

# Unit 2: Political Culture and the Role Tradition Plays in the Democratic Process

Magruder Chapters 6-7

Wilson Chapters 4-6

# Political Culture

- Definition: The commonly shared beliefs, values, and norms about government.
- **Common Characteristics of Democracy**
  - Liberty
  - Individualism / Rugged Individualism – a sense that “I can do it on my own”
    - Americans delude themselves into thinking that we do not depend on government yet when trouble arise, we call for governmental aid (Hurricane relief, economic bail-out of transportation companies, farm subsidies, etc.)

# Common Characteristics of Democracy

- **Equality**

- **Equality of opportunity more than equality of result**
- **Political equality more than economic equality**
- The American dream: economic prosperity, the land of opportunity
- FDR “Second Bill of Rights” economic security for all.
  - “It is our duty now to begin to lay the plans and determine the strategy for the winning of a lasting peace and the establishment of an American standard of living higher than ever before known. We cannot be content, no matter how high that general standard of living may be, if some fraction of our people—whether it be one-third or one-fifth or one-tenth—is ill-fed, ill-clothed, ill-housed, and insecure.” – FDR, 1944 State of the Union message

# Common Characteristics of Democracy

- Equality (Continued)
  - False consciousness
    - Surrendering to the “false economic needs of society”, the desire to live beyond your means.
    - This desire to “keep up with the Jones” creates an unreasonable desire for wealth that creates disparity not equality.

# Common Characteristics of Democracy

## Capitalism v. Equality

- There is a conflict between the liberty of capitalism and the equality associated with democracy
  - Government attempts to solve the issue through government reform programs
    - Progressive Era – attempts to control corporations
    - 1930's offset / fix problems caused by runaway capitalism
    - 1960's Great Society programs
- Great Society Programs
  - U.S. history, term for the domestic policies of President Lyndon Johnson. In his first State of the Union message, he called for a war on poverty and the creation of a "Great Society," a prosperous nation that had overcome racial divisions. To this end, Johnson proposed an expansion in the federal government's role in domestic policy.

# Common Characteristics of Democracy

- Democracy
  - All citizens should have an equal voice.
  - US has a history of disenfranchisement of groups, Civil Rights movement fixes most of those issues.
- Civic Duty
  - People have an obligation to the state
    - Pay taxes
    - Serve on juries
    - Participate in government
  - Americans want the benefits of government yet dread the obligations
    - How can society be served if people do not take an active role in defending / supporting democracy?

# Common Characteristics of Democracy

- **Distrust of government**
  - Since the 1960's (Vietnam / Watergate) Americans have distrusted government
    - Do we trust government more today?
- **Political efficacy**
  - A citizens faith or trust in government
  - A good indicator of predicting political participation
    - If people trust the government, they will take a more active role

# Common Characteristics of Democracy

- **Political Tolerance**

- “political tolerance refers to a willingness to extend the rights of citizenship to all members of the polity—that is to allow political freedoms to those who are different”
  - An abstract idea that we like to believe yet many secretly do not

- **Pragmatism**

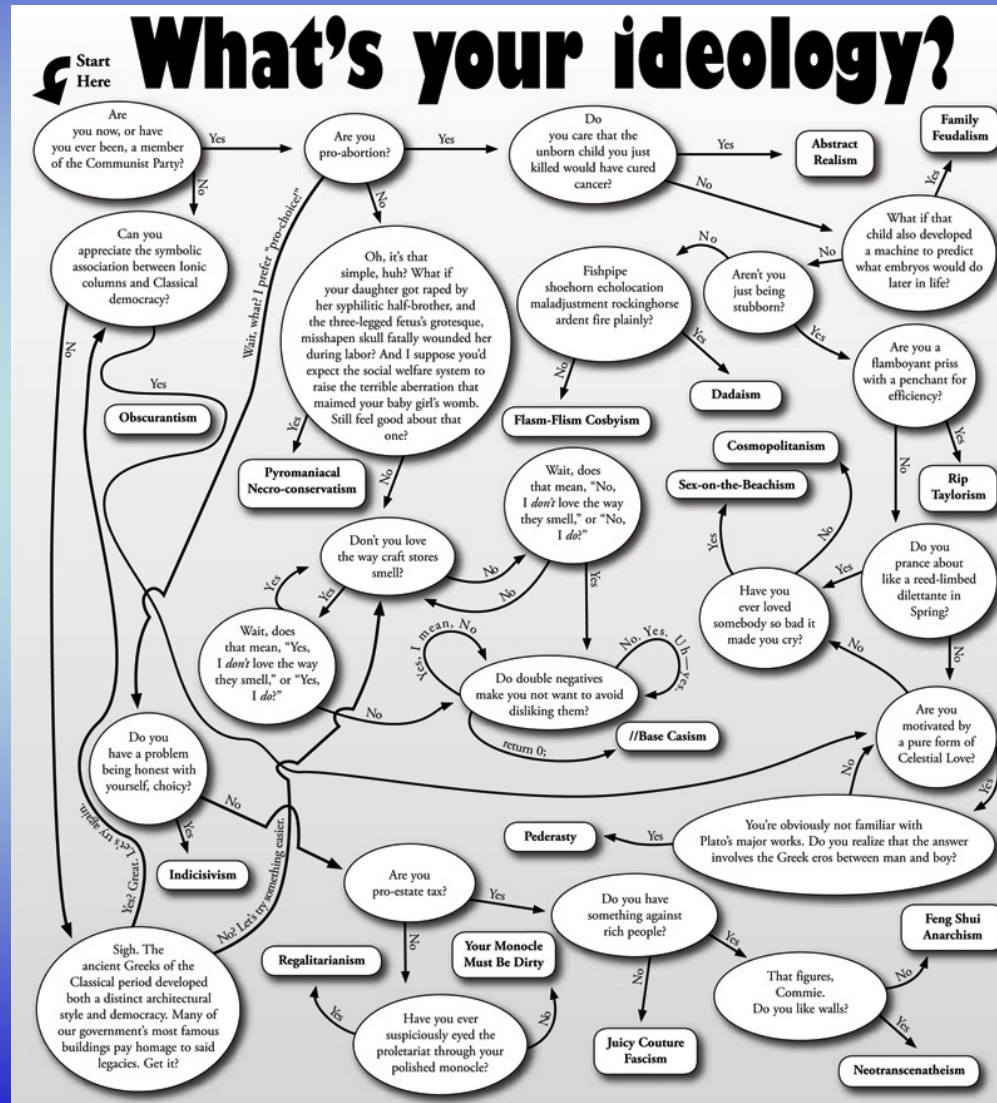
- We have lost faith in the political process / we are less ideological

- **Justice**

- A belief in the rule of law, not men
- The system is just, even if the men running it are not



# Ideology and Public Policy



# Ideology and Public Policy

- Definition: an integrated set of beliefs that shape a persons views
  - We tend to develop our ideology based on family tradition
  - As we grow older, our personal values begin to have a larger influence
  - It is common to change ideology several times throughout your life
    - What you value now, may not be what you value when you are in college, a parent, or a senior citizen.
- Political ideology plays a significantly smaller role in US
  - Our two-party system makes it difficult for everyone to relate to a specific political party

# Ideological Views

- Liberalism
  - Classical liberalism (18<sup>th</sup> century)
    - Government should be limited
    - Government is a threat to liberty
    - Government should not be active, should act only when necessary
    - **Governments main goal is to protect property**
  - Modern Liberalism (20<sup>th</sup> century)
    - Role of government has expanded / government more active in our lives
    - Corporations viewed as chief threat to liberty (corporate greed at the expense of society)
    - Need for a strong central government to offset the problems caused by capitalism
    - Government must protect the society
      - Freedom from government control rings hollow when one is poor, unemployed, or discriminated against.

# Ideological Views

- Liberalism gained strength from 1930's-1970's
  - New Deal
  - Civil Rights Act
  - Variety of laws & Supreme Court cases about protecting civil liberties
  
- Revolt against Liberalism during 1980's-1990's
  - Commonly held belief that liberalism had gone too far
  - Society too dependent on government / we have forgotten how to achieve the American dream
  - Responsible for the creation of “Neo-liberalism”

# Ideological Views

## – Neo-Liberals

- Less likely to depend on government to solve societies problems
- The government has a role to play but it should not be as expansive as it has been (New Deal)
- The Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) was formed in an effort to combat societies inequities without overly involving the government
  - Bill Clinton was / is a member
  - Typically the group supports welfare reform, nationalized healthcare, and tax breaks to the poor.

# Ideological Views

- Conservatism
  - Essentially classical liberalism
    - See notes on classical liberalism
  - Gained strength since the late 1970's in response to liberalism of previous age
    - Reagan, Bush (GH 41<sup>st</sup>) and Bush (GW 43<sup>rd</sup>) are responsible for its resurgence.
    - The 104<sup>th</sup>-109<sup>th</sup> Republican Congress
    - Strongly supported by the “Heartland of America” and the “Religious Right”
    - Focus on reversing America's dependence on government
    - Reliance on “private sector” to solve problems (social security reform)
    - Strong supporters of tax cuts
      - Belief in trickle-down theory: if you give tax cuts to businesses, they will create more jobs which is good for society.

# Ideological Views

- Neoconservatives and the New Right
  - Also known as the Religious Right
  - Emphasize social issues like prayer in school, anti-abortion, and anti-homosexuality.
- Foreign Policy
  - Very aggressive when dealing with foreign threats such as terrorism and are supportive of intervention.
  - Others prefer a more isolationist policy and fear the US becoming over involved with organizations such as the UN, WTO, World Bank, and NAFTA.
- Compassionate Conservatism
  - A more moderate brand of conservatism balancing social issues with a hard stance on national defense (Bush)

# Ideological Views

- Socialism
  - Means of production, distribution, and exchange are controlled by the government.
  - Very strong in Western Europe.
  - Not popular in US
    - Feared for its radical measures
    - Americans still believe in individualism don't want to be overly dependant on government.



# Ideological Views

- Libertarianism
  - A blending of Classical Liberalism and Conservatism
    - Extreme emphasis on individual liberty
    - Desire an extreme cutback on the role of government
    - Believe government is only responsible for national defense

# Public Opinion

- Types of Publics
  - Elites
    - Own a disproportionate amount of political resources.
    - Raise issues and help to set national agenda
    - Can be “tapped” for campaign donations and “rallying of troops” to help resolve political issues.
  - Attentive
    - Those with an active interest in government and politics
  - Mass
    - Those with little interest in government and politics

# Public Opinion

- Types of Opinions
  - Stable- changes little
  - Fluid- frequently changing opinion
  - Latent- dormant but may be aroused
  - Intense- strongly held
  - Non-Intense- the “balanced” opinion
  - Salient- opinions based on personal importance to the individual
  - Consensus- shared by 75% of the people or more
  - Polarized- shared by less than 75% of the people

# Public Opinion

- Measurement of Public Opinion
  - Elections
    - Great measurement on what people want but does not tell why they want it.
  - Straw Polls
    - Surveys taken to estimate the strength of opposing candidates or the popularity of a proposed law
    - News reporters interview voters as they exit polling booths to gain insight on how the election is progressing
  - Scientific / structured polls
    - The Way Polls are Constructed
      - Samples a limited population that is representative of the population (group is rotated / shuffled using census data)
      - National Polls require large sampling
      - Sampling errors are registered as +/- terms
      - Sampling error can be reduced by increasing respondents but is subject to diminishing returns

# Public Opinion

- The Use of Polls
  - Informing the public
  - Informing the candidates
  - Informing office-holders
  - Making election night projections through the use of “exit polls”
- Abuses of Polls
  - **Horse Race** mentality
    - More emphasis on winning public opinion rather than focusing on issues
  - Candidates and office holders pander to whims of the public
  - Early projections from exit polls may hinder voter turnout
    - East coast numbers come in before West coast elections are completed

# Public Opinion

- Public Awareness and Interest in Politics
  - Not considered important to most citizens (mass public)
  - Surveys show very little political awareness by society
    - Difficulty in identifying political figures
    - Uninformed about key political issues

# Political Socialization

Factors that influence voter  
behavior and turnout

# Political Socialization

- Definition: **Process in which people acquire their political beliefs**
- **An individual's family has the greatest influence on political beliefs**
  - Children often mirror parents' political views
  - Views on civil liberties and race can often differ
  - When parents don't share the same view, the child usually associates with the parent they are closest to.



# Political Socialization

- School
  - Good for teaching civic duty but has little impact on shaping political views of students
- Religion
  - Protestants
    - Tend to be more conservative with evangelicals most conservative of all
  - Catholics
    - Are traditionally more liberal but tend switch back and forth based on issue (abortion, gay rights, etc)
  - Jews
    - Tend to favor a more liberal view, strong supporters of Democratic Party

# Political Socialization

- Race
  - Whites
    - Generally take a more conservative view, strong supporters of Republican Party
  - Blacks
    - Generally more liberal, **primary supporters (the base) of Democratic Party**
  - Hispanics
    - Mexican-Americans and Puerto Ricans generally more liberal, Cubans usually more conservative. Recent polling data shows a shift in Hispanic vote.
  - Asians
    - Jumps from party to party, recent polling data shows stronger support for Democratic Party

# Political Socialization

- **Income**
  - **The higher the income, the more conservative (Republican Party) the political view.**
  - **Those with lower income tend to favor Democrats**
- **Other influences**
  - **Opinion leaders**
    - **Advisors / people who are knowledgeable about government / politics who advise government decision-makers**
  - **Mass Media**
    - **News programs, late-night TV, radio talk-shows, etc.**

# Political Socialization

- Gender
  - Generally, men and women are split when it comes to political affiliation
  - Women tend to favor Democrats while men slightly favor the Republicans
  - Recent elections have shown a narrowing of the gap
- Differing Views
  - Sex-sensitive issues divide the genders (abortion, pornography, gun-control, war, etc.)
- Cross Pressure
  - As we grow older, family has less of an impact on political views, mass media and opinions of our peers becomes more important

# Voter Turnout

Who votes? Who doesn't? Who  
cares?

# Voter Turnout

- Historical qualifications for voting rights
  - Religion (eliminate by state legislatures)
  - Property (eliminate by state legislatures)
  - Race (eliminated by 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment)
  - Sex / Gender (eliminate by 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment)
  - **Income** (eliminated by 24<sup>th</sup> Amendment banning poll tax)
  - Literacy (eliminated by Voting Rights Act of 1965)
  - Minimum age of 21 (eliminated by 26<sup>th</sup> Amendment)

# Current Standards for Voting

- Rules established by states
  - Citizenship
    - must be a legal citizen
  - Residency
    - must live in the state for which you are voting
    - each state has its own rules for what qualifies as resident
  - Age
    - Current minimum age is 18
    - States could lower the age if they so desire
  - Registration
    - Registration is handled by each state
    - Currently, only North Dakota does not require voter registration

# Voter Turnout

- Comparisons between US voter turnout and other nations
  - **US traditionally has a low voter turnout**
    - **50% for Presidential elections**
    - **30%-40% for midterm Congressional elections**
    - **Even less for state elections**
  - Industrial nations of the West
    - Typically have up to 90% voter turnout
  - In Context
    - US does not impose penalties for not voting
    - Other nations have multi-party system, voters feel closer to their political party
    - Other nations have automatic or same-day registration



# Voter Turnout

- Reasons for low voter turnout
  - Institutional barriers
    - Registration: experts believe that eliminating the need would increase voter turnout by 9%
    - National Voter Registration Act 1993
      - Allows voters to register when renewing license or car registration
      - Governmental / public offices offer registration forms
      - States must authorize registration by mail
        - » California allows citizens to register online
        - » *Has not increased turnout significantly*
    - Ballots are too long / too many issues
    - Difficulties in obtaining absentee ballots
      - Absentee ballots are only counted when elections are too close to call
      - People feel like their vote does not count

# Voter Turnout

- Reasons for low voter turnout
  - Institutional barriers (continued)
    - Too many elections / voter fatigue
    - Young people have the lowest voter turnout
  - Political reasons
    - Lack of political awareness
    - Dissatisfaction with candidates, parties, politics in general
    - Lack of strong 2-party competition
      - “I don’t like either one of them”
      - “Who cares, they are both liars”
    - Political parties fail to motivate the voters

# Voter Turnout

- Characteristics of those likely to vote
  - **Education level is the greatest predictor of voter behavior**
    - Those with a higher level of education are more likely to vote than those without
  - Income level
    - Those with high incomes vote more often than those who are poor
  - Age
    - As people grow older (50+) they become more likely to vote
    - College-age citizens (18-30) are the least likely to vote
  - Race
    - Whites vote more often than Blacks, who vote more often than Hispanics
    - Politicians have begun catering to minority groups because of their ability to swing an election if voter turnout can be improved

# Voter Turnout

- Does low voter turnout matter?
  - If voters truly represent a cross-section of America, then low turnout does not matter
    - The will of the people is served
  - Currently, voter turnout does not represent a cross-section of US
    - Older, Whites with higher levels of education and income are over-represented
      - This creates a class bias
  - Some research shows that although voters are demographically different, their voting patterns closely mirror society politically
    - in other words, the way they vote closely mirrors society

# Factors Affecting Voting Behavior

- Geography
  - Each region of the country tends to favor one political party over the other
- Popular Presidency
  - Having a popular President helps boost support for that political party
  - Conversely, an unpopular President can cost the party

# Factors Affecting Voting Behavior

- Time
  - Political parties tend to hold power for several election cycles before the public demands change
  - Midterm elections are a traditional way to “realign” the party
    - The party in power has lost seats in Congress in nearly every midterm election

# Factors Affecting Voting Behavior

- Political Party Identification
  - **Strongest predictor of voter behavior**
  - Most people “vote the man” not the party
  - Straight ticket voting
    - Voters only vote for people of their political party regardless of qualifications of candidate
    - This trend has declined in recent years
  - Split ticket voting
    - Voters choose candidates based on ability, name recognition, or other factors, not party affiliation

# Factors Affecting Voting Behavior

- Demographics
  - Men: favor the Republican Party
  - Women: favor the Democratic Party
- **Race**
  - White: more likely to vote Republican
  - Non-White: more likely to vote Democrat
    - **African-Americans are the most loyal to the Democratic Party**
- **Social Class**
  - Lower: more likely to vote Democrat
  - **Upper: more likely to vote Republican**

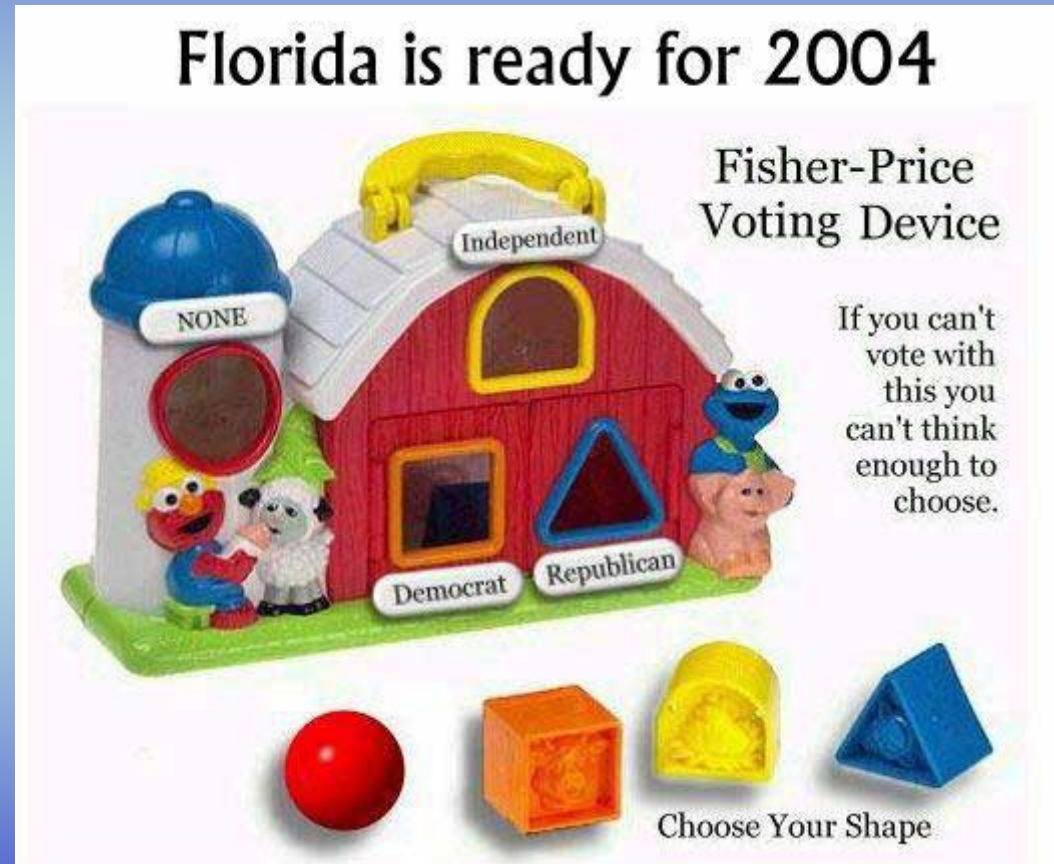


# Factors Affecting Voting Behavior

- **Religion**
  - Protestant: Republican
  - Catholic: traditionally Democrat but trend is changing
  - Jewish: Democrat
- **Issues**
  - Voting based on a specific agenda / personal hot point
  - Retrospective Voting: voting based on the question, “Have things gotten better or worse since the last election?”
  - Prospective Voting: voting based on the views of the candidate regarding issues the voter values and the candidates likelihood of handling the issue in a way the voter will agree with
- **Candidate Appeal**
  - Is the candidate good looking? Do I like how he carries himself? I’m voting for the younger candidate, etc.

# Voting Humor

- Fun facts about Florida voters in 2000 election
  - 1000 voted for all ten Presidential candidates
  - 3600 voted for all ten candidates except Bush
  - 700 voted for all ten candidates except Gore
  - 7000 voted for both Bush and Gore



# The Election Process

## Congressional Elections

# Congressional Elections

- Background:
  - US elections are held at regular intervals as opposed to Britain where elections are held at the request of Parliament
  - Members of Congress have fixed terms that are staggered to keep a balance of members
  - States have attempted to impose term limits but the Supreme Court declared them unconstitutional (would require a Constitutional Amendment) *US Term Limits v. Thornton*
  - The US uses a **Single Member District System** as opposed to a proportional representation system

# Congressional Elections

- **Single Member District System**

- Representation to Congress is based on state population figures.
- In a single member district system the only person elected to office is the one with the most votes. (only 1 representative for each district / region) ***They more commonly call this the winner-take-all system.***
- In a proportional or multi-member system, Congressional seats would be appointed based on the percentage of the vote received
  - Example: If California is awarded 10 Congressional seats and the election results show that the Democrats won by 80% with Republicans receiving 20% of the vote, the Democrats would be given 8 Congressional seats and the Republicans 2.

# Congressional Elections

- **Primary Elections**

- Designed as a way of limiting the power of Political Parties (remember political parties were not part of the founder's designs for our political system)
- Types of Primary Elections
  - **Closed**
    - **Most states sponsor closed elections**
    - **Only registered party members may choose party candidates. Cannot cross party lines**
    - **California has open primaries**
  - **Open**
    - Independent voters (people who did not declare any particular party affiliation) may participate in the primary election. They may choose candidates from only one party.
    - This system poses a danger as it opens the door for trickery (people choosing a weak candidate from the opposing party so that your desired candidate will win the final election)
  - **Blanket “free love”**
    - Independent voters may mix and match choosing candidates from either party
    - Poses same dangers as open primaries
    - Ruled unconstitutional by California Supreme Court

# Factors Affecting Outcomes of Congressional Elections

- **Incumbency**
  - **Has the greatest influence on elections results**
    - 90% reelection rate for Representatives
    - 80% for Senators
  - **Lack of competition due to trickery from both parties**
    - Prompted voters to call for Congressional term limits but Supreme Court ruled it unconstitutional
- **The Advantages of Incumbency**
  - **Franking Privilege**
    - The ability to send out mailers for free / political opponents must spend campaign funds to send out mailers
  - **Staff already in place**
    - Incumbents use their existing staff to run the day-to-day operations of their campaign. They do not need to pay them out of campaign funds as they are already being paid by the government to be staffers

# Factors Affecting Outcomes of Congressional Elections

- The Advantages of Incumbency
  - Patronage
    - The ability to appoint people to certain positions. This is used as a way of rewarding those who help you run a successful reelection campaign
  - Gerrymandered districts “safe-seats”
    - Election districts are organized in such a way that politicians are almost guaranteed to be reelected
    - A lot of trading occurs between parties to keep the status quo (I’ll give you this region if you give me that one)
  - **Committee service to district**
    - Because Congressmen serve on several House Committees, they have the opportunity to bring funds and projects to their district.
    - Local businesses want to keep the funds flowing so they support reelection
    - The longer a person serves in Congress, the more influential they become in their prospective Committees
  - **Name recognition**



# Factors Affecting Outcomes of Congressional Elections

- The Advantages of Incumbency
  - **Casework done for constituents**
    - Assisting people in the district who are having problems with a Federal government agency such as the IRS, Social Security, etc. Could also be recommendation for Military Academy.
  - **“Pork Barrel” Projects for district**
    - Special Federal projects that bring government contracts into the district
    - These “special projects” create jobs and tax revenue for the district
    - “Pork Barrel” projects are usually added at the end of a Congressional Bill that is likely to pass. *This is called a Rider.*
  - War Chest
    - Money collected for the reelection campaign
    - **If the incumbent has a huge war chest it discourages challengers from running against him / her**
  - **Money**
    - Incumbents typically outspend challengers by a 3:1 ratio

# Factors Affecting Outcomes of Congressional Elections

- Types of Elections
  - Incumbent Campaigns
    - Least competitive (safe seats / Gerrymandering)
  - Weak Challenger
  - Strong Challenger
  - Open Seat
    - For whatever reason the seat is up for grabs
    - The most competitive election
  - **House or Senate Campaigns**
    - Senatorial campaigns are usually more competitive since Gerrymandering doesn't occur
  - Midterm Elections
    - Typically, the party of the President loses seats

# Factors Affecting Outcomes of Congressional Elections

- Coattail Effect
  - A popular political party leader can bring in votes for other members of his / her party
- Media
  - How the media covers a candidate can alter the outcome of an election
  - Incumbents typically have more media coverage

# Factors Affecting Outcomes of Congressional Elections

- Party Affiliation
  - Voters typically stay loyal to their party
  - Candidates that stick to mainstream political parties have a greater chance of election
- Campaign Consultants
  - Professional campaign managers that learn the system
  - Consultants are becoming more and more important in this age of mass media
- Technology
  - Mass media is reshaping elections
  - Having the ability to process campaign data quickly helps campaign managers keep the candidate better informed

# The Path to the Presidency

Presidential Elections

# The Path to the Presidency

- “Invisible Primary”
  - Politicians who wish to be nominated for the Presidential primary start working long before the Primary season
  - They attempt to line up supporters and cut deals in order to assure their nomination when Primary season comes around
- Declaration of Candidacy
  - Those who wish to run for President must formally declare their intention to run
- The Nomination Phase
  - Party Conventions
    - Local Caucuses: Formal meetings with party members in order to develop a consensus on who to nominate for office
    - Iowa State Caucus is the 1<sup>st</sup> of the campaign season
    - Citizens get to participate in the selection process (more democratic)

# The Path to the Presidency

- Presidential Primaries
  - States choose candidates that will attend the national convention
    - Proportional basis (Democrats)
      - Number of delegates from each state is chosen by number of electoral votes
      - Delegates are chosen to represent the nominees based on percentage of the votes received
      - Democrats have developed a system in which they can award more delegates to states that have demonstrated loyalty to the party
    - Winner-take-all basis (Republicans)
      - The nominee with the most votes has his / her delegates sent to the national convention.
      - Number of delegates is equal to number of electoral votes
    - New Hampshire Primary: 1<sup>st</sup> primary of the season
      - Primaries are held earlier
      - **Super Tuesday** several southern states hold their primaries at the same time

# The Path to the Presidency

- National Convention
  - Selection of Presidential Nominee
    - The selection of the Presidential nominee is typically decided well before the convention
    - The convention allows the candidate to work on his image
    - The convention serves as a ratification of the candidate more than a nomination
  - Selection of Vice Presidential candidate
    - Chose by Presidential nominee and rubber stamped by convention
    - VP's are chosen in an effort to “**Balance the Ticket**”
  - Develop Party Platform
    - The party develops a strategy on how to support their candidate (a discussion of tactics)
  - Unification of the party
    - Getting everybody on the same page
    - A show of unity whether it is true unity or not



# The Path to the Presidency

- Positives and Negatives of the presidential nominating system
- Pro:
  - **Allows for voter participation along each step; caucuses, primaries, and conventions**
  - Highly representative
  - Weeds out weaker candidates
- Con:
  - Low voter turnout
  - Too lengthy of a process, voters become apathetic
  - Candidates are not tested on skills needed for the office / **emphasis on image not qualifications**
  - Front loading (states with early caucuses and primaries have greater impact on selection than those whose are held later)
  - **The voters in primaries are usually better educated and more affluent than those in general elections**
  - **Delegates at caucuses and conventions are usually the elites of the party and don't represent the majority of the constituents**

# The Electoral College

How does this complicated  
system work?

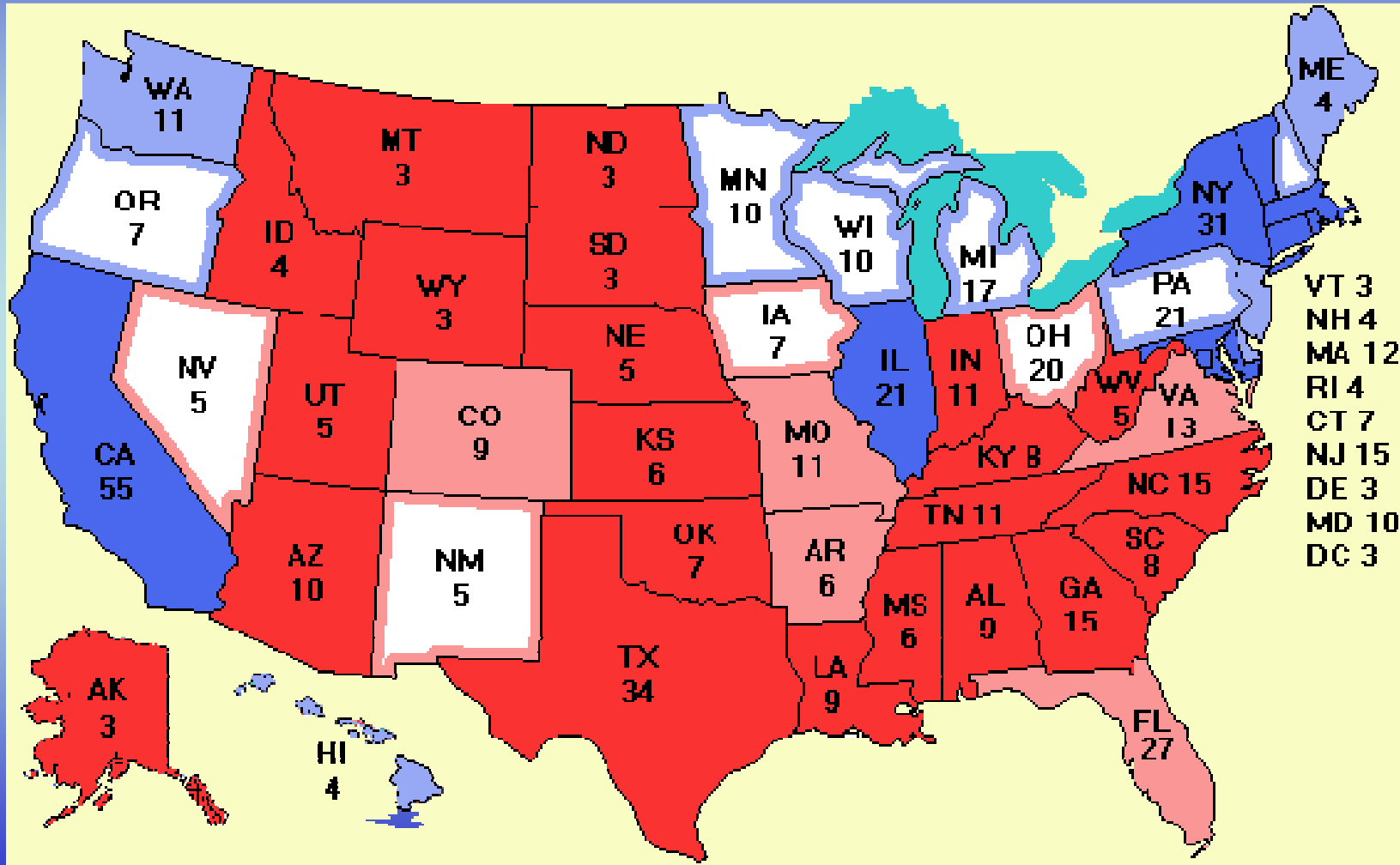
# The Electoral College

- Explanation as to why the Electoral College system was created
  - Poor communication: The Founders believed that the voters would be so far removed from the candidates that they would be unable to make informed decisions
  - Elitism: A desire to have only the “best” people select the President
    - Founders feared that the common man could be too easily swayed
  - Compromise: Since the convention was divided, this system allowed for compromise between those who wanted direct election and those who wanted Congress to choose a President

# The Electoral College

- Allotment of electoral votes to states
  - Each state has as many electoral votes as it has members in Congress
    - Minimum of 3 members
    - Washington DC has 3 votes (23<sup>rd</sup> Amendment)
  - Total # of electoral votes = 538
  - California has highest total = 55
  - As people move out of colder climates to warmer climates (rust belt to sun belt) states with better weather are gaining political power

# Electoral College



# The Electoral College

- Selection of Electors
  - It is up to each state to decide how to choose and appoint its electors
  - Typically, representatives from each of the political parties are selected
  - After the states votes are counted, the electors representing the candidate who received the majority of the votes has his / her electors sent to Washington DC to cast their Electoral vote (winner-take-all)
  - 2 states (Maine & Nebraska) send 2 electors from the party of the candidate that received the most votes and 1 elector for each district won
    - Electoral votes are divided with a slight advantage going to the candidate that wins the popular vote

# The Electoral College

- **Winning of Electoral Votes**
  - **Candidates with the most popular votes (only a plurality is needed) wins all of that states votes (exceptions: Maine & Nebraska)**
    - **Winner-take-all**
    - **Candidates focus their campaigning on competitive “swing” states (states that are divided in loyalty and carry sufficient number of electoral votes)**
  - **Electors meet in their state capitals in December to officially cast their ballots**
    - **Generally this is a formality but electors are not required to vote the way their state wishes “Faithless Electors”**

# The Electoral College

- Winning the election
  - **Winning candidate must have a majority of the electoral votes (270) to win without contest**
  - If no candidate wins a majority, as the founders believed would happen often (2-party system was not anticipated by the Founders)
    - Congress chooses President from among the top 3 candidates
    - Each state is given 1 vote
    - This was done in 1800 & 1824
    - The Senate would choose the VP from among the top 2 candidates (this would in effect create a Executive Branch that was led by 2 different political parties)



# The Electoral College

- Criticisms of Electoral College System
  - **President can be elected with only a plurality rather than a majority of the popular vote (thanks to 3 party candidate siphoning off votes)**
  - There is a possibility that a minority President (minority meaning a President that did not win the overall popular vote) could win the election
  - Faithless Electors: since there is no law demanding that the electors vote according to the people's wishes, electors could defy the will of the people
  - **Small states proportionally overrepresented**
    - The ratio of electoral votes to population favors people living in smaller states
    - California, with the most electoral votes has a representation ratio of 1:600,000
    - This is why the Electoral College will most likely never be removed, small states like being overrepresented
  - Small state become equal to large states if vote goes to Congress
  - **Inhibits development of 3<sup>rd</sup> parties** Perot won 19% of popular vote and 0 electoral votes since he carried no states

# The Electoral College

- Alternatives to Electoral College
  - **Direct election: Election based on popular vote**
    - Each person's vote would count as much as every others
  - District System: All states would follow the electoral system of Maine and Nebraska
    - 2 votes to the winner of the state
    - 1 vote for each district won by popular election
  - Proportional System: Candidates earn the same % of electoral votes as they win in popular vote
  - Keep Electoral Votes but abolish the electors themselves

# Campaign Finance

The money behind the politics

# Campaign Finance Wilson p. 193

- Federal Election Campaign Acts, 1971-1974
  - Established the Federal Elections Commission (FEC)
    - Charged with regulating federal elections
  - All candidates must disclose contributions (over \$100) and expenditures
  - **Presidential candidates may receive campaign funding from the federal government (taxpayers may contribute to Presidential elections by checking a box on their tax forms)**
    - Clinton & Dole each received \$61 million in 1996
  - Candidates who receive Federal money are subject to strict spending limits
    - If they decline the Federal money, they have more freedom in campaign spending (Bush refused funding in 2004)
  - **Contribution Limitations**
    - **Individuals: \$1000 per candidate, per election (Primaries and Popular)**
    - **Political Action Committees (PAC's): \$5,000 per candidate, per election, and no overall cap**

# Campaign Finance Wilson p. 193

- Buckley v. Valeo (1976)
  - Supreme court case which challenged the constitutionality of placing spending limits on elections
    - Court ruled that federal limits on campaign contributions was constitutional (Presidential Races)
    - Limits on Presidential campaigns are constitutional because they are subsidized by the federal government
    - Individual contributions are protected under the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment (free expression)
    - Allows for unlimited spending on Congressional and Senate races

# Campaign Finance

- Campaign Reform Act of 2002 (McCain-Feingold Bill)
  - Bans **soft money** donations to national political parties
    - Soft Money: money that is undisclosed, unlimited donations to parties for party building activities
  - Limits soft money donations to state political parties to \$10,000
    - Use of money is limited to voter registration and get-out-the-vote drives
  - Doubles individuals **hard money** donations to \$2,000 and allows for future increases in reaction to inflation
    - Hard Money: disclosed, limited donations given to specific candidates
  - No change to PAC limits (\$5,000)
  - Unions and corporations banned from giving soft money to parties

# Campaign Finance

- **No government subsidies for Congressional campaigns**
  - **Further advantage of incumbency**
- No spending limits on Congressional races (Buckley v. Valeo)
  - Congressional campaign spending continues to rise
  - Members of Congress spend great amounts of time on fund-raising projects (war chests)
  - Late-starters are discouraged
- No limitations on **independent expenditures**
  - Money spent on candidate but not given to the candidate directly
  - Known as 527's, tax exempt groups that collect and spend money on behalf of a candidate.
  - Money is spent on *Issue Advocacy Ads* that praise or slam a candidate (groups may not advocate any particular candidate)
    - MoveOn.org is a prominent Liberal 527
    - “Swiftboat Veterans for Truth” was a prominent 527 in 2004 election

# Campaign Finance

- Minor Presidential candidates cannot receive federal subsidies unless their party received 5% of the popular vote in the previous election
  - This creates a disadvantage to 3<sup>rd</sup> party candidates
- Parties are weakened since presidential election funds go to the candidates themselves rather than the party
  - Alters elections to focus on the candidate not the Party
- PAC's have grown in power as candidates have become dependent on them for campaign funds
- The cost of campaigning has risen, candidates must spend more time on fundraising
- Largest share of PAC money goes to incumbents
  - Another advantage of incumbency