

CHAPTER 10

Elections and Campaigns

OBJECTIVES

This chapter focuses on the process of campaigning involved in each type of election. After reading and reviewing the material in this chapter, the student should be able to do each of the following:

1. Demonstrate the differences between the party-oriented campaigns of the nineteenth century and the candidate-oriented ones of today, contrasting the major elements of successful campaigns.
2. Discuss how important campaign funding is to election outcomes, what the major sources of such funding are under current laws and how successful reform legislation has been in removing improper monetary influences from United States elections.
3. Outline the processes for electing presidents and for electing members of Congress, and discuss how the major differences between the two types of contests shape who runs and how it affects their campaign strategy.
4. Describe what the Democrats and Republicans each must do to put together a successful national coalition to win an election.
5. Outline the major arguments on either side of the question of whether elections do or do not result in major changes in public policy in the United States.

OVERVIEW

Political campaigns have become increasingly personalized, with little or no connection to formal party organizations. Party influence has decayed as a result of the widespread adoption of the direct primary, the increasing influence of the media, and the workings of campaign finance law. Today, candidates face the problem of creating a temporary organization that can raise money from large numbers of small donors and mobilize enthusiastic supporters; they must win the nomination by appealing to the party faithful, while not losing their ability to recruit moderate and independent voters in the general election.

Election outcomes can have important effects on public policy, especially during critical or “realigning” elections. On these occasions, new voters are coming into the electorate in large numbers, old party loyalties are weakening, and/or a major issue is splitting the majority party.

CHAPTER OUTLINE WITH KEYED-IN RESOURCES

- I. Presidential versus congressional campaigns
 - A. Differences
 1. Most obvious difference is more voter participation in presidential campaign, so candidates must work harder and spend more
 2. Presidential races are more competitive than House races
 3. Lower turnout in off years means that candidates must appeal to more motivated and partisan voters
 4. Members of Congress can do things for their constituents that the president cannot

5. Members of Congress can run as ⁽⁴⁾ _____ distancing themselves from “the mess in Washington”; presidents cannot _____
- However, members of Congress may feel voter anger about national affairs, particularly the economy
 - Presidential coattails do not have the value they once had; some scholars argue they don’t exist anymore
6. Congressional elections are now substantially independent of the presidential election

B. Running for President

- Getting mentioned
 - David Broder: “The Great Mentioner”
 - Let it be known to reporters “off the record” that you are considering running
 - Travel around the country making speeches
 - Have a famous name (John Glenn)
 - Be identified with a major piece of legislation
 - Be the governor of a big state
- Setting aside time to run
 - Reagan: six years; Mondale: four years
 - May have to resign from office first (Dole in 1996), though many campaign while in office
- Money

These amounts have changed

 - Individuals can give \$2,000, PACs can give \$5,000 in each election to each candidate.
 - Candidates must raise \$5,000 in twenty states in individual contributions of \$250 or less to qualify for federal matching grants to pay for primary campaigns.
- Organization
 - A large (paid) staff
 - Volunteers
 - Advisers on issues: position papers
- Strategy and themes
 - ⁽⁵⁾ _____ defend their record; ⁽⁶⁾ _____ attack incumbents.
 - Setting the tone (positive or negative)
 - Developing a theme: “trust,” “confidence,” “compassionate conservatism,” etc.
 - Judging the timing (early momentum vs. reserving resources for later)
 - Choosing a target voter: who’s the audience? Who will change their vote?

C. Getting elected to Congress

- Incumbents with extraordinary advantage—and no term limits in Congress
- Each state has two senators; number of House representatives based on state population, as determined by the census
- House members are now elected from single-member districts.
- District boundaries can affect election outcomes; two enduring problems have characterized congressional electoral politics
 - ⁽⁷⁾ _____ districts have very different populations, so the votes in the less-populated district “weigh more” than do those in the more-populated district
 - ⁽⁸⁾ _____ boundaries are drawn to favor one party rather than another, resulting in odd-shaped districts
- Problems associated with House elections:
 - Total size of the House, which Congress has decided
 - Allocating House seats among the states (states gain and lose seats following the census)
 - Determining the size of congressional districts within the states, which states have decided in keeping with stringent Supreme Court rulings

- d) Determining the shape of congressional districts within the states, which states have decided in keeping with stringent Supreme Court rulings
- D. Winning the congressional primary
1. Must gather voter 11 to appear on the ballot for a primary election
 2. Win party nomination by winning the primary election—parties have limited influence over these outcomes 10
 3. Run in the general election—10 almost always win: sophomore surge due to use of office to run a strong personal campaign
 4. Personalized campaigns offer members independence from party in Congress
- E. Staying in Office
1. How members get elected has two consequences
 - a) Legislators are closely tied to local concerns
 - b) Party leaders have little influence in the Congress because they can't influence electoral outcomes
 2. Affects how policy is made: the members gear her/his office to help individual constituents, while committees secure 11 for the district
 3. Members must decide how much to be delegates (do what district wants) versus trustees (use their independent judgment)
- II. Primary versus general campaigns (THEME A: HOW CAMPAIGNS ARE CONDUCTED)
- A. Primary and general campaigns
1. What works in a primary election may not work in a general election, and vice versa
 - a) Different voters, workers, media attention in different types of elections
 - b) Must mobilize activists who will give money, volunteer, and attend caucuses
 - c) Activists are more ideologically stringent than are the voters at large.
 2. Iowa caucuses
 - a) Held in February of presidential election year
 - b) Candidates must do well or be disadvantaged in media attention, contributor interest
 - c) Winners tend to be most 12 Democrat, most 13 Republican
 3. The balancing act
 - a) Being conservative enough or liberal enough to get nominated
 - b) Then move to 13 to get elected
 - c) Apparent contradictions can alienate voters from all candidates
 4. Even primary voters can be more extreme ideologically than average voters: Kerry took more extreme positions in 2004 primaries, backed away from them after winning Democratic nomination
- B. Two kinds of campaign issues
1. 13 issues: rival candidates have opposing views, voters are divided and a partisan realignment may result
 - a) Position issues in 2000: social security, defense, public school choice systems
 - 16 b) Great party realignments (e.g., 1890s, 1960s) have been based on position issues
 2. 16 issues: candidate supports the public, widely held view
 - a) Dominated the 1996 election
 - b) Increasingly important because television leads to a reliance on popular symbols and admired images
- C. Television, debates, and direct mail
1. Paid advertising (spots)
 - a) Little known candidates can increase name recognition through the frequent use of spots (example, Carter in 1976)
 - b) Probably less effect on general than primary elections because most voters rely on many sources for information

2. News broadcasts (“visuals”)
 - a) Cost little
 - b) May have greater credibility with voters
 - c) Rely on having television camera crew around
 - d) May actually be less informative than spots and therefore make less of an impression
3. 17
 - a) Usually an advantage only to the challenger
 - b) Reagan in 1980: reassured voters by his performance
 - c) 2004 primary debates: not clear who did better, and are thought to have little impact on voters
4. Risk of slips of the tongue on visuals and debates
 - a) Forces candidates to rely on stock speeches—campaign themes and proven applause-getting lines
 - b) Sell yourself as much or more than ideas
5. Ross Perot’s campaign depended on television
 - a) CNN appearances
 - b) Infomercials
 - c) Televised debates 18 with major party contenders 19
6. 1996, major networks gave 20 time to “major” candidates—and 19 it to minor third-party nominees
7. 20
 - a) Makes possible direct-mail campaigns
 - b) Allows candidates to address specific voters via direct mail
 - c) Mailing to specific groups, so more specific views can be expressed
 - d) 2004 Howard Dean campaign based in Internet appeals
8. The gap between running a campaign and running the government has been growing on:
 - a) Party leaders had to worry about their candidates’ reelection so campaigning and government linked
 - b) Today’s consultants work for different people in different elections—no participation in governing

III. Money (THEME B: MONEY IN ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS)

- A. The sources of campaign money
 1. Presidential primaries: part private, part public money
 - a) Federal matching funds for all individuals’ donations of \$250 or less
 - b) Gives candidates an incentive to raise money from small donors
 - c) Government also gives lump-sum grants to parties to cover convention costs
 2. Presidential general elections: all public money (2004: \$74.4 million for major party candidates)
 3. Congressional elections: mostly 21 money
 - a) From individuals, political action committees, and political parties
 - b) Most money comes from individual small donors (\$100–\$200 a person)
 - c) \$2,000 maximum for individual donors
 - d) Benefit performances by rock stars, etc., can raise large amounts of money
 - e) \$5,000 limit for PACs but most give just a few hundred dollars
 - f) Incumbents receive one-third of their campaign funds from PACs and spend little 22 of their own money
 - g) 22 must supply much of their own money
 4. Arizona, Maine, Vermont now have public funding of campaigns, but the impact of this reform is not yet known.

- B. Campaign finance rules
1. 1972: 23 and illegal donations from corporations, unions, and individuals catalyzed change
 2. Brought about the 1974 federal campaign reform law and Federal Election Commission (FEC)
 3. Reform law
 - a) Set limit on individual donations (\$1,000 per candidate per election)
 - b) Reaffirmed ban on corporate and union donations...
 - c) ...but allowed them to raise money through PACs
 - d) PAC requirements:
 - (1) At least 50 voluntary members
 - (2) Give to at least 5 federal candidates
 - (3) Limited to giving \$5,000 per election per candidate, or no more than \$15,000 per year to any political party
 - e) Primary and general election counted separately for donations
 - f) Public funding for presidential campaigns:
 - (1) Matching funds for presidential primary candidates, who meet fundraising stipulations
 - (2) Full funding for presidential general campaigns, for major party candidates
 - (3) Candidates may decline public funding: in 2004, George W. Bush, John Kerry and Howard Dean did not accept public funding and ran on money they had raised privately
 - (4) Partial funding for presidential general campaigns, for minor party candidates, if you have won at least 5 percent of the vote in the previous election (2000, Reform Party and Green Party candidates, Pat Buchanan and Ralph Nader, each received some funding; neither was eligible in 2004)
 4. 1973 reform produced two problems
 - a) Independent 24: an organization or PAC can spend as much as it wishes on advertising, so long as it is not coordinated with a candidate's campaign
 - b) 25 money: unlimited amounts of money may be given to a political party, so long as a candidate is not named; this money can then be spent to help candidates with voting drives, etc. (2000 election, approximately half a billion dollars in soft money was spent)
- C. A Second Campaign
1. Following 2000 election, desire to reform the 1974 law led to the Bipartisan Campaign Finance Reform Act; three changes:
 - a) Banned soft money contributions to national parties from corporations and unions after 2002 election
 - b) Raised the limit on individual donations to \$2,000 per candidate per election
 - c) Sharply restricted independent expenditures—corporations, unions, trade associations, nonprofit organizations cannot use their own money for an advertisement referring to a candidate by name, 30 days before a primary and 60 days before a general election
 2. Immediately challenged in court as restriction of free speech: Supreme Court upheld almost the entire law

- D. New sources of money
1. 20 organizations: a new source of money under the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act
 - a) Designed to permit the kind of soft money expenditures once made by political parties
 - b) Can spend their money on politics so long as they do not coordinate with a candidate or lobby directly for that person
 2. 21 527 organizations:
 - a) The Media Fund
 - b) America Coming Together
 - 22 c) America Votes (and many others)
 3. 23 527 organizations:
 - a) Progress for America
 - b) The Leadership Forum
 - c) America for Job Security (and many others)
 4. 2004: 527 organizations raised and spent over one-third of a billion dollars

- E. Money and winning
1. Presidential candidates have similar funds because of federal funding
 2. During peacetime, presidential elections are usually decided on the basis of three factors:
 - a) Political party affiliation (the 20% of the voters who swing between the parties)
 - b) The state of the economy
 - (1) Often called 24 "swing" voting"
 - (2) Not clear whose pocketbook is being voted, though: the individual or the country as a whole?
 - c) Character
 3. Other factors whose influence on the presidential campaign is usually overstated:
 - a) Vice presidential nominee
 - b) Political reporting
 - c) Religion of the presidential candidate
 - d) Abortion as a single issue
 4. Congressional races—money has a decisive effect
 - 25 a) 26 must spend to be recognized
 - b) Jacobson: big spending challengers do better
 - c) Big spending incumbents also do better and higher spending has become the norm 27
 5. Advantages of 28, in fundraising
 - a) Can provide services to constituency
 - b) Can use franked mailings
 - c) Can get free publicity by sponsoring legislation or conducting investigations

IV. What decides elections?

- A. Party
1. Not as simple as it seems: most people identify as Democrats—but the Democrats lost 6 of 9 presidential contests between 1968 and 2000
 2. Democrats less wedded to their party than are Republicans
 3. GOP does better among independents
 4. Republicans have higher turnout
- B. Issues, especially the economy
1. V. O. Key: most voters who switch parties do so in their own interests
 - a) They know what issues affect them personally
 - b) They have strong principles about certain issues (abortion, etc.)

2. 32 voting is used by relatively few voters
- Those voters know the issues and vote accordingly
 - Most common among activists and special interest groups
3. 33 voting practiced by most voters, and decides most elections
- Judge the incumbent's performance and vote accordingly
 - Have things gotten better or worse, especially economically?
 - Examples: presidential campaigns of 1980, 1984, 1988, 1992, 1996
 - Usually helps incumbent, unless economy has gotten worse
 - Midterm elections: voters tend to turn against president's party
- C. The campaign
- Campaigns do make a difference.
 - They reawaken voters' partisan loyalties
 - They let voters see how candidates handle and apply pressure
 - They let voters judge candidates' characters and core values
 - Campaigns tend to emphasize 31 over 33
 - True throughout American history
 - What has changed is importance of primary elections
 - Gives more influence to single-issue groups with loyal members who vote as a block
- D. Finding a winning coalition
- Ways of looking at various groups
 - How loyal, or percentage voting for party
 - How important, or number voting for party
 - Democratic coalition
 - 30 most loyal
 - Jews almost as loyal as African Americans
 - Hispanics loyal, though somewhat mixed because of underlying ethnic differences
 - Cubans tend to vote Republican
 - Mexicans and Puerto Ricans strongly Democrat
 - Turnout among Hispanic voters still quite low
 - Catholics, southerners, unionists departing the coalition
 - Republican coalition
 - Party of business and professional people who are very loyal (exception: 1964)
 - Farmers are often Republican, but are changeable
 - Party usually wins a majority of the votes of the poor (includes elderly)
 - Representatives of different segments of the coalition stress loyalty or numbers, because can rarely claim both
- V. The effects of elections on policy (THEME C: ELECTIONS AND PARTISAN ALIGNMENTS)
- A. The broad trends in winning and losing
- 1876-1896: 32 Democrats and Republicans hotly competitive
 - 1896-1932: 31; dominant party
 - 1932-1952: 33 dominants party
 - 1952-present: 30 power has changed hands frequently
- B. Argument: Public policy remains more or less the same no matter which official or party is in office.
- Depends on the office and the policy
 - Voters must elect numerous officeholders
 - Parties have a limited ability to build coalitions of officeholders
 - Winning coalitions may change from policy to policy

- C. Comparison: Great Britain, with parliamentary system and strong parties, often sees marked changes, as in 1945 and 1951.
- D. Conclusion: Many American elections do make differences in policy, though constitutional system generally moderates the pace of change.
- E. Why, then, the perception that elections do not matter?
 1. Because change alternates with consolidation
 2. Most elections are retrospective judgments about the incumbent president and existing congressional majority

WEB RESOURCES

Note: During election years, candidates and parties have extensive web pages that may be readily accessed for information. The sites listed below are independent of election year cycles.

American Votes, Duke University Campaign Memorabilia:
<http://SCRIPTORIUM.LIB.DUKE.EDU/AMERICAVOTES/>

Campaign Finance Institute: <http://WWW.CFI.ORG/>

Constitutional Rights Foundation: <http://WWW.CRF-USA.ORG/>

Presidential Campaigns (selected) from 2000: <http://WWW.FEC.GOV/PUBREC/2000PRES.HTM>

Presidential Campaign maps: <http://FISHER.LIB.VIRGINIA.EDU/ELECTIONS/ELECT2000/ELECTION2000.HTML>

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION TOPICS

Caucuses or primaries? As a state party chair, would students advocate on behalf of caucuses or primaries for their state's presidential elections? And what kind of primary—open, closed, or blanket—would they institute? Ask students to consider the benefits and costs of each form of election, for party members and for unaffiliated voters, in single-party and competitive states.

Can presidential coattails be lengthened? Under what circumstances would a member of Congress want to campaign with the party's presidential candidate? Under what circumstances would a member seek to distance herself or himself from the party's presidential candidate? Be careful to have students think about these questions in terms of political campaigning, fundraising, political advertising, and electoral returns.

Where does the money come from? The Federal Election Commission provides a detailed accounting of the donations received by congressional and presidential candidates, from individual donors and from political action committees. Select a variety of candidates—differing parties, policy interests, partisan and committee leaders, and so forth—and ask students to establish whether and how their differences are reflected in their funding sources. For data, see: <http://WWW.FEC.GOV/>

Do campaigns make a difference? What motivates a citizen to vote? To abstain? Explore these questions through public opinion data and through partisan recommendations for designing get-out-the-vote (GOTV) efforts. Then, have the students test their hypotheses by conducting a registration drive. What appeals work? Which ones don't? How can you use your information to help candidates design more persuasive campaigns?

IMPORTANT TERMS

- *527 organizations** Organizations that, under Section 527 of the Internal Revenue Code, raise and spend money to advance political causes.
- *blanket primary** A primary election in which each voter may vote for candidates from both parties.

*caucus (electoral)	A meeting of voters held to help choose a candidate for office.
*closed primary	A primary election in which voting is limited to already registered party members.
*coattails	The alleged tendency of candidates to win more votes in an election because of the presence at the top of the ticket of a better-known candidate, such as the president.
*general election	An election held to determine which candidate will hold office.
*gerrymandering	Drawing the boundaries of legislative districts in bizarre or unusual shapes so that they favor one party.
*incumbent	The person already holding office.
*independent expenditures	Spending by political action committees, corporations, or labor unions that is done to help a party or candidate but is done independently of them.
*malapportionment	Drawing the boundaries of legislative districts so that they are unequal in population.
*open primary	A primary election in which voters may choose in which party to vote as they enter the polling place.
*political action committee	A committee, set up by a corporation, labor union, or other interest, that raises and spends campaign money from voluntary donations.
*position issue	An issue about which the public is divided and rival parties or candidates adopt different positions.
*primary election	An election held to choose candidates for office.
*prospective voting	Voting for a candidate because you favor his or her ideas for handling issues.
*retrospective voting	Voting for a candidate because you like his or her past actions in office.
*runoff primary	A second primary election held when no candidate gets a majority of the votes in the first primary.
*soft money	Funds obtained by political parties that are spent on party activities, such as get-out-the-vote drives, but not on behalf of a specific candidate.
*sophomore surge	An increase in the votes a congressional candidate usually gets when they first run for re-election.
*valence issue	An issue about which the public is united and rival candidates or political parties adopt similar positions in hopes that each will be thought to represent those widely shared beliefs.

THEME A: HOW CAMPAIGNS ARE CONDUCTED

Instructor Resources

Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Paul Waldman, ed., *Electing the President 2000: The Insiders' View*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001.

Thomas A. Hollihan, *Uncivil Wars: Political Campaigns in a Media Age*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001.

Dennis W. Johnson, *No Place for Amateurs: How Political Consultants are Reshaping American Democracy*. New York: Routledge, 2001.

Mary Matalin and James Carville, *All's Fair: Love, War, and Running for President*. New York: Random House, 1994.

Jeremy D. Mayer, *Running on Race: Racial Politics in Presidential Campaigns*. New York: Random House, 2002.

Candice J. Nelson, David A. Dulio, and Stephen K. Medvic, ed., *Shades of Grey: Perspectives on Campaign Ethics*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2002.

James A. Thurber and Candice J. Nelson, eds., *Campaign Warriors, Political Consultants in Elections*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2000.

James A. Thurber, Candice J. Nelson, and David A. Dulio, ed., *Crowded Airwaves: Campaign Advertising in Elections*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2000.

Theodore H. White, *The Making of the President, 1960*. New York: New American Library, 1961.

Summary

Several developments have led to the rise of candidate-centered campaigns. The decline of parties is the most important. The primary election has taken from party leaders the power to select the party's nominee for office; they therefore have little reason to work hard to help that person win the general election. Political funds and political jobs are increasingly under the control of candidates and office holders, not party leaders. Public financing funds go to the individual candidate, not the party. And the decline in party identification among voters means that candidates have less incentive to stress party ties. In addition, the increased use of mass media for campaigning encourages the building of an image based on personal qualities.

Any campaign tends to be composed of four distinct types of workers. First, the paid professionals may be either members of the incumbent's office staff (when the campaign season is over) or outside "hired-gun" specialists. Second, unpaid senior advisers are usually old and trusted acquaintances of the candidate. Third, citizen volunteers are a diverse lot who are given routine and boring tasks. Finally, issue consultants define issues and write position papers. Other professional consultants include media personnel, organizers of computerized direct-mail campaigns, and pollsters. Modern political consultants, unlike their party counterparts of the past, usually do not participate in governing after the election is won.

After assembling a campaign staff, the candidate must make a series of important decisions about campaign strategy. The primaries present the first problem. A candidate may take strong ideological positions on the issues and attract the support of ideological activists who loom large in the primary electorate. This, as George McGovern found in 1972, makes it difficult to appeal to independents and members of the party in the general election. The candidate must also decide whether to run a positive or negative campaign, how to time the campaign (peaking early or late), what groups to appeal to, and how money should be spent. Sometimes choices are restricted: an incumbent will necessarily be judged on past votes and policies, and a member of the president's party will be saddled with the record of the incumbent president. Finally, a candidate must guard against making a blunder—such as Carter's *Playboy* interview, Reagan's claim that trees are a major source of pollution, or Clinton's claim not to have inhaled marijuana—that could cost the election.

Television is an important factor in modern campaigns. Paid advertisements, called *spots*, can be useful, especially in primary elections in which voters do not have large amounts of information from other sources. *Visuals* are segments on television newscasts. To get this exposure a candidate must contrive to do something visually interesting at a time and place convenient for TV camera crews. Ironically,

television newscasts are rarely informative, focusing as they do on campaign hoopla. Paid spots, on the other hand, contain a good deal of issue information that the public sees, remembers, and intelligently evaluates. Conversely, television debates between presidential candidates can sometimes sway an election outcome (such as the 1960 Kennedy-Nixon debate). However, their total effect on an election may frequently appear uncertain or mixed (as the Clinton-Bush-Perot 1992 debates illustrate).

One undisputed effect of campaigns is to allow the passage of time so that partisan loyalties can reassert themselves. People who identify themselves as Republicans are substantially outnumbered by people who self-identify as Democrats. This does not prevent presidential races from being highly competitive, however, because (1) independents historically have leaned toward the Republicans, (2) Republicans have been less likely to defect to the opposite party than have Democrats, and (3) a higher percentage of Republicans than Democrats turn out to vote in elections.

Discussion Questions

1. In the 1960 presidential debate between Kennedy and Nixon, television viewers overwhelmingly considered Kennedy the victor while radio listeners considered Nixon a narrow victor. What does this evidence suggest about the impact of issues on elections? Are today's voters more critical consumers of the media? How should a candidate devise an electoral strategy to balance personality and issues?
2. Why would a candidate rarely wish to run a campaign focused solely on issues with his or her stands on those issues clearly explained? Be careful to distinguish between primary and general elections.
3. Should voters be prevented from splitting their ticket? This could be accomplished by issuing a party-specific ballot, as is done in open and closed primaries. Are there any benefits to split-ticket voting, for the voter or for the officeholders? Would one party's control of both the Congress and the presidency necessarily yield strong, coherent policy? Why or why not? Be careful to draw examples from the early years of the Clinton presidency—and the early months of the George W. Bush presidency.

THEME B: MONEY IN ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS

Instructor Resources

Annelise Anderson, ed., *Political Money: Deregulating American Politics, Selected Writings on Campaign Finance Reform*. Hoover Institute Press, 2000.

Ian Ayres and Bruce A. Ackerman, *Voting With Dollars: A New Paradigm for Campaign Finance*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002.

Diana Dwyre and Victoria A. Farrar-Myers, *Legislative Labyrinth: Congress and Campaign Finance Reform*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2000.

Peter Kobra, *Cozy Politics: Political Parties, Campaign Finance, and Compromised Governance*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002.

David B. Magleby, ed., *The Other Campaign: Soft Money and Issue Advocacy in the 2000 Congressional Campaign*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002.

Trevor Potter, et al., *The New Campaign Finance Sourcebook*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2003.

Martin H. Redish, *Money Talks: Speech, Economic Power, and the Values of Democracy*. New York: New York University Press, 2001.

Jerrold E. Schneider, *Campaign Finance Reform and the Future of the Democratic Party*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Bradley A. Smith, *Unfree Speech: The Folly of Campaign Finance Reform*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003.

Darrel M. West, *Checkbook Democracy: How Money Corrupts Political Campaigns*. Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 2000.

Robert Williams, ed., *Party Finance and Political Corruption*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000.

Summary

Political campaigns cost a lot. This has been particularly true in recent years, because political machines cannot supply battalions of precinct workers, and expensive media (such as television and direct mail) have become more important. But can money buy elections? In twenty-nine presidential elections between 1860 and 1972, the winner outspent the loser twenty-one times. This does not necessarily mean that money can buy votes, because popular candidates who look like winners can raise more money than others. Nixon outspent George McGovern in 1972 but almost certainly would have won even if he had spent less.

The best studies on the effect of money in elections have been done on congressional races. It seems that how much an incumbent spends is of little importance, whereas higher spending by the challenger produces more votes. Such spending can overcome the advantages enjoyed by incumbents.

Campaign money comes from several sources:

1. *The candidates themselves*. The Supreme Court has held that spending one's own money in campaign activity is a form of free speech protected by the First Amendment. However, this spending can be regulated if the candidate receives public funds.
2. *Other well-to-do people*. Usually they give for ideological reasons, or out of ambition for prestige or power. Traditionally, however, some high federal appointments, especially ambassadorships, went to campaign contributors. The 1974 campaign-finance reform law limited to \$1,000 the amount any individual could contribute to any single candidate in any one federal election. The Bipartisan Campaign Finance Reform Act changed this ceiling, bringing it to \$2,100 per candidate. Under particular circumstances (e.g., when a candidate's opponent has spent more than a certain amount of his or her own money), individuals may contribute even more.
3. *Organizations and interest groups*. These may be motivated by either a material interest in a policy area (for example, milk producers or schoolteachers) or by a liberal or conservative ideology. *Political action committees* can be set up to solicit contributions from donors and contribute sums of up to \$5,000 per candidate per election. (The Bipartisan Campaign Finance Reform Act maintained this ceiling. PACs have produced a great increase in the total amount of business and labor spending on elections; business spends more than labor. Because PACs favor incumbents in the majority party, however, Republicans did not fully benefit from corporate spending until 1994 when they became the majority party in both chambers for the first time in 40 years.
4. *Small individual donors*. Recent campaign-finance reform laws have given candidates a strong incentive to solicit small contributions.

5. *The federal government.* In presidential primaries, the federal government will match the money a candidate raises from individuals in amounts of \$250 or less, up to a limit of \$5 million. In the presidential general election, candidates of “major parties” get full federal support. A candidate who accepts federal funding cannot accept private donations. Minor parties, if they obtain at least 5 percent of the vote, also get federal money. (However, there remain loopholes in the campaign finance law, so more money can be spent.)

Campaign-finance reform laws have effects that are not yet entirely clear. But the following seem likely: First, candidates who are personally wealthy have an advantage, as do candidates who can successfully appeal to many small donors. Second, candidates have to spend much more time on fundraising to appeal to a large group of small donors. Third, incumbents will continue to enjoy a substantial advantage in fund raising. Fourth, late starters will be at a disadvantage, because the raising of money from many small donors must begin long in advance of an election. Fifth, the political parties are weakened because funding goes to the presidential candidate and not to the party. (However, laws have been amended to allow the party congressional committees to spend more money on congressional candidates.) Sixth, the role of celebrities in politics will continue because they can stage benefit concerts to raise money for the candidates.

Discussion Questions

1. Suppose we consider campaign-finance reform an attempt to redistribute political influence. That is, “fat cats” are thought to have excessive influence and campaign-finance reform attempts to take away that influence and give it to more deserving people—for example, small contributors. Consider the groups listed below. Judge whether each has *gained* or *lost* influence as the result of campaign-finance reform, or whether reform has made no difference. Then judge whether each group *should have* more influence in American politics.
 - Labor unions
 - Large corporations
 - Incumbent politicians
 - Poor people
 - Issue-oriented members of the middle class
 - Media managers
 - Average workers
 - Rich individuals
 - Popular entertainers
 - Political party officials
2. Given that campaign funds have such an immediate effect on a candidate’s ability to conduct a strong campaign, why would members of Congress pass reform legislation in 2000? Did the reform disadvantage incumbents?
3. Should congressional elections be publicly financed? What effect has public financing had on the presidential elections?

THEME C: ELECTIONS AND PARTISAN ALIGNMENTS

Instructor Resources

Paul R. Abramson, John H. Aldrich, and David W. Whode, *Change and Continuity in the 2000 Elections*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2002.

Walter Dean Burnham, *Critical Elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1970.

Jeffrey E. Cohen, Richard Fleisher, and Paul Kantor, *America Political Parties: Decline or Resurgence?* Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 2001.

E.J. Dionne (ed.), *The Election of 2000: Reports and Interpretations*. New York: Chatham House Publishers, 2001.

Peter F. Galderisi, Marni Ezra, and Michael Lyons, eds., *Congressional Primaries and the Politics of Representation*. Lanham, MD: Rowman Littlefield, 2001.

Steven Hill, *Fixing Elections: The Failure of America's Winner-Take-All Politics*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Jeremy D. Mayer, *Running on Race: Racial Politics in Presidential Campaigns, 1960-2000*. New York: Random House, 2002.

Arthur Paulson, *Realignment and Party Revival: Understanding American Electoral Politics at the Turn of the Twenty-first Century*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001.

Jeffrey M. Stonecash et al, *Diverging Parties: Realignment, Social Change, and Political Polarization*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2002.

Stephen J. Wayne and Clyde Wilcox (ed.), *The Election of the Century and What It Tells Us About the Future of American Politics*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2002.

Summary

When political scientists look at election outcomes, they are interested in broad trends in winning and losing and in what these imply about the attitudes of voters, the operation of the electoral system, and the fate of the political parties. Looking at the historical record, we note several eras in American elections divided by *critical*, or *realigning*, *periods*. During such periods there occurs a sharp, lasting shift in the popular coalition supporting one or both parties. This may occur at the time of the election as voters choose sides in new patterns, or just after an election, when the new administration creates, by its policies, a new supporting coalition. The five realigning periods in American history have been:

1. 1800—when the Jeffersonian Republicans defeated the Federalists, who then disappeared as an organized party.
2. 1828—when the Jacksonian Democrats came to power.
3. 1860—when the Whig party collapsed and the Republicans (a “minor” or “third” party) rose to replace them.
4. 1896—when, reacting to economic discontent in the country, the Democrats nominated populist William Jennings Bryan and adopted a Populist Party platform. This alienated urban Catholic workers in the Northeast, leaving the Republicans in control of the industrial states and the Democrats strong in the farm states of the South and Midwest.

- 1932—when, in the midst of an economic depression, Roosevelt gained office on the basis of popular dissatisfaction and proceeded to implement policies that drew urban workers, Blacks, and Jews away from the Republicans to form a new majority coalition.

Thus realignments occur when a highly salient new issue (slavery, the economy) appears and cuts across existing party divisions. A party may try to straddle the issue, as the Whigs did with slavery in 1860. Or it may take a distinct position, as the Republicans did in 1860 and as both parties did in 1896 and 1932. Either way, the salient new issue creates a new alignment of voters, both by converting existing voters and by recruiting new voters into the dominant party.

Some people feel that the nation is overdue for another realigning period. Indeed, some think the 1980 election signaled the breakup of the New Deal coalition and its replacement with an alignment by which the Republicans have benefited from a new conservative coalition. Yet neither the 1980 nor the 1984 elections *per se* signaled a realigning shift among voters. Apparently, economic issues and personalities affected the voters more than any fundamental repudiation of the entire New Deal political philosophy.

Perhaps, however, the party system has lost so much of its meaning for voters that parties will decay rather than realign. Evidence of this is found in the decreasing proportion of voters who identify themselves with one or another party and in the consequent increase in *split-ticket voting*. This phenomenon is referred to as *dealignment*.

Even at the peak of the New Deal realignment, the Democratic Party never had a dependable winning coalition in each election. The groups most loyal to the Democratic Party—African Americans and Jews—are small and have given the party only a small fraction of the votes it needs to win an election. The nation's African Americans have been the most loyal. The groups that make up the largest part of the Democratic vote—Catholics, union members, and southerners—are also the least dependable parts of the coalition. In fact, the South has experienced an extraordinary realignment among its white voters, most of whom now vote Republican.

Realigning periods often bring substantial changes in public policy. The election of 1860 resulted in a chain of events that ended slavery; that of 1896 produced Republican dominance and high tariffs, a strong currency, urban growth, and business prosperity; the 1932 election produced a vast enlargement of federal authority. The election of 1964 allowed the Democrats to implement the Great Society programs; and the 1980 election brought into office a Republican administration committed to reversing the growth of government over the preceding half-century. Between such elections are periods of consolidation and continuity.

Discussion Questions

- Who constitutes the Democratic coalition? Which groups are the most loyal members of the Democratic coalition? Which contribute the largest proportion of the Democratic vote? How does it matter that the most loyal groups are not among the largest contributors of votes?
- Why is a crisis often required to produce major policy changes? Does the fact that a crisis is required to produce major policy changes suggest that our system is excessively biased against change? Or does our system produce changes only when clear majorities *want* a change, which is likely to occur during a crisis?
- How should the 1992 and 2000 elections be classified? Are these realignments, dealignments, or simply instances of voters acting erratically?