Unit II Key Terms

Key Terms:

Political Beliefs/Political Behaviors

(Underlined terms have appeared on the multiple choice sections of past released AP exams)

**Attentive public**: those who follow politics and public affairs carefully.

**Australian ballot**: secret ballot printed at the expense of the state.

**Balancing the ticket**: occurs when a presidential nominee chooses a vice president running mate who has different qualities in order to attract more votes for the ticket.

**Blanket primary**: election to choose candidates that is open to independents, and that allows voters to choose candidates from all the parties.

**Caucus**: local party meeting.

**Closed primary**: party election to choose candidates that is closed to independents; voters may not cross party lines.

**Coattail effect**: the influence of a popular presidential candidate on the election of congressional candidates of the same party.

**Demographics**: characteristics of populations, e.g., race, sex, income,.

**Direct election**: election of an official directly by the people rather than by an intermediary group such as the Electoral College.

**Direct primary**: election in which people choose candidates for office.

**Fixed terms**: terms of office that have a definite length of time, e.g., two years for a member of the House.

**Front loading**: scheduling presidential primary elections early (e.g., February or March) in an election year.

**Gender gap**: difference in voting patterns for men and women, particularly in the greater tendency of the latter to vote for Democratic presidential candidates.

**General election**: election in which the officeholders are chosen, contrast with a primary election, in which only the candidates are chosen.

**Hard money**: campaign contributions donated directly to candidates.

**Ideology**: set of beliefs about political values and the role of the government.

**Incumbent**: an officeholder who is seeking reelection.

**Independent**: one is not registered with a political party. **Independent leaners** tend to vote for candidates of one particular party, whereas **pure independents** have no consistent pattern of party voting.

**Issue advocacy ads**: ads that focus on issues and do not explicitly encourage citizens to vote for a certain candidate.

**Open primary**: election to choose candidates that is open to independents, and in which voters may choose candidates from any one party.

**Party identification**: a sense of affiliation that a person has with a particular political party.

**Party platform**: a list of positions and programs that the party adopts at the national convention; each position is called a **plank**.

**Political culture**: the widely shared beliefs, values, and norms that citizens share about their government.

**Plurality**: more votes than anyone else, but less than half, e.g., Clinton won a plurality (43%) of popular votes in 1992, but not a majority. **Plurality elections** such as those for Congress are won by the person with the most votes, regardless if he/she has a majority.

**Political efficacy**: capacity to understand and influence political events.

**Political socialization**: process in which one acquires his/her political belief.

**Realigning (“critical”) election**: an election in which there is a long term change in party alignment, e.g., 1932.

**Safe seat**: an office that is extremely likely to be won by a particular candidate or political party.

**Single member district system**: system in which the people elect one representative per district. With a winner-take-all rule, this system strengthens the two major parties and weakens minor parties.

**Soft money**: campaign contributions that are not donated directly to candidates, but are instead donated to parties.

**Solid South**: historically, the South voted solidly Democratic. However, the South is now strongly Republican: Bush carried every Southern state in 2000.

**Split ticket voting**: casting votes for candidates of one's own party and for candidates of opposing parties, e.g., voting for a Republican presidential candidate and a Democratic congressional candidate.

**Straight ticket voting**: casting votes only for candidates of one's party.

**Suffrage**: the right to vote.

**Superdelegate**: a delegate to the Democratic national convention who is there by virtue of holding an office.

**Super Tuesday**: a Tuesday in early March in which many of the presidential primaries, particularly in the South, are held.

**Swing state**: a state does not consistently vote either Democratic or Republican in presidential elections.