



AP Photo

Photo 2.1 Before widespread air travel, candidates relied on whistle-stop tours conducted from a campaign train. Here, Harry S. Truman and his wife speak to a crowd in Philadelphia before his come-from-behind victory in the 1948 presidential election.

Just as the president is the focal point of public life for most Americans, it follows that the presidential election is the country's pivotal political event. More citizens participate in this process than in any other aspect of civic life—nearly 137 million in 2016—and their choices have enormous significance for the nation and, indeed, for the world. Historians break history into four-year blocks of time coinciding with presidential terms, and U.S. policymaking follows the same rhythm. The election is usually a unifying event, a collective celebration of democracy coming at the conclusion of an elaborate pageant replete with familiar rituals, colorful characters, and plot lines that capture attention despite being familiar. Each iteration includes some controversies, and 2016 had far more than usual.

Today's selection process bears little resemblance to what the founders outlined in the Constitution. Most of the changes have been extraconstitutional—that is, they have resulted from the evolution of political parties, media practices, and citizen expectations rather than constitutional amendments. There has been almost constant tinkering with the rules governing presidential elections, with most changes producing greater democratization. However, remnants of the constitution's original **indirect democracy** persist, including the means used to select delegates to the party nominating conventions and voters in the Electoral College. The 2000 and 2016 elections, when George W. Bush and Donald J. Trump won in the Electoral College but lost the popular vote, renewed the debate about election rules. Bush won all of Florida's electoral votes by winning 537 more popular votes out of nearly 6 million ballots. It took thirty-six days to settle the contest while Americans relearned the arcane workings of the Electoral College and discovered the fallibility of the state's voting methods and counting rules. In contrast, Bush's reelection victory in 2004 was clear-cut, as were Barack Obama's in 2008 and 2012. Trump won in 2016 because of 78,000 votes in three states, but he lost the national popular vote by nearly three million, once again triggering questions about the method Americans use to select their national executive. Overshadowing that debate, however, was the question of whether Russia had influenced the outcome of the election. The nation's intelligence community concluded in January 2017 that the Russians had, indeed, undertaken such an effort. Former FBI director Robert Mueller then investigated whether the Trump campaign had conspired with the Russians.

At the conclusion of this chapter, we review recommendations for reform intended to improve system performance and provide for a greater degree of direct democracy. We first examine the major transformations in the nomination and general election phases of the process.

Evolution of the Selection Process

In 1789 and 1792, electing a president was simple. Each member of the Electoral College cast two votes, one of which had to be for a person outside the elector's state. Both times George Washington was elected by unanimous votes.¹ And both times John Adams received the second highest number of votes to become the vice president. In 1789, the process took three months: No one campaigned, electors were chosen on the first Wednesday of January, they met in their respective states to vote on the first Wednesday in February, and the votes were counted on April 6. In 1792, the procedure took even less time. The contrast with today's process could not be sharper: Candidates now launch nomination campaigns two years or more before the general election, collectively spending a billion dollars

or more in pursuit of the office, and everyone expects to know the winner on election night.

Consensus support for Washington ensured smooth operation of the selection procedure during the first two elections: There was widespread confidence that the nation's wartime hero would govern in the interest of all the people. When the nation's political consensus eroded, elites developed a separate nomination procedure. Policy differences in Congress created the basis for an important institution not mentioned in the Constitution—the political party. By the early 1790s, the Federalist Party had formed around the economic policies of Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton, and his supporters in Congress backed his programs.² Resigning as secretary of state in 1793, Thomas Jefferson joined James Madison, then serving in the House of Representatives, as a critic of Hamilton's policies, and they formed the rival Republican Party, which came to be known as the Democratic-Republican Party.³ By the mid-1790s, cohesive pro- and anti-administration blocs had formed in Congress, and congressional candidates were labeled either Democratic-Republicans or Federalists.⁴

Political parties had an almost immediate impact on the Electoral College. Electors became party loyalists, whose discipline was apparent in 1800, when Jefferson, the Democratic-Republicans' candidate for president, and Aaron Burr, the party's candidate for vice president, tied in the Electoral College vote. Loyal to their party, the electors had cast their ballots for both candidates, but the Constitution had no provision for counting the ballots separately for president and vice president. Jefferson and Burr each received seventy-three votes to President Adams's sixty-five. The House of Representatives decided the election, where Jefferson won after thirty-six ballots. Hamilton broke the tie by throwing his support behind Jefferson, his longtime rival. Party loyalty, with infrequent exceptions, has prevailed in Electoral College balloting ever since. (The Twelfth Amendment to the Constitution, ratified in 1804, provided for separate presidential and vice presidential balloting.⁵)

The rise of parties also altered presidential selection by creating a separate nomination stage: The parties had to devise a method for choosing their nominees. Influence over presidential selection shifted from the local notables who had served as electors to party elites. In 1796, the Federalists' leaders chose their candidate, John Adams, and the Democratic-Republicans relied on their party members in Congress, the **congressional caucus**, to nominate Jefferson. Four years later, the congressional caucus became the nominating mechanism for both parties, a practice that continued until 1824, when the system broke down.

The caucus system meant that a party's members of Congress, already assembled in the nation's capital and facing minimal transportation problems, selected a nominee. Because legislators were familiar with potential presidential candidates from all parts of the new country, they were

the logical agents for choosing candidates for an office with a nationwide constituency. Caucuses provided peer review of candidates' credentials: Essentially, a group of politicians assessed a fellow politician's skills, abilities, and political appeal. But the congressional caucus violated the constitutional principle of separation of powers by giving members of the legislative body a routine role in choosing the president rather than an emergency role, assumed only in the event of an Electoral College deadlock. The caucus also could not represent areas in which the party had lost the previous congressional election, a problem quickly encountered by the Federalists, whose support was largely limited to New England. Moreover, interested and informed citizens who participated in grassroots party activities, especially campaigns, had no means to participate in congressional caucus deliberations.

The 1824 election brought an end to nomination by congressional caucus. First, the Democratic-Republicans in Congress insisted on nominating Secretary of the Treasury William Crawford, who had recently suffered a debilitating stroke. Then, in the general election, Andrew Jackson, nominated by the Tennessee legislature, won more popular votes and more electoral votes than any other candidate but failed to achieve a majority in the Electoral College. The election again was decided by the House, where John Quincy Adams emerged victorious after he agreed to make Henry Clay, another of the five contestants, secretary of state in return for his support. These shenanigans permanently discredited *King Caucus*, as its critics called it. Favorite sons nominated by state legislatures and state conventions dominated the 1828 campaign, but this method proved too decentralized to select a national official. A device was needed that would represent party elements throughout the country, tap the new participatory fervor, and facilitate the nomination of a candidate.

National Party Conventions

What developed was the **party nominating convention**, an assembly made truly national by including delegates from all the states. Rail transportation made such meetings feasible, and the expanding citizen participation in presidential elections made the change necessary. Influence over selection of the party nominee, therefore, shifted to state and local party leaders, particularly those able to commit large blocs of delegate votes to a candidate.

Two minor parties with no appreciable representation in Congress, the Anti-Masons and the National Republicans, led the way with conventions in 1831.⁶ To rally support in 1832, the Democrats, under President Andrew Jackson (elected in 1828), also held a convention. Major political parties have nominated their presidential and vice presidential candidates by holding national conventions ever since. National committees composed

of state party leaders call the presidential nominating conventions into session to choose nominees and to adopt a platform of common policy positions.⁷ Delegates are selected by states and allocated primarily on the basis of population.

Although today's conventions in some ways resemble those of the past, the nomination process has undergone drastic revision, especially after 1968, when Democrats introduced reforms that diminished the conventions' importance. Just as influence over selection of the party nominee shifted from Congress to party leaders, it has moved within the party from a small group of organization professionals to a broad base of activists and voters. The origins of this shift can be traced to the development of presidential primary elections that began early in the twentieth century. (Florida passed the first primary election law in 1901.)

Under the system that operated from roughly 1850 to 1950, party leaders from the largest states could bargain over presidential nominations. Most influential were those who controlled large blocs of delegates and would throw their support behind a candidate for the right price. These power brokers—hence the term **brokered conventions**—might seek a program commitment in the platform, a position in the president's cabinet, or other forms of federal patronage in return for support. To be successful, candidates had to curry favor with party and elected officials before and during the national convention. An effective campaign manager might tour the country selling the candidate's virtues and securing delegate commitments prior to the convention, but about half the conventions began with no sense of the likely outcome. Protracted bargaining and negotiation among powerful state and local party leaders were often the result. In 1924, the Democrats were badly divided over the role of the Ku Klux Klan and needed 103 ballots cast over seventeen days to nominate John W. Davis, an effort that must have seemed pointless later when he attracted only 29 percent of the popular vote. Nevertheless, the convention was a deliberative body that reached decisions on common policy positions as well as on nominees. Providing a way to accommodate the demands of major elements within the party established the base for a nationwide campaign.

In this respect, modern conventions are quite different. Not since 1952, when the Democrats needed three ballots to nominate Governor Adlai Stevenson of Illinois for president, has it taken more than one ballot to determine either party's nominee.⁸ Even predictions that Trump's 2016 opponents would use multiple ballots to block his nomination did not come to pass. Raucous floor battles over procedures and delegate credentials have given way to a stream of symbols and speakers whose appearances are carefully choreographed to appeal to a prime-time television audience. Conventions now serve as ratifying assemblies for a popular choice made during the preceding primary elections rather than deliberative bodies, and candidates with popular appeal have the advantage over those whose appeal is primarily with party leaders.

Although much of the convention's business is still conducted in backroom meetings, the most important business—choosing the presidential nominee—already has been decided through the grueling process used to select convention delegates. Compared with their forerunners, modern conventions conduct their business in a routine fashion, adhere to enforceable national party standards for delegate selection and demographic representation, and are more heavily influenced by rank-and-file party supporters than by party leaders.⁹ These changes appeared gradually through a process often fraught with conflict that centered on the rules governing delegate selection.

Reform of the Selection Process

The pace of change accelerated when the Democratic Party adopted internal reforms after it lost the presidency in 1968. In addition to the actions already noted, rules adopted by a variety of actors—one hundred state political parties and fifty legislatures, the national political parties, and Congress—reformed the process, and they continue to modify it. Sometimes individuals and states turned to the courts to interpret provisions of these regulations and reconcile conflicts. In addition, the rules were adjusted so drastically and so often that, particularly in the Democratic Party, candidates and their supporters found it difficult to keep up.

Reform has been especially pervasive in the nomination process. Following their tumultuous convention in 1968, when Vietnam War protesters clashed with police in the streets of Chicago, the Democrats adopted a set of guidelines that reduced the influence of party leaders, encouraged participation by rank-and-file Democrats, and expanded convention representation of previously underrepresented groups, particularly youth, women, and African Americans. The result was a pronounced shift of influence within the party from *party professionals* toward *amateurs*, a term encompassing citizens who become engaged in the presidential contest because of a short-term concern, such as an attractive candidate (candidate enthusiasts) or an especially important issue (issue enthusiasts).

States, seeking to conform to the party's new guidelines on participation, adopted the **primary** as the preferred means of selecting convention delegates. Primaries allow a party's registered voters—and, in some states, Independents—to express a presidential preference that is translated into convention delegates. The **party caucus** is another way to select delegates. The caucus is a local meeting of registered party voters that often involves speeches and discussion about the various candidates' merits. A caucus is more social, public, and time-consuming (often requiring two hours to complete) than a primary, in which voters make choices in the privacy of the voting booth. The caucus method is also multistage: Delegates from the local caucuses go to a county convention that selects delegates to a state convention that selects the national delegates. In 1968, only seventeen

states chose delegates through primaries, the remainder used caucuses dominated by party leaders. In 2016, of the fifty-one contests (including D.C.) thirty-six states held primaries in both parties, twelve states used caucuses in both parties, and three states held a primary in one party and a caucus in the other.¹⁰ Because of these changes, nominations are more apt to reflect the voters' immediate concerns, nominees are unofficially chosen well before the convention, and the influence of party leaders is reduced. The cost of these changes is the loss of peer review—politicians evaluating the capability of fellow politicians. Moreover, the changes have enhanced the importance of the media. By operating as the principal source of information about the candidates and by emphasizing the “horse race”—who is ahead—the media have become enormously influential during the delegate selection process. Not everyone was satisfied with the general movement toward a more democratized selection process, as evidenced by several counter reforms that appeared during the 1980s.

The Contemporary Selection Process

Despite the seemingly perpetual flux that characterizes presidential elections, it is possible to identify four broad stages in the process: (1) defining the pool of eligible candidates; (2) nominating the parties' candidates at the national conventions following delegate selection in the primaries and caucuses; (3) waging the general election campaign, culminating in election day; and (4) validating results through the Electoral College.

No two presidential election cycles are identical, but the customary timeline is relatively predictable (see Figure 2-1). Potential candidates actively maneuver for position during the one or two years preceding the election. Selection of convention delegates begins in January and February of the election year, with conventions typically scheduled first for the **out party**, the one seeking the White House.¹¹ Traditionally, the general election campaign begins on Labor Day and runs until election day, the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November, but modern campaigns really begin once the major parties' nominees become clear, sometimes as early as April. When the nomination contest is heated, we may not know the nominees until June, as happened in 2008 when Senator Obama and Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton fought to the end. In 2016, the parties' nominating conventions were held in late July, so the general election campaign began a full month earlier. Voters usually know the general election winner on election night, and the mid-December balloting by electors in their state capitals is practically automatic. Finally, the electors' ballots are officially tabulated the first week in January during a joint session of the U.S. Congress, presided over by the incumbent vice president. The duly elected president is inaugurated on January 20, a date set in the Twentieth Amendment.

Figure 2-1 The 2020 Presidential Contest Timeline

2019			
Stage 1			Defining the pool of eligible candidates
2020	Jan.		
Stage 2 Nomination and delegate selection	Feb.	Iowa, first caucus (2/3/20) New Hampshire, first primary (2/11/20) S. Carolina primary (2/29/20 D) Nevada caucuses (2/22/20 D or 2/25/20 R)	
	Mar.	Super Tuesday (3/3/20)	
	Apr.		
	May		
	June	Last primary (6/2/2020)	
Party conventions		July	Democratic Convention (Milwaukee, WI, 7/13/20–7/16/20) Republican Convention (Charlotte, NC, 8/24/20–8/27/20)
Stage 3		Sept.	Labor Day (9/7/20)
General election campaign		Oct.	
		Nov.	Election Day (11/3/20)
Stage 4 Validation in Electoral College		Dec.	Electoral College balloting, state capitals (12/14/20)
2021		Jan.	Electoral College results, joint session of Congress (1/6/21, unless changed by law) Inauguration Day (1/20/21)

Defining the Pool of Eligibles

Who is eligible to serve as president? The formal rules relating to qualifications are minimal and have been remarkably stable over time. Individuals need to meet only three requirements set forth in Article 2, section 1 of the Constitution. One must be a natural-born citizen, at least thirty-five years of age, and a resident of the United States for fourteen years or longer. In 2016, more than 135 million Americans met these constitutional requirements, but the pool of plausible candidates was far smaller.¹²

From time to time, a candidate whose citizenship is questioned seeks the presidency. Large numbers of Americans erroneously believed that Obama was born in Kenya, not Hawaii as his birth certificate makes clear. George Romney (candidate in 1968), John McCain (nominee in 2008), and Ted Cruz (candidate in 2016) were born to American parents living outside U.S. territory (in Mexico, the Panama Canal Zone, and Canada, respectively). Barry Goldwater (nominee in 1964) was born in Arizona before it was a state. The Supreme Court has never ruled on the meaning

of the Constitution's "natural born" requirement, but the Congressional Research Service concluded in 2011 that *natural born* means a person born in the United States and under its jurisdiction or born abroad to U.S. citizen-parents.¹³ Two former solicitors general of the United States wrote in the *Harvard Law Review* that both British common law and actions of the first Congress defined "natural born" as someone who does not have to go through the naturalization process to become a citizen.¹⁴

The informal requirements for the presidency are less easily satisfied. People who entertain presidential ambitions must have **political availability**, the political experiences and personal characteristics that make them attractive to political activists and to the general voting public. Potential candidates accumulate these credentials through personal and career decisions made long before the election year, but there is no explicit checklist of informal qualifications for the presidency. One method to determine what particular political experiences and personal characteristics put an individual in line for a nomination is to look at past candidates, but the attitudes of political leaders and the public change over time, as was quite evident in 2016.

Political Experience of Candidates

Who is nominated to run for president? Until 2016, the answer had been people with experience in one of a few civilian, elective, political offices or the military. Nominees' backgrounds had changed very little since the second half of the nineteenth century.¹⁵ Since 1932, with only two exceptions, major-party nominees had been drawn from one of four positions: (1) the presidency, (2) the vice presidency, (3) a state governorship, or (4) the U.S. Senate. (See Appendix B.) Candidates with other backgrounds were unsuccessful. In 2000, five aspirants who lacked experience in elected office unsuccessfully sought the Republican nomination. In 1992, H. Ross Perot, a billionaire businessman, sought election without a party nomination and did so again in 1996, as nominee of the Reform Party. Non-politicians Donald Trump, Carly Fiorina, and Ben Carson ran in 2016 with Trump the surprise nominee. Trump is the first major party nominee in history to have no record of public service—elected, appointed, or military—before entering the presidency.

Presidents and Vice Presidents. Since 1932, the party controlling the presidency has turned to the presidency or vice presidency for candidates, and the out party has turned primarily to governors and secondarily to senators. In only three of the twenty-two elections from 1932 to 2016 was the name of an incumbent president or vice president not on the ballot. Fifteen times, the incumbent president was renominated,

and in four of the seven instances when the incumbent president was either prohibited by the Twenty-Second Amendment from running again (Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1960, Ronald Reagan in 1988, Bill Clinton in 2000, George W. Bush in 2008, Barack Obama in 2016) or declined to do so (Harry S. Truman in 1952 and Lyndon B. Johnson in 1968), the incumbent vice president won his party's nomination. The exceptions occurred in 1952, 2008, and 2016. When Truman halted his reelection effort in 1952, Adlai Stevenson became the nominee rather than the vice president, seventy-five-year-old Alben Barkley. In 2008 and 2016, the incumbent party had an open competition for the presidential nomination because Vice Presidents Dick Cheney and Joe Biden chose not to pursue the office.

There are no guarantees that an incumbent president will be renominated, but it is enormously difficult for the party in power to remove these leaders from the national ticket. Party leaders are reluctant to admit they made a mistake four years earlier, incumbents can direct federal programs toward politically important areas or make politically useful executive branch appointments, and presidents enjoy far greater name recognition and media exposure than others seeking the nomination. Even unpopular presidents are renominated. The Republicans chose Gerald R. Ford in 1976 despite an energy crisis and slow economy. Democrats renominated Jimmy Carter in 1980 when both inflation and unemployment were high, Americans were being held hostage in Iran, and Soviet troops occupied Afghanistan.

Incumbent vice presidents who choose to run are more likely to win their party's nomination today than in the past.¹⁶ Recent presidential candidates have chosen running mates who are arguably more capable than their predecessors, which makes these individuals more viable prospects for the presidency. Moreover, presidents now assign their vice presidents meaningful responsibilities, including political party activities (especially campaigning in off-year elections), liaison assignments with social groups, and diplomatic missions abroad. As the position's visibility and significance have increased, so have the political chances of its occupants improved.¹⁷

If it is an asset in securing the party's nomination, the vice presidency once seemed a liability in winning the general election. George H. W. Bush's victory in 1988 broke a 152-year-old record of losing campaigns. Richard Nixon, Hubert Humphrey, and Al Gore lost as incumbent vice presidents in 1960, 1968, and 2000.

Senators and Governors. From 1932 through 2016, the party out of power nominated eleven governors, six senators, two former vice presidents, one general (Eisenhower), and two businessmen (Wendell Willkie and Trump).

(See Table 2-1.) Both major parties have looked to governors as promising candidates, except for the period from 1960 to 1972, when Sen. John F. Kennedy (D-1960), Sen. Barry Goldwater (R-1964), Sen. George McGovern (D-1972), and former vice president Nixon (R-1968) won the nomination. Governorships later regained prominence with the nomination of former governors Carter (D-1976), Reagan (R-1980), and Mitt Romney (R-2012); and sitting governors Michael Dukakis (D-1988), Bill Clinton (D-1992), and George W. Bush (R-2000). In the other five elections since 1960, the party out of power turned to a former vice president (Walter Mondale, the Democratic nominee in 1984), to senators (Robert Dole in 1996, John Kerry in 2004, and Obama in 2008), and of course to businessman/TV personality Trump in 2016.

These patterns may understate the importance of the Senate as a recruiting ground for president. Many senators have sought their parties' presidential nomination since the early 1950s. Senators share the political and media spotlight focused on the capital, enjoy the opportunity to address major public problems and develop a record in foreign affairs, and they usually can pursue the presidency without leaving the Senate. Nevertheless, only three times in American history have senators been elected directly to the White House (Warren Harding in 1920, Kennedy in 1960, and Obama in 2008).¹⁸

Instead of a stepping-stone to the presidency, the Senate has been a path to the vice presidency, which then gave its occupants the inside track either to assume the presidency through succession or to win nomination on their own. Vice Presidents Truman, Nixon, Johnson, Humphrey, Mondale, Quayle, Gore, and Biden served as senators immediately before assuming their executive posts. (Ford, who succeeded to the presidency when Nixon resigned in 1974, had moved into the vice presidency from the House of Representatives. Dick Cheney, elected vice president in 2000 and 2004, had served in the House before becoming secretary of defense and then a businessman.) Service in the Senate, therefore, has been an important source of experience for presidents since 1932, but almost all have gained seasoning in the vice presidency.

Until 2008, governors seemed to have a competitive advantage over senators. Bill Clinton and George W. Bush moved directly into the Oval Office from a governor's mansion. Two others—Carter and Reagan—were former governors who were free to devote themselves full time to the demanding task of winning the nomination, an opportunity not available to the senators who sought the presidency in those years. Governors can claim valuable executive experience in managing large-scale public enterprises and thousands of state government employees, in contrast to a senator's legislative duties and direction of a small personal staff. Moreover, the public's concern with foreign affairs declined after 1976 and was replaced by anxiety over the domestic economy, taxes, the budget,

Table 2-1 Principal Experience of In- and Out-Party Candidates before Gaining Nomination, 1932–2016

Election Year	In Party	Out Party
1932	President (R)	Governor (D)
1936	President (D)	Governor (R)
1940	President (D)	Businessman (R)
1944	President (D)	Governor (R)
1948	President (D)	Governor (R)
1952	Governor (D)	General/educator (R)
1956	President (R)	Governor (former) (D)
1960	Vice president (R)	Senator (D)
1964	President (D)	Senator (R)
1968	Vice president (D)	Vice president (former) (R)
1972	President (R)	Senator (D)
1976	President (R)	Governor (former) (D)
1980	President (D)	Governor (former) (R)
1984	President (R)	Vice president (former) (D)
1988	Vice president (R)	Governor (D)
1992	President (R)	Governor (D)
1996	President (D)	Senator (R)
2000	Vice president (D)	Governor (R)
2004	President (R)	Senator (D)
2008	Senator (R)	Senator (D)
2012	President (D)	Governor (former) (R)
2016	Former senator, former secretary of state (D)	Businessman/TV personality (R)

education, and health care. This shift in public attitudes was especially evident in 1992 and 2000, when Clinton and Bush benefited from the Cold War's reduced prominence during their successful election campaigns.

With the terrorist attacks of 9/11/2001, public concerns once again shifted to national security, which may have boosted senators over governors in the nomination contest. At the outset of 2008, it seemed the war in Iraq would be the dominant issue, again giving senators prominence, but public attention shifted during the year to domestic issues, led by the economy. The Democratic candidates included four sitting senators (Biden, Clinton, Dodd, and Obama), two former senators (Edwards, Gravel), one House member (Kucinich), one sitting governor (Richardson), and one former governor (Vilsack). Among Republican contestants were two sitting senators (Brownback, McCain), one former senator (F. Thompson), four former governors (Gillmore, Huckabee, Romney, and T. Thompson), three sitting members of the House (Hunter, Paul, and Tancredo), and one former mayor (Giuliani). In 2012, Republicans examined the credentials of one sitting governor (Perry), three former governors (Huntsman, Pawlenty, and Romney), two House members (Bachmann, Paul), one former House Speaker (Gingrich), one former senator (Santorum), and a businessman (Cain).

In 2016, Republicans needed a spreadsheet to keep track of their seventeen candidates, while Democrats faced a less complex contest. Republican candidates included four current senators, Ted Cruz (Texas), Rand Paul (Kentucky), Marco Rubio (Florida), and Lindsey Graham (South Carolina); one former senator, Rick Santorum (Pennsylvania); four sitting governors, Chris Christie (New Jersey), Bobby Jindal (Louisiana), John Kasich (Ohio), and Scott Walker (Wisconsin); five former governors, Jeb Bush (Florida), Jim Gilmore (Virginia), Mike Huckabee (Arkansas), George Pataki (New York), and Rick Perry (Texas); a former pediatric neurosurgeon, Ben Carson; and a former Hewlett-Packard CEO, Carly Fiorina.¹⁹ In late summer, the field was joined by billionaire businessman and television personality Donald Trump. Such widespread interest reflected Republican confidence that the White House would change hands in 2016, a belief that almost any reasonable candidate could raise enough money to launch a campaign, and a wide-open contest where there was no clear front-runner.

In sharp contrast, Hillary Clinton was the clear front-runner among Democrats pursuing the nomination in 2016 and only four others joined the contest: former senator Jim Webb (Virginia), sitting senator Bernie Sanders (Vermont), former governor Martin O'Malley (Maryland), and former senator and former governor Lincoln Chafee (Rhode Island).²⁰ Democrats had a huge field of candidates pursuing the nomination in 2020, including current and former governors, senators, mayors, House members, cabinet secretaries, and a former vice president.

By June 2019, dozens of Democrats were lining up to take a shot at Trump. Seven sitting senators (Bennett, Booker, Gillibrand, Harris, Klobuchar, Sanders, Warren), four sitting and two former House members (Gabbard, Moulton, Ryan, Swalwell, Delaney, O'Rourke), one former vice

president (Biden), two current and one former governor (Bullock, Inslee, Hickenlooper), three mayors (Buttigieg, de Blasio, Messam), one former cabinet secretary (Castro), and two nonpoliticians (Williamson, Yang) had declared. Billionaire hedge fund manager Tom Steyer joined the field later.

On the Republican side by Labor Day 2019, the incumbent president (Trump) faced challenges from a former governor of Massachusetts (Weld) and from two former House members (Walsh, Sanford), although another former governor (Kasich) was still pondering.

Personal Characteristics of Candidates

Although millions meet the formal requirements for president, far fewer meet the informal criteria that have guided past choices. Most constraining have been the limits imposed by social conventions on gender and race, constraints that the Democrats challenged in 2008 and 2016. Until Obama's victory over Clinton for the nomination in 2008, only males of European heritage had been nominated for president by either of the two major parties, although several women and African Americans had waged national campaigns since 1972. In 2016, Hillary Clinton became the first woman nominated by a major party for president. Former representative Geraldine Ferraro of New York was the Democrats' 1984 nominee for vice president and Sarah Palin, governor of Alaska, was the Republicans' vice-presidential nominee in 2008. In 2008, Bill Richardson became the first Latino to seek a major party's presidential nomination; two candidates of Cuban heritage were in the Republican field in 2016, Cruz and Rubio.

Presidential aspirants also have had to pass other "tests" based on personal characteristics, although these informal requirements have changed in the past five decades.²¹ Until 1960, candidates had to meet unspoken demographic and religious requirements: that they hail from English ethnic stock and practice a Protestant religion. The successful candidacy of Kennedy, a Roman Catholic, challenged the traditional preference for Protestants. By 2004, Kerry's Catholicism was not an issue. The Republican senator Barry Goldwater was the first nominee from a partly Jewish background, and Sen. Joseph Lieberman, an Orthodox Jew, joined the Democratic ticket in 2000. Religion as an issue resurfaced in 2008 when critics incorrectly alleged that Obama was a Muslim and again in 2012, when Republican Mitt Romney became the first Mormon to win a party nomination. Recent candidates have come from Irish, Norwegian, Greek, and Kenyan heritage, suggesting that the traditional preference for English stock has weakened.

In the past, representing an idealized version of home and family life also seemed essential to winning nomination. Nelson Rockefeller's divorce in 1963 from his wife of more than thirty years and his rapid remarriage virtually ensured the failure of his campaign for the Republican nomination in

1964 and 1968. In 1980, Reagan became the first divorced and remarried president. Trump, now in his third marriage, is the second. Public attitudes about other moral and ethical questions can become deciding factors. Gary Hart's widely reported extramarital affair ended his presidential hopes for 1988, even though he began the campaign as the clear Democratic front-runner. Bill Clinton's alleged extramarital relationships and marijuana use became issues in 1992, but an admission of past alcohol abuse did not damage George W. Bush in 2000, nor did an acknowledged youthful use of recreational marijuana affect Barack Obama's prospects in 2008.

It appears, therefore, that several of the informal qualifications applied to the presidency have altered with the passage of time, probably because of changes in the nomination process itself as well as broader currents in U.S. society. One observer suggests that the proliferation of presidential primaries "provides a forum in which prejudices can be addressed openly,"²² and the public is possibly becoming more tolerant overall. As demonstrated in 2008 and 2016 as African Americans, women, and descendants of immigrants from Asia, Latin America, and eastern and southern Europe occupy governorships and seats in the House and Senate, they enhance their chances of becoming serious candidates for the presidency.

Drew Angerer/Getty Images



Photo 2.2 Two dozen Democrats sought the 2020 presidential nomination, so many that they could not all fit on a single stage. Two groups of ten candidates debated during the initial round. The group pictured met on June 27, 2019, and included Joe Biden, Bernie Sanders, Kamala Harris, and Pete Buttlegieg, among others.

Competing for the Nomination

Once the pool of eligible candidates is established, the selection process begins. This phase has two major components: (1) choosing delegates to the two parties' national conventions and (2) selecting the nominees at the conventions. By far the more complicated of these steps, the selection of delegates, became the principal focus of party reform efforts after 1968 and continues to undergo change. Prior to the conventions, candidates crisscross the country to win delegates, who then attend the convention to select the party's nominee.

The first primary of 2016 was held in New Hampshire following the Iowa caucuses. Delegate selection concluded in June, when a handful of states held primaries. Through this complex process, the Republicans selected 2,472 convention delegates, and the Democrats 4,763. Consistent with post-1968 reforms, most delegates were chosen through primaries. Participation has been growing; in 2016 an estimated 57.68 million citizens voted in primaries, up sharply from 2000 and 2004 but down slightly from 2008.²³

For 2016 and 2020, Iowa, New Hampshire, Nevada, and South Carolina were again positioned to be the first four states selecting delegates. The calendar had Iowa conducting the first caucuses on February 1 and New Hampshire the first primary on February 9, 2016. Projected dates for 2020 were February 3 and February 11. In 2016, Republican officials successfully prevented a repeat of 2012 when other states moved their events forward in the schedule; for 2016, states would have received severe delegate reductions for jumping the line and new rules rewarded states that delayed their events until after mid-March. The final primary was held in the District of Columbia on June 14, although several state conventions were slated to run through the remainder of the month.²⁴ Nearly the identical schedule was expected for 2020.

In truth, the nomination contest begins much earlier than January of the election year. By starting their campaigns early, candidates seek to amass the financial backing, attract the media attention, and generate the popular support necessary to ensure eventual victory. In contrast to 2007, when all the Democratic candidates had either announced their candidacy or launched exploratory committees by the end of January, most Republicans got off to a slow start in 2016. Ben Carson was first to announce in November 2014 and Ted Cruz followed in March 2015, but Donald Trump did not declare until June 2015 and several candidates entered the race even later. President Trump had formed his 2020 reelection effort the day after he was inaugurated (a first for any incumbent), and former Maryland congressman John K. Delaney was the first Democrat to declare July 28, 2017.

The Nomination Campaign

The nomination campaign is a winnowing process in which each of the two major parties eliminates from the pool of potential candidates all but the one who will represent the party in the general election. As political scientist Austin Ranney argued in 1974, the nomination phase of the campaign is more important than the election stage because “the parties’ nominating processes eliminate far more presidential possibilities than do the voters’ electing processes.”²⁵ In the 1970s, aspirants typically did not know how many opponents they would face or who they would be. The competition took place in weekly stages, with candidates hopscotching the nation in pursuit of votes and contributions. First-time candidates had to organize a nationwide political effort, a chore that dwarfs the campaign required to win a Senate seat or governorship in even the largest states.

This competitive situation has changed. As more states moved their primaries to earlier positions in the schedule—a pattern called **front-loading**—the critical events take place during a very brief window near the beginning of the six-month process. Instead of having the luxury of adjusting strategy along the way, candidates need to establish campaign organizations in many states and to raise enormous sums of money early in the process. Many of the traditional uncertainties—for example, new candidates entering the competition—have become less likely, as early contests quickly trigger the departure of weaker candidates instead of creating opportunities for new entrants.²⁶ In 2008, both parties chose 50 percent of their convention delegates by the end of the day on February 5, and more than three-quarters of all delegates by the first Tuesday in March.²⁷ But instead of an early nomination victory, the Democrats’ contest extended into June. In 2012, both Republicans and Democrats wanted to slow down the process and lengthen it. By contrast, Republicans in 2016 desperately hoped that their rules changes would produce a more compressed process, producing early unity around a nominee. But as Trump’s nomination began to appear inevitable, many establishment Republicans (members of the “Never Trump” group) regretted the changes they had introduced.

Because the early contests are so important, presidential hopefuls spend considerable time before January of the election year laying the campaign’s groundwork. Decades ago, journalist Arthur Hadley called this period the “invisible primary,” a testing ground for the would-be president to determine whether his or her candidacy is viable.²⁸ Candidates must assemble a staff to help raise money, develop campaign strategy, hone a message, and identify a larger group of people willing to do the advance work necessary to organize states for the primaries and caucuses. Candidates visit party organizations throughout the country, especially in the two traditional early states, Iowa and New Hampshire, to curry favor with activists and solicit endorsements.²⁹ Democrats authorized Nevada and South Carolina to join the early group of contests in 2008, but Florida and Michigan then

demanded to be added as well. The resulting legal and political challenges complicated candidates' strategies. A similar scramble occurred in 2012, when Florida, Michigan, and Nevada defied Republican efforts to start the process later. No states challenged the calendar in 2016.

Because media coverage provides name recognition and potentially positive publicity, developing a favorable relationship with reporters and commentators is crucial. Those hopefuls not regarded by the media as serious contenders find it almost impossible to become viable candidates. Even the suggestion that some candidates are "top tier" and others "second tier," the terms widely used to sort the large fields in 2008, 2012, and 2016, could adversely affect a candidacy. As Ranney suggested, most candidates' campaigns are scuttled, if not officially canceled, during the "invisible primary" stage.

Financing Nomination Campaigns

Candidates for the nomination must raise funds early to prepare for the competition. Dramatic changes occurred between 1976 and 2016 in campaign funding. Federal funds became available for the first time in the 1976 election: Candidates seeking a major party nomination could qualify to receive federal funds that matched individual contributions of \$250 or less if they raised \$100,000 in individual contributions, with at least \$5,000 collected in twenty different states. The intent was to shift funding away from a few wealthy "fat cats" to a broader base of contributors,³⁰ to help underdog candidates contest the nomination, and to enable candidates to remain in the race despite poor showings in early contests. A key goal was disclosure of contributions, a reform put into place following revelations of how President Nixon's campaign had used cash contributions to fund a variety of dirty tricks during the 1972 election.

By checking a box on their federal income tax forms, taxpayers authorized the government to set aside \$3.00 of their tax payments for public financing of campaigns. The Federal Election Commission (FEC), a bipartisan body of six members nominated by the president and confirmed by the Senate, oversaw the administration of the public financing provisions. The changes were initially popular, but participation in the system dropped from 28.7 percent of all tax returns in 1980 to 6 percent in 2013.³¹ Candidates also became less supportive; those who accept public financing must abide by limitations on total expenditures and a cap on spending in individual states that is based on population. As the competitive landscape shifted, most candidates preferred to avoid these limits. The 2004 election was the first in which both parties' nominees had declined federal matching funds and the leading candidates declined them in 2008, 2012, and 2016, making the system's future bleak.³² Today, only weak candidates rely on matching funds. Martin O'Malley (D) was the only major party candidate to do so in 2016.

Candidates' personal wealth played a role in the shift away from public funds. In 1996, Steve Forbes loaned his campaign \$37.5 million. He was ultimately unsuccessful, but Forbes dramatically influenced the Republican nomination process by outspending his rivals in Iowa, New Hampshire, and several other early contests. Even Bob Dole, who led all candidates in fund-raising that year, could not match such expenditures because he had to observe the federal limits.³³ When he anticipated that Forbes would pursue a similar tactic in 2000, Bush raised a record \$94 million in private funds, double that of Forbes and McCain, his closest competitors; he, therefore, avoided the spending limits associated with public funding and the problems Dole had encountered.³⁴

Although public funds reduced financial disparities among candidates, their financial resources were still highly unequal, and in most election years, the field's leading fund-raiser won the nomination.³⁵ The new system favors very wealthy candidates or those who—like Bush in 2000 and 2004, Clinton and Obama in 2008, and Romney in 2012—can tap networks of donors during the invisible primary before the Iowa and New Hampshire contests, raising enough money early to turn down public funding and sail through to the end. Usually, the calendar of contests and funding system rules favor front-runners, making it difficult for primary voters to give other candidates a second look.³⁶

Observers anticipated that wealthy donors would be more important than ever in 2016. This expectation followed the Supreme Court's decision in 2010 in the case of *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, which opened the doors to oceans of political cash. The decision allowed unions, corporations, and associations to spend unlimited amounts in elections and “paved the way for...the creation of super-PACs [political action committees], which can accept unlimited contributions from corporations, unions and individuals for the purpose of making independent expenditures,” spending intended to influence the outcome of elections but not coordinated with a candidate's campaign.³⁷ Super-PACs must disclose their donors, giving them a bit of transparency, but they are often headed by candidates' political allies, making non-coordination highly questionable. Super-PACs spend large sums on ads both *for* and *against* candidates. Candidates deny coordinating expenditures with the super-PACs that help them, but it is clear that super-PACs complicate both the strategic calculations of candidates and the public's ability to follow the campaign's dynamics.

As always, politicians learn from the last contest, and new efforts emerged in 2016 to stretch loopholes in campaign finance laws. Before officially declaring his candidacy, Jeb Bush attended events to help raise money in behalf of a super-PAC pledged to support him, and it was expected that after disassociating himself from the group the PAC would assume responsibility for some of the activities traditionally handled by a campaign, such as television advertising and direct mail.³⁸ This would be a departure from

2012. Fearing that she would lose ground to her potential general election opponent, Hillary Clinton also began to work cooperatively with a Democratic super-PAC, attending fund-raising events although not asking for contributions herself.³⁹ Another super-PAC, Correct the Record, was created to monitor media coverage and campaign criticisms directed at Clinton; it would coordinate with her campaign but not be controlled by it, another nuance.⁴⁰

For reformers concerned with the influence of money in politics, there was an even worse development in 2016: the rise of **nonprofit social welfare groups**. Like a super-PAC, donations to nonprofits are unlimited, but unlike their cousins, the donors need not be disclosed, creating what reformers call **dark money**. This money ostensibly must be spent on projects advancing the public good, in this case, financing ads that support the same issues advanced by a candidate. Money can underwrite a potential candidate's travel, pay for polling, and build volunteer lists. Fears grew that "for the first time in a generation, there will be a clear avenue for America's richest to secretly spend an unchecked sum to choose their party's nominee for the White House."⁴¹ By early 2015, four Republican candidates—Rick Perry, Rick Santorum, Bobby Jindal, and John Kasich—had such nonprofits helping them run for president using anonymous donations.

Despite all the concern about money flooding the system, two other stories dominated the 2016 nomination stage. Donald J. Trump emerged victorious after loudly proclaiming that he was the only "self-funded" candidate, thereby turning personal wealth into an asset because it made him beholden to no one. Trump loaned funds to his campaign as needed throughout the primary/caucus stage, even though he also raised substantial funds. By the end of June 2016, Trump had spent \$71 million, second to Ted Cruz's \$86 million total. Trump had loaned his campaign nearly \$50 million at this point and had raised another \$37 million.⁴² Among Democrats, Bernie Sanders had raised and spent nearly as much money as the successful nominee, Hillary Clinton, but his contributions came largely in small donations. By the end of June 2016, Sanders had spent only \$3 million less than Clinton and had less money on hand. For Jeb Bush, the \$34 million his campaign raised and the \$121.7 million raised by his super-PAC went for naught.⁴³

Dynamics of the Contest

Before front-loading became so pronounced, candidates competed in as many locations as funds allowed. This was especially true for Democrats, whose rules call for proportional allocation of delegates: As long as candidates receive at least 15 percent of the vote, they are awarded a share of delegates proportional to the vote share.⁴⁴ Republican candidates also faced proportional rules in 2012 and 2016, when fewer states awarded

all delegates to the first-place finisher in a primary. The earliest contests, the Iowa caucuses and New Hampshire primary, attract most of the major contenders because they are the first tests of rank-and-file voter sentiment. Iowa returned to prominence in 2008 after being overshadowed for many years by New Hampshire, where the delegate total is small but the winner receives immediate national attention. The small New Hampshire electorate enables candidates with more modest financial resources to conduct voter-intensive campaigns, as was the case for McCain in 2008.

Since 1988, campaigns have had to contend with a single day when a large number of states held primaries, dubbed *Super Tuesday*. Twenty states selected delegates, sixteen through primaries and four through caucuses in 1988. In 1992, only eleven states participated in Super Tuesday, but the Democratic designers accomplished their goal of boosting the chances of a moderate candidate when Clinton won all six of the southern primaries and two caucuses. The media renamed Super Tuesday to “Titanic Tuesday” and “Mega Tuesday” in 2000 because the delegate total rose dramatically when New York and California joined the list of states holding primaries that day. In 2008, the list grew to twenty-two contests choosing delegates. Although Hillary Clinton had hoped to score a knockout that day, when nearly 40 percent of all convention delegates were selected, she split the results with Obama. On the Republican side, McCain pulled away from Romney, his closest competitor. In 2012, both California and New York moved their contests to later dates and Super Tuesday shrank in significance when only ten states chose delegates. Twelve states held events on the first Tuesday in March 2016, and the return of California to that day in 2020 is again likely to raise its significance.

Holding primaries early in the nomination process is a reversal from the past, when late primaries could be decisive. Until 1996, California scheduled its primary on the final day of delegate selection, giving Golden State voters the chance to determine a party’s nominee, as they did with Goldwater in 1964 and McGovern in 1972. After losing the election in 1996, Republicans adopted rules that encouraged states to schedule their primaries later in 2000 by providing them with bonus delegates.⁴⁵ But the schedule was only slightly less front-loaded in 2000, and the contests were concluded earlier than ever before—March 9, when both McCain and former senator Bill Bradley, the number-two candidate in each party, discontinued their campaigns.

The two parties set a “window” for delegate selection, providing special exceptions for Iowa and New Hampshire, a privileged position later extended to South Carolina and Nevada beginning in 2008. In these relatively small states, candidates engage in **retail politics**, meeting with voters on a more personal basis than is possible in larger states, where candidates must rely on media advertising in practicing **wholesale politics**. The Democrats overcame a congested field in 2004 to unofficially select

their nominee, Senator John Kerry, before the middle of March. Observers expected the same thing to happen in 2008, but Clinton and Obama were so evenly matched that the states scheduled later in the process played an unexpectedly important role. For a while, Democrats wondered whether the nomination campaign would continue until the convention decided on a nominee, a scenario that has not occurred since 1952. But **super-delegates**, elected and party officials who attend the convention by virtue of their leadership positions, sided with Obama, whose delegate total exceeded Clinton's after all primaries and caucuses had been concluded. In 2016, superdelegates heavily favored Clinton over Sanders, a source of dismay for progressive supporters who thought the rules were rigged against them. As a result, Democrats changed the rules for 2020 to prevent superdelegates from voting during the first round of convention balloting.⁴⁶

Republicans, even less accustomed to crowded candidate fields, experienced an "open convention" in 1976, when Ford's victory over Reagan was not sealed until just before the delegates convened. With a very crowded field in 2016, Republicans enacted rules that concentrated the delegate selection process into three months. Nearly two-thirds of Republican delegates had been selected by April 1, 2016. As more and more Republican candidates dropped out of the competition, pressure grew on the remaining candidates, Cruz and Kasich, to coordinate their efforts in order to deny Trump a first-ballot nomination at the convention, but the effort failed.

State caucuses operate in the shadow of the primaries, although they remain important for candidates able to mobilize an intensely motivated group of supporters who can exert greater influence than in a primary. Until 2008, the Iowa caucuses, long the first-in-the-nation delegate selection contest, had diminished in importance as a launching pad for presidential contenders. McCain sidestepped Iowa altogether in 2000 to focus on New Hampshire, but Dean's 2004 defeat in Iowa signaled the decline of his candidacy. Obama's 2008 victory in Iowa triggered a surge of favorable media coverage, and his campaign targeted other caucus contests, allowing him to keep pace with Clinton's emphasis on primaries. Although the number of states holding caucuses can vary, the overall role of caucuses has been declining steadily.

Media Influence and Campaign Consultants

"For most of us, the combination of media coverage and media advertising is the campaign; few voters see the candidates in person or involve themselves directly in campaign events," wrote Marjorie Randon Hershey after the 2000 election.⁴⁷ Little has changed in two decades. As the nomination process has grown in complexity, the influence of the media also has grown. Candidates who must campaign in a score of states within two weeks, as they have done since 1992, necessarily rely on the media

to communicate with large numbers of potential voters. Televised ads, network and station-sponsored debates, prime-time news coverage, the Internet and now Twitter are critical to candidates' efforts. Even talk show appearances have gained in importance.

The media tend to focus on the game aspects of the pre-election-year maneuvering and the early contests. As candidates begin to emerge, journalists concentrate on the competition for financial contributions, the reputations of professionals enlisted to work on a campaign, and speculation about the candidates' relative chances of success based on polls and non-binding straw votes in various states. Once the delegate selection contests begin, the media focus on political tactics, strategy, and competitive position more than on the candidates' messages and issue stands, particularly in covering Iowa, New Hampshire, and the other early contests. In general, the media use a winner-take-all principle that, regardless of how narrow the primary victory or the popular-vote margin, gives virtually all the publicity to the victorious candidate. In the 1976 Iowa caucuses, for example, Carter was declared the "clear winner" and described as leading the pack of contenders even though he received only about 14,000 votes, 28 percent of the 50,000 cast; he actually trailed the "uncommitted" group.⁴⁸ Gore defeated Bradley in the 2000 New Hampshire primary by a mere 49.7 percent to 45.6 percent, but Bradley's narrow loss was a less important story than Gore's victory.⁴⁹ Kerry salvaged his campaign with a first place finish in Iowa in 2004, even though he led John Edwards by only a modest number of votes. Sometimes, a surprise showing by a runner-up may garner attention: After winning just 16 percent of the votes to finish an unexpected second in the Iowa caucuses in 1984, Gary Hart got as much publicity as Walter Mondale, who captured three times as many votes.⁵⁰

As the fate of presidential candidates has passed from a small group of party professionals to rank-and-file voters, media coverage and public opinion polls have grown in importance. Media evaluations help determine candidate viability—labeling candidates "likely" or "unlikely" as well as "winners" or "losers." Media-sponsored candidate debates garner widespread attention. Voters and contributors gravitate to the perceived winners and desert the apparent losers. Republican hopefuls participated in twenty debates in 2012, too many in the view of party leaders who were intent on reducing that total in 2016. With so many candidates, the first prime-time debate sponsored by Fox News in Cleveland, Ohio, was limited to the top ten hopefuls as measured in the national polls. The other seven candidates (dubbed the "undercard," or the "kids' table") appeared in an earlier contest on the same day, August 6, 2015. Democrats, anticipating a record number of candidates in 2020, announced plans to hold a dozen debates, the first two of which would be spread over two nights in late June and July. A random drawing assigned candidates to the first or second night, and to participate, candidates needed to have at least 1 percent support in three

national polls or raise at least \$65,000 from at least 200 donors in twenty states. Ten candidates were allowed to participate each night. As the contest progressed, candidates needed to hit the minimum in four polls and raise double the contribution total to qualify.⁵¹

Polls gauge voters' presidential preferences, a fixture of media coverage. Favorable polls impress reporters, editorial writers, political activists, and many rank-and-file voters, leading to more primary and caucus victories for the poll leaders. This reinforcement process helps ensure that, by the time the delegates gather for their party's national convention, one candidate almost always has enough delegates to receive the nomination.⁵²

Donald Trump pursued a novel nomination strategy in 2016. He relied heavily on social media, large-scale public rallies, and aggressive debate tactics to deliver outrageous statements that won extensive media coverage. At the same time, he attacked media outlets as purveyors of "fake news." In this way, Trump overcame the weak organization and poorer funding of his campaign relative to that of his competitors. It will be fascinating to see whether future candidates will emulate the Trump campaign or whether candidates return to traditional strategies.

The National Convention

No part of the selection process has undergone more dramatic change than the nominating conventions. Long the province of party leaders, today's conventions are largely media extravaganzas choreographed to project images designed to reawaken party loyalty, appeal to contemporary public concerns, and project the most desirable aspects of the newly anointed presidential ticket. In short, the convention is important for two reasons. First, whatever may have happened during the long search for delegates, the actual nomination occurs at the convention. Second, a well-run convention can boost a candidate's chances in the general election, whereas a convention in disarray or one that distracts voters' attention from the candidate can be damaging.

Between 1976 and 2012, the FEC provided funding to the Democratic and Republican Parties to finance their nominating conventions, but that public subsidy (\$18.24 million each in 2012) was repealed by Congress in 2014 putting the parties on their own. In 2012, Congress appropriated another \$50 million to cover security costs at each convention, and the same funding was provided to state and local law enforcement to help with security in 2016. Both parties spent much more for their conventions, an additional \$60 million each in 2008 and an estimated \$100 million in 2012.⁵³ Facing the need to raise even more money in 2016, the major political parties expected to raise significant funds from corporations and received permission from Congress to set up separate

political committees for convention fund-raising, and raised the limits on convention contributions for individuals and pacs. Seventy-four individuals gave the maximum of \$100,200 to the party convention committees.⁵⁴ The host cities, Cleveland and Philadelphia, raised unlimited contributions to cover convention expenses, including donations from corporations and unions. Philadelphia raised \$69.7 million and Cleveland \$65.7 million.⁵⁵

Nominating the Ticket

Since the early 1950s, conventions have offered little drama about the choice of the presidential nominee. In the thirty-six conventions held by the two major parties from 1948 through 2016, only two nominees—Thomas Dewey in 1948 and Adlai Stevenson in 1952—failed to win a majority of the convention votes on the first ballot. In all other cases, victory has gone to the candidate who arrived at the convention with the largest number of pledged delegates. Nevertheless, the state-by-state balloting remains a traditional feature of the process.

Selecting the vice-presidential nominee is the convention's final chore and the only chance to create any suspense. Although, in theory, the delegates make the choice, it has been a matter of political custom since 1940 to allow presidential nominees to pick their running mates after conferring with leaders whose judgment they trust. Parties traditionally attempt to balance the ticket—that is, broaden its appeal by selecting a person who differs in helpful ways from the presidential nominee. In 1980, George H. W. Bush's links to the eastern establishment and moderate wing of the Republican Party complemented the conservative, western Reagan. Ferraro balanced the 1984 Democratic ticket geographically and in other ways: The first woman to serve as a major-party candidate in a presidential contest, she was also the first Italian American.

Dan Quayle brought generational balance to the 1988 ticket, and the party's conservatives enthusiastically supported him despite media questions about Quayle's National Guard service during the Vietnam War, his modest academic performance, and his ability to perform as president should the need arise. Clinton violated political tradition by selecting Al Gore, a fellow southerner and baby boomer, but the choice was well received by the party faithful and probably helped Clinton erode Republican support in the South. Dole chose Jack Kemp in 1996, a one-time presidential candidate who was highly popular with Republican activists. In 2000, George W. Bush asked a fellow western conservative, Dick Cheney, to join the ticket as a way to offset his own lack of Washington and White House experience. In what the media described as a "bold" move, Gore added Lieberman to the 2000 ticket, the first practicing Jew on a national ticket. Massachusetts Senator Kerry chose Edwards, a southerner, to bring regional balance to the 2004 ticket. Obama turned to Sen. Joseph Biden

in 2008, an eastern liberal with extensive Washington experience and ties to Pennsylvania, a hotly contested state. McCain chose Gov. Sarah Palin of Alaska in an effort to shake up the election, but she proved to be a liability in nationally broadcast interviews. Romney chose a rising star in the party—Wisconsin Rep. Paul Ryan—in 2012 as a way to tap the enthusiasm of the Tea Party movement and highlight the nation's budget problems. Clinton's choice in 2016, Senator Tim Kaine from Virginia, shored up her support in a key state. Trump chose Mike Pence, governor of Indiana and a former member of Congress, as a way to strengthen ties with conservative Republicans and provide government as well as Washington experience to the ticket.

The final night of the convention is devoted to acceptance speeches. The presidential nominee tries to make peace with former competitors and to reunite party factions that have confronted one another during the long campaign and the hectic days of the convention. Major party figures usually come to the stage and pledge their support.

Conducting Party Business

Parties continue to write and adopt convention platforms, although participants acknowledge that winning presidential candidates may disavow planks with which they disagree. Because delegates, party leaders, and major groups affiliated with the party have strong feelings about some issues, the platform provides an opportunity to resolve differences and fashion politically palatable compromises.⁵⁶ Civil rights and the Vietnam War once prompted major disagreements within the Democratic Party; civil rights, foreign policy, and abortion have been important bones of contention among Republicans.

Despite intraparty differences, conventions provide strong incentives for compromise, to bring back to the fold a disgruntled segment of the party that might otherwise offer only lukewarm support during the fall election or launch a third-party effort. To avoid such damage, almost every presidential candidate decides to provide major rivals and their supporters with concessions in the platform and a prime-time speaking opportunity during the convention. Occasionally, this tactic can backfire. At the Republican convention in 1992, Pat Buchanan was given an opportunity to address a national audience, but his comments proved so controversial that he was not invited to speak four years later.

National nominating conventions have become so predictable that network television has reduced coverage dramatically since 1996. To obtain the traditional “gavel to gavel” coverage that ushered in the television age, viewers must follow proceedings on cable news networks, such as CNN and Fox News, or on the Internet. Parties have become so adept at scripting these quadrennial gatherings that their very existence is jeopardized,

although surprises still occur such as Clint Eastwood's rambling prime-time monologue at the 2012 Republican convention and Ted Cruz's refusal to endorse Trump in his 2016 speech.⁵⁷

The General Election

With nominees unofficially selected by May (in most cases and sometimes March) and officially nominated in late summer, the nation moves into the general election period. Candidates must develop new political appeals for this stage, primarily a contest between the nominees of the two major parties and, occasionally, a major Independent candidate. The campaign's audience increases greatly: More than twice as many people vote in the general election as participate in the nomination process. Candidates and staff must decide how they can win the support of these voters, appeal to people who identify with the other party, and woo partisans who backed losing candidates for the nomination. Time is a further complication because the nationwide phase of the presidential contest when most citizens become attentive is compressed into ten weeks, traditionally running from Labor Day to election day. Since 1996, however, the two eventual party nominees have begun campaigning as soon as the opponent is known, thereby extending the campaign into a longer competition.

Two features of the general election make it fundamentally different from the nomination phase: (1) the Electoral College and (2) the distinctive provisions of the campaign finance laws. Compared with the ever-changing nomination stage, the constitutionally prescribed presidential election process has been remarkably stable over time, while campaign finance practices have changed significantly since 1972.

The Electoral College

Presidential candidates plan and carry out their general election strategies with one ultimate goal: winning a majority of the Electoral College votes cast by state electors. Early in U.S. history, electoral votes were determined by congressional districts. The winner of a popular-vote plurality in each district would receive the associated electoral vote, with the statewide winner of the popular vote getting the two electoral votes representing senators. But legislatures soon began to adopt the **unit** or **general-ticket rule**, whereby all the state's electoral votes went to the candidate who received the plurality of the statewide popular vote. This rule benefited the state's largest party and maximized the state's influence in the election by permitting it to throw all its electoral votes to one candidate. By 1836, the unit

system had replaced the district plan. Since then, two states have returned to the old plan: Maine in 1969 and Nebraska in 1992.

The final product is a strange method for choosing a chief executive. Although most Americans view the system as a popular election, it is not. When voters mark their ballots, the final vote actually determines which slate of electors pledged to support the party's presidential candidate will cast the state's electoral votes. The electors are party loyalists, chosen variously in primaries, at party conventions, or by state party committees. In mid-December, the electors pledged to the winning candidate meet in their state capitals to cast ballots. (Twenty-seven states and the District of Columbia attempt by law to bind the electors to vote for the winner of the popular vote, but some observers question whether such laws are constitutional.⁵⁸) The official electoral vote certificates are transmitted to Washington, D.C., and counted in early January. Next, the presiding officer of the Senate—the incumbent vice president—announces the outcome before a joint session of Congress. If, as usually happens, one candidate receives an absolute majority of the electoral votes, currently 270, the vice president officially declares that candidate president. Because the winner of the popular vote usually wins in the Electoral College as well, we call this final stage of the selection process the *validation* of the popular-vote outcome. For candidates who win without a popular-vote plurality, as George W. Bush did in 2000 and Donald Trump in 2016, the Electoral College may validate a victory but not necessarily provide legitimacy.

Financing the General Election

Mounting a nationwide campaign requires greater financial resources than winning the nomination. For the general election, public financing is available to nominees of the major parties, and any party that won 25 percent or more of the popular vote in the last presidential election is considered a major party. However, only one of the last six major party candidates has chosen to tap this source of funding. McCain received \$84.1 million in 2008, but Obama declined public funding. Neither Romney nor Obama sought such funding in 2012, nor did Trump or Clinton in 2016.⁵⁹

Candidates of minor parties, those who won between 5 percent and 25 percent of the vote in the previous election, receive partial public financing, and they can raise private funds up to the major-party limit. Ross Perot spent an estimated \$63 million of his own money to mount his 1992 campaign, and as a result of his 19 percent showing, he received \$29 million in federal funds in 1996 but was limited to using only \$50,000 of his own money in the general election. Pat Buchanan, the official Reform Party nominee in 2000, received \$12.6 million as a result of Perot's 8.4 percent share of the vote in 1996. But the party was ineligible for public funding in

2004 after Buchanan's poor showing of 0.43 percent of the popular vote. Candidates whose parties are just getting started may receive no help, a major disadvantage.

Two other sources may engage in campaign spending. Until 2002, there was no limit on **independent campaign expenditures** made by individuals or political committees that advocate the defeat or election of a presidential candidate but are not made in conjunction with a candidate's campaign. The new law, the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act or BCRA, applied to the 2004 campaign and prohibited corporations and labor unions from spending their funds on television ads broadly construed as for or against candidates thirty days before a primary and sixty days before a general election.⁶⁰ In June 2007, however, the U.S. Supreme Court in *Federal Election Commission v. Wisconsin Right to Life* weakened these provisions. More significantly, another Supreme Court decision discussed earlier, *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* (2010), now allows corporations, unions, and nonprofit organizations to spend as much as they want in support of or in opposition to candidates. Independent expenditures in the 2012 presidential campaign nearly quadrupled to an estimated \$560 million with a four-to-one advantage for Romney. (The total in 2008 had been \$150 million.)⁶¹ Total independent expenditures rose again in 2016 but less dramatically than many observers had predicted given the proliferation of super-PACS and nonprofit public welfare groups.

BCRA placed new limits on fund-raising and spending by state and local party organizations. Until 1996, party organizations raised funds, commonly called **soft money**, that had largely been used for grassroots activities such as distributing campaign buttons, stickers, and yard signs; registering voters; and transporting voters to the polls. Total spending from these sources grew to \$65 million in 1996. In 2000, the national parties spent more for television advertising in the presidential election than did the candidates, especially in the **battleground states**, those most hotly contested by the major candidates.⁶² In Florida, the key to Bush's victory, pro-Bush party expenditures exceeded those for Gore by about \$4 million.⁶³

BCRA aimed to prevent a repeat of Clinton's aggressive fund-raising in 1995 and 1996, as well as to end abuse of soft money.⁶⁴ In its wake, however, independent expenditures rose dramatically, from \$14.7 million in 2000 to \$192.4 million in 2004 and \$170 million in 2008.⁶⁵ The growth trajectory resumed in 2012; the RNC spent \$386 million for Romney, and the DNC spent \$292 million for Obama. But the landscape changed dramatically again in 2016: Both parties spent less with the DNC spending less than \$7 million in support of Clinton and another \$7 million against Trump. The RNC spent almost \$8 million helping Trump and only \$346,000 against Clinton. Outside groups and wealthy donors have become the new dominant players.

Until 2008, the system of public financing introduced in the 1976 election was viewed as a success: Major party candidates no longer depended on wealthy contributors and other private sources to finance their campaigns; expenditures of the two major-party candidates were limited and equalized, an advantage for Democrats who were historically outspent by their opponents.⁶⁶ Today, each presidential election sets new records: 2008 was the first billion-dollar presidential election; spending in 2012 and 2016 exceeded a billion.⁶⁷ In 2012, Romney's campaign spent \$433.3 million, but additional spending by outside groups and the Republican Party brought the total to \$1.24 billion. On the Democratic side, Obama's campaign spent \$683.5 million, but the total was \$1.1 billion after adding expenditures by the party and outside groups.⁶⁸ For 2016, the Center for Responsive Politics put the combined resources of Clinton's campaign and supportive outside groups at nearly \$770 million. Trump and his allies had combined resources of \$408 million. Self-funding was also a factor. Trump ended up spending more than \$66 million of his own funds; Hillary Clinton spent a little less than \$1.5 million of hers.

With such high spending, today's candidates rely heavily on donors giving the maximum legal contribution to the candidates (\$2,700 in 2016), and the era of "fat cats" is back. Billionaire casino-owner Sheldon Adelson and his wife contributed an estimated \$92.8 million to multiple groups supporting Romney and other Republican candidates in 2012 and another \$82.5 million in 2016, including \$20.4 million to pro-Trump groups.⁶⁹ Campaign spending on presidential elections is now out-of-control after a quarter century of restraint.

Targeting the Campaign

As in the nomination process, candidates must decide which states will be the focus of their efforts in the fall campaign. The most important consideration is the Electoral College: A candidate must win a majority—270—of the 538 electoral votes.⁷⁰ This fact places a premium on carrying the states with the most electoral votes (see Figure 2-2). From 2004 through 2016, the candidate winning the eleven largest states—California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Texas—could win the presidency while losing the thirty-nine other states and the District of Columbia. Understandably, candidates from both major parties concentrate their personal visits and spending on states with the most electoral votes.

Another element affecting candidates' decisions on where to campaign is competitiveness, the chance of winning a particular state. Are the party's candidates generally successful there, or do the results swing back and forth from one election to the next? Distinctly one-party states are likely to be slighted by the major-party candidates as a waste of time and money,

while swing states with large populations (think Florida and Ohio) draw a good deal of attention.

In formulating campaign strategy, therefore, candidates and their advisers start with the electoral map as modified by calculations of probable success. The Electoral College creates fifty-one separate presidential contests—fifty states plus the District of Columbia—primarily following the winner-take-all principle; the goal is a popular-vote victory, no matter how small the margin. The winner in a large state benefits from the unit rule by getting all the state's electoral votes. As we have noted, Bush won Florida in 2000 by a margin of 537 votes of the 5.963 million legitimate ballots cast.⁷¹ But he won all twenty-five of the state's electoral votes, which gave him 271 votes in the Electoral College.⁷² Bush's victory in Florida was not final until a controversial 5–4 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Bush v. Gore* (2000). This decision reversed the Florida Supreme Court's order for a statewide recount, which led to Gore's final concession on December 13. Seven justices agreed that Florida did not have a clear, consistent standard to govern manual recounts, but only five—all Republican appointees—believed that a deadline established in an obscure 1887 law that precluded recounts within six days of Electoral College balloting applied in this instance. Despite deep disagreement on the Court, the Florida recount was halted, and Bush emerged the victor.

Electoral votes were reapportioned for the 2004 and 2012 presidential elections, reflecting the results of the 2000 and 2010 censuses and the subsequent reallocation of seats in the House of Representatives. States in the North, East, and Midwest lost seats, while those in the South and West gained.⁷³ Following the 2010 census, Texas gained four votes and Florida two, with six other states gaining one each: Arizona, Nevada, Georgia, South Carolina, Utah, and Washington. New York and Ohio lost two votes each, while Michigan, Illinois, Missouri, Iowa, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania lost one vote each.

Democratic candidates have confronted a difficult strategic problem arising from the historic realignment of the South in presidential politics. Southern voters solidly supported Democrats for many decades following the Civil War but then shifted party allegiance. Until 1992, no Democrat had ever won the White House without carrying a majority of southern states. Southern support evaporated even for Jimmy Carter in 1980, when only Georgia supported its favorite son. No southern state voted for the Democratic ticket in 1984 or 1988. The Solid South was a Republican stronghold until Clinton won Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, and Tennessee in 1992.⁷⁴

George W. Bush won the entire South in 2000, including Gore's home state of Tennessee. Eleven states switched columns from 1996, including Florida, New Hampshire, and West Virginia, a traditional Democratic stronghold. Gore could have won the election with either New Hampshire's

four votes or Florida's twenty-five; many Gore voters believed that liberal Democrats supporting Ralph Nader in both states prevented victory. Buchanan may also have denied Bush victories in New Mexico and Wisconsin and their sixteen electoral votes.⁷⁵

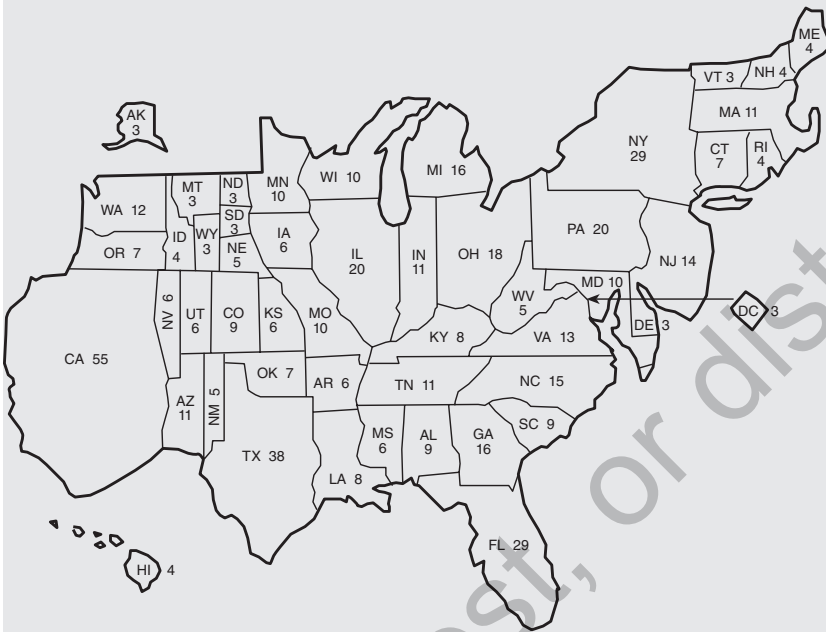
For all the money spent in the 2004 campaign, the outcome changed from 2000 in only three states: Iowa and New Mexico moved to Bush and New Hampshire to Kerry. Once again, no southern state voted for the Democratic candidate, which meant the Kerry campaign had virtually no room for error in reaching 270. The election came down to Ohio's twenty electoral votes, and the nation waited anxiously to see if there would be a repeat of 2000, but in the end, Kerry lost Ohio by 118,599 votes out of 5,627,903 cast.

With his solid financial advantage, Obama pursued a fifty-state strategy in 2008 while concentrating resources on the crucial target states. As a result, nine states shifted party columns from how they voted in 2004, including three in the South—Florida, North Carolina, and Virginia. In the West, Colorado, Nevada, and New Mexico shifted to the Democrats; and in the Midwest, Indiana, Iowa, and Ohio went Democratic. One electoral vote also shifted in Nebraska, the result of a congressional district supporting Obama while the rest of the state supported McCain. With broad popular support, Obama won in the Electoral College, 365 to 173, the largest margin of victory since Clinton in 1996.

For 2012, states that Obama won in 2008 lost six votes in the Electoral College following the census. In two other states (North Carolina and Indiana), the popular-vote plurality shifted from Democrat to Republican, and Obama lost the one district vote he had received in Nebraska. In the end, Obama won thirty-three fewer electoral votes. His popular-vote total was also down by 4.5 million votes.

In 2016, Trump won in the Electoral College 304–227, but he lost the popular vote by nearly 2.9 million. The key to Trump's success was victories in three states the Democrats believed were secure: Clinton lost Michigan by 10,704 votes; Pennsylvania by 44,292 votes; and Wisconsin by 22,748. Combined, they had forty-six electoral votes, enough for a Clinton victory. Had Clinton been able to halve the popular vote margin in each of those states (fewer than 39,000 total votes), she would have won. Votes for the left-leaning Green candidate exceeded Trump's margin of victory in each of these three states; that is, had those votes gone to Clinton, she would have won. In addition to the big three, several other states switched from D to R, including Florida, Iowa, Ohio, and one congressional district in Maine. Overall, Clinton lost 100 electoral votes from Obama's total in 2012 (an additional five electors who should have supported her refused to do so). Trump won thirty states and Clinton twenty plus D.C. Clinton's popular vote total was down slightly from Obama's in 2012, and Trump's was up from Romney's, although still trailing Clinton's.

Figure 2-2 State Size by Number of Electoral Votes, 2016



Source: For more information on shifting state electoral vote totals over time see <http://uselectionatlas.org/INFORMATION/index.php> and www.presidency.ucsb.edu/elections.php.

Appealing for Public Support

Presidential campaigns spend millions of dollars and untold hours pursuing two goals: motivating people to cast a ballot and winning their support for a particular candidate. Several factors other than campaign appeals determine who votes and how they vote. Voters' choices depend on their long-term political predispositions, such as party loyalties and social group affiliations, and their reactions to short-term forces, such as the candidates and issues involved in specific elections. Candidates and their campaign professionals try to design appeals that activate these influences, attract support, and counter perceived weaknesses.

Because the audience is larger and the time is shorter during the general election period than during the nomination period, candidates use their resources primarily for mass-media appeals. Advertising expenditures have risen accordingly, with campaigns spending half their funding on radio and television messages. Since 1952, television has been the chief source of campaign information for most Americans and is still used more than the internet, newspapers, or radio.⁷⁶ Rather than being national in scope,

however, campaign advertising is targeted to selected markets in crucial Electoral College states, a pattern especially apparent since 2000 when major party campaigns have focused on a defined list of battleground states. Obama's money advantage allowed him to challenge in many more states in 2008, even those considered long shots, such as McCain's home state of Arizona. In 2016, the campaigns focused on a dozen states with the greatest attention on Florida, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Ohio.

Students of elections have categorized influences on voter decisions as either long term or short term. Long-term influences include partisanship and group membership, whereas candidate image, issues, and campaign incidents are short term.

Long-Term Influences. Partisan loyalty, although still important for a large part of the public, has become less significant as a determinant of election outcomes. Conditions have changed considerably since researchers studying presidential elections in the 1950s concluded that the single most important determinant of voting was the voter's **party identification**.⁷⁷ This general psychological attachment, shaped by family and social groups, tended to intensify with age. For the average person looking for guidance on how to vote amid the complexities of personalities, issues, and events of the 1950s, the party label of the candidates was the most important reference point. Partisanship was also fairly constant: About 45 percent of Americans in 1952 and 1956 said they thought of themselves as Democrats, and about 28 percent viewed themselves as Republicans, for a combined total of nearly three-fourths of the electorate. When asked to classify themselves further as "strong" or "weak" partisans, Republicans and Democrats both tended to divide equally between those two categories. Independents in 1952 and 1956 averaged about 23 percent of the electorate.

In the mid- to late-1960s, however, partisan affiliation in the United States began to change (see Table 2-2). Beginning with the 1968 election, the number of Independents started to rise, primarily at the expense of the Democrats; by 1972, Independents constituted one-third of the electorate. Even voters who stayed with the Democrats were more inclined than formerly to say they were weak, rather than strong, party members. By 1988, some polls found that Independents outnumbered Democrats. Voters who entered the electorate in 1964 or later are much more likely to be political Independents than were voters of earlier political generations, a development that has been linked to the influence of Vietnam and Watergate and later to declining confidence in government.

Total partisanship—the combined percentage of citizens declaring themselves Democrats or Republicans—fell to its lowest level between 1972 and 1976, rebounded slightly in the 1980s, and sank again in the

Table 2-2 Party Identification, 1952-2016 (Percentage)

Party	1952	1956	1960	1964	1968	1972	1976	1980	1984	1988	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004	2008	2012	2016
Strong Democratic	22	21	20	27	20	15	15	18	17	17	18	15	18	19	19	17	17	19	20	21
Weak Democratic	25	23	25	25	25	26	25	23	20	18	18	19	19	18	15	17	16	15	15	14
Total	47	44	45	52	45	41	40	41	37	35	36	34	37	37	34	34	33	34	35	35
Strong Republican	14	15	16	11	10	10	9	9	12	14	11	16	12	10	12	14	16	13	15	16
Weak Republican	14	14	14	14	15	13	14	14	15	14	14	15	15	16	12	16	12	13	12	12
Total	28	29	30	25	25	23	23	23	27	28	25	31	27	26	24	30	28	26	27	28
Independent	23	23	23	23	30	34	37	34	34	36	38	35	35	36	40	36	39	40	38	37

Source: Data drawn from the American National Election Studies (ANES), Center for Political Studies at the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research; and the ANES Guide to Public Opinion and Electoral Behavior, Table 2A.1, <https://electionstudies.org/resources/anes-guide/top-tables/?id=21>.

Note: Responses to this question: "Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?" Independent voters include voters labeled as "Independent Democrats" and "Independent Republicans," sometimes referred to as "leaners."

1990s. The percentage of Independents has remained strong since the 1970s. By the 2004 election, the electorate's composition was 33 percent Democrats, 28 percent Republicans, and 39 percent Independents. Another 17 percent of Independents "leaned" Democratic, and 12 percent "leaned" Republican.⁷⁸ In 2008, Independents outnumbered Democrats 40 percent to 34 percent with Republicans a distant third at 26 percent. Independents reversed places with Democrats in 2012 and Republicans lost slightly (see Table 2-2). The Pew Research Center found 2012 to have been more like 2008; about one-third of the voters were Democrats, one-quarter Republican, and the remainder Independent, with 10 percent more voters "leaning" Democratic. In the lead up to the 2016 election, both Pew and Gallup found that Independents approached forty percent and consistently outnumbered both Democrats and Republicans.⁷⁹ Campaigns seek support by activating traditional party loyalties, yet they also attempt to lure identifiers of the other party by blurring traditional themes, a tightrope act that can confuse the general public.

In 2016, Trump ("lock her up!") and, to a lesser extent, Clinton ("basket of deplorables") vilified their opponent on the campaign trail, tactics reflecting a striking change that has occurred in partisanship over the past two decades—the rise of **negative partisanship**.⁸⁰ Voters "largely align *against*" a party and its nominee "instead of affiliating *with*" the other option.⁸¹ In 2016, neither party's voters were enthusiastic about their own nominee, but "large majorities of Democrats and Republicans truly despised the opposing party's nominee" and those negative feelings extended to the opposition party, as well.⁸²

Yet voters appear to be relying heavily on partisanship in making their voting decisions even while they have lower opinions of both political parties. Nearly 63% of voters identified to some degree with one of the two major parties and another 22% were self-identified Independents who leaned towards a party. Relatively few voters defected from those party preferences with only 11% of Democrats and 12% of Republicans voting for the presidential candidate of the other party. Many factors help explain this development: the widespread use of negative campaign tactics; the proliferation of more ideological media and internet outlets; the salience of emotionally polarizing issues such as abortion and gay rights; rising racial resentment as nonwhite voters moved disproportionately toward the Democratic party; and the ability of voters to select sources of information and friends that reinforce their opinions.⁸³

Political conflict has become more intense even as group support for the parties has become more distinctive. Social group membership has long been an important influence on voting that candidates try to tap. Patterns of group support established during the New Deal persisted during succeeding decades, although with decreasing vibrancy. In the 1940s, Democrats' support came from southerners, union members, Catholics, and people with limited education, lower incomes, and a working-class background.

Northerners, whites, Protestants, and people with more education, higher incomes, and a professional or business background supported Republican candidates. The support of many groups for their traditional party's candidates varied from election to election. Democrats lost the southern white vote: In 1988, only one in three white votes went to Dukakis, and only 26 percent of white males supported him.⁸⁴ On the other hand, support of nonwhites for Democrats strengthened after 1964 and reached near-historic levels in 2008,⁸⁵ and in 2012, nonwhites represented 45 percent of the Democratic vote.⁸⁶ Union members, long a foundation of Democratic support, voted strongly for Nixon and Reagan, and the percentage of workers who were union members declined precipitously.

Obama's victorious coalition in 2008 rested on strong support among women (56 percent of that vote), African Americans (95 percent), Hispanics (67 percent), and young voters. Exit polls showed Obama winning 69 percent of support from first-time voters and a similar percentage among the eighteen- to twenty-nine-year-old voters (66 percent).⁸⁷ Obama lost among white voters (55 percent to 43 percent), those sixty and older (51 percent to 47 percent), Protestants (54 percent to 45 percent), and rural voters (53 percent to 45 percent). He garnered the votes of just 31 percent of southern whites, but his advantage in other categories was so great that the popular-vote outcome—53 percent to 46 percent in his favor—was not in question.

In 2016, Clinton hoped to reassemble the Obama coalition, and Trump worked to erode it. The first woman to head a major party ticket won less of the women's vote than the campaign had expected (54 percent to 42 percent), a smaller margin than Obama enjoyed in 2008. Trump carried men 53 percent to 41 percent. Black voters again voted overwhelmingly for the Democrat (88 percent to 8 percent) and whites for the Republican (58 percent to 37 percent). Younger voters went for Clinton (55 percent of 18- to 29-year olds), but down 11 percent from Obama; older voters supported Trump. Clinton's support rose with education, and Trump led among whites without a college degree, 67 percent to 28 percent. Trump's decisive advantage among rural voters (62 percent to 34 percent) helped explain his victories in Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin where he won rural counties by large margins, offsetting Clinton's advantage in urban areas. As we have seen, after raucous and fragmenting nomination campaigns in both parties, partisans went back home to support their own party's nominee. Independents chose Trump 48 percent to 42 percent.⁸⁸ Today, "The Democrats are the party of nonwhites, women, city dwellers, the young, and 'highbrow' culture. The Republican electorate consists disproportionately of older White males, evangelicals, southerners, and people more interested in Nascar than the NBA."⁸⁹

The rise of negative partisanship combined with the sorting out of social groups between Democrats and Republicans means that America

faces the potential of becoming a society at war with itself. Most of the traditional party loyalties from the New Deal era and later have disappeared. Organized labor occasionally divided its vote in the past but is now very fragmented. Trump's embrace of restrictive and punitive immigration policies, part of his appeal to working class Americans, is likely to accelerate further the movement of nonwhite voters to the Democrats. Democrats have the advantage among three of the four new groups that emerged over the past half-century—women, young voters, and Hispanics. The fourth group—fundamentalist Christians—is strongly Republican. Because many American voters view parties in a negative light, short-term influences—candidates, issues, and events—as well as presidential performance are now more important than ever.

Short-Term Influences. During presidential campaigns, the public focuses a great deal of attention on the candidates' personality and character traits. Each campaign organization strives to create a composite image of its candidate's most attractive features. To do this sometimes means transforming liabilities into assets: Age becomes mature judgment (Eisenhower); youth and inexperience become vigor (Kennedy). Alternatively, a candidate can direct attention to the opponent's personal liabilities, a risky move because some voters see such an effort as dirty campaigning.

The 1988 and 2012 campaigns provide good examples of how candidates try to shape each other's image. George H. W. Bush succeeded in creating a negative portrait of Michael Dukakis in 1988, whose favorable image was based on very little information. Interviews conducted with small groups of Democrats who had supported Reagan in 1980 and 1984 shaped the Bush campaign's charges that the Democratic nominee was sympathetic to criminals, weak on defense, opposed to saying the pledge of allegiance in school, and a liberal who favored high taxes and big government.⁹⁰ In 2012, the Obama campaign defined Romney as a wealthy, hard-hearted businessman responsible for U.S. workers losing their jobs. Unfortunately for Romney, a secret video tape of a fund-raising dinner where he had denounced forty-seven percent of the people as seeking government hand-outs seemed to confirm much of the stereotype.

In 2016, the Clinton campaign and supportive outside groups focused their advertising efforts on Donald Trump's personality and why it made him unfit for the presidency. Trump aired far fewer ads than Clinton and they had more policy content, providing more comparisons of himself with Clinton. But ads sponsored by pro-Trump outside groups were quite negative toward Clinton. Trump pursued the unconventional strategy of relying heavily on social media (his supporters loved his Twitter messages) and large rallies where he made controversial statements that attracted blanket (free) media coverage. Many comments focused on crimes

allegedly committed by Clinton that triggered chants by his supporters to “Lock her up.” A comprehensive study of the election’s political advertising concluded that 2016 was the “second most negative in the last decade and a half.”⁹¹

Voters look for many qualities in a president. Honesty, trustworthiness, the ability to bring about change, empathy towards people like themselves, and having a vision for the future are often mentioned. In 1992, change favored Clinton, and in 1996 it was having a vision for the future that distinguished him from Dole.⁹² In 2000, honesty was the trait mentioned most by voters (24 percent), and 80 percent of those who mentioned it voted for George W. Bush, also perceived as the stronger leader and more likeable despite Gore’s greater experience and greater empathy.⁹³ In 2004, Bush was regarded as more honest and trustworthy (47 percent to 40 percent), the stronger leader (56 percent to 36 percent), and clearer on the issues (57 percent to 34 percent), while Kerry was slightly more likely to understand the problems of “people like you” (46 percent to 44 percent).⁹⁴

In 2008, candidates for the nomination focused on experience versus change: Which candidate would bring the necessary experience to the job and be able to hit the ground running on “day one,” as Hillary Clinton put it, as opposed to which would be an agent for change? Change emerged as a more powerful appeal than experience. Both Clinton (eight years in the White House as first lady and eight years in the Senate) and John McCain, (four years in the U.S. House and twenty-two in the Senate) modified their campaigns to highlight their capacity to serve as change agents, an indication of the power of Obama’s appeal for “change you can believe in.” By election day, exit polls showed that 59 percent of voters thought McCain had the right experience to be president vs. 51 percent for Obama.⁹⁵ Voters preferred Obama’s judgment over McCain’s (57 percent to 49 percent), and more people thought Obama was in touch with people like themselves (57 percent to 39 percent). Obama’s empathy advantage was again strong in 2012, and there were strongly unfavorable perceptions of Romney. Leadership and empathy were especially important to Independent voters, a group hotly pursued by both campaigns.

Although the public knew both 2016 candidates quite well, neither was viewed favorably. In fact, polls showed that Trump and Clinton had the lowest favorability ratings of any candidates since the question became a polling standard in 1980. Trump’s unfavorable ratings exceeded his favorable ratings by an average of –24 percent during the campaign’s final three months and Clinton’s averaged –16 percent. The difference was that among voters who disliked *both* candidates, Trump led by 22 percent of the vote; many of the late deciders, nearly one in every eight voters, overwhelmingly disliked both candidates. Exit polls showed that Clinton had an enormous advantage among voters in experience (90 percent to 8 percent) and judgment (66 percent to 26 percent), but Trump was viewed as far more likely

to bring about change (83 percent to 14 percent). Twenty percent of Trump voters did not believe he had the temperament to be effective in office, just as twenty percent of Clinton's voters doubted that she was honest and trustworthy, probably the lingering doubts about her missing emails and Trump's repeated attacks on "Crooked Hillary."⁹⁶

Issues are another major short-term influence on voting behavior. University of Michigan researchers in the 1950s suggested that issues influence a voter's choice only if three conditions are present: (1) The voter is aware that an issue or several issues exist, (2) issues are of some personal concern to the voter, and (3) the voter perceives that one party represents his or her position better than the other party does.⁹⁷ When the three conditions were applied to U.S. voters in the 1952 and 1956 presidential elections, researchers found that these criteria were met by relatively few voters—at most one-quarter to one-third. Another one-third of the respondents were unaware of *any* of the sixteen principal issues about which they were questioned. Even the two-thirds who were aware of one or more issues frequently had no personal concern about them. Finally, many of those who were aware and concerned about issues were unable to perceive differences between the two parties' positions. The analysts concluded that issues *potentially* determined the choice of, at most, only one-third of the electorate. (The proportion who *actually* voted as they did because of issues could have been, and probably was, even less.)

Studies of political attitudes in the 1960s and 1970s found that the number and types of issues of which voters were aware had increased.⁹⁸ Voters during the Eisenhower years exhibited some interest in traditional domestic matters, such as welfare and labor-management relationships, and in a few foreign policy issues, such as the threat of communism and the danger of the atomic bomb. Beginning with the 1964 election, however, voters' interests broadened to include concerns such as civil rights and the Vietnam War. The war, in particular, remained an important consideration in the 1968 and 1972 contests and was joined by new matters—crime, disorder, and juvenile delinquency, which, along with race problems, were known as social issues.

Salient issues vary from election to election. Greater issue clarity existed between the candidates in the elections of 1984, 1992, 1996, and 2004.⁹⁹ Exit polls in 2004 revealed that Bush voters identified moral values and terrorism as their most important issues, while the economy and jobs, Iraq, and health care mattered most to Kerry voters.¹⁰⁰ The economy dominated voter concerns in 2008 and 2012; 63 percent of voters in 2008 and 59 percent in 2012 cited it as their most important concern. Of those who were very worried about the economy in 2008, 59 percent favored Obama; voters in 2012 split evenly on whether Obama or Romney could do a better job on the economy, but a plurality saw things as getting better and a majority (53 percent to 38 percent) blamed Bush for the nation's

economic problems rather than Obama.¹⁰¹ Voters' lingering feelings about George W. Bush had weighed heavily against McCain in 2008. Seventy-one percent of the voters disapproved of the way Bush had performed as president, and 48 percent said McCain would continue Bush's policies.¹⁰²

Immigration dominated much of the 2016 campaign from the moment Donald Trump declared his candidacy in June 2015, but on election day voters ranked the economy as most important: 52 percent ranked the economy number one followed by 18 percent terrorism and 13 percent immigration. Clinton held a 52–41 advantage among those listing the economy most important but trailed Trump 40–57 on terrorism and 33–64 on immigration.

Campaign events loomed large in 2016. The FBI played a prominent role, first declaring in June 2016 that Clinton would not be prosecuted for using a private email server while serving as Secretary of State that potentially made classified documents vulnerable. But a mere nine days before the election, Director James Comey announced that the FBI was examining another group of emails found on the computer of a close Clinton aide. Even though Comey announced three days before the election that no charges against Clinton would arise from the new emails, Clinton believed that the sudden doubt injected into voters' minds cost her the election. Clinton was also filmed stumbling during a bout with pneumonia, and Trump was embarrassed by the release of an *Access Hollywood* audio and videotape shortly before the second debate in which he described grabbing attractive women by their genitals.¹⁰³ Eventually, a dozen women came forward to denounce his unwanted advances over the years.

In early October 2016, the Director of National Intelligence and Secretary of Homeland Security warned that agents of the Russian government were interfering in U.S. elections by posting fake messages on social media, hacking Democratic National Committee emails, and releasing them through WikiLeaks, all actions timed to embarrass the Democrats.¹⁰⁴ Multiple intelligence agencies of U.S. allies alerted their counterparts in the United States that there were contacts between Russian agents and Trump campaign officials as well as close Trump associates.¹⁰⁵ After the election, Obama ordered a full investigation by the FBI and U.S. intelligence agencies that concluded unanimously that Russia had interfered in the presidential election with the goal of helping Donald Trump win. Two questions remained: Had the interference influenced the outcome? Had Americans colluded with the Russians? Intelligence officials refused to take a position on how much the interference had impacted the election's outcome. Congressional investigations into collusion got bogged down in partisan conflict (House) and even when the investigation was more bipartisan (Senate) proved unable to produce definitive answers.

The principal investigation into Russian interference was conducted by a Special Counsel appointed by the Justice Department in May 2017.

Robert Mueller was a Republican and former Marine who had served as FBI Director under both Bush and Obama. Although President Trump falsely railed against Mueller as having personal conflicts of interest and as heading a “rigged witch hunt” conducted by partisan Democrats, Mueller’s probe produced an impressive number of indictments and guilty pleas. Mueller charged thirteen Russians and three companies with using social media to spread false stories about immigration, religion, and race designed to fan social conflict, reduce turnout of typically Democratic voters, and help the Trump campaign.¹⁰⁶ Mueller charged twelve Russian intelligence agents with hacking the DNC server, laundering money, and breaking into state election boards (more than 20) in order to sabotage Hillary Clinton’s campaign.¹⁰⁷ Mueller secured guilty pleas from Rick Gates (Trump’s deputy campaign manager and deputy inauguration chair) and Michael Flynn (Trump’s first National Security Adviser and campaign aide), while charging Paul Manafort (Trump’s campaign chair) with multiple bank and tax fraud charges not related to the campaign for which he was found guilty. Trump’s personal attorney, Michael Cohen, pled guilty to six bank fraud and tax evasion charges as well as to two violations of campaign finance laws after Mueller referred findings to the district attorney of the Southern District of New York. Gates, Flynn, Cohen, and lesser campaign figures cooperated with the Mueller investigation. (Manafort cooperated briefly before reversing field.) And Mueller’s probe could not prove a campaign conspiracy existed. The arrest and indictment of Roger Stone, a long-time political adviser to Trump, suggested that he may have been the conduit through which coordination occurred between the Trump campaign and Julian Assange, head of Wikileaks.¹⁰⁸

So far as we know, Russia is the first nation to attempt to influence the outcome of a modern U.S. presidential election. Kathleen Hall Jamieson conducted the most systematic academic study of whether the Russian efforts helped determine the outcome of the 2016 election. She concluded that Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and Tumbler were unwitting “conduits for Russian propaganda”¹⁰⁹ and that as many as one in every four Americans “visited a fake news website” in the final weeks leading up to the election, exposure that was increased by the sharing of fake stories on Facebook viewed by one-hundred and twenty-six million Americans.¹¹⁰ “Late deciders—who disapproved of both candidates—voted disproportionately for Trump,”¹¹¹ the result of an overwhelmingly negative media environment in the closing weeks of the campaign. The hacked emails released by WikiLeaks produced a glut of negative publicity for Clinton (the media described their theft as leaks), refocused the topics raised during the two final debates, and diminished the effect of revelations about Trump’s reprehensible personal behavior toward women. Based on its uncritical focus on the stolen emails, Jamieson concluded that, “The press served as a conveyor belt of stolen content rather

than a gatekeeper”¹¹² that helps the public figure out the meaning of what it sees.

It is reasonable to argue that the many-pronged information war launched by Russia could have made the critical difference in a race decided by a few thousand votes in a few states.¹¹³ Moreover, Russian intervention was timed to have the greatest desired effect. Take, for example, the fascinating sequence of events on October 7, 2016. At 3:00 p.m., spokespersons release the joint statement from Homeland Security and the Director of National Intelligence about Russia’s interference in the presidential election. That startling story was pushed aside just after 4:00 p.m. by the *Washington Post’s* story on Donald Trump’s lewd comments directed at women caught on mic by *Access Hollywood*. They also posted a link to the actual recording. Just a half hour later, however, WikiLeaks released the first group of emails stolen from Clinton’s campaign director, John Podesta. This final story was an obvious effort, largely successful, to distract attention away from the two earlier stories.¹¹⁴

By mid-August 2018, Gallup found that among the seventy-five percent of Americans who believed Russia had interfered in the election, 39 percent believed it had affected the outcome and 36 percent believed that it had not.¹¹⁵ It is possible that Mueller’s future probe will uncover definitive evidence about collusion; in the meantime, Jamieson’s carefully argued account makes it clear there is a high probability that Russia’s efforts made the decisive difference in the 2016 election.

Incumbency. Incumbency may be viewed as a candidate characteristic that also involves issues. Service in the job provides experience no one else can claim. Incumbency provides concrete advantages: An incumbent already has national campaign experience (true for all incumbents except Ford, who had been appointed to the vice presidency), can obtain media coverage more easily, and has considerable discretion in allocating federal benefits.

Four of the seven incumbent presidents who ran for reelection between 1976 and 2012 won (Reagan, Clinton, George W. Bush, and Obama), while only one of the past four incumbent vice presidents who sought the presidency was successful (George H. W. Bush). The failure of Ford, Carter, and G. H. W. Bush to gain a second term demonstrates the *disadvantages* of incumbency, particularly if service in the presidency coincides with negative economic conditions, such as a recession and high inflation or an unresolved foreign crisis for which a president is blamed, even if erroneously. Experience in the job, then, is not a political plus if a sitting president’s record is considered weak or national conditions seem to have deteriorated under the incumbent’s stewardship. The president may be held accountable by voters who cast their ballots *retrospectively* rather than *prospectively*;

in other words, these voters evaluate an administration's past performance rather than try to predict future performance.

Retrospective voting helps to explain Carter's defeat in 1980 and Reagan's reelection in 1984. Carter's failure to resolve the hostage crisis in Iran seemed to demonstrate national weakness; in contrast, Reagan embraced pride in America as a major campaign theme. Both elections found citizens voting retrospectively, first providing a negative and then a positive verdict. In 1996, Clinton benefited from the peace and prosperity of his first term, but when Gore distanced himself from Clinton's affair with Monica Lewinsky, he also moved away from the administration's achievements.¹¹⁶ Personal incumbency was not a factor in 2008 and 2016, but party incumbency was. For the first and second times since 1952, neither party's nominee was an incumbent president or vice president. Democrats actively linked Bush's record to the Republican nominee in 2008 even though the president made no campaign appearances with McCain. In stark contrast, Hillary Clinton featured Barack and Michelle Obama during rally after rally, particularly during the final month of the 2016 campaign. The Obamas' message was clear: "Our legacy is on the line. Vote for Hillary." But, as we have seen, the Obama coalition did not reassemble for Clinton or at least not with the same enthusiasm. More generally, extending partisan control of the presidency past two terms requires overcoming voters' instinct that it is "time for a change."¹¹⁷

Presidential Debates. Voters have the opportunity to assess the issue positions and personal characteristics of presidential and vice-presidential contenders during nationally televised debates. Debates, first staged in 1960 and held each election year since 1976, are the most widely watched campaign events. Candidates hope to avoid making a mistake on live television, a particular danger for incumbents. Ford misspoke in 1976 by saying that the countries of Eastern Europe were not under Soviet domination; Reagan appeared to be confused and out of touch during his first debate with Mondale in 1984 but rallied in the second encounter. Challengers try to demonstrate their knowledge of issues and their presidential bearing to a nationwide audience. Kennedy in 1960, Reagan in 1980, and George W. Bush in 2000 benefited by exceeding expectations and dispelling negative impressions while debating a more experienced opponent. Candidates usually prepare carefully prior to the meeting and repeat themes already prominent in the campaign. As a result, the exchanges often seem wooden rather than spontaneous, although there can be moments of drama. Trailing candidates hope the debates will reverse the trend. John Kerry was the consensus victor in all three debates with George W. Bush but could not turn the race around. McCain lost all three presidential debates in 2008,

although he was more effective in the final debate. Obama appeared passive in the first 2012 debate under Romney's pressure, but the incumbent rallied in the final two debates,

Donald Trump pointedly approached the debates in a confident, relaxed manner, refusing to sequester himself for days of preparation as most candidates have done. Post-debate polls showed that he lost all three encounters, the first of which was the most watched presidential debate in history with 84 million television viewers. Trump's unrehearsed style contrasted with Clinton's careful, lawyer-like approach.¹¹⁸ The second debate, coming on the heels of the *Access Hollywood* tape, was probably the most dramatic. After several days of controversy and pressure on him to withdraw from the race, Trump instead held a pre-debate press conference featuring several of the women who had charged Bill Clinton with unwanted sexual advances and then gave them prime seats in the debate audience. In the third debate, Clinton and Trump traded insults. Her opponent was "unfit, and he proves it every time he talks," Clinton charged; "Such a nasty woman," Trump snarled back.

Vice-presidential candidates have debated since 1976 without much impact on the outcomes. The vice-presidential debate that drew the largest audience was held in 2008. An estimated 69.9 million viewers tuned in to see the encounter between longtime senator Joe Biden and national neophyte Sarah Palin. Governor Palin's poor performance in several televised interviews had aroused speculation whether she would self-destruct during this high-stakes encounter, but she held her own for most of the debate, using a folksy style that contrasted sharply with Biden's occasional lapse into Washington speak. An even greater mismatch between VP candidates occurred in 1988 when Dan Quayle confronted the much older and far more experienced Lloyd Bentsen. Questioners asked Quayle repeatedly what he would do if forced to assume the duties of president. When Quayle compared himself to former president John F. Kennedy, Bentsen pounced with withering directness: "Senator, I served with Jack Kennedy. I knew Jack Kennedy. Jack Kennedy was a friend of mine. Senator, you're no Jack Kennedy." Quayle never recovered.¹¹⁹

Televised debates enable even the least engaged citizen to develop an impression of the major-party contenders. Candidates, however, have become quite adept at stagecraft, and the public may now expect more than just a polite exchange of policy challenges as candidates try to display assertiveness, empathy, humor, or character.

Election Day

One of the ironies of presidential elections since 1960 is that although more citizens have acquired the right to vote, until 2004, a shrinking

proportion had exercised that right. As Table 2-3 indicates, the estimated number of people of voting age has more than doubled since 1932. After reaching a peak in 1960, however, the percentage of people who voted declined in the next five presidential elections. Despite a modest increase in 1984, only 50.1 percent went to the polls in 1988. This pattern unexpectedly reversed in 1992, when 55.2 percent voted.¹²⁰ The resurgence proved short-lived, however. Only 49.1 percent showed up in 1996, the lowest turnout since 1924. There was a modest uptick in 2000 to 51.2 percent, and a startling increase in 2004, variously set at 55.3 percent based on the *voting-age population* (all those eighteen and older) or 60.7 percent using the more accurate measure of the *voting-eligible population*, which excludes noncitizens and felons. In 2008, turnout rose to 56.9 percent for the voting-age population (including noneligible residents, immigrants, and prison inmates) and to 63 percent of the voting-eligible population. These levels declined in 2012 to 53.6 percent (voting age) and 58.7 (voting eligible) but rose again in 2016 to 54.7 percent (voting age) and 60.2 percent (voting eligible).¹²¹

Optimists believe that the long-term decline in voter participation has been halted. Indeed, the trend ran counter to most theories of why



AP Photo, File

Photo 2.3 The debates between Democratic Senator John F. Kennedy and Republican Vice President Richard Nixon in 1960 were the first to be televised. Kennedy benefited from his strong performance in the debates against his more politically experienced opponent. Today, candidates use this forum to challenge opponents' ideas and portray themselves as presidential and likeable.

Table 2-3 Participation of General Public in Presidential Elections, 1932–2016

Year	Estimated Population of Voting Age (in millions)	Number of Votes Cast (in millions)	Number of Votes as Percentage of Population of Voting Age
1932	75.8	39.7	52.4
1936	80.2	45.6	56.0
1940	84.7	49.9	58.9
1944	85.7	48.0	56.0
1948	95.6	48.8	51.1
1952	99.9	61.6	61.6
1956	104.5	62.0	59.3
1960	109.7	68.8	62.8
1964	114.1	70.6	61.9
1968	120.3	73.2	60.9
1972 ^a	140.8	77.6	55.1
1976	152.3	81.6	53.6
1980	164.6	86.5	52.6
1984	174.5	92.7	53.1
1988	182.8	91.6	50.1
1992	189.0	104.4	55.2
1996	196.5	96.5	49.1
2000	205.8	105.4	51.2
2004	221.3	122.3	55.3
2008	230.8	131.3	56.9
2012	240.9	130.3	53.6
2016	250.1	136.7	54.7

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports*, Series P-25, No. 1085 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1994); 1996, 2000, and 2004 data from Federal Election Commission (FEC) website, www.fec.gov; and U.S. Census Bureau website, www.census.gov. Data for 2008, 2012, and 2016 from United States Elections Project, www.electproject.org/2008g, www.electproject.org/2012g, and www.electproject.org/2016g, respectively.

^a Beginning in 1972, persons eighteen to twenty years old were eligible to vote in all states.

people do not vote. Most states had eased laws pertaining to registration and voting, said to prevent citizens from going to the polls. Federal laws made it far easier for a person to register and to vote for president in 1996, the low point in the trend, than in 1960. A person's lack of education is often put forward as a reason for not voting, but the level of education of U.S. citizens rose as participation declined. Lack of political information is yet another frequently cited explanation, but more Americans than ever are aware of the candidates and their views on public issues, thanks to media coverage and the debates. Finally, close political races are supposed to stimulate people to get out and vote because they think their ballot will make a difference in the outcome. But the recent increases could also be temporary.

Why did voting decline after 1960, and then surge and decline in subsequent elections? Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde link the long-term decline to the erosion in political party identification and to lower **political efficacy**—the belief that citizens can influence what government does.¹²² But these authors note that neither party identification nor political efficacy changed significantly in 1992 and 1996 to explain the rising numbers. Subsequent gains and losses seem unique to particular contests. For example, Ross Perot's presence on the ballot probably contributed to the 1992 turnout increase; 14 percent of Perot voters (which translates into nearly three million votes, a substantial portion of the larger turnout) indicated in exit polls that without Perot on the ballot, they would not have voted. By 1996, when turnout again declined, states were providing opportunities to register to vote when getting a driver's license, and Democrats made a concerted effort to register newly naturalized citizens, but Perot's presence was no longer novel. Today, more states are adopting restrictive requirements designed to combat purported voter fraud even though the number of documented voter fraud cases remains quite low. Given these new laws, we might expect participation to decline again.

Validation

Translating the popular vote into the official outcome is the final stage of the selection process, in which the Electoral College produces the true winner. Until 2000, it had been more than a century since the constitutionally prescribed process failed to do so or produced a winner who was not also the "people's choice," although we had been dangerously close to such an Electoral College *misfire* on several occasions.

Despite the separation of the presidential and the vice-presidential balloting in 1804, there remain three possible ways for a misfire to occur. First, the Electoral College does not ensure that the candidate who receives the most popular votes wins the presidency: John Quincy Adams in 1824, Rutherford B. Hayes in 1876, and Benjamin Harrison in 1888 became

president even though they finished second in total popular vote to their respective political opponents. The same thing happened in 2000, when Gore won a national plurality of 543,895 votes but lost in the Electoral College. And in 2016, Clinton won nearly 2.9 million more popular votes than Trump but finished second in the Electoral College.¹²³ In a second misfire, candidates may fail to win an Electoral College majority, thereby throwing selection into the House of Representatives. This situation occurred in 1800, 1824, and 1876.

The 2016 election illustrates a third danger of the Electoral College system: An elector need not cast his or her ballot for the candidate who wins the plurality of votes in the elector's state. This problem of the **faithless elector** occurred eight times in the twentieth century, and in 2004 a Minnesota elector apparently mismarked his ballot and cast votes for John Edwards both as president and vice president. It is not particularly dangerous when isolated electors make an error or refuse to follow the result of their states' popular votes, but widespread desertion would be another matter. A record number of electors ignored their state results in 2016—four in Washington state, two in Texas, and one in Hawaii, with others thwarted while attempting to do so in Maine, Minnesota, and Colorado. This was the highest number of faithless electors in history, surpassing the six in 1808. Several voiced support for the defeated Bernie Sanders but others were intentionally trying to block the election of Trump.¹²⁴

The Electoral College as it operates today violates some major tenets of political equality that are central to our contemporary understanding of democracy. Each person's vote does not count equally: A citizen's influence on the outcome depends on the situation in one's state. For the many Americans who support a losing candidate, it is as though they had not voted at all because under the general-ticket system all the electoral votes of a state go to the candidate with a plurality of its popular votes. Perot received 19,741,048 votes, 18.9 percent of the total cast nationally in 1992, but he won no electoral votes because he did not finish first in any state or in any of the House districts in Maine and Nebraska. Citizens who live in populous, politically competitive states have a premium placed on their votes because they are in a position to affect how large blocs of electoral votes are cast. Similarly, permitting the House, voting by states, to select the president is not consistent with the "one person, one vote" principle that has become a central tenet of American democracy.¹²⁵

Proposals to reform the Electoral College system attempt to remove the possibility of system failures and uphold a more modern understanding of democracy. They range from the rather modest suggestion of prohibiting faithless electors—votes would be cast automatically—to scrapping the present system and moving to a direct popular election. Intermediate

suggestions would nationalize the congressional district plan used in Maine and Nebraska, divide electoral votes proportionally between (or among) the contenders, or provide the popular-vote winner with bonus votes, enough to ensure his or her victory in the Electoral College. No proposal is foolproof, and all must develop safeguards against new problems.

Is the Electoral College a constitutional anachronism that should no longer be preserved? In the aftermath of the 2000 election, attention once again focused on this eighteenth-century process, with many people stressing its inadequacies and others praising its genius. The constitutional amendments proposed then were just the latest in a long line; in fact “there have been more proposals for Constitutional amendments on changing the Electoral College than on any other subject,” more than 700 throughout U.S. history.¹²⁶ The passage of a constitutional amendment is problematic because national legislators will calculate how the new system will affect their states’ influence on the outcome (or their chances to pursue the office) and vote accordingly. A new reform proposal seeks to sidestep the difficulty of passing a constitutional amendment.

The National Popular Vote reform proposal asks states to adopt legislation that awards all of the state’s electoral votes to the winner of the *national* popular vote, even if that person did not finish first in the state’s balloting. Maryland was the first state to adopt such legislation in 2007, although the change will not go into effect until enough other states have adopted similar legislation to total 270 electoral votes.¹²⁷ By 2018, eleven states (Maryland, Hawaii, Illinois, New Jersey, Vermont, Washington, Massachusetts, California, Rhode Island, New York, and Connecticut) and the District of Columbia, totaling 172 electoral votes, had adopted the reform legislation, and eleven other states passed the bill in one house of the legislature. Among other advantages, advocates point out that general elections focus candidates’ attention on a handful of battleground states, especially Ohio, Florida, Virginia, and Iowa. In fact, the post-convention travel of the two parties’ presidential and vice-presidential candidates in 2012 was limited to twelve states, barely one-fourth of the fifty-one contests nationally.¹²⁸ And 99 percent of television advertising, the principal method of modern campaigning, was concentrated in ten states. To avoid having most of the nation relegated to spectator status, supporters argue, adopting their reform would force candidates to wage a truly national contest.¹²⁹

Defenders of the current system note that the most serious misfires occurred during periods of intense political divisiveness (for example, 1824 and 1876), when alternative selection systems would have been just as severely tested. Several of the close calls in the twentieth century, such as those in 1948 and 1968, occurred when political parties were suffering serious internal divisions. An examination of the historical conditions

surrounding the misfires shows that only 1888, 2000, and 2016 offer clear examples of a popular-vote winner who lost the general election.¹³⁰ If popular-vote rules had been in place in 2000, the chaos would have been even more widespread because the results would have been challenged in many states with close outcomes, not just in Florida. A national recount would have been far more complex than state-by-state challenges. Democrats sought reform after 2000. In the wake of 2012, Republicans in key battleground states that went to Obama (Pennsylvania, Florida, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Virginia) considered adopting either proportional or district-based systems of allocating electoral votes, hoping to provide support for the Republican presidential candidate in 2016. Changing the rules *can* change the outcome, but in 2016, Trump won five of those six battleground states under the unaltered rules. Only Virginia remained in the Democrats' column.¹³¹

Defenders also argue that the present system has been remarkably successful in producing peaceful resolutions even in tumultuous years. Its virtues include the requirement that candidates not only receive significant popular support but also have support sufficiently distributed geographically to enable the winner to govern. George W. Bush, for example, won thirty states in 2000, including eleven that had voted for Clinton in 1996. A report in the *Washington Times* noted that, even more significant, because of Bush's strength in the South and the West, "Had the 2000 presidential election been conducted using the new numbers [from the 2000 census] rather than the numbers based on the 1990 census Texas governor George W. Bush would have defeated Vice President Al Gore by a more comfortable 278 to 260 margin," a result closer to the 2004 outcome.¹³² Ethnic minority groups, it is argued, receive special leverage under the present system because they are concentrated in states with large electoral vote totals and receive attention because their support might make the difference between winning all the electoral votes or none. Finally, some observers express concern that a system of direct election would encourage the development of minor parties based on regional or ideological interests that might organize in hopes of denying any candidate a majority or winning plurality and, thereby, force a runoff. Two-party stability, it is suggested, would be threatened. Following the 2016 election, Gallup found that public support for the Electoral College system had risen, especially among Republicans who showed a sharp drop in support for a popular majority system.¹³³

Analysts differ over the wisdom of retaining the present electoral system, and even the brush with electoral crisis in 2000 did not produce a uniform response. Maintaining government legitimacy is a shared concern. Historically, successful candidates unable to secure a popular-vote majority gained legitimacy through an Electoral College majority. This happened

twice to Bill Clinton and once to George Bush, although Clinton at least won the popular-vote plurality. Defenders of the Electoral College believe legitimacy is achieved through continuity with the past, but reformers believe it is achieved through enhancing popular control and avoiding controversy like that surrounding Bush's 2000 victory and Trump's in 2016.

Conclusion: Transitions to Governing

The presidential selection process has been altered many times throughout American history. Some of the informal changes resulting from new practices pursued by the political parties and candidates have been just as important as those resulting from constitutional amendments and statutes. The current system—largely a product of modifications introduced after 1968—stresses the preferences of voters expressed through presidential primaries over those of party professionals, enhances the role of the mass media, and centers on the candidates' ability to raise campaign funds. Front-loading the delegate selection schedule has transformed the dynamics of the early stages of the contest and substantially lengthened the overall process. Despite all this, the general election winner is still chosen by balloting in the Electoral College, not the national popular vote.

For the individual and election team that prevail in this long, grueling process, victory requires a sudden change in focus. The successful candidate realizes that winning is the means to an end, not an end in itself. Making that transition is sometimes difficult. Putting together a team of political executives to staff the new administration and establishing a list of program and policy priorities is accomplished during the transition, the period between election and inauguration. In the modern presidency, governing involves some of the same activities as getting elected, but the two are far from identical. Trump faced unusual problems in 2017 after using the election to wage war against the Republican, Democratic, and Washington establishments.

The burning question for everyone is how effective will the president be in leading the nation. Presidents vary along a wide range of dimensions—abilities, interests, personality—even as the office exhibits certain commonalities over time. In chapter 4, we turn to the problem of understanding how a president's personal characteristics influence performance in office, and subsequent chapters focus on presidents' political success. First, however, we examine their relationship with the public between elections, a relationship that has increased in importance in modern times as presidents attempt to sustain the support that brought them to the office in the first place.

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RESOURCES ON THE WEB

On the arcane workings of the Electoral College, see www.archives.gov/federal-register/electoral-college/index.html.

For an extensive collection of data on the presidency, including information about recent elections, see the American Presidency Project, www.presidency.ucsb.edu/.

For thorough analysis of voter turnout, see the United States Elections Project, www.electproject.org/home/voter-turnout/voter-turnout-data. Also see *America Goes to the Polls 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016* a joint project of NonprofitVOTE and the US Elections Project, www.nonprofitvote.org/america-goes-to-the-polls-2016/execsummary/.

National Popular Vote reform effort, www.nationalpopularvote.com/index.php. For a rich collection of presidential election maps, see www.uselectionatlas.org/.

NOTES

1. Besides George Washington, James Monroe is the only candidate to approach this distinction; he won all but one Electoral College vote in 1820. Michael Nelson, ed., *Guide to the Presidency*, 4th ed. (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2007), 2:1819.

2. William Chambers, *Political Parties in a New Nation: The American Experience, 1776–1809* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), chap. 2.
3. Jefferson's Republican Party served as the basis for the Democratic Party. The Democratic-Republican Party was officially designated the Democratic Party in 1840. Paul David, Ralph Goldman, and Richard Bain, *The Politics of National Party Conventions* (New York: Vintage, 1964), chap. 3.
4. Joseph Charles, *The Origins of the American Party System* (New York: Harper Torch, 1956), 83–94.
5. Other constitutional amendments dealing with presidential selection have expanded participation (Amendments 15, 19, 24, 26), set the term of office (20, 22), and sought to cope with death or disability (20, 25).
6. David, Goldman, and Bain, *The Politics of National Party Conventions*, 50. The National Republican Party was soon to give way to the Whigs, with many Whig supporters joining the Republican Party when it was formed in the 1850s (57–59).
7. *Ibid.*, 61.
8. First-ballot convention decisions have been surprisingly prevalent. Through 2012, the two major parties selected their candidates on the first ballot at sixty-one of eighty-seven conventions. Many of the multiballot conventions were held from 1840 to 1888, when sixteen of the twenty-two went past the first ballot. What distinguishes the post-1952 era is that *none* of the twenty-eight conventions went past one ballot.
9. Richard C. Bain and Judith H. Parris, *Convention Decisions and Voting Records*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: Brookings, 1973), 1–6.
10. “2016 Presidential Primaries, Caucuses, and Conventions Alphabetically by State,” www.thegreenpapers.com/P16/events.phtml.
11. “Because 1956 was the first time that the Republicans were both the incumbent party and the one that met second, it is when the tradition of the Democrats having the later nomination was fully replaced with one of giving that privilege to the incumbents.” Bruce E. Altschuler, “Scheduling the Party Conventions,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36 (December 2006): 662.
12. U.S. Census Bureau, “Characteristics of the Foreign Born Population by Nativity and U.S. Citizenship Status: 2009,” Table 1.1, www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/foreign/cps2009.html.
13. Jack Maskell, “Qualifications for President and the ‘Natural Born’ Citizenship Eligibility Requirement,” *CRS Report R42097* (November 14, 2011), 2; www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R42097.pdf.

14. Neal Katyal and Paul Clement, "On the Meaning of 'Natural Born Citizen,'" *Harvard Law Review* 128:5 (March 2015), harvardlawreview.org/2015/03/on-the-meaning-of-natural-born-citizen/. See PolitiFact.com for March 26, 2015, www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/article/2015/mar/26/ted-cruz-born-canada-eligible-run-president-update/.
15. John Aldrich, "Methods and Actors: The Relationship of Processes to Candidates," in *Presidential Selection*, ed. Alexander Heard and Michael Nelson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1987).
16. Before Richard Nixon's selection in 1960, the last incumbent vice president to be nominated was Martin Van Buren in 1836.
17. Joseph A. Pika, "Bush, Quayle, and the New Vice Presidency," in *The Presidency and the Political System*, 3rd ed., ed. Michael Nelson (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 1990). Also see Joseph A. Pika, "The Vice Presidency: New Opportunities, Old Constraints," in *The Presidency and the Political System*, 6th ed., ed. Michael Nelson (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2000); and Joseph A. Pika, "Dick Cheney, Joe Biden, and the New Vice Presidency," *The Presidency and the Political System*, 8th ed., ed. Michael Nelson (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2009).
18. Ronald D. Elving, "The Senators' Lane to the Presidency," *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, May 20, 1989, 1218.
19. Charlie Cook, "Nineteen's a Crowd: Why Are So Many Republicans Running for President?" *National Journal*, May 2, 2015, ujreview.com/2015/05/02/charlie-cook-nineteens-a-crowd-why-are-so-many-republicans-running-for-president/. See the regularly updated list maintained by Larry Sabato of the Center for Politics at *Sabato's Crystal Ball*, University of Virginia, www.centerforpolitics.org/crystalball/2016-president/.
20. For example, many of his colleagues suggested that Senator Paul's presidential hopes lay behind his late-May 2015 use of a dramatic filibuster and other delaying tactics to prevent renewal of government authority to fight terrorism by collecting citizens' phone data. Paul added to this impression by tweeting supporters in real time about the success of his strategy. Dustin Volz, Brendan Sasso, Sarah Nimms, and Rachel Roubein, "How the Senate Fell Apart and Failed to Deal with the Patriot Act," *National Journal*, May 22, 2015, www.nationaljournal.com/tech/NSA-Patriot-Act-Rand-Paul-20150522.
21. For a statement of informal expectations from 1959, see Sidney Hyman, "Nine Tests for the Presidential Hopeful," *New York Times*, January 4, 1959, sec. 5, 1–11.

22. Michael Nelson, "Who Vies for President?" in Heard and Nelson, *Presidential Selection*, 144.
23. See Nonprofit Voter Engagement Network, *America Goes to the Polls: A Report on Voter Turnout in the 2008 Presidential Elections*, www.nonprofitvote.org/documents/2010/10/america-goes-to-the-polls-2008-pdf.pdf. With fewer primaries and a contest in only one party, the total in 2012 was 50 percent lower, estimated at 27.7 million, www.electproject.org/2012p. For 2016 see Drew DeSilver, "Turnout was high in the 2016 primary season, but just short of the 2008 record," Pew Research FactTank (June 10, 2016), www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/06/10/turnout-was-high-in-the-2016-primary-season-but-just-short-of-2008-record/.
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26. Barbara Norrander, "The End Game in Post-Reform Presidential Nominations," *The Journal of Politics* 62 (November 2000): 999–1013.
27. See the useful table "Chronological Cumulative Allocation of Delegates," www.thegreenpapers.com/P08/ccad.phtml.
28. Arthur Hadley, *The Invisible Primary* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1976). For valuable updates, see Emmett H. Buell Jr., "The Invisible Primary," in *In Pursuit of the White House*, ed. William G. Mayer (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House, 1996), and Barbara Norrander, *The Imperfect Primary* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 35–45.
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30. In 2012, individuals were limited to contributions of \$2,500 to a presidential candidate for each election, up from the previous \$1,000 limit (the nomination and general election are considered separate contests), \$5,000 per year to a political action committee (a group that contributes to more than one candidate), \$30,800 to the national committee of a political party, and a total contribution of no more than

\$117,000 over two years. Presidential candidates are free to spend an unlimited amount of their and their immediate family's money on their campaigns, but if they accept public financing, their contributions to their campaigns are limited to \$50,000 per election. These limits were raised for the 2015–2016 cycle to \$2,700 for contributions to candidate campaigns, \$33,400 to a national party, and a total of \$100,200 per year. See the Federal Election Commission brochure on “Contributions” for the limits set for 2011–2012, www.fec.gov/pages/brochures/contrib.shtml#electionlimits.

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33. Anthony Corrado, “Financing the 1996 Elections,” in *The Election of 1996*, ed. Gerald M. Pomper (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House, 1997).
34. Anthony Corrado, “Financing the 2000 Elections,” in *The Election of 2000*, ed. Gerald M. Pomper (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House, 2001), 98.
35. This did not happen in 2004 when Howard Dean led the field in fundraising or in 2008 when McCain was not the leader. Overall, it is not clear whether the additional financial resources produce victory or whether contributors simply choose to give their money to the leading candidate.
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37. Andrew Mayersohn, “Four Years after Citizens United: The Fallout,” *Open Secrets*, Center for Responsive Politics, January 21, 2014, www.opensecrets.org/news/2014/01/four-years-after-citizens-united-the-fallout.
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41. Shane Goldmacher, “Buying a Nominee,” *National Journal*, January 24, 2015, www.nationaljournal.com/magazine/the-secret-fundraising-scheme-that-will-make-super-pacs-look-quaint-in-2016-20150123.
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43. See fund-raising data for individual candidates on the website of the Center for Responsive Politics, www.opensecrets.org/pres16/candidate?id=N00037006.
44. In 1984, the minimum was 20 percent, a rule that favored the front-runner, Walter Mondale. Complaints from defeated candidates Jesse Jackson and Gary Hart resulted in lowering the qualifying level to 15 percent for the 1988 contest, and that rule has continued. Most Republican contests have been conducted under winner-take-all rules, although some states use proportional rules for both parties.
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47. Marjorie Randon Hershey, “The Campaign and the Media,” in Pomper, *The Election of 2000*, 47.
48. C. Anthony Broh, *A Horse of a Different Color: Television’s Treatment of Jesse Jackson’s 1984 Presidential Campaign* (Washington, DC: Joint Center for Political Studies, 1987), 4.
49. For discussion of the primary contests in 2000 and election results, see William G. Mayer, “The Presidential Nominations,” in Pomper, *The Election of 2000*.
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57. Edwin Diamond, Gregg Geller, and Chris Whitley, "Air Wars: Conventions Go Cable," *National Journal*, August 31, 1996, 1859. In 2004, the major networks carried only three hours of prime-time convention coverage, less than one hour a night and a far cry from the once-continuous coverage typical of the 1950s and 1960s.
58. "No elector has ever been prosecuted for failing to vote as pledged." From U.S. Electoral College FAQ, www.archives.gov/federal-register/electoral-college/faq.html#popular. However, in 2016 three electors were not allowed to cast their vote as they wished. Electors in Maine and Minnesota wanted to support Bernie Sanders but were told such a vote would violate state law. An elector in Colorado was replaced when he tried to vote for Kasich. Kyle Cheney, "Electoral College

sees record-breaking defections,” *Politico* (December 19, 2016) www.politico.com/story/2016/12/electoral-college-electors-232836. For a list of the state laws, see U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, www.archives.gov/federal-register/electoral-college/electors.html.

59. Federal Election Commission press release, “2004 Presidential Campaign Financial Activity Summarized,” February 3, 2005, classic.fec.gov/press/press2005/20050203pressum/20050203pressum.html. In the 2004 presidential election, the federal government gave each major-party candidate \$74.62 million, up from \$67.56 million in 2000. Nominees receiving full funding may accept other direct contributions only to meet legal and accounting fees, so George W. Bush’s enormous fund-raising advantage during the prenomination phase in 1999–2000 could not be repeated for the general election phase.
60. See Fred Wertheimer, president of Democracy 21, “Opening Remarks,” conference on the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act, June 23, 2003; found on the organization website under “BCRA and Other Campaign Finance Laws,” www.democracy21.org/.
61. Center for Responsive Politics, www.opensecrets.org/outsidespending/index.php and www.opensecrets.org/pres12/index.php#out.
62. Corrado, “Financing the 2000 Elections,” 107. In 1996, each party had launched **issue advocacy** campaigns, media advertisements that do not expressly support or oppose a candidate but ostensibly educate the public about an issue or a candidate’s position on an issue. The Democratic National Committee (DNC) ads helped Bill Clinton well before the nomination contests began. When Dole ran short of money in late spring 1996, the Republican National Committee (RNC) stepped in with a similar campaign.
63. *Ibid.*, 109. In 2000, independent expenditures by political groups favored Gore by a margin of seven to one, with Planned Parenthood leading the way.
64. Wertheimer, “Opening Remarks.”
65. Both parties were big spenders: The DNC spent \$120 million in 2004 (much less in 2008) and the RNC \$59 million in 2008. Federal Election Commission press release, “Public Funds” (2004). Also see the records reported by the Center for Responsive Politics at www.opensecrets.org/pres08/index.php.
66. Although presidential candidates are free to refuse public funds, no major-party nominee had done so in the general election through 2004, perhaps because the maximum contribution limitations made raising money from individuals and groups more difficult. Candidates

may also have thought the public favors the use of public, rather than private, funds. This changed dramatically in 2008 when Obama reversed his previous public position and refused public funding.

67. Center for Responsive Politics, “2008 Presidential Election,” www.opensecrets.org/pres08/. For 2016, the Center estimates that candidates raised \$1.5 billion and super PACs another \$615 million. www.opensecrets.org/pres16/.
68. Amy Parnes and Kevin Cirilli, “The \$5 Billion Presidential Campaign?” *The Hill*, January 21, 2015, thehill.com/blogs/ballot-box/presidential-races/230318-the-5-billion-campaign.
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70. The Twenty-Third Amendment, ratified in 1961, gave the District of Columbia the right to participate in presidential elections. Previously, District residents were excluded. Their inclusion accounts for there being three more electoral votes (538) than the total number of senators and representatives (535). Citizens living in U.S. territories and the commonwealth of Puerto Rico do not have a vote in the general election.
71. For election results and a brief account of the events surrounding the Florida outcome, see Gerald M. Pomper, “The Presidential Election,” in Pomper, *The Election of 2000*, 125–135. For an in-depth journalistic account of the Florida situation, see *Deadlock: The Inside Story of America’s Closest Election*, comp. Political Staff of the *Washington Post* (New York: Public Affairs, 2001).
72. Gore received 266 votes. One elector from the District of Columbia, Barbara Lett-Simmons, who should have cast her ballot for Gore and Lieberman, instead cast a blank ballot as a means of protesting the lack of D.C. statehood and a vote in Congress. Therefore, the two-party total is not 538. A copy of the ballot can be viewed at the Electoral College website of the National Archives, www.archives.gov/federal_register/electoral_college/2000_certificates/vote_dc.html.
73. New York and Pennsylvania each lost two House seats. Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Ohio, Oklahoma, and Wisconsin each lost one. Arizona, Florida, Georgia, and Texas each gained two seats; and California, Colorado, Nevada, and North Carolina each gained one. Because of widespread criticism following the 1990 census, the Census Bureau agreed to conduct a postcensus survey

to determine the extent to which some population groups had been undercounted. The results of that study should have led to adjustments in congressional representation, but the secretary of commerce recommended following the initial census findings. A similar debate followed the 2000 census. Utah filed suit to have its residents serving as missionaries abroad included in the count, which would give it the additional seat awarded to North Carolina. In *Utah v. Evans* (2002), the Supreme Court decided in favor of North Carolina.

74. In 1992, Clinton amassed 370 electoral votes by winning thirty-two states, each state that had voted for Dukakis in 1988 and all but one of the twelve where the previous Democratic nominee had won at least 45 percent of the vote. Clinton totaled 379 electoral votes in 1996, winning twenty-nine of the same states and adding two longtime Republican strongholds—Arizona and Florida.
75. Gore lost New Hampshire by 7,300 votes; Nader garnered 22,198 there. Nader also received 97,488 votes in Florida, thousands more than Gore needed for victory. Bush lost New Mexico by 366 votes; Buchanan received 1,392 there. In Wisconsin, Bush lost by 5,708, while Buchanan secured 11,471. See official 2000 election results at www.fec.gov/pubrec/2000presgeresults.htm.
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77. Angus Campbell et al., *The American Voter*, abbr. ed. (New York: Wiley, 1964).
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81. Alan I. Abramowitz and Steven W. Webster, "Negative Partisanship: Why Americans Dislike Parties But Behave Like Rapid Partisans," *Political Psychology* 39:S1 (February 2018): 119–135.
82. Ibid.
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85. Offsetting gains in nonwhite voting, white fundamentalist Christians have gained significance in national politics. This group has become solidly Republican and in 1988 was nearly as large a proportion of the voting population as blacks (9 percent versus 10 percent). See poll results reported in Gerald M. Pomper, "The Presidential Election," in Pomper, *The Election of 1996*, 134.
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