980, the deadline for filing to get on the ballot had already passed in five states: Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, New Mexico, and Ohio. Anderson had to set up a separate petition drive in every state and in the District of Columbia. To qualify for the ballot in California, he needed 100,000 signatures, but he needed more than half that number in the much smaller state of Georgia. Qualifying for all fifty-one ballots in 1980 required a total of 1.2 million signatures gathered under fifty-one different sets of rules.[3]

6.2c Public Opinion and Party Flexibility

Back in Chapter 3, we said that, by and large, Americans agree on the rules of the political game. It's been a characteristic of American politics that, for all our disagreements on particular issues, most of us tend to prefer democracy, capitalism, liberty, and equality of opportunity to their alternatives. We also traditionally support moderate positions, such as those balancing individual liberty with social responsibility, over extreme positions. As a consequence, parties advocating socialism, communism, fascism, or libertarianism simply haven't found a big audience in America.

Because public opinion in normal times tends toward the political center rather than the political extremes, Republicans and Democrats typically are most successful when they craft moderate positions. After all, parties and their candidates have to go where the votes are. The centrist nature of public opinion dovetails with the winner-take-all electoral system, as both forces move political parties to embrace broad, mainstream political messages in the effort to capture the most votes.

Of late, some national Republican figures, including President Trump, have taken positions closer to their core supporters than to the mainstream on high-profile matters. This is unusual, and prior to 2016, it was not always an effective political strategy. A number of Senate races in 2010 and 2012 were lost to Republicans when they nominated Tea Party–backed candidates who ended up losing winnable seats in states like Delaware, Nevada, Missouri, and Indiana for taking out-of-the-mainstream positions on issues like women's health, immigration, and the economy. One of the more widely reported examples is former Missouri Representative Todd Akin, who lost a winnable Senate race in 2012 by saying that "legitimate rape" could not result in pregnancy. By 2013, some high-profile Republicans like former Bush strategist Karl Rove were concerned that the party would become increasingly marginalized if establishment leaders didn't challenge some of the more extreme sentiments expressed by the party's base.[4] This is because moderation generally wins elections, especially in large statewide and national electorates. And in the rare case when moderation doesn't win elections, it sets up potential conflict between the winner and more moderate voters. This is one reason why Donald Trump arrived at the White House as a polarizing figure with strong support from his base but deep dislike from large numbers of Americans.

You could say that both major parties function best when they act like big umbrellas containing several factions, which would probably go their own way in other nations where the electoral system rewarded multiple small parties.[5] The Republican Party is composed of several conservative factions that have different interests and agendas, including:

- ***Religious conservatives*** concerned about moral issues, but not economic issues.
- ***Business conservatives*** favoring free enterprise, who are not particularly concerned about moral questions.
- ***Small government conservatives*** whose laissez-faire views on social issues may conflict with the direction religious conservatives want government to take.

Similarly, the Democratic Party is composed of several relatively liberal factions that also have different and at times competing agendas:

- ***Economic liberals***, centered around unions, who are concerned with wages, benefits, job creation, and the interests of workers.
- ***Social liberals***, such as African Americans and many Jews, with a liberal social agenda, including concern for minority rights.
- ***Social and economic moderates*** ("New Democrats" as Bill Clinton called them), especially suburbanites and women concerned with crime, education, and the environment, whose support of globalization and free trade may conflict with the interests of union workers.

Even within these groups, there can be flexibility and overlap. Union workers with conservative social values were dubbed "Reagan Democrats" when they were persuaded

to vote Republican in the 1980s. Business leaders in the entertainment field who have liberal social agendas often support Democratic candidates.

Because of the fluid and diverse nature of the groups that identify with the two major parties, Republicans and Democrats need to engage in the process of **interest aggregation** to bring together a wide variety of sometimes-conflicting demands, in order to enter into successful electoral competition. What makes U.S. parties interesting in this respect is that interest aggregation takes place *within* the party *before* it contests an election. In multiparty systems, where many narrow parties are represented in government, the process of negotiating among interests takes place when multiple victorious parties bargain with each other after the election for a place in the new government. The result of this negotiating is a **coalition** government made up of multiple parties.[6]

interest aggregation: The process by which groups with different and potentially conflicting agendas are brought together under the umbrella of a political party.

coalition: A government formed as a partnership among several victorious parties in a multiparty system, following negotiations about the agenda that each party will be allowed to pursue in exchange for its participation in the new government.

Because the groups that make up the two large parties are always negotiating with each other (or fighting among themselves) to get the party to represent their agendas, the parties are pretty adept at moving to where the votes are as public opinion shifts. In the 1980s, as public opinion took a conservative turn, the Republican Party shifted rightward and began a successful electoral run. Eventually, following a protracted battle among its more liberal constituencies (which tend to participate disproportionately in the process of selecting presidential candidates), the Democratic Party shifted rightward as well in the 1990s, only to revisit its earlier struggles following Bill Clinton's departure from the White House. During the second Bush administration, the Republican Party lost touch with a large number of voters in the political center and lost control of Congress and the White House. Barack Obama's rise to the presidency appeared to herald the resurrection of liberal groups in the Democratic Party, although internal battles persisted with economic moderates who remained a significant presence in Congress. Donald Trump's capture of the Republican nomination represented the continuation of a race to the right that took hold in the party during the Obama years.

This flexibility also permits the major parties to move into space occupied by smaller parties, should they begin to make electoral inroads. Ross Perot's economic pragmatism appealed to enough voters to make him a force (if not a factor) in the 1992 presidential contest. Over the next four years, both major parties deliberately made appeals to Perot supporters, and by 1996, they were able to cut the maverick Texan's vote-getting ability in half.

Figure 6.2 should give you a picture of what public opinion typically looks like in the United States and how the two major parties respond to it. The curved line captures the

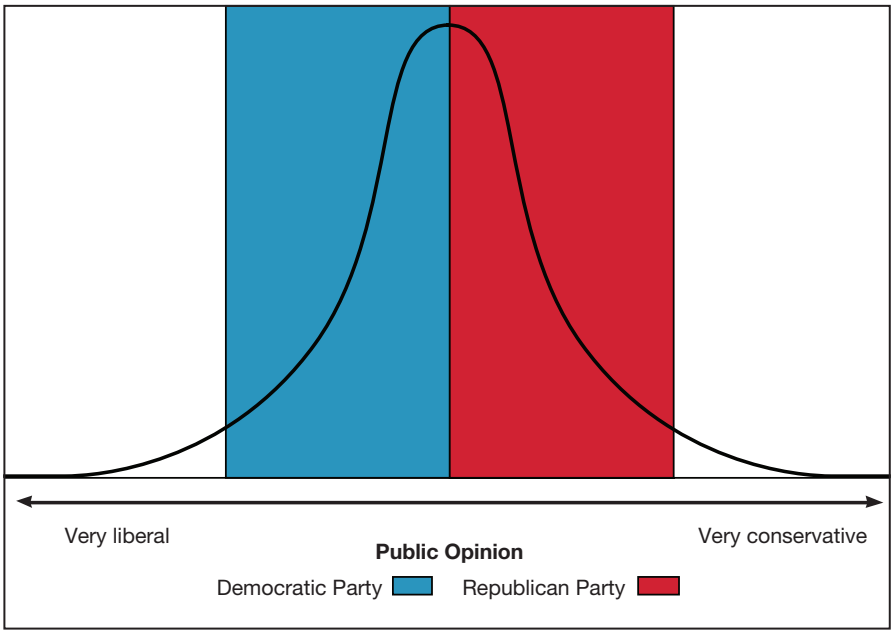


FIGURE 6.2 The Two Large Parties Maintain Their Dominance

distribution of opinions people hold, from very liberal to very conservative. It bulges in the middle, meaning that most people hold moderate views. If you think of this line in terms of votes, there are more votes where the line peaks. Public opinion may shift over the years to the (conservative) right or the (liberal) left—today you would find more of a bulge on the right than has been typical—but it tends to avoid extremes. As it shifts, the parties follow, like two big, wobbly Jello molds, capturing as many votes as they can while squeezing out smaller parties that could try to capitalize on changing public attitudes. This is why the Republican Party has moved to the right along with its voters, but in the process, it runs the risk of losing voters in the middle.

6.2d Third and Minor Parties

L.O. Identify third parties as either ideological, single-issue, or splinter parties, and explain why they rarely compete successfully for elected offices.

With the rules stacked against them, you might think that third parties and minor parties simply wouldn't form at all. However, throughout our history, parties that have been unsuccessful at winning elections have repeatedly formed, and some of them have flourished. What's with that?

There are a couple of answers to this question. In some cases, winning is less important than giving party identifiers a place to go. Communists may not win too many elections in the United States, but if you're a Communist, then neither of the two major parties is going to represent your beliefs. That's why **ideological parties** like the Communist Party, Socialist Party, and Libertarian Party have a long history in the United States, complete with fielding candidates for office. Even though almost all ideological party candidates go down to defeat, having the opportunity to publicize their views can be a goal in its own right, apart from electoral victory.[7]

ideological parties: Third parties that form around a broad ideology not represented by the two major American parties. They endure from election to election despite the fact that they rarely achieve electoral success.

In a similar vein, some parties that endure from election to election formulate around a concern for a particular issue rather than a broad ideology. Such **single-issue parties** operate like ideological parties in that they compete in elections largely to draw attention to the issue they espouse. For instance, a Right-to-Life Party appears on the ballot in New York State elections. Nationally, the Green Party is a single-issue party devoted to the cause of environmentalism.

single-issue parties: Third parties that form to advance a specific issue agenda, like environmentalism, that members feel is not being adequately addressed by the two major American parties. They endure from election to election despite the fact that they rarely achieve electoral success.

In 2000, the Green Party nominated noted consumer advocate Ralph Nader as its presidential candidate. Given the media's natural affinity for personality and celebrity, Nader's candidacy generated more media attention for the Green Party than a single-issue party normally would attract (although much of this centered around the horse race elements of Nader's candidacy—whether Nader would claim liberal votes that might otherwise go to Democrat Al Gore—rather than on environmental concerns espoused by the Green Party). Nader won 2.7 percent of the national presidential vote, which is quite sizable for a single-issue candidate (and quite a bit more than the margin that separated George W. Bush from Al Gore). In 2016, the Libertarian Party nominated former New Mexico Governor Gary Johnson, who captured more than 3 percent of the vote, better than Nader's 2000 showing and triple what he won as the Libertarian nominee four years earlier, likely a reflection of the unpopularity of the major candidates.

Other minor parties develop in reaction to the temporary failure of the major parties to satisfy a sizable constituency. Unlike ideological or single-issue parties, these **splinter parties**—named because of their propensity to splinter away from the broad Democratic or Republican Party coalitions—tend to be pragmatic. They typically form around a charismatic figure and compete for one or two election cycles until the major parties successfully address the concerns of the group that split away, move into the space occupied by the splinter party, and effectively put it out of business.

splinter parties: Third parties that split away from one of the major parties in protest against the direction taken by the Republicans or Democrats. They often form around a charismatic leader and last a short time, after which the major parties address their concerns, and they lose their reason to continue.

There were several notable splinter parties in the last century, constituting the bulk of meaningful national third-party challenges depicted in Table 6.2. In 1912, former Republican President Theodore Roosevelt attempted a comeback after a falling-out with incumbent Republican President William Howard Taft. Unable to wrest the nomination of the Republican Party from the conservative Taft, Roosevelt ran as the nominee of the Progressive or "Bull Moose" Party (a nickname that captured Roosevelt's hearty physical characteristics). On the strength of his personal popularity, Roosevelt secured more than

TABLE 6.2 Significant Third-Party and Independent Candidates of the Twentieth Century[T1]

Year	Candidate	Party	Type of Third Party	Percentage of Votes	Electoral Votes
1912	Theodore Roosevelt	Progressive/Bull Moose	Splinter	27.4%	88
1992	Ross Perot	Independent	Splinter	18.9%	0
1924	Robert M. LaFollette	Progressive	Splinter	16.6%	13
1968	George C. Wallace	American Independent	Splinter	13.5%	46
1996	Ross Perot	Reform	Splinter	8.4%	0
1980	John B. Anderson	Independent	Splinter	6.6%	0
1912	Eugene V. Debbs	Socialist	Ideological	6.0%	0

one-quarter of the vote, better than any third-party or independent candidate of the twentieth century. However, his presence on the ballot drained Republican votes from Taft and enabled the election of Democrat Woodrow Wilson.

After the election, the Republican Party absorbed the disaffected progressives, and the Progressive Party faded away. It reemerged briefly in 1924 under the leadership of one of its original founders, Senator Robert M. LaFollette of Wisconsin, whose showing was less impressive than Roosevelt's. LaFollette died shortly after the election, and although the Progressive Party continued to function for a while, it never again competed effectively in national elections.

In the mid-twentieth century, it was the Democratic Party's turn to see a faction walk out and compete against it. The issue of civil rights split southern Democrats from the rest of their party, as first Harry S Truman and then John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson took increasingly progressive positions on race relations. In 1948, President Truman beat back a challenge by disaffected "Dixiecrats," who unsuccessfully ran Democratic South Carolina Governor Strom Thurmond as a regional alternative to Truman. Thurmond won only 2.4 percent of the vote, although he polled ahead of Truman in four southern states.[8]

A more serious split occurred in 1968, when fiery Alabama Governor George C. Wallace, a Democrat, received 13.5 percent of the vote as the candidate of the American Independent Party, on a platform of racial segregation. With the national Democratic Party supporting policies promoting civil rights for African Americans, Wallace's defection heralded the departure of white southerners as a Democratic Party constituency. Socially conservative white southerners eventually found a new home in the Republican Party, and the American Independent Party faded from the scene.

John Anderson's 1980 independent run for president and Ross Perot's 1992 independent bid were born more from widespread doubts about the major party nominees than from disagreements over the direction of a major party. In 1980, Republicans nominated former California Governor Ronald Reagan to face incumbent Democrat Jimmy Carter. At the time, Reagan was widely regarded as being more conservative than mainstream America and highly belligerent toward the Soviet Union, while Carter was saddled with a sour economy and a lingering crisis in which Americans were being held hostage in Iran.

In this environment, where one candidate did not inspire trust and the other was perceived to lack competence, undecided voters were looking for an alternative. Anderson, a previously obscure Republican congressman from Illinois who had lost his party's nomination to Reagan, presented himself as someone trustworthy and competent. Although his campaign received a fair amount of press interest because of its potential to complicate the horserace, Anderson's independent bid fell way short and, as many Americans warmed to Reagan during his first term, there was no rationale for Anderson to try again four years later.

DEMYSTIFYING GOVERNMENT

Building a Viable Third Party—for a Few Months

If splinter parties gain momentum from charismatic figures, certainly Ross Perot fits the mold. The feisty self-made Texas billionaire surprised political observers when, during an appearance on CNN's *Larry King Live* in February 1992, he announced that he would put his considerable fortune behind an independent presidential run if people would circulate petitions sufficient to get his name on the ballot in all fifty states. They did. Perot coordinated and financed the effort—and advertised it by appearing on other television talk shows.

Perot was an unconventional candidate. He understood television and used the media to maximum effect. By late June, he was running neck-and-neck with his major party opponents—only to drop out of the race at a time when questions about his character threatened to foment into a feeding frenzy. Then, just as suddenly, Perot reentered the contest with just weeks to go before the election. His personal fortune permitted him to pick up where he had left off, albeit with a smaller base of supporters. Perot spent heavily to purchase thirty-minute-long "infomercials" focusing primarily on economic issues that interested his supporters. A combination of money, media, and misgivings about the major candidates contributed to his strong showing.[T2]

After the election, Perot remained a visible figure, energizing his followers and encouraging them to begin a third-party movement. As disaffection with the major parties continued into the first years of the Clinton administration, the Perot-backed organization "United We Stand America" became the basis for the Reform Party, which was organized with Perot's support in 1995. Leaders of the new party hoped to run candidates for numerous offices and to build on Perot's impressive showing in the 1992 presidential election.

However, the Reform Party faltered as the political climate changed. After a halting start, President Clinton began to connect with a large segment of the population. By 1996, a lot of the anger from four years earlier had dissipated, and with it, more than half of Perot's vote. Because the Reform Party had been built from the top down—around Perot's dynamic television persona—rather than from the bottom up, there was little to sustain it once Perot's television "act" grew stale. In 1998, the Reform Party captured a major office when former professional wrestling star Jesse Ventura was elected governor of Minnesota in a tight, three-way race, but Perot's legions were learning how hard it is to build a viable third party in the United States.

Reform Party Founder Ross Perot

By 2000, the national Reform Party had split into two camps: one loyal to its founder and one supportive of conservative television commentator Patrick Buchanan, who had been denied the nomination of the Republican Party and who was looking for a ready-made platform from which to launch a presidential campaign. Perot supporters cried foul and accused Buchanan of hijacking their organization. In a raucous and testy convention, the two camps nominated different candidates (the Perot group supported physicist Dr. John Hagelin), and it was left to the courts to decide who would be the official nominee. In September 2000, a federal judge declared Buchanan to be the Reform nominee. Buchanan turned out to be a candidate who did not resonate with the times, and his campaign went nowhere. In 2002, Ventura decided not to seek a second term as Minnesota governor, and the once high-flying Reform Party was left battered and irrelevant.

In a similar fashion, Perot offered himself as an alternative to unpopular incumbent Republican George H. W. Bush and scandal-plagued Democrat Bill Clinton. Unlike Anderson, Perot could bankroll his campaign with the considerable fortune he had acquired as the founder of Electronic Data Systems, a multibillion-dollar corporation. In a year when many voters were disillusioned with the major nominees, Perot's candidacy polled almost 19 percent of the vote. He tried to organize his independent bid into a permanent third-party organization, but as disaffected voters returned to the major parties, Perot's **Reform Party** candidacy did less well in 1996, and by 2000, the third-party movement had effectively run out of steam. Demystifying Government: Building a Viable Third Party—for a Few Months discusses the Perot effort in more detail.

Reform Party: The organization built by businessman Ross Perot in a mostly unsuccessful attempt to create a competitive third party.

Even though a number of third-party and independent presidential candidates performed admirably at the polls, they rarely had any traction in the Electoral College, which ultimately decides who becomes president (no third-party or independent candidate has won any electoral votes since George Wallace in 1968). In Chapter 7, we'll explore how the Electoral College works, but for now, the important thing to know is that in contempo-

rary elections, it takes 270 electoral votes to be elected president, which are awarded state by state on a winner-take-all basis. When you look at how even the more successful third-party and independent candidates did over the last hundred years, it's clear that none of them came close (review Table 6.2). Even in Perot's case, because his support was evenly spread throughout the country, he was unable to dent the Electoral College.

6.3 Party Systems

party system: The regular, over-time competition of the same major political parties, composed of the same groups of identifiers.

L.O. Define the term* party system*, and identify the key characteristics of the five party systems that have arisen since parties emerged in the late eighteenth century.

So, America has a two-party system and always has. From the time the Constitution went into effect, with the formation of rudimentary political parties, there have been two parties in regular competition with each other. In a **party system**, the *same* parties enter into regular competition with each other year after year, and although the number of parties has been stable over the past two centuries, party labels and the groups identifying with the parties have changed several times.

We can divide our history into five distinct periods, each characterized by a party system with a uniquely constituted pair of major parties competing against each other. Within each of these five party systems, the groups identifying with the two parties remained stable. But between each period, there was a **realignment**, or a significant, lasting, long-term shift in the groups that identified with the parties in the previous system, precipitating the change to the new system. Typically, realignments have followed a major social upheaval, like war or depression, which created new social cleavages that the existing parties were simply unable to address. Political scientist V. O. Key noted that each realignment followed what he called a **critical election**, in which large numbers of voters shift their allegiances in what turns out to be lasting fashion.[9]

L.O. Identify the relationship between realignments and the demise of party systems.

realignment: A shift from one party system to another, the result of a lasting, long-term adjustment in the groups that identify with the major political parties.

critical election: An election that heralds a realignment, during which large numbers of voters deviate from their traditional party allegiances in what turns out to be a lasting change.

The story of these five party systems and the realignments that fashioned them is in one respect the story of the major events that shaped American political history. Let's look briefly at that story, paying special attention to some of the key figures who emerged during these periods to get a sense of the foundation beneath the parties we know today as Republican and Democrat.

6.3a Formation of a Party System, 1796–1824

The framers of the Constitution did not look kindly on political parties and did not anticipate their existence. If you look at the Constitution, you'll find that parties aren't mentioned anywhere. That's because parties were perceived to be synonymous with **factions**, and you probably remember how poorly factions were regarded. Regardless, the fact that parties were feared as organizations that could produce **tyranny** didn't stop some of the same people who wrote negatively of them from organizing what would become the first party system.

faction: A group of individuals who are united by a desire that, if realized, would threaten the liberty of the larger community—in James Madison's words, individuals who are "united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community." A faction may be defined by size, such as when a majority of citizens threatens the liberty of the minority, or by intensity, such as when a minority of citizens with intensely held preferences threatens the liberty of a disinterested majority.

tyranny: The denial of liberty to individuals through the actions of a faction or through the actions of government itself.

George Washington, in his farewell address of 1796, spoke directly of "the baneful effects of the spirit of party:"

> It serves always to distract the public councils and enfeeble the public administration. It agitates the community with ill-founded jealousies and false alarms; kindles the animosity of one part against another; foments occasionally riot and insurrection. It opens the door to foreign influence and corruption, which finds a facilitated access to the government itself through the channels of party passion.[10]

All well and good, but at the same time Washington was urging his countrymen to put aside partisan differences, others—notably others who served in Washington's administration, like Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson—were at work forming what would soon become America's first political parties. By 1800, two factions in Congress had developed around the major issue of the day: the strength of the federal government relative to the states. Supporters of Hamilton's position in favor of a strong federal government with a strong national bank formed the camp that would eventually be known as the Federalists. Followers of Jefferson's position on states' rights would become known as the Democratic-Republicans (they were also called Anti-Federalists, Republicans, Jeffersonian Democrats, and even sometimes simply Jeffersonians).

In 1800, the two groups, or caucuses, began acting and looking like political parties. The Democratic-Republican congressional caucus nominated Thomas Jefferson for president, while congressional Federalists lent their support to the incumbent (and eventual loser) John Adams. Congressional partisans also began building connections with supporters in the states.[11] Despite widespread apprehension about political parties, the first party system was in full swing.

The Federalists never organized as effectively as the Democratic-Republicans, and John Adams was the only president who would wear their label. The Democratic-Republicans, with strength in the rural South, elected a succession of Virginians to the presidency between 1800 and 1824: Jefferson, James Madison, and James Monroe. In fact, the Federalists had such a hard time of it that by 1816 they stopped nominating presidential candidates altogether. From the time the Federalists called it quits until 1824, the country went through a brief period when there was little party activity at the national level.[12] This so-called "Era of Good Feelings" masked conflicts that were rumbling below the surface, however. It was only a short period of time before party competition would be back.

6.3b The Second Party System: Jackson Democrats vs. the Whigs, 1828—1856

The electorate was changing in the 1820s as states began removing property ownership as a requirement for political participation. This led to conditions that supported the emergence of the mass political parties that we know today. More than anyone else, Andrew Jackson—backwoodsman, lawyer, congressman, senator, and charismatic general in the War of 1812—would surface as the architect of the new political party (see biography).

"Old Hickory" was a popular, strong, and divisive figure, determined to democratize government and bring ordinary people into the political process. Elected to the presidency in 1828 as a Democratic-Republican, Jackson was a polarizing force who expanded Jefferson's party to include newly enfranchised voters while sending disaffected Jeffersonians into the opposition as National Republicans, or Whigs. Leaders of the new Whig Party—people like Henry Clay and Daniel Webster—feared Jackson's form of democracy meant trampling individual liberties. For its part, Jackson's party began competition under the abbreviated name "Democrats"—a label meant to capture the broad-based nature of the party and the same label it uses today.[13] In fact, the modern-day Democratic Party is the nation's oldest continually operating political party, tracing its roots back to Jefferson and Jackson.

Under Jackson's leadership, the Democrats held their first national nominating convention in 1832—the forerunner of the conventions we talked about at the start of the chapter—replacing the congressional caucuses that had selected previous presidential candidates. It was more democratic, and it drew more people into the political process. Presidential campaigns, once dominated by a congressional elite, became mass exercises. Something resembling modern political parties had been born.[14]

The Democrats drew their strength from the rural southern and western elements of Jefferson's party, but they were a national party with a base in New York led by the pragmatic Martin Van Buren, who would follow Jackson in the White House. The Whigs were also national in scope, and more of an elite party, supported by southern plantation owners and northern commercial interests. For three decades, they entered into regular competition with each other, with the Democrats winning most of the presidential contests (the two Whig victories were with military figures William Henry Harrison in 1840 and Zachary Taylor in 1848, both of whom promptly died in office not long after their inaugurations).

However, as the 1850s approached, the national coalitions in both parties came under enormous strain. Abolitionist sentiment grew in the northern and frontier states, while public debate over extending slavery to new western states intensified divisions over the issue of slavery. Northern Whigs aligned with strong antislavery forces and split from southern Whigs, who had been promoting compromise positions designed to preserve the union while maintaining the institution of slavery. Northern Democrats, who long

BIOGRAPHY

ANDREW JACKSON

Andrew Jackson was born in the Waxhaws area near the border between North and South Carolina on March 15, 1767. At age thirteen he joined the Continental Army as a courier, and in 1781 he was briefly taken prisoner by the British. In 1784, Jackson went to Salisbury, North Carolina, where he studied law for several years. His public service career began in 1788 with an appointment as prosecuting officer for the Superior Court in Nashville, Tennessee, which at that time was a part of the Western District of North Carolina. In 1796, Jackson was elected to Congress from the newly created state of Tennessee. The following year, the Tennessee legislature elected Jackson to serve in the U.S. Senate, but he held the seat for only one session before resigning to serve for six years as a judge on the Tennessee Supreme Court. In the years to follow, Jackson would rise to the rank of major general in the U.S. Army, and became a national hero during the War of 1812 following his defeat of the British at the Battle of New Orleans in January 1815. During this period he earned the nickname "Old Hickory." Jackson returned to the U.S. Senate in 1822, and two years later resigned his seat when the House of Representatives denied him the presidency despite winning the popular vote. He was subsequently elected twice, in 1828 and 1832. Following his second term, Jackson retired to his home near Nashville, where he died on June 8, 1845.[T3]

differed with their pro-slavery southern counterparts, found themselves in alliance with northern Whigs, and in the middle 1850s, they joined forces to create the Republican Party as an antislavery party.

The Whigs and the Democrats had originally organized around common economic perspectives. But their internal similarities were irrelevant to the issue of slavery, and as slavery became the overriding political concern, regional differences within each party pulled them apart. The realignment that ensued left the Democrats as a southern, pro-slavery party. It destroyed the Whigs entirely. And it enabled the emergence of the Republicans, the only "third" party ever to attain major party status.[15]

Based in Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio, and Illinois, the Republican Party began competing successfully in statewide elections, as it spread through the Midwest eastward to anti-slavery regions of the North. By 1856, state Republican parties had unified, and the first Republican national convention was held. In 1860, the Republican Party elected its first president, Abraham Lincoln, ushering in secession, Civil War, and the third party system.[16]

6.3c The Third Party System: Ascendancy of a New Party, 1860–1892

From 1860 on, Republicans and Democrats engaged in regular competition with each other. Even though the labels haven't changed in over 145 years, the issues the parties have confronted and the groups aligning themselves with each party have shifted dramatically over the years.

The Republican Party dominated national politics during this era of the third party system, when the parties were organized over divisions stemming from the Civil War and Reconstruction of the Union. The Democratic Party had become a southern conservative party, while the Republican Party was essentially a northern party devoted to extending rights to freed slaves.

Still, just like the second party system had been organized around economic groups and fell apart when the parties weren't able to address the issue of slavery, the third party system, organized around the issue of slavery, was unprepared to address emerging economic concerns as the nation headed into the industrial era.

In the West, farmers became politicized in opposition to an eastern financial class that they felt had a tight grip over the economy. In cities, workers in the new industrial economy were concerned with issues of trade, wages, and as the century progressed, monopoly ownership of business. Neither party responded adequately to their complaints, which

rose in volume over the latter third of the nineteenth century until they came to dominate national politics. The coming division in American politics would pit East against West, bankers and lenders against farmers and laborers, much as the previous conflict had divided North and South.[17]

6.3d The Fourth Party System: Republicans Again, 1896–1928

In 1893, the country plunged into economic depression. The Democratic Party was split down the middle between eastern forces of commercialism that favored the stability of a gold standard for currency, and western forces of populism—rural advocates of currency backed by silver, which by virtue of its greater availability would have a devaluing effect that would assist rural debtors.

By 1896, the agrarian forces had emerged victorious within the Democratic Party, which nominated Nebraskan William Jennings Bryan for president on a platform of "free silver" (see biography). The Republicans, with the strong support of commercial interests, cast Bryan as a radical and stoked fears of a populist takeover of the government that resonated in the industrial Northeast and Midwest. Banks and corporations heavily funded the Republican nominee, William McKinley (see biography). The nation was polarized.

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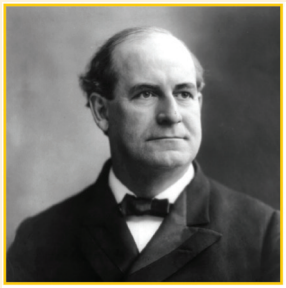
WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN



William Jennings Bryan, the fiery populist who secured three presidential nominations only to be turned away each time by the voters, was born in Salem, Illinois in 1860. After moving to Lincoln, Nebraska in 1887, he was elected to Congress in 1890 and reelected two years later. By 1896, he had become a national figure as an advocate of free silver as an alternative to the gold standard for American currency, which would have worked to the benefit of debtors and laborers over creditors and industrialists. At age 36, Bryan won the presidential nomination of the Democratic Party and delivered what became known as the "Cross of Gold" speech for its admonition not to "crucify mankind upon a cross of gold." Despite his oratory, Bryan lost the presidency to William McKinley in 1896 and again in 1900. He won a third Democratic nomination in 1908 but was defeated by William Howard Taft, making him the only party standard-bearer in history to run unsuccessfully for the presidency three times. In his later years, Bryan served as secretary of state under Woodrow Wilson and was active as an orator, author, and lecturer. He was the lead prosecuting attorney for the state of Tennessee in the 1925 "Scopes Monkey Trial" on the teaching of evolution. Bryan died in Tennessee of a heart attack, days after the conclusion of the trial.[T4]

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WILLIAM MCKINLEY

William McKinley was born in Niles, Ohio on January 29, 1843, the seventh son of William and Nancy Allison McKinley. At age 18, he enlisted in the Ohio Infantry and served in the Civil War. McKinley was elected to Congress in 1876 as a Republican from the eighteenth district of Ohio, and despite constant gerrymandering of his district, he served as congressman from 1876 to 1890, with the exception of a period in 1884-1885, when he was unseated in a contested election. Congress passed the McKinley Tariff Act in 1890, but it hurt the Republican Party in the 1890 election, and McKinley lost his seat. He was elected governor of Ohio the following year, however, and reelected in 1893. In 1896, McKinley defeated William Jennings Bryan and was elected president. In 1898, McKinley asked Congress to declare war on Spain. During the brief Spanish-American War, he maintained direct control over the armed forces, making many decisions himself. After the war, McKinley made the decision to retain the Philippines and Puerto Rico, thus launching the global expansion of the United States. He was reelected president in 1900. The following year, McKinley was shot in Buffalo, NY. He died on September 14, 1901, from complications resulting from his wounds.[T5]

For the first time in over a generation, a presidential election offered a stark choice over economic issues long ignored by the major parties.

McKinley's victory in the critical election of 1896 cemented Republican control of national politics through the first one-third of the twentieth century. Even though the Republicans had been the majority party before, the 1896 vote revealed an entirely new set of allegiances for the two parties that would hold for decades. McKinley's victory was concentrated in the commercial centers of the Northeast and the industrial Midwest. Bryan swept the South and the West.[18]

The Republican Party established itself as the party of bankers, industrialists, urban laborers, and African Americans (who remained loyal to the party of Lincoln). The Democrats emerged as the party of rural interests and southerners (whose attachment to the Democratic Party was as strong as it had been since the Civil War). These two groups would compete against each other for more than thirty years, with the Republicans maintaining a clear advantage. Between 1896 and 1928, in a time marked by rapid immigration and industrialization, Republicans would lose the White House only in the wake of Teddy Roosevelt's third-party challenge in 1912 and again in 1916.

That is, until the next great economic depression.

6.3e The Fifth Party System: Democrats Emerge as Liberals, 1932–1964

Herbert Hoover, the last in the line of Republican presidents who served during the fourth party system, no doubt had little sense of what was coming (see biography). The Great Depression hit suddenly and ferociously in 1929, ending a decade of prosperity. Hoover spent the rest of his term unsuccessfully grappling with an economic downturn that proved deeper and more enduring than he had initially anticipated.

With the unemployment rate soaring above 20 percent, voters were ready for a change. In what emerged as a campaign of the powerful versus what Democratic nominee Franklin D. Roosevelt called the "forgotten man at the bottom of the economic pyramid," the Democratic Party won a landslide victory in 1932 that would establish it as the majority party for over three decades (see biography). Roosevelt himself would claim the presidency four times—breaking with the two-term tradition established by Washington—and between 1932 and 1964, popular General Dwight D. Eisenhower would be the only Republican to crack the Democrat's lock on the White House.[19]

After the election, Democrats embraced government activism to ease the burden felt by an increasingly angry and despondent America. In office, Roosevelt moved swiftly

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HERBERT HOOVER

Herbert Hoover, the mining engineer who would become president of the United States only to see his administration undermined by the Great Depression, was born on August 10, 1874, in West Branch, Iowa. He attended Stanford University where he earned a degree in geology in 1891, and after working in gold mines in California and Australia, he traveled the world as a consulting engineer. Following World War I, Hoover directed the American Relief Administration, which fed 350 million people in 21 countries in the aftermath of the war. In 1921, Hoover was appointed secretary of commerce, a post he held during the Harding and Coolidge administrations. In 1928, Hoover was elected president, easily defeating Democrat Alfred E. Smith. But, one year later the stock market crashed, and Hoover's actions to deal with it proved ineffective and unpopular. Four years later, he was overwhelmingly defeated in his bid for reelection by Franklin D. Roosevelt. Hoover remained active after leaving office. In 1946, at the request of President Truman, Hoover conducted postwar World Famine surveys as the coordinator of the European Food Program, and in 1947 he chaired the Commission on Organization of the Executive Branch of the Government (known as the first Hoover Commission). He reprised this role in 1953 for President Eisenhower, as chair of the second Hoover Commission. Herbert Hoover died in New York in 1964 at age 90.[T6]

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FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

Franklin D. Roosevelt was born into a life of privilege in Hyde Park, New York on January 30, 1882. His parents and private tutors provided him with almost all his formative education until 1896, when he attended Groton, a prestigious preparatory school in Massachusetts, followed by Harvard and Columbia University. In 1905, he married a distant cousin, Anna Eleanor Roosevelt, who was the niece of President Theodore Roosevelt. They had six children, one of whom died in infancy. Roosevelt began his political career in 1910 when he was elected to the New York State Senate as a Democrat. He was appointed assistant secretary of the navy by President Wilson in 1913 and held the post until 1920, when he was the vice-presidential nominee of the Democratic Party on a ticket that lost in a landslide to Warren Harding. The following year, Roosevelt contracted polio and permanently lost the use of his legs. In 1928, Roosevelt was elected governor of New York. Four years later, he won the nomination of the Democratic Party for president, and he defeated incumbent Herbert Hoover by a lopsided margin. Roosevelt would serve longer in the presidency than anyone in history, winning reelection three times. During his tenure, Roosevelt initiated a series of "New Deal" social welfare programs designed to address the effects of the Great Depression, and he presided over American involvement in World War II. He served until his death in 1945.[T7]

to enact an agenda that was far more activist than the one on which he had campaigned. Working in tandem with Democratic majorities in the House and Senate, Roosevelt implemented the **New Deal** policies that would cement the electoral changes evident in the critical election of 1932. Key members of what would be termed the **New Deal coalition** included:

- Urbanites, particularly in the North, many of whom were first-time voters.
- Jews, many of whom were urbanites, and who were among the Democrats' strongest supporters.
- Catholics, many of whom were first drawn to the Democratic Party in 1928, when its nominee was New York Governor Al Smith, the first Catholic presidential nominee of a major party.
- African Americans, who abandoned the party of Lincoln after seventy years of affiliation.
- Organized labor, who benefited greatly from Roosevelt's New Deal reforms.
- Liberals, whose ideas were well received in FDR's reformist administration.
- Southern whites, who remained true to the party of the Civil War, despite conservative voting patterns that were out of sync with the progressive reforms of the New Deal.[20]

New Deal: The name given to the programs of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, which vastly expanded the role of the federal government in an effort to deal with the debilitating effects of the Great Depression on American society.

New Deal coalition: The political coalition composed of urbanites, ethnic and racial minorities, unions, liberals, and southerners that made the Democratic Party the majority party during the fifth party system.

Following Roosevelt, Harry S Truman maintained the New Deal coalition with his **Fair Deal** policies that built on popular New Deal programs by, for instance, raising the minimum wage and increasing Social Security benefits (see biography). The only Republican president elected during the fifth party system, Dwight D. Eisenhower served in the 1950s during a conservative interlude to the activist governments of his predecessors and successors (see biography). In the 1960s, Lyndon B. Johnson presided over a second wave of government activism ushered in by his **Great Society** programs aimed at conquering poverty and extending civil rights protection to African Americans (see biography).

Fair Deal: The name given to the domestic policies of President Truman, which built on the popularity of the New Deal.

Great Society: The name given to the programs of President Lyndon B. Johnson, which elevated the federal government to the most prominent role it would play in the twentieth century. The philosophy of the Great Society was that government should try to solve large social problems like hunger and poverty.

However, Johnson's emphasis on civil rights alienated white southerners, and his prosecution of the Vietnam War deeply divided elements of the New Deal coalition. Although Democrats would continue to compete successfully in southern statewide elections, they no longer dominated. Republicans were emerging as a competitive force on the statewide level and, gradually, as a dominant force in presidential elections. Richard Nixon exploited cracks in the Democrats' southern base during his presidential campaign of

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HARRY S TRUMAN

Harry S Truman was born in Lamar, Missouri on May 8, 1884. During his youth, Truman worked as a timekeeper for a railroad construction contractor, bank clerk, farmer, and clothing store owner before being elected judge and, in 1926, presiding judge of the Jackson County Court. In 1934, he won election to the U.S. Senate as a Democrat from Missouri, and in 1944 Truman was elected vice president on a ticket with Franklin D. Roosevelt. He became president 82 days after his inauguration upon Roosevelt's sudden death. In office, he approved the use of the atomic bomb against Japan, oversaw the founding of the United Nations, and presided over the start of the Cold War, issuing the Truman Doctrine in 1947 to support nations struggling against communism. Truman narrowly won an uphill reelection battle against Republican Thomas E. Dewey in 1948. His second term saw America wage an undeclared war in Korea. He retired to Independence, Missouri in 1953, and died on December 26, 1972.[T8]

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DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

Dwight D. Eisenhower, the World War II military leader who would become president of the United States, was born in Denison, Texas on October 14, 1890. In 1892, the Eisenhower family moved to Abilene, Kansas, where Eisenhower graduated from Abilene High School. In 1911, Eisenhower entered West Point, followed in 1925 by Command and General Staff School and the Army War College in 1927. He rose rapidly through the military ranks, serving as executive officer to the assistant secretary of war (1929 to 1933), chief military aide to Army Chief of Staff General Douglas MacArthur (1933 to 1935), then during World War II as commander-in-chief of Allied Forces in North Africa (1942), supreme commander of the Allied Expeditionary Forces (1943), commander of the Normandy invasion force, and five-star general (1945). After the German surrender in 1945, Eisenhower was appointed military governor of the U.S. Occupied Zone in Frankfurt and was designated army chief of staff. In 1948, Eisenhower became president of Columbia University, a position he held until he was named Supreme Allied Commander of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1950. He retired from active service in 1952 to run successfully for president as a Republican. During his two terms in office, Eisenhower oversaw the end of the Korean War and the initial construction of the interstate highway system. He retired to his farm near Gettysburg, Pennsylvania after leaving office and died on March 28, 1969.[T9]

1968, and by 1972, Nixon swept the South against antiwar Democrat George McGovern, who was perceived as too liberal to be in touch with southern political sentiment.

Nonetheless, Democrats maintained control of the House of Representatives until 1994, and of the Senate until 1980. They would regain control again in 1986 and hold it on and off thereafter, at one point getting it back when Vermont Republican Senator Jim Jeffords left his party over disagreements with the policies of George W. Bush in 2001, throwing his support to Democratic leaders and breaking a rare 50–50 Senate tie. Throughout this period, more Americans still claimed to be Democrats than Republicans. There had been no political earthquakes on the scale of depression or civil war, and no obvious critical elections to usher in the start of a new political system. Yet, clearly, something had changed. What was it?

6.3f Divided Government in a Conservative Era, 1969–Today

L.O. Explain why the post-1960s political era may be understood as a period of dealignment.

In the wake of the social turmoil of the turbulent 1960s, large numbers of people who previously identified with one of the political parties were shaken from their partisan moorings. As the majority party in the fifth party system, the Democrats felt this shift

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LYNDON B. JOHNSON

Lyndon B. Johnson was born August 27, 1908, in Stonewall, Texas. After high school, Johnson performed odd jobs, including work as an elevator operator and as part of a road construction gang, janitor, and office helper. He graduated from Southwest Texas State Teachers College in 1930 and worked as a secondary school teacher before being selected as legislative secretary to a U.S. congressman. In 1937, he won a special election for an open congressional seat and remained in the House of Representatives until 1948. While in Congress, Johnson enlisted in the navy and volunteered for active duty, earning a Silver Star for his role in an aerial combat mission. Johnson was elected to the U.S. Senate from Texas in 1948, became the youngest person to hold the post of Senate majority whip in 1951, and became Senate minority leader in 1953 and majority leader in 1955, where he was instrumental in the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1957. He ran unsuccessfully for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1960 against John F. Kennedy, but Kennedy selected Johnson as his running mate, and he was elected vice president. Johnson became president after Kennedy was assassinated. During his administration, Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, promoted "Great Society" social programs, and escalated the War in Vietnam. He was reelected in a landslide in 1964, but with the Vietnam War raging he chose not to run for reelection in 1968. Johnson retired to his Texas ranch where he died on January 22, 1973.[T10]

more strongly than the Republicans. The percentage of people claiming to be independent of party identification has increased since the 1960s, and the percentage of Democrats has declined (see Figure 6.3). This suggests a **dealignment** in American politics: not the establishment of a new party system so much as a weakening of the existing system.

dealignment: The weakening of party affiliation, signified by an increase in the number of people who call themselves independents.

One source of this possible dealignment is the weakening attachments of some of the original members of the New Deal coalition. Southern whites, for sure, as well as Catholics—both groups that were never ideologically liberal—over time relinquished their support for the Democratic Party. Part of the movement away from the Democrats came in reaction to the political dialogue of the twentieth century's last two decades, which was markedly different from the New Deal and Great Society periods. With the

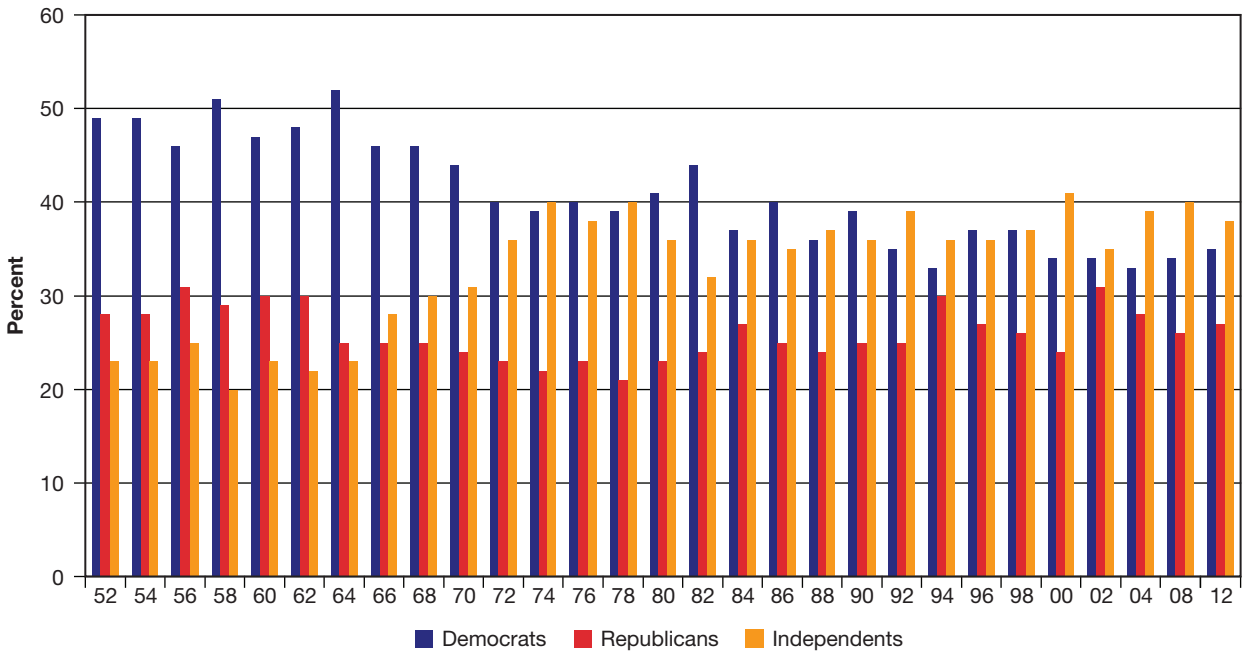

FIGURE 6.3 Weakening Party Ties[T11]

The percentage of independents increased dramatically in the late 1960s, while Democrats declined in strength and Republicans held their own. (Note: Independents include people who lean slightly toward one of the major parties.)

election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 on a platform of social conservatism, issues like abortion rights and gun ownership came to the forefront of debate.

However, while divisive, these issues have not proved to be of enough importance to voters to serve as the basis for realignment. The history of realignments since the Civil War has been that deeply felt economic issues have been the engine of political change, and the history of the late twentieth century has been that during times of economic difficulty, discussion of social issues tends to disappear.[21]

Additionally, while some groups moved away from the Democratic Party since Reagan, the "New Democrats" we mentioned earlier have shifted in the opposite direction. Middle-class suburbanites have become less strongly affiliated with the Republican Party over this period, as have women, whose lukewarm response to cultural conservatism is apparent in a **gender gap**, whereby women have supported Republican presidential candidates by a much lower margin than men.

gender gap: A difference in the voting pattern of men and women, evident since 1980, whereby men are more likely than women to support Republican presidential candidates.

Scholars who study political parties do not universally agree that the United States has gone through a dealignment, especially because the percentage of independents in the electorate began to stabilize in the late 1980s. If you want to make the case that dealigning forces have influenced party affiliation over the past two generations, though, it's easy to see where you would claim the trend started. It coincides with the fraying of the New Deal coalition during the Johnson administration in the mid-1960s. In Figure 6.3, check out the way the percentage of independents, which had hovered around 20 percent in the 1950s and early 1960s, shot up to 30 percent in 1968 and to 40 percent in 1974.

Since 1980, at the national level, it would only be exaggerating things a little to say that Republicans have been the "Male Party" and Democrats have been the "Female Party." When Ronald Reagan defeated Jimmy Carter that year, 54 percent of men supported Reagan, while only 46 percent of women did—a gap of eight points. There has been a gap of at least this magnitude in almost every subsequent presidential election. The 2016 gender gap was a record 24 points, 4 points larger than the gender gap that favored Barack Obama four years earlier. If only women could vote, Hillary Clinton would have been elected president in a 12-point rout. Of course, if only men could vote, Donald Trump would have won by the same margin.[22]

This is not to suggest that women vote as a unit or that there aren't important differences among women voters. Socially conservative and married women tend to support Republicans, for instance, whereas single women lean toward Democratic candidates. But it does point to the tendency for women more than men to be supportive of the activist agenda promoted by the Democratic Party and to the importance of women as an electoral force.[23]

Loosening political ties mean people are less likely to vote for the candidate of the same party for every office on the ballot, something that was quite commonplace during earlier periods of strong party allegiance. As we noted in Chapter 4, since 1968, we've been much more willing to engage in **ticket splitting**, dividing our vote between the parties. This can result in **divided government**, in which one party controls the White House while the other party controls at least one house of Congress.

ticket splitting: Voting for candidates of different parties for different offices, rather than voting a "party line" for all Republicans or all Democrats. Ticket splitting, which has increased in recent years, is a sign of how Americans have been growing independent from political parties.

divided government: Partisan division of the national government, in which each of the two major parties can claim control of one branch (or one legislative house) of the federal government.

Perhaps more than anything, divided government characterizes the politics of our recent past. In the forty-nine years from 1968 to 2017, the same party has controlled the White House and both houses of Congress only five brief times: during the four years of the Carter administration, during the first two years of the Clinton administration, during the first few months of the George W. Bush administration (prior to the defection of Republican Senator James Jeffords of Vermont), between the congressional elections of 2002 and 2006, and during the first two years of the Obama administration, when Democrats had large majorities in the House and Senate. During President Bush's first term, the margin of Republican control in the House and the Senate was slim, although Republican strength in the Senate did increase with the president's reelection. In 2010, voters decided to slam on the brakes after two extremely active years with Democrats in charge, returning to divided government following doubts about the substance and speed of implementation of the Democrats' agenda.

To put this in perspective, when Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower was reelected president in 1956, Democrats won control of both houses of Congress, marking the first time

in over a century (since Zachary Taylor's election in 1848) that an election had produced a president of one party and a Congress of another.[24] As we identify less with political parties, we feel more freedom to pick and choose among individual candidates, regardless of party label. Presidents no longer have **coattails**, carrying senators and representatives into office on the strength of their victory. If anything, representatives and senators commonly have reverse coattails—outpolling the presidential nominee of their party. In 2016, Republicans lost seats in the House and Senate even as they recaptured the White House. As a consequence, governing becomes more ad hoc, and more difficult.

coattails: The ability of a victorious presidential candidate to sweep congressional candidates of the same party into office on the strength of people voting for one political party.

That's one reason why this period of divided government has often been characterized by the **gridlock** we talked about in Chapter 5. When voters place majorities of different ideological persuasions in the White House and Congress, officials will naturally disagree, and those checks and balances designed to slow progress kick into high gear. Without strong party ties, this has happened with great frequency over the past four decades. Once Republicans recaptured the Senate in 2002, Congress and the Bush White House at times were able to work effectively to move the president's legislative agenda, but even one-party control is not a recipe for moving legislation through the system. Democrat Barack Obama struggled mightily to fashion congressional support for health-care policy changes amidst deeply held party divisions over how to structure and pay for reform. Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton (in his first two years) had comfortable House and Senate majorities but had limited success winning legislative approval for their major agenda items.

gridlock: The term given to legislative inaction, when members of Congress are unable to reach agreement and legislation stalls.

Today, President Trump has Republican majorities in the House and Senate, although the stability of this arrangement is likely to be tested by the deep divisions in the country that make this a particularly tricky time to govern. The atypical characteristics of the 2016 election raise questions about the ability of the current party system to address the demands of economic and social change. Anti-elite populist sentiment on both sides of the aisle is a sign of a restless electorate. Whether that suggests a long-term turn to Trump's populism of the right or something completely different, the stable party alignment of the past several decades occupies a precarious perch.

We've covered a lot of ground talking about 220 years of party history. Let's stop for a second and take a look at Figure 6.4, which summarizes the main points about partisan realignment and party systems. The majority party in each system is the one in blue type.

6.4 The Party in Government

L.O. Distinguish between the party in government and the party in the electorate.

"Do something!"

That's the cry heard for years from Americans frustrated with the inability of the federal government to make quick progress on important issues. But that doesn't mean we agree on the details of what should be done. Democrat Barack Obama was elected on a platform of change that included some huge promises—stabilizing the economy and ending the deepest recession since the 1930s, extending health-care coverage to uninsured Americans while bringing down health-care costs overall, combating global warming, improving public education—and his supporters expected that Democrats in Congress would work with him to move his agenda forward. But members of Congress have their own constituencies and their own views about how to approach these problems, leading to inevitable disagreement among congressional Democrats and between Congress and the president.

Some of these fault lines were evident even before Obama took the oath of office. The incoming president had asked Congress to prepare legislation designed to stimulate the economy, largely by using tax money to fund government projects that would quickly create jobs. His original plan was to have a bill ready for his signature on the day of his inaugural. But as Congress started work on the measure, disagreements quickly emerged on how much to spend and how to spend it. Some members worried about the size of the price tag, which could have exceeded one trillion dollars. Others wanted more money spent on tax relief and less on job creation. There were disagreements over which projects merited funding. The new president's insistence that the final product have bipartisan support further confounded a complex political situation.

Party System Number	Dates	Main Issue	Parties			Major Figure
1	1796–1824	Federalism	Federalists	vs.	Anti-Federalists (Democratic-Republicans)	Jefferson
2	1828–1856	Expansion	Whigs	vs.	Democrats	Jackson
3	1860–1892	Slavery/ reconstruction	Republicans	vs.	Democrats	Lincoln
4	1896–1928	Industrialization	Republicans	vs.	Democrats	McKinley
5	1932–1964	New Deal	Republicans	vs.	Democrats	F. D. Roosevelt
?	1968–present	(Dealignment?)	Republicans	vs.	Democrats	Reagan

Denotes majority party in each system

FIGURE 6.4 Party Systems

Spurred by a sense of urgency stemming from the crisis atmosphere of the moment, and buoyed by the support of a new president fresh off a significant electoral victory, Congress eventually passed a stimulus package—one month later than Obama had requested, containing less money than he desired and appropriating more of it for tax cuts than he had wished.

It was by all measures a legislative victory for the young administration, but it also served as an early warning sign of the hazards that lay ahead for a president with ambitious goals, despite the presence of large congressional majorities. That's because, from this first initiative, President Obama had marched headlong into the limitations of partisanship in our institutions of government. When we talk about the **party in government**, we're talking about an elite group: the members of the Republican and Democratic Parties who serve in our governing institutions. We can contrast this with what we call the **party in the electorate**, which involves all of us who through our party identification make up rank-and-file party membership.

party in government: That component of political parties composed of elected officials that organizes and runs our governing institutions like Congress, the presidency, state governorships and assemblies, and the like.

party in the electorate: Party identifiers who make up the rank-and-file membership of the political parties.

The party in government is an interesting and sometimes confounding entity. Remember, the Constitution established Congress and the presidency as institutions that would be filled by people who did not carry party labels. Nonetheless, both institutions are infused with partisanship. In Congress, party strength determines who runs the institution and who controls the agenda. Individual members, though, still have the freedom to go their own way, regardless of party membership. That's how Senator Jeffords' defection from the Republican party could upend President Bush's agenda and why Presidents Clinton and Carter were frustrated by members of Congress who shared a common party affiliation but not always common political interests.

6.4a How Parties in Government Function

Even when we don't have divided government, it can be difficult for members of the same party in Congress and the White House to work as one because of the way political parties function in government. They're flexible. They're not ideological. They're not **responsible parties**, which is simply to say that party leaders cannot impose an agenda

responsible parties: Political parties whose legislative members act in concert, taking clear positions on issues and voting as a unit in accordance with their stated positions.

GLOBAL TOPICS

Responsible Parties

In some countries, political parties act cohesively in the legislature. Great Britain is a good example. Candidates run for office on a party platform, and when in office, leaders of the majority party advance that platform with the unified support of its members. Leaders of the minority parties will also vote as a unit, forming a reliable opposition group.

The British system offers incentives for responsible party behavior that don't apply to the American system. The British prime minister is selected by the majority party in the House of Commons and remains in office only with the continuing support of a legislative majority. If the prime minister loses the support of the majority, the government falls. So, it's in the interest of members of the majority party to act in concert in order to maintain their majority status. Separation of powers and fixed terms of office in the American system do not give legislative parties in the United States the same incentive to unify, as legislative majority status is conferred by the voters every two years, whether or not members of a party vote together.[T12]

In theory, there are advantages to having responsible parties. Campaigns run around clearly articulated programs would accentuate the choices between the parties and provide voters with the information they need to base their vote on the kind of policy they want government to make. There would be no fudging or fuzziness to the candidate's positions of the sort that can complicate **issue voting** like we talked about in Chapter 4—what you see would be what you get. All candidates of a party would run on the same program and in office would be accountable to that program. The party winning the most seats in the legislature would therefore be expected to move ahead and implement its program, while the minority party would play the role of loyal opposition.

For these reasons, responsible parties have had their advocates in the United States. Over a half-century ago, the American Political Science Association issued a report in which it advocated responsible parties for the United States.[T13] Although responsible parties would present voters with clear policy choices and make it easier for elected officials to claim a mandate for action, the decentralization of American politics discourages the collective action necessary to make it happen.

In 1994, the Republican Party attempted to impose a responsible party model on its candidates in that year's congressional elections, organizing its congressional campaigns around a platform it called "The Contract with America." Republican candidates signed a document pledging that, if elected as a legislative majority, they would work collectively to implement a carefully articulated set of policies, what they called "a detailed agenda for national renewal." It included provisions for how the House would operate and listed ten bills that would be considered during the first one hundred days of the congressional session on such things as a constitutional amendment requiring a balanced budget, a crime bill, a welfare reform proposal, and congressional term limits.[T14]

The idea of coordinating congressional campaigns around a national party theme was novel: Congressional campaigns are typically waged independent of each other, revolving around local rather than national concerns. Nonetheless, Republican congressional candidates endorsed the "Contract with America" with the discipline you'd expect to find in a system that has responsible parties.

However, it can be difficult to maintain strict party discipline in a system that requires power sharing in all but the most exceptional political circumstances. For the last two years of President Obama's first term, House Republicans abided by the informal "Hastert rule," stating that only measures supported by a majority of the majority would come to the floor for a vote. Named for former Republican House Speaker Dennis Hastert, the rule was an attempt to prevent Democrats from joining with a handful of Republicans to pass legislation. Although good for maintaining discipline, the "Hastert rule" made governing impossible by precluding compromise with Senate Democrats and President Obama, even when action was urgent. Following President Obama's reelection, political pressures on Republicans to act on a set of looming fiscal issues became impossible to ignore. With taxes set to rise for all Americans on January 1, 2013, House Speaker John Boehner agreed to set aside the rule and let the House vote on a Senate proposal to permit taxes to go up only on income over $400,000. The measure passed with a minority of Republicans and an overwhelming number of Democrats, preventing the country from going over what journalists called the "fiscal cliff." Party unity was the price of compromise, proving that when it comes to responsible parties, the United States just isn't like Great Britain.

issue voting: Choosing a candidate in an election on the basis of his or her proximity to your position on an issue or issues you consider important.

on their members in the House or Senate, and legislators will not automatically heed the wishes of a president of their party. To say we do not have responsible parties in the United States is not to suggest that parties act irresponsibly; rather, it is to say that members of a party do not act as one unit as parties often do in parliamentary systems. Global Topics: Responsible Parties puts the American system in an international perspective.

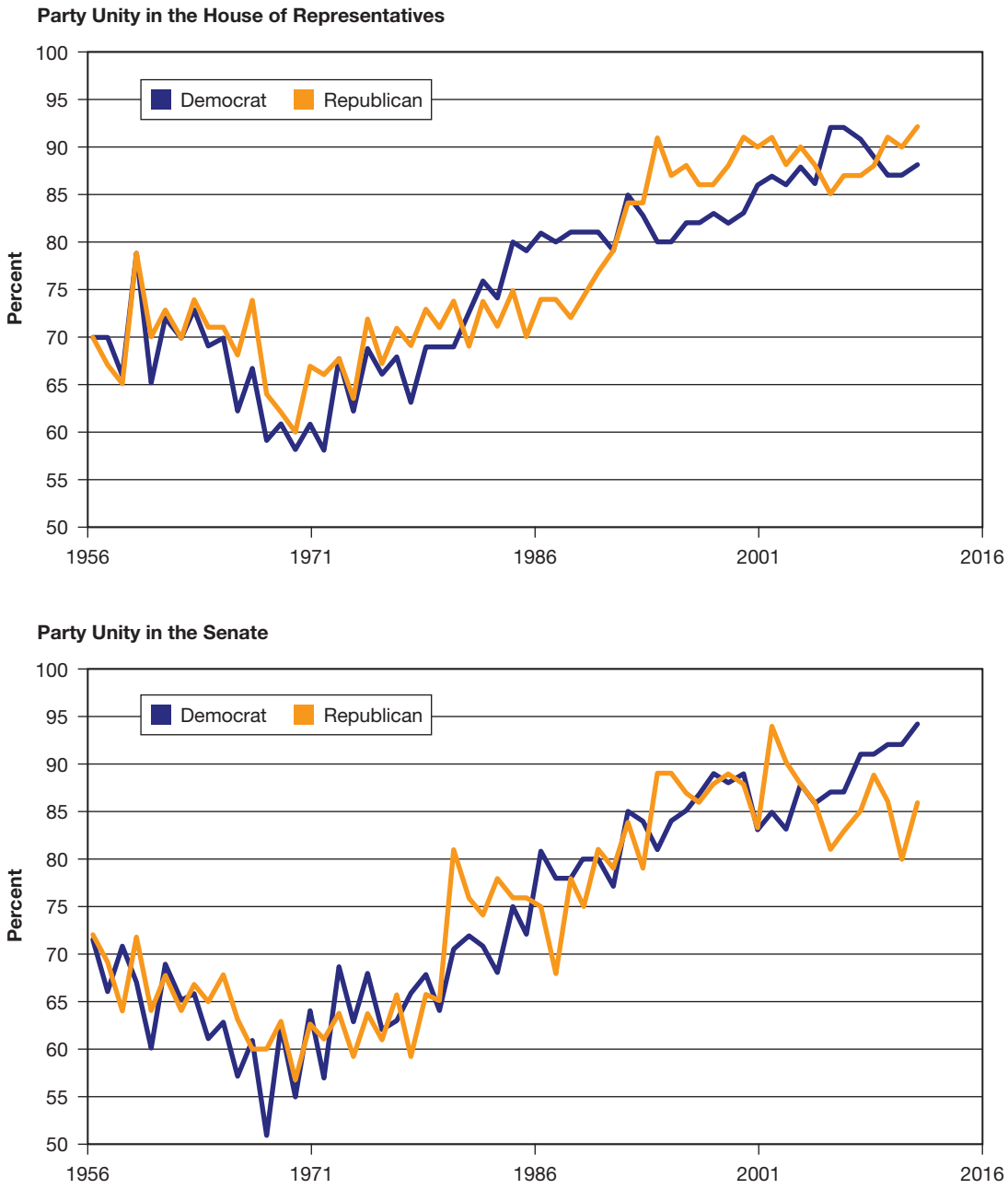

FIGURE 6.5 Party Unity in Congress, 1955–2013[T15]

Party unity among Democrats increased greatly in the 1980s, while Republicans became a very cohesive party when they took over Congress in 1995 following the "Contract with America" election. By the start of this century, Democrats and Republicans had become so unified in their voting that bipartisanship became difficult to attain.

Because our political parties are those large, catch-all groups we were talking about earlier, it shouldn't be surprising to find members of the same party disagreeing with each other and coming down on different sides of an issue. Perhaps the most pronounced example of this is southern Democrats, who are typically more conservative than the rest of their party and often vote their own way. In fact, you could say that when you take into account how broad-based the parties are and how hard it is for party leaders to impose discipline, it's remarkable how much party cohesion there is in Congress.

In recent years, Democrats and Republicans have been able to get large majorities of their members to stick together on votes where the parties take a position. As you can tell from the party unity scores in Figure 6.5, in the 1960s and 1970s, Republicans were somewhat more unified than Democrats as conservative southern Democrats crossed over to vote with Republicans. In the 1980s, during the Clinton administration, there was growing

polarization in the priorities of the parties, leading to greater internal cohesiveness in voting.[25] By 2003, partisanship had intensified to the point where *Congressional Quarterly* reported the most polarization in its five decades of keeping track of party unity scores.[26]

6.4b How Parties in Government Are Organized

Although party members may not always come together to vote on policy issues, they invariably speak with one voice when it comes to organizing the legislature. Parties organize the U.S. Congress and forty-nine of the fifty state legislatures, with the party holding the most seats commanding the power to set the rules (only Nebraska, which has a unicameral or one-house legislature, elects its representatives on a nonpartisan basis). We'll see in Chapter 9 how this gives majority party members many advantages if they can stay together and control the organizational process. So, when it comes to organizational matters, it's in everyone's interest to get with the program and vote along party lines.

Let's use the U.S. Congress as an example of how parties organize legislatures. Before the start of each two-year session of Congress, party members meet in groups closed to members of the other party (Democrats call their group a "caucus" and Republicans call their group a "conference"), to select their candidates for leadership positions in the coming session. It's understood that the candidates selected in caucus will receive the backing of all party members later on, when leadership votes are held in the full House or Senate. At that point, with individuals falling in line behind their party's choices, the party with the most seats will elect its candidates to positions in the majority, while the candidates of the other party will take their place as part of the minority leadership.

We'll also see in Chapter 9 that the leadership of the House of Representatives is vested in a Speaker of the House, who is selected on a party-line vote—essentially, as the top leadership choice of the majority party. In both the House and Senate, each party has a leader (majority leader or minority leader, depending on whether they are the majority or minority party), who plays an important role in assigning party members to committees, shaping and moving the legislative agenda, and campaigning and raising money for party members. There are also several "whips," who work to maintain as much party discipline as possible on legislative votes.[27]

Some leaders exercise power more strongly than others—for instance, Newt Gingrich went to great lengths to hold his fellow Republicans accountable for their actions when he was Speaker of the House—but in any event, the majority party exercises a lot more control over the legislature than the minority. This is particularly true in the House of Representatives, where the rules give the Speaker a lot of formal authority. Not surprisingly, this manner of organization produces a lot of competitive pressure within both parties to attain (or remain in) the majority.[28] The pressure was particularly intense in the early years of the century as the parties were so close in number that majority status remained within the reach of both.

6.5 The Party in the Electorate

political socialization: The process by which we acquire political knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs.

party identification: An individual's association with a political party. The most common parties Americans identify with are the two major parties, Republican and Democrat. Party identification—also called party I.D.—varies in intensity such that it may be strong or weak. Those who do not identify with any party are typically called independents.

Are you a Democrat? A Republican? If so, do you have your party membership card stored carefully in your pocketbook or wallet?

Can't find it? Don't spend too much time looking. There are no membership cards for American political parties, just like there are no meetings to attend and no dues to pay. You can be a Republican simply by virtue of identifying with Republicans, a Democrat with no more effort than it takes to think, "I guess I'm a Democrat." In some states, when you register to vote, you may be asked if you want to register with a party so you can participate in that party's primary election contests (we'll go into more detail on this in Chapter 7). But you can change your registration any time you want, and you can consider yourself a party member without ever registering.

When we talked about **political socialization** in Chapter 4, we said that **party identification** was the most well-socialized political phenomenon and that many of us hold to our party affiliation in a manner similar to the way many people are attached to a religious

affiliation. This gives party identification a psychological component unrelated to whatever policy agreements we may have with the party we call our own. Through these associations, be they emotional or policy-based, we align ourselves with a party and become a small portion of that party's base of support. In effect, we are the party in the electorate—any of us who wish to claim allegiance to a political party, for whatever reason.

Now, there's a connection between us—the party in the electorate—and the party in government, inasmuch as party supporters typically want their candidates to succeed politically, or to have an effect on public policy making, or both. The extent to which the electorate acts on these wishes often depends on how much the electorate is motivated or mobilized. The composition of the party in government depends on how much we indulge our partisan instincts through the kinds of political participation we talked about in Chapter 4—contributing funds, campaigning, or voting for members of our party.

6.5a Who Makes Up the Party in the Electorate?

Because we don't have to declare our partisan allegiances, the composition of the Democratic and Republican Parties in the electorate will shift and change. Nonetheless, there are differences in the relative attachments of various groups of Americans to the two parties. Republicans are more likely to be older, white, southern, less well educated, and religious. Democrats tend to be younger, ethnically diverse, well educated, and secular (see Figure 6.6).

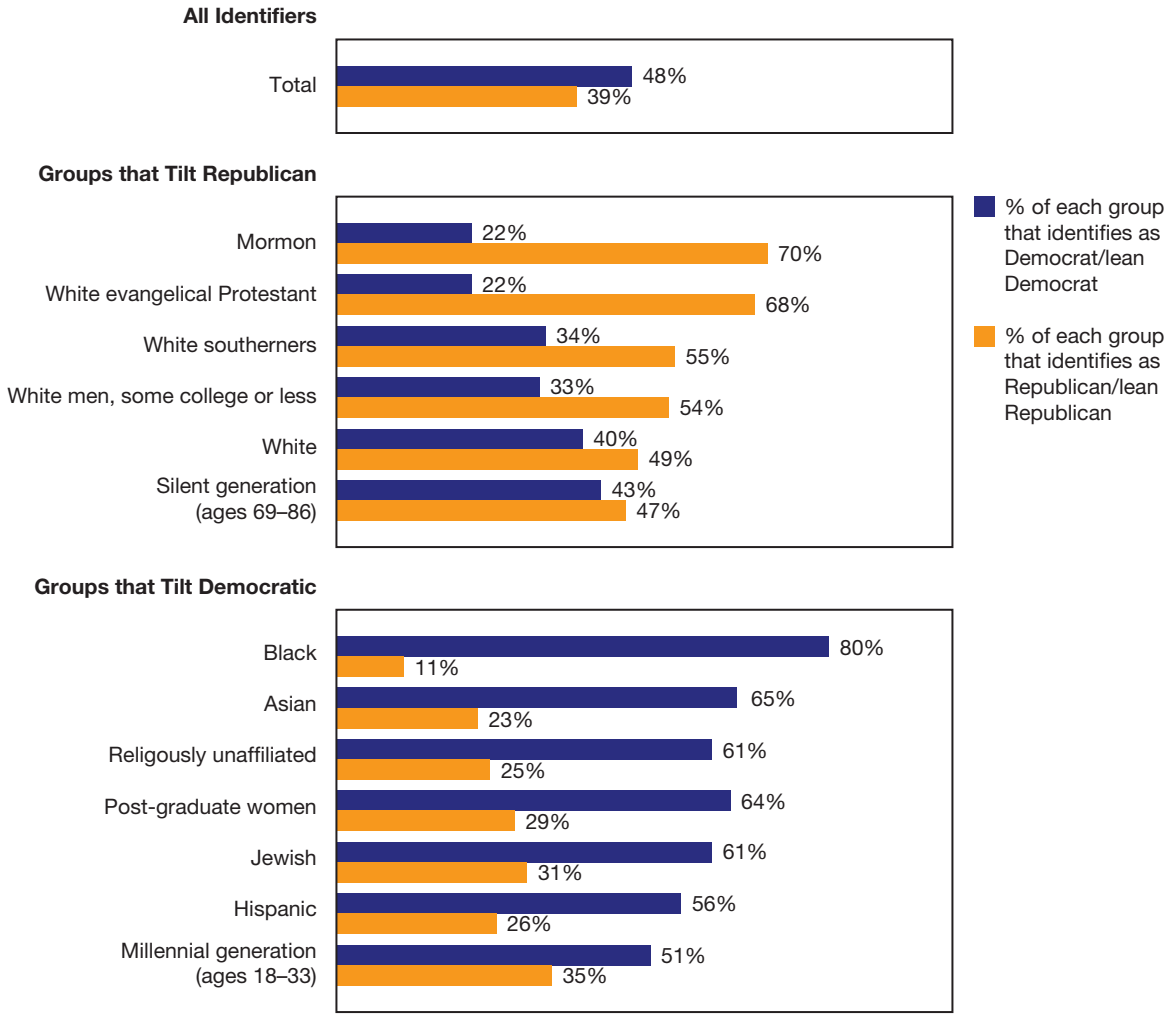

FIGURE 6.6 Democrats and Republicans in the Electorate[T16]

6.5b How Are Political Parties Organized to Reach the Electorate?

As much as party organizations inside the legislature are structured and hierarchical, party organizations that don't perform a legislative function are more decentralized. Instead of imagining a singular, cohesive, national Republican or Democratic Party, try to picture each party with several national organizations, fifty statewide organizations, and lots of local organizations, connected to each other but not organized from top to bottom. Each has a slightly different perspective on the same goal: electing Republicans or Democrats to office. From the standpoint of what they're about, party organizations outside the legislature are concerned with contesting elections—getting us to the polls to vote for their candidates—not with governing or advancing legislation. They share political interests with the party in government, but they operate separately.

Nationally, each party has three organizations: a national committee (the Democratic National Committee, or DNC, and the Republican National Committee, or RNC), run by a national committee chair, and House and Senate campaign committees.

political machines: The name given to urban political parties that used patronage to overrun their competition and maintain power.

patronage: Jobs, favors, and other resources that party officials provide in exchange for people's political support.

The national committees govern the national parties and include among their members representatives from the state parties. The party that controls the White House typically finds that the president exercises a great deal of control over the actions of the committee, from selecting the chair to setting the goals and objectives for the national party. The party that is not in the White House typically finds that the national chair is an important force in establishing the direction of the party and laying the groundwork to contest the next national election.[29]

DEMYSTIFYING GOVERNMENT

"Only Vote 'Em Once"

While national parties have grown in strength, local parties have become far weaker than they were early in the twentieth century, when some were so strong that they overpowered free democratic competition. In many cities, party organizations were **political machines** run by party bosses who controlled electoral competition by controlling **patronage**, or favors that were doled out to political supporters.[T17] The image of a machine might bring to mind a smoothly running vehicle with many component parts, and that's pretty much the way party machines operated. Cities were divided into small districts or wards, each with its leader responsible for dispensing patronage.

Here's how it worked: At a time when cities were flooded with immigrants, party leaders through their connections and control of public services could provide jobs, make sure tenement apartments had heat in the winter, and supply a host of other necessary services to poor constituents who had nowhere else to turn for help. In exchange, they were asked to support the party—a fairly easy price to pay when you're cold and hungry.

So, in one respect, political machines used the resources of government to supply social services. In another respect, they were thoroughly corrupt, ensuring through patronage that there would be no competition against them. If, to maintain control, the names of deceased people happened to appear in the voting logs prepared to support the machine candidates in the next election, who was going to complain? There's an old (and not particularly funny) joke about two machine politicians who, while looking at names on headstones in a cemetery, came across some particularly long names that they planned to copy down and have "vote" for machine candidates in the next election. One politician blurted out that the names were so long, they could vote them twice, to which his companion replied, "Let's be honest. Only vote 'em once."

Of course, there was nothing honest about it, even though the political machines were providing people with resources they needed. If you think back to Chapter 2, when we said that in order to maintain liberty, the Federalists created an inefficient system where factions would keep each other in check, you might recognize that just the opposite happened with the highly efficient political machines that denied people the liberty of free political competition. Madison argued that, in a big country, it would be difficult for one faction to dominate politics, but such was not the case in relatively small cities.

Party machines began to decline as they lost exclusive control of the resources needed for patronage. As the federal government began to turn its attention to social welfare needs during the New Deal and Great Society eras, it claimed control of the resources that machines needed to function.[T18] Patronage still exists at all levels of politics, but political machines are largely a thing of the past.

As the main national organization for their respective parties, the DNC and RNC are responsible for arranging their party's national convention. However, the parties only meet in convention once every four years, for the purpose of nominating a presidential and vice-presidential candidate. On a more regular basis, the national committees are responsible for raising money for campaigns, establishing the guidelines for nominating presidential candidates, and helping state parties recruit candidates, develop campaign strategies, and build their organizations (you can probably imagine how the state parties perform parallel functions to the national committees). On the fund-raising front, the national committees are joined by the four congressional committees—the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC) and Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC), which raise money for House candidates, and the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee (DSCC) and National Republican Senatorial Committee (NRSC), which do the same for Senate candidates.[30]

For a long time, national party organizations were weak, victims of campaigns that had become candidate-centered. With the growth of television as a central campaign tool, the locus of campaigning shifted from the national committees to the candidates and their personal campaign organizations. As we'll see in Chapter 7, political consultants, hired by the candidates to run campaigns and direct fund-raising techniques, made the national party organizations less important to candidates. In recent years, the national party organizations have rebounded, owing in large part to the ability of the national parties to provide candidates with resources like political information and technical knowledge, and as they became more proficient in raising money, they became stronger and more relevant.[31] Demystifying Government: "Only Vote 'Em Once" discusses the concurrent declining role of local parties. We'll get a deeper sense of how parties operate as we take a closer look at political campaigns and elections, the subject we'll discuss in Chapter 7.

Chapter Review

Define political parties.

Political parties are organized groups that link us to government through the role they play in recruiting and running candidates for elected office. We have two major parties in the United States; many nations have more than that.

Explain why America's two-party system is consistent with its electoral mechanisms and public opinion.

A two-party system is consistent with our electoral mechanisms that award representation on a winner-take-all basis to the plurality vote winner of an election. Election laws and the moderate tendencies of American public opinion also encourage two parties, although they are broad parties made up of groups that sometimes disagree.

Identify third parties as either ideological, single-issue, or splinter parties, and explain why they rarely compete successfully for elected offices.

When these disagreements become pronounced, a faction might temporarily leave and form a splinter party that competes as a third party against the Democrats and Republicans. Typically, one of the major parties is able to capture the allegiance of the disaffected faction in a future election, and the third party disappears. Third parties built around an ideology or single issue endure from election to election but rarely win public office.

Define the term *party system*, and identify the key characteristics of the five party systems that have arisen since parties emerged in the late eighteenth century.

Since parties emerged in the late eighteenth century, we have had five party systems in which two parties have faced each other in regular competition. Each party system gave way to a new one when a major issue arose that shattered the prevailing party coalitions, causing a realignment to a new party system following a critical election.

Identify the relationship between realignments and the demise of party systems.

Explain why the post-1960s political era may be understood as a period of dealignment.

The most recent realignment coincided with the emergence of the fifth party system under the leadership of the Democratic Party during the Great Depression, but since the 1960s, some observers say we've witnessed a period of dealignment characterized by weak party ties, more independent voters, and divided government.

Distinguish between the party in government and the party in the electorate.

We can understand political parties by distinguishing between the party in government and the party in the electorate. The party in government is composed of elected

officials who serve in government, and our legislative branch is organized around parties, with the majority party controlling leadership positions and exercising great influence over the legislative agenda. Even though party leaders often have an agenda, party members do not always follow it because we do not have responsible parties that would obligate members to vote the party line. The party in the electorate is composed of those of us who identify as Democrats or Republicans, although American parties do not require formal membership.

Key Terms

coalition A government formed as a partnership among several victorious parties in a multiparty system, following negotiations about the agenda that each party will be allowed to pursue in exchange for its participation in the new government. (p. 169)

coattails The ability of a victorious presidential candidate to sweep congressional candidates of the same party into office on the strength of people voting for one political party. (p. 182)

critical election An election that heralds a realignment, during which large numbers of voters deviate from their traditional party allegiances in what turns out to be a lasting change. (p. 173)

dealignment The weakening of party affiliation, signified by an increase in the number of people who call themselves independents. (p. 180)

divided government Partisan division of the national government, in which each of the two major parties can claim control of one branch (or one legislative house) of the federal government. (p. 181)

electorate The portion of the public eligible to vote in elections. (p. 164)

faction A group of individuals who are united by a desire that, if realized, would threaten the liberty of the larger community—in James Madison's words, individuals who are "united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community." A faction may be defined by size, such as when a majority of citizens threatens the liberty of the minority, or by intensity, such as when a minority of citizens with intensely held preferences threatens the liberty of a disinterested majority. (p. 173)

Fair Deal The name given to the domestic policies of President Truman, which built on the popularity of the New Deal. (p. 178)

gender gap A difference in the voting pattern of men and women, evident since 1980, whereby men are more likely than women to support Republican presidential candidates. (p. 181)

Great Society The name given to the programs of President Lyndon B. Johnson, which elevated the federal government to the most prominent role it would play in the twentieth century. The philosophy of the Great Society was that government should try to solve large social problems like hunger and poverty. (p. 178)

gridlock The term given to legislative inaction, when members of Congress are unable to reach agreement and legislation stalls. (p. 182)

ideological parties Third parties that form around a broad ideology not represented by the two major American parties. They endure from election to election despite the fact that they rarely achieve electoral success. (p. 170)

interest aggregation The process by which groups with different and potentially conflicting agendas are brought together under the umbrella of a political party. (p. 169)

issue voting Choosing a candidate in an election on the basis of his or her proximity to your position on an issue or issues you consider important. (p. 184)

majority Winning more than half the votes in an election, or 50 percent plus one. (p. 165)

multimember district The structure of electoral districts in proportional representation systems, in which each electoral district sends several representatives to the legislature. (p. 165)

multiparty system Political systems in which more than two parties have a realistic chance to win representation in government. (p. 165)

New Deal The name given to the programs of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, which vastly expanded the role of the federal government in an effort to deal with the debilitating effects of the Great Depression on American society. (p. 178)

New Deal coalition The political coalition composed of urbanites, ethnic and racial minorities, unions, liberals, and southerners that made the Democratic Party the majority party during the fifth party system. (p. 178)

party identification An individual's association with a political party. The most common parties Americans identify with are the two major parties, Republican and Democrat. Party identification—also called party I.D.—varies in intensity such that it may be strong or weak. Those who do not identify with any party are typically called independents. (p. 186)

party in government That component of political parties composed of elected officials that organizes and runs our governing institutions like Congress, the presidency, state governorships and assemblies, and the like. (p. 183)

party in the electorate Party identifiers who make up the rank-and-file membership of the political parties. (p. 183)

party system The regular, over-time competition of the same major political parties, composed of the same groups of identifiers. (p. 173)

patronage Jobs, favors, and other resources that party officials provide in exchange for people's political support. (p. 188)

plurality Winning the most votes in an election, or at least one more vote than the next closest candidate or party. (p. 165)

political machines The name given to urban political parties that used patronage to overrun their competition and maintain power. (p. 188)

political party An organized group of individuals with common interests seeking to gain power in government by electing officials to public office. (p. 164)

political socialization The process by which we acquire political knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs. (p. 186)

proportional representation Electoral systems that encourage the participation of many parties by awarding representation on the basis of the share of the vote won by each party in an electoral district. (p. 165)

realignment A shift from one party system to another, the result of a lasting, long-term adjustment in the groups that identify with the major political parties. (p. 173)

Reform Party The organization built by businessman Ross Perot in a mostly unsuccessful attempt to create a competitive third party. (p. 172)

responsible parties Political parties whose legislative members act in concert, taking clear positions on issues and voting as a unit in accordance with their stated positions. (p. 183)

single-issue parties Third parties that form to advance a specific issue agenda, like environmentalism, that members feel is not being adequately addressed by the two major American parties. They endure from election to election despite the fact that they rarely achieve electoral success. (p. 170)

single-member district The structure of electoral districts in winner-take-all electoral systems, in which each electoral district sends only one representative to the legislature. (p. 166)

splinter parties Third parties that split away from one of the major parties in protest against the direction taken by the Republicans or Democrats. They often form around a charismatic leader and last a short time, after which the major parties address their concerns, and they lose their reason to continue. (p. 170)

ticket splitting Voting for candidates of different parties for different offices, rather than voting a "party line" for all Republicans or all Democrats. Ticket splitting, which has increased in recent years, is a sign of how Americans have been growing independent from political parties. (p. 181)

two-party system A political system, like ours in the United States, in which only two parties have a realistic chance to win most elections. (p. 165)

tyranny The denial of liberty to individuals through the actions of a faction or through the actions of government itself. (p. 173)

winner-take-all system The electoral system in use in the United States, whereby the candidate of the party receiving the most votes in an electoral district gets to represent that district. (p. 165)

Resources

You might be interested in examining some of what the following authors have said about the topics we've been discussing:

Hershey, Marjorie R. *Party Politics in America*, 14th ed. New York: Longman, 2010. This is a good source if you're looking for a comprehensive overview of American parties and party systems.

Hetherington, Mark J., and Bruce A. Larson. *Parties, Politics, and Public Policy in America*, 11th ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2009. Like *Party Politics in America* by Marjorie Hershey, a good, comprehensive overview of political parties.

Maisel, L. Sandy, ed. *The Parties Respond: Changes in American Parties and Campaigns*, 4th ed. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2002. A recommended assortment of essays assessing the role and status of contemporary political parties.

Rosenstone, Steven J., Roy L. Behr, and Edward H. Lazarus. *Third Parties in America: Citizen Response to Major Party Failure*, 2nd ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996. A thorough review of third parties and third-party voting from the nineteenth century through Ross Perot.

Sundquist, James L. *Dynamics of the Party System: Alignment and Realignment of Political Parties in the United States*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1983. A good place to turn for a descriptive and theoretical discussion of party realignments in American history.

Wattenberg, Martin P. *The Decline of American Political Parties*, 1952–1996. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996. An interesting source to turn to on the phenomenon of dealignment.

Notes

1 Leon D. Epstein, *Political Parties in Western Democracies* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1980), 9.

2. William J. Keefe, *Parties, Politics, and Public Policy in America*, 8th ed. (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1998), 60.

3 Steven J. Rosenstone, Roy L. Behr, and Edward H. Lazarus, *Third Parties in America: Citizen Response to Major Party Failure* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 21.

4 Liz Mariantes, "Karl Rove Take on the Tea Party. Is a GOP Civil War Looming?" *Christian Science Monitor*, February 4, 2013.

5 See Theodore J. Lowi, *The End of the Republican Era* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995); Richard S. Katz and Peter Mair, eds., *Party Organizations* (London: Sage Publications, 1992), 871–876; Steven B. Wolinetz, ed., *Parties and Party Systems in Liberal Democracies* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 272–279.

6 Epstein, *Political Parties*, 283.

7 Rosenstone, et al., *Third Parties in America*, 88–92. If you're interested in the positions of a few ideological parties, and want to know more about the issues that concern them, check out the websites for the U.S. Communist Party at http://www.cpusa.org/; the U.S. Socialist Party at http://sp-usa.org/; the U.S. Green Party at http://www.gp.org/; and the U.S. Libertarian Party at http://www.lp.org/.

8 For the political junkies among us, if the name Strom Thurmond sounds familiar, it's because the "Dixiecrat" who ran for president in 1948 is the same Strom Thurmond who retired from the Senate in 2003 at the age of 100. First elected to the Senate in 1954, he switched parties and became a Republican in 1964.

9 James L. Sundquist, *Dynamics of the Party System* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1983), 1–18.

10 You can read the full text of Washington's farewell address at the U.S. Department of State website, http://www.state.gov/usa/infousa/facts/democrac/49.htm.

11 Larry J. Sabato, *The Party's Just Begun: Shaping Political Parties for America's Future* (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, 1988), 32–33.

12 Ibid.

13 If you'd like to read a brief but interesting biography of Andrew Jackson, you can find one at the White House website, http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/andrewjackson.

14 Paul Allen Beck, *Party Politics in America*, 8th ed. (New York: Longman, 1997), 23.

15 Sundquist, *Dynamics of the Party System*, 50–105.

16 The modern-day Republican Party rightfully claims to be the party of Lincoln, tracing its roots to the election of 1860.

17 Sundquist, *Dynamics of the Party System*, 106–146.

18 Ibid., 146–169.

19 Ibid., 198–214.

20 Sabato, *The Party's Just Begun*, 34.

21 Sundquist, *Dynamics of the Party System*, 412–449.

22 Danielle Paquette, "The Unexpected Voters behind the Widest Gender Gap in Recorded Election History," *Washington Post*, November 9, 2016. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/11/09/men-handed-trump-the-election/?utm_term=.e6f93a93a5a1.

23 Martin P. Wattenberg, *The Decline of American Political Parties: 1952–1992* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 162–167.

24 Beck, *Party Politics in America*, 321–322.

25 Isaiah J. Poole, "Party Unity Vote Study: Votes Echo Electoral Themes," *Congressional Quarterly*, December 11, 2004.

26 Responsible parties have had their advocates in the United States. Over a half-century ago, the American Political Science Association advocated responsible parties for the United States in a report called "Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System," *American Political Science Review* 44:3 (1950); online at http://www.apsanet.org/~pop/APSA_Report.htm.

27 For a more detailed account of the leadership positions in each house, by party, as well as the names and backgrounds of the current occupants of these positions, go to The Congressional Institute website at http://www.conginst.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=55&Itemid=, and click on any of the four boxes on the right-hand part of the screen (House Republican Leadership Positions; House Democratic Leadership Positions; Senate Democratic Leadership Positions; Senate Republican Leadership Positions).

28 Keefe, *Parties, Politics, and Public Policy*, 218–236; and Beck, *Party Politics in America*, 305–311.

29 Beck, *Party Politics in America*, 85–91.

30 Paul S. Herrnson, "National Party Organizations at the Century's End," in L. Sandy Maisel, ed., *The Parties Respond*, 3rd ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), 50–82.

31 Ibid.

Table, Figure, and Box Notes

T1 William J. Keefe, *Parties, Politics, and Public Policy in America* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 1998), 60.

T2 Steven J. Rosenstone, Roy L. Behr, and Edward H. Lazarus, *Third Parties in America: Citizen Response to Major Party Failure* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 231–268.

T3 Information Services Branch of the State Library of North Carolina, Andrew Jackson, at http://statelibrary.dcr.state.nc.us/nc/bio/public/jackson.htm; Leonard W. Levy and Louis Fisher (eds.), *Encyclopedia of the American Presidency* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994); H. W. Brands, *Andrew Jackson: His Life and Times* (New York: Doubleday, 2005); Donald B. Cole, *The Presidency of Andrew Jackson* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas Press, 1993); Sean Wilentz, *Andrew Jackson* (New York: Times Books, 2005).

T4 Speer Memorial Library, Williams Jennings Bryan: Biographical Resources, at http://www.mission.lib.tx.us/exhibits/bryan/resource/bio/time.htm; Leonard W. Levy and Louis Fisher (eds.), *Encyclopedia of the American Presidency* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994); Robert W. Cherny, *A Righteous Cause: The Life of William Jennings Bryan* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994); Michael Kazin, *William Jennings Bryan: A Godly Hero* (New York: Knopf, 2006).

T5 Everett Walters, William McKinley Biographical Resources, at http://www.ohiohistory.org/onlinedoc/ohgovernment/governors/mckinley.html; Leonard W. Levy and Louis Fisher (eds.), *Encyclopedia of the American Presidency* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994); H. Wayne Morgan, *William McKinley and His America* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2003); Kevin Philips, *William McKinley* (New York: Times Books, 2003).

T6 Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum, at http://hoover.archives.gov/education/chronology.html; Leonard W. Levy and Louis Fisher (eds.), *Encyclopedia of the American Presidency* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994); George H. Nash, *The Life of Herbert Hoover* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1983); Joan Hoff Wilson. *Herbert Hoover: Forgotten Progressive* (Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland Press, 1992).

T7 Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, Franklin D. Roosevelt Biography, at http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/fdrbio.html; Leonard W. Levy and Louis Fisher (eds.), *Encyclopedia of the American Presidency* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994); Roy Jenkins, *Franklin Delano Roosevelt* (New York: Times Books, 2003); George McJimsey, *The Presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2000); Allan M. Winkler, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Making of Modern America* (New York: Pearson/Longman, 2006).

T8 Truman Presidential Museum and Library, Biographical Sketch, at http://www.trumanlibrary.org/hst-bio.htm; Leonard W. Levy and Louis Fisher (eds.), *Encyclopedia of the American Presidency* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994); Robert H. Ferrell, *Harry S Truman: A Life* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1994); Alonzo L. Hamby, *Man of the People: A Life of Harry S Truman* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); David McCullough, *Truman* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992).

T9 Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library & Museum, at http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/ddebio.htm; Leonard W. Levy and Louis Fisher (eds.), *Encyclopedia of the American Presidency* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994); Peter G. Boyle, *Eisenhower* (New York: Pearson/Longman, 2005); Geoffrey Perret, *Eisenhower* (New York: Random House, 1999); Tom Wicker, *Dwight D. Eisenhower* (New York: Times Books, 2002).

T10 Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum, President Lyndon B. Johnson's Biography at http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/biographys.hom/lbj_bio.asp; Leonard W. Levy and Louis Fisher (eds.), *Encyclopedia of the American Presidency* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994); Thomas W. Cowger and Sherwin J. Markman (eds.), *Lyndon Johnson Remembered: An Intimate Portrait of a Presidency* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003); Robert Dallek, *Lone Star Rising: Lyndon Johnson and His Times*, 1908–1960 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Irwin Unger and Debi Unger, *LBJ: A Life* (New York: Wiley, 1999).

T11 Data from American National Election Studies, at http://www.electionstudies.org/nesguide/toptable/tab2a_1.htm. The American National Election Studies, Center for Political Studies, University of Michigan. Electronic resources from the NES World Wide Web site (http://www.electionstudies.org). Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, Center for Political Studies [producer and distributor], 1995–2012. These materials are based on work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant Nos.: SBR-9707741, SBR-9317631, SES-9209410, SES-9009379, SES-8808361, SES-8341310, SES-8207580, and SOC77-08885. Any opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in these materials are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the National Science Foundation.

T12 Paul Allen Beck, *Party Politics in America*, 8th ed. (New York: Longman, 1997), 303.

T13 Responsible parties have had their advocates in the United States. Over a half-century ago, the American Political Science Association issued a report in which it advocated responsible parties for the U.S. The report is called "Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System." It can be found in the *American Political Science Review* 44:3 (1950).

T14 You can read the full text of the Republican proposals at http://www.house.gov/house/Contract/CONTRACT.html.

T15 Congressional Quarterly, CQ Roll Call's Vote Studies—2013 In Review, February 3, 2014, http://media.cq.com/votestudies/.

T16 "A Deep Dive into Party Affiliation," Pew Research Center, April 7, 2015, http://www.people-press.org/2015/04/07/a-deep-dive-into-party-affiliation/.

T17 Martin and Susan Tolchin, *To The Victor: Political Patronage from the Clubhouse to the White House* (New York: Random House, 1971), 5.

T18 John F. Bibby, "State Party Organizations: Coping and Adapting to Candidate-Centered Politics and Nationalization," in L. Sandy Maisel, ed., *The Parties Respond*, 3rd ed., 23–49.