Nominations, Campaigns, and Elections

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"Throwing your hat in the ring" marks the traditional announcement by a political candidate running for office. Today's campaign and election resembles more of a "war room" atmosphere than the old-style "whistle stop" rallies. This chapter traces the characteristics of the nominating process and election campaign. In fact, the nominating process has turned into a campaign itself. Thus many of the strategies used to receive a party's nomination are the same as those used to convince the electorate to vote for a particular candidate.

PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES "THROW THEIR HATS IN THE RING" WHEN THEY ANNOUNCE THEIR INTENTION TO RUN FOR THE HIGHEST OFFICE IN THE LAND

Specifically, we will focus our attention on the campaign to receive the nomination for president, including the primary route, the party caucus, and the nominating convention. We will trace the process a candidate uses, once given the nod, to organize an election campaign including the money requirements, the fundraising techniques used, the restrictions placed on the candidate by federal election laws, and the different strategies used to reach the voter. We will also explore the role of the media in the high-tech campaign waged to get nominated and elected.

As we play the nomination and election game, we will also point to the various reforms being discussed in relation to the length of campaigns, to the primary system, and to the revision of campaign election laws, especially in the area of contributions by special interest groups.

ELECTION PROCESS

The road to victory is actually a three-round fight involving a dual campaign to get nominated and elected, each involving a complex strategy.

When you calculate the time it takes between a candidate's announcement that he or she is running to the actual convention, it could easily be two years from start to end. Add to that the actual campaign for president, and you can tack on an additional three to four months.

The "invisible primary," the period between a candidate's announcement that he or she is running for president and the day the first primary votes are cast, will heavily influence the outcome of the primary season. After the candidate declares, the candidate starts building an organization, actively seeking funds—the current start-up fee for presidential races has been estimated at $100 million, with the expected cost to escalate well above $1 billion in 2008—and developing an overall strategy to win the nomination. Before the first primary or caucus, the candidate vies for endorsements from party leaders and attempts to raise the public's interest by visiting key states with early primaries such as Iowa and New Hampshire. Debates are also held among the candidates and political ads are shown in the early primary states. Since 1976, when little-known Georgia Governor Jimmy Carter threw his hat in the ring, the invisible primary has created a perceived front runner. Front-runner status during the invisible primary has been defined as the candidate who raised the most money. This pattern was broken in 2004, when Vermont Governor Howard Dean raised more money than any other Democrat. His candidacy also pioneered using the Internet to raise a record amount of funds. However, after Dean lost the Iowa caucus, his candidacy imploded. In the election of 2008, Hillary

Republican Rudy Giuliani led the Republican field, with the eventual nominee John McCain lagging behind in fourth place. The Iowa caucus and New Hampshire primary changed the dynamics of the race. Both Obama and McCain captured their party's nomination, increasing their fundraising as the campaign progressed.

The second stage of the campaign (based on the 2008 election) is the primary season. By the time the first caucus in Iowa and the first primary in New Hampshire are held in January, the campaign for the party's nomination is well underway—some 10 months before election day. By the time these early primary votes are completed, many candidates will have dropped out of the race. Prior to 2004, there was a break between the Iowa and New Hampshire votes and other primaries. But in 2004, the Democrats created a primary calendar that characterized as "front-loading," where each week different primaries are held. This is the third phase of the campaign. And in February and March key regional primaries are held on what has been called "Super Tuesday." After Super Tuesday, one candidate usually has enough delegates pledged to him that he becomes the presumptive nominee. This did not happen in 2008, as the Democratic candidates fought until the last primary was completed.

The third stage of the campaign takes place between the time both parties have a presumptive candidate and the conventions where the candidates are officially nominated. In 2004, Massachusetts Senator John Kerry won the majority of the Democratic primaries and had enough delegates pledged to him that by March he became the Democratic Party's presumptive nominee. Incumbent Republican President George W. Bush also began his campaign in earnest in March 2004 with a television blitz of more than $60 million. In 2008, Republican Senator John McCain wrapped up his party's nomination months before Democratic Senator Barack Obama. This gave McCain an opportunity to unify the Republican Party, define his candidacy, and continue to raise funds for the general campaign. Obama seemingly was at a disadvantage, because he finally became the presumptive nominee in June and had a much more difficult time unifying the Democratic Party.

The fourth stage of the campaign is the nominating convention held by each party. Traditionally, the party out of power holds its convention first. The conventions are highly scripted. The conventions are like a pep rally for the party's base. The key components of the convention are the adoption of the party platform, the keynote speech, the nominating speeches, and the acceptance speeches of the vice-presidential and presidential candidates. After the conventions, each presidential candidate is expected to get a "convention bounce" (a sometimes-temporary increase in positive polling results) in the polls. In 2008, both parties delayed their conventions because they did not want to have a conflict with the Summer Olympics. The conventions were held in successive weeks. The Democrats met first, and Barack Obama's acceptance speech was held in Denver's Invesco Field before the largest audience ever to watch an acceptance speech. The Democrat received a modest poll bounce, which was quickly erased after John McCain announced his choice for vice president, Alaska Governor Sarah Palin, prior to the opening of his convention.

The election campaign seems like a 100-yard dash compared to the nominating process. Even though there are similarities to the campaign for nomination in terms of organization and strategy, once the candidate has the official party designation, the fall campaign turns into a fight to the finish. In 1960 Richard Nixon decided to be the first candidate to campaign actively in all 50 states, and some analysts believe it

cost him the election. In 1992, George Bush decided to take the high road as the incumbent and not begin campaigning actively until he was "officially nominated," thereby losing valuable time to challenger Bill Clinton. In 1996, President Clinton used the office of the President in what has been described as the "Rose Garden" strategy to establish the themes of his campaign. In fact, he used primary campaign funds to air political commercials 16 months before the election, touting his accomplishments. In the 2000 campaign, Al Gore campaigned for a continuation of the Clinton accomplishments while trying to separate himself from the scandals that President Clinton faced—most notably his impeachment. He selected a Clinton critic, Connecticut Senator Joseph Lieberman, the first Jewish candidate for the office of vice president. Governor George W. Bush of Texas campaigned as a Washington outsider. He selected a Washington insider, former George H.W. Bush Defense Secretary Dick Cheney, to be his vice presidential running mate. In 2004, Bush ran as an incumbent, while Democratic Senator John Kerry challenged the sitting president's Iraq policies. The 2008 campaign was characterized by a number of firsts. It was the first time there was no incumbent running for president from the previous administration since 1928; the first time an African-American was nominated; and the first time the Republican Party nominated a woman for vice president.

PRIMARIES

Winning delegate support takes place as a result of a high-tech campaign to convince party regulars that a particular candidate is best suited to run the country.

Today, presidential candidates use the media for every aspect of their campaign. From sound bites to photo ops to the use of pollsters, media moguls play a key role. The candidate knows the makeup of every election district he campaigns in and relies on the media and its tools to market his or her candidacy. Ad campaigns, as well as the decision on where to go and who to see, are determined by media advisors.

The first step on the road to the White House is the caucus and primary process. Before primaries became the accepted manner in choosing delegates, party regulars met in small groups called caucuses. There they would meet the candidate, ask questions, discuss qualifications, and vote on whether to endorse the candidacy. Party bosses had a great deal of input, and the at-large party membership was locked out of the process.

Today states such as Iowa, which has a caucus, involve many more of the party regulars. It is one of the most direct forms of democracy, similar to the town meeting. Because it is the first official indication of the candidate's viability, Iowa has taken the spotlight as the first test of a candidate's strength. In 1976 Jimmy Carter won the Iowa caucus and received national attention. Bob Dole defeated George H. W. Bush in Iowa in 1988 but could not carry that momentum to the New Hampshire primary.

In 1996 the compressed primary schedule resulted in the showing of an inherent weakness in front-runner Bob Dole's ability as a campaigner. Even though Dole won the Iowa caucus, his margin of victory was slim, and a strong showing by Pat Buchanan dashed Dole's hope of early campaign momentum. Dole's campaign continued to falter in New Hampshire and Arizona, where victories by Buchanan and Steve Forbes signaled serious flaws in the Dole candidacy. By the end of the first leg of the primary season, Dole still faced a serious challenge by Buchanan, Forbes, and former education secretary Lamar Alexander. The rest of the Republican field had been weeded out. Dole's victory finally came in March 1996, a little more than a month after the primary season began, after he won the South Carolina primary. In

overnor Howard Dean won the "invisible primary," he lost the Iowa Caucus and his candidacy imploded after his concession speech. Senator John Kerry used the momentum of his Iowa Democratic primary victory to carry him through the rest of the primaries to victory.

The 2008 primaries presented major challenges for both parties. The front loaded calendar created major problems. The Iowa caucus was held earlier in January than previous election cycles. New Hampshire was forced to schedule its first in the nation primary five days after Iowa, since other states pushed up their primary dates. Both national parties had to penalize state parties because they violated party rules. Fundraising during the primaries also set records, with both Democratic front-runners Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton raising more money than any other presidential candidates in the history of presidential elections. After winning the Iowa caucus, Democratic candidate Barack Obama was declared the front-runner by the media. This label was short lived as Hillary Clinton defied the pundits and the polls by defeating Obama in New Hampshire. Super Tuesday was split between Obama and Clinton, with Clinton winning more delegates and Obama winning more states. The turning point for the Democratic candidates came after Super Tuesday, when Obama won a series of primaries and caucuses that left Hillary Clinton scrambling for superdelegates. For the first time since the modern primary system began, neither candidate could claim a majority until the superdelegates declared who they supported following the last primary. The Republicans had a crowded field with no real front-runner. This changed after John McCain reemerged as the victor in the New Hampshire primary after losing the Iowa caucus. He gained momentum after Super Tuesday, gaining a majority of delegates and claiming victory.

Without a doubt, the presidential primary has become the decisive way a candidate gains delegate support. It has taken on such importance that key primary states such as New York and California have changed their primary dates so that their primaries take on much greater importance. Today, 30 states have presidential primaries. The others use caucuses or party conventions. Presidential primaries can be binding or nonbinding. They can ask the voter to express a preference for a presidential candidate or delegates who are pledged to support a candidate at the convention. Primaries are used in many ways:

- Proportional representation where delegates are selected based on the percentage of the vote the candidate received in the election.
- Winner takes all, where, as in the actual election, the candidate receiving a plurality receives all the delegates. The Republicans use this method in California. Democratic rules have banned the use of this system since 1976.
- Nonpreferential primary where voters choose delegates who are not bound to vote for the winning primary candidate.
- A primary vote where all the voters, including cross-over voters from other political parties, can express a preference but do not actually select delegates.
- A dual primary vote where presidential candidates are selected and a separate slate of delegates is also voted on. New Hampshire uses this type of primary.

Strategy

Primary strategy has changed over the years. For years it was a political axiom that a candidate had to win New Hampshire to win the nomination. Even though Eugene McCarthy came in second to Lyndon Johnson in 1968, because McCarthy received close to 40 percent of the vote, LBJ ultimately decided not to run. In 1992 Bill Clinton came in second to Paul Tsongas. However, the media picked up on Clinton's description of himself as "the comeback kid," making it seem like he was the real winner. The overall strategy used by candidates in primaries is to win as many as possible, as early as possible in order to gain momentum. Al Gore decided to concentrate on a Southern strategy in 1988, hoping to win on Super Tuesday. He did not campaign actively in Iowa and New Hampshire, and by the time the Southern states held their primaries, his victories were limited and his candidacy was hurt. In 1996, Dole's Southern strategy became the turning point of his campaign. Focusing on South Carolina, Dole mounted an offensive against Pat Buchanan and Lamar Alexander, which successfully ended their campaigns and ensured Dole's nomination. Candidate debates have also become a feature of the primary season. These debates often draw the attention of voters to image rather than issues. In addition, the media's coverage and analysis of the results of these elections plays an important role in the process.

THE PARTY CONVENTION

Presidential nominations play an important role in giving the candidate and the party national exposure.

National conventions date back to the 1830s, when the first "open" party convention was held by Jacksonian Democrats. Historically, conventions have provided excitement, hoopla, and ultimately the nomination of the party's candidates for president and vice president. The 1924 Democratic Convention took 103 ballots to determine the winner. Backroom deals were cut and strange political bedfellows emerged, creating a truly national ticket. Since 1952, both parties have selected their standard bearers on the first ballot. Even though this has been the case, convention coverage by the media guarantees a national audience. Key convention proceedings such as rules and credentials debates, keynote speeches, platform debates, nomination of the presidential candidates, selection of a running mate, and acceptance speeches pique the interest of the electorate. Even the location of the convention can play a role in affecting the party's choice and creating a positive or negative public impression. In 1952, Governor Adlai Stevenson, Illinois's "favorite son" (the candidate backed by the home state), gave the welcoming address, and many political observers felt that it contributed to his nomination that year. In 1968 the riots in Chicago played to a national audience, who came away with the feeling that the Democratic Party was not unified. The close results of the 1968 general election, according to some, would have been different if there had not been riots.

Rule and Credential Disputes

Rule and credential disputes have also led to party fights. At the 1952 Republican Convention, Senator Robert Taft was given a majority of Southern delegates by the Republican National Committee. Dwight Eisenhower's supporters forced a floor fight and overturned that decision, ensuring Ike's nomination. At the 1972 Democratic Convention the McGovern Commission rules were supposed to create a fairer representation of minorities. Two key votes—one giving McGovern all California's delegation and the other denying Chicago's Mayor Daley representation—helped give

overn the nomination. In 1976, a rules debate forced by the Reagan supporters pted to force the apparent nominee, Gerald Ford, to announce his choice for vice dent before the balloting began. The convention voted against this rule change, ny chance of Reagan pulling an upset that year disappeared. A Democratic hope-enator Ted Kennedy, also tried to use a rule change to defeat incumbent Jimmy r at the 1980 Democratic Convention. The issue revolved around a rule that dic- that delegates pledged to a candidate had to vote for that candidate on the first t. Kennedy hoped to change that rule so that some of Carter's supporters would t to his camp. The convention overwhelmingly defeated the change, and Kennedy he had no chance to wrest Carter's renomination away from him.

tform Fights

rm fights also have provided interesting public debates. It is ironic that these sophical arguments could affect the party, because party platforms usually fade the woodwork once the convention is finished. Yet in 1948 at the Democratic ention, a platform fight over civil rights caused the Southern Dixiecrats to stage lkout. At the 1964 Republican Convention, Goldwater conservatives were in ol of the party's platform and refused to make any concessions to the efeller moderates in the areas of civil rights and dealings with political extrem- n 1968, arguments over a Vietnam peace plank split the Democratic conven- and hurt Hubert Humphrey's chances against Richard Nixon.

e platform has also been used to ameliorate political relations. When Ford he had the nomination wrapped up in 1976, he agreed to make concessions to an's views regarding détente. Carter did the same thing in 1980, allowing edy's supporters to add a job program to the platform. And in 1988, Michael akis had to agree to support some of Jesse Jackson's platform modifications in to get Jackson's support in the campaign. In 1992, columnist Patrick Buchanan the reelection of President George H. W. Bush after attracting a significant vote in a number of primaries. Even at the 1992 conventions, platform debates con- ng abortion caused division in both parties. In 1996 and 2000, both the blican and Democratic conventions avoided televised platform controversy by hing consensus over thorny issues prior to the start of the conventions. In 2000, rge W. Bush, running as a "compassionate conservative," directed the platform mittee of the Republican Party to tone down some of the extreme provisions of er Republican platforms. And in 2004, both parties stressed how they would a successful war against terrorism and keep the American homeland safe while maintaining a strong economy.

eeches

balloting for president follows keynote and nomination speeches and is pre- d by some tough political wheeling and dealing. One of the most memorable ote speeches was given by Senator Barack Obama of Illinois at the 2004 ocratic convention. Invoking the same theme as the one he used in the 2008 dential campaign, Obama said to the country, "We are one people, all of us ging allegiance to the stars and stripes, all of us defending the United States of rica. In the end, that's what this election is about. Do we participate in a poli- of cynicism, or do we participate in a politics of hope?" The speech immediately st Obama into a national role, one that eventually led to his election as presi- t of the United States.

Sometimes a nomination speech also brings attention to a candidate. When John Kennedy stepped aside in 1956, clearing the way for his opponent's nomination for vice president, Kennedy's graceful and tactful speech was a factor in many delegates urging him to run in 1960. In 1988 a youthful Bill Clinton, in a long and rambling nomination speech for Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis, had delegates cheering when he finally ended. When Clinton announced his own candidacy three years later, he had to refer to that speech and promise to be much briefer in the manner he would speak if nominated. When the Republicans allowed defeated candidates Patrick Buchanan and Pat Robertson to speak in 1992, the result was that some Americans felt that the Republicans were giving too much influence to conservatives and the religious right.

Both parties have learned from past convention mishaps. In 1996, 2000, 2004, and 2008, the Democrats and Republicans ran the most tightly-controlled political conventions since the start of televised convention proceedings. Each party orchestrated the themes of their respective campaigns. They chose keynote speakers and "prime-time" dignitaries to address both the party faithful and the shrinking television audience. Yet even with criticism by the media, there was agreement that both parties achieved their purpose of putting their best foot forward and achieving a significant campaign bounce for their candidates. By spotlighting the party's most popular figures, including General Colin Powell and dramatic appearances by Hillary Rodham Clinton (who was also running as a candidate for the Senate from New York), both parties tried to convince the electorate that they represented their interests. The 2000 Democratic Convention gave Vice President Al Gore the opportunity to separate himself from President Clinton. Clinton gave his final farewell speech on the first night of the convention.

The actual balloting for president in recent conventions has been a formality. Yet the tactics that are used by the frontrunner's opponents have put the nomination in doubt. This is counteracted through a tight organization on the floor of the convention and the use of such techniques as verbal and visual demonstrations. In addition, promises are made to delegates who are wavering. A bandwagon effect is achieved.

Selecting the V.P.

Wheeling and dealing often comes about in the selection of the vice presidential running mate. Since 1940, the political precedent of having the presidential nominees choose their running mates has been established. The philosophy of the presidential nominees in picking a vice presidential candidate has ranged from attempts at "balancing the ticket" to paying off a political debt. The classic choices of Lyndon Johnson as John Kennedy's running mate in 1960, Walter Mondale as Jimmy Carter's selection in 1976, and Lloyd Bentsen's addition to the Dukakis ticket in 1988 illustrate this balancing principle. When George McGovern selected Senator Thomas Eagleton in 1972 in a rushed decision, he soon regretted the choice. The media uncovered Eagleton's history of mental illness, and he was forced to leave the ticket. When people say that "politics make strange bedfellows," you can look at Reagan's choice of George H. W. Bush and agree with that observation, considering that Bush had referred to Reagan's economic plan during Republican primary debates as "voodoo economics." There sometimes is a sense of history in the elevation of a person to the ticket. Mondale's choice of Geraldine Ferraro of New York was historic, signaling the willingness of the Democratic Party to recognize that a woman had the capability to become president.

that the vice president must be qualified to be president in the event of a presi-dent dying in office has been a source of controversy when presidential candidates select running mates. George H. W. Bush's selection of Dan Quayle and the questions regarding Quayle's qualifications hurt Bush's campaign. On the other hand, when a politician breaks the rules, it sometimes helps the image of his candidacy. Clinton's choice of fellow southerner Al Gore violated every previous rule. But the strategy worked, as this baby boomer ticket caught the fancy of the American public. In 1996, Republican candidate Bob Dole surprised everybody by selecting his former adversary Jack Kemp, a retired Representative and cabinet member during Ronald Reagan's presidency. Vice President Gore surprised the pundits by choosing Connecticut Senator Joseph Lieberman, the first Jewish candidate for vice president. George W. Bush selected former Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney as his running mate. In 2008, Barack Obama selected one of his rivals for the presidency, Delaware Senator Joseph Biden. Biden, who chaired both the Senate Judiciary and Foreign Relations committees, brought experience to the ticket. John McCain surprised the country, choosing a relatively unknown governor from Alaska, Sarah Palin. It was the first time the Republicans chose a woman for vice president. Palin helped unify the Republican Party, but ultimately hurt the ticket because of her inexperience.

By the closing night of the convention, there is an attempt to heal wounds and get the party faithful geared up for the general campaign.

Once the ticket is set, the party attempts to paint a picture of party unity. The acceptance speeches attack the other party and pledge to work for the good of the country. There are some memorable speeches, such as Goldwater's "Extremism in the pursuit of liberty is no vice. . . ." Bush also made a pledge, "Read my lips, no new taxes," in 1988 in order to put the Democrats on the defensive.

THE GENERAL CAMPAIGN

A successful race for president depends on the candidate's ability to develop a strong campaign organization, have a specific strategy, and be able to use the media effectively.

If getting the nomination was round one of the battle for the presidency, then the actual campaign is the final round. The successful candidate must sustain the momentum received at the convention. Bill Clinton was able to do this by taking a campaign bus trip immediately after the 1992 convention. Michael Dukakis decided to go on vacation right after he was nominated and lost the "convention bounce" that he had in the polls. Both Senator Dole and President Clinton achieved poll bounces after their respective conventions in 1996. In 2000 Vice President Al Gore closed the gap after the Democratic convention and even maintained a lead that lasted from Labor Day until the presidential debates. In 2004, for the first time in modern political history, John Kerry did not receive a convention bounce, but maintained a slim lead after his party's convention in July 2004. President George W. Bush got a five-point bounce after his party's convention and led the race after Labor Day. He kept this lead until the first debate, when Kerry closed the gap. In 2008, because the conventions were a week apart, neither candidate benefited from a bump that lasted.

A candidate usually keeps his campaign staff and has a war chest of funds. Additional funds are solicited by the national committee, and a new strategy must be developed involving the media. Campaign consultants are becoming more and more common. They plan the logistics of the campaign, develop campaign themes, and keep track of daily polls. The role of Clinton advisor Dick Morris illustrates this point. His advice to the president, called "triangulation," moving Clinton away from both his own party and the Republicans, helped Clinton maintain his popularity during the campaign. The candidate's press secretary works closely with the candidate and campaign team. Using these factors, the candidate is ready to enter the final leg of his or her journey to the White House.

Specifically, each presidential hopeful must:

Target the campaign. Candidates need to plot out the best way to achieve an electoral majority. Some candidates have used a Southern strategy, others look to the largest industrial states. Besides electoral votes, candidates have looked to see how previous candidates have done in states and the potential for victory in a given state. Clinton's electoral strategy in 1996 was simple: maintain and expand his 1992 base of states. This included the industrial Northeast, the industrial Midwest, California, and the same southern states he carried in the 1992 election. Dole attempted to hold the traditional Republican mountain states, Midwest, and the newly emerging Republican south. If both candidates held their states, there would be a battleground in states which had a total of about 100 electoral votes. The 2000 election clearly illustrated how close the electoral contest would be if both candidates held on to their states. In fact, it was one of the closest electoral contests, with Bush winning 271 electoral votes and Gore capturing 267 electoral votes (though a D.C. elector abstained and Gore officially received 266 votes). In 2004, the election came down to Florida and Ohio; Bush won both states and an electoral vote victory of 286–252. The official vote was 286–251 because one "faithless elector" (an elector who decides to vote for somebody other than the official winner) from Minnesota voted for John Edwards. In 2008, Barack Obama's campaign put John McCain on the defensive by targeting former George W. Bush "red states." Obama won Virginia, North Carolina, Florida, Nevada, and Colorado, significantly expanding the electoral map. The official vote was 365–173. It is interesting to note that Obama also picked up one electoral vote in Nebraska, because that state allocates its five electoral votes as a result of who wins the state's congressional districts.

Take advantage of political assets. Identifying with one's party is usually done by the Democrats and downplayed by the Republicans because they have a slightly smaller enrollment than the Democrats. If a candidate is the incumbent, he should take advantage of that role. A sitting president will try to use the office of the presidency as much as possible in order to elevate himself above the political fray. Incumbency can also hurt a sitting president if domestic or foreign policy is in disarray. Carter's chances were hurt as a result of the Iran hostage crisis, whereas George H. W. Bush was constantly taken to task over a faltering economy. Incumbent vice presidents have had a much harder time getting elected. Richard Nixon, Hubert Humphrey, and Walter Mondale were defeated even though they had the experience of holding the office of vice president; George H. W. Bush broke this trend in 1988. The major asset that President Clinton had in 1996 was that he was able to position himself as a moderate waging a battle against extremists in the Republican Party. Even though Dole chose Kemp as his running mate, in political commercials you might have thought the highly unpopular Speaker of the House was also on the ticket as Clinton referred to his opponents as "Dole, Kemp, and Gingrich." In 2000 Gore portrayed himself as a populist, while George W. Bush ran as a "compassionate conservative." In 2004, George W. Bush used incumbency and the fact that he was the best candidate to wage a war against terrorism to his advantage. He successfully tied the Iraq war to terrorism and the voters responded. In 2008, an election that did not feature an incumbent running for either party, both John McCain and Barack Obama tried to run on changing the direction of the country. McCain had trouble with this theme because the electorate identified his policies with those of George W. Bush. Obama, on the other hand, successfully established himself as the candidate of change.

Develop an image the voter responds to. This is a double-edged sword. The public seems to respond to personality much more than issues. Knowing this, the media is able to investigate the most intimate details of a candidate's personal life. After revelations about an alleged affair Bill Clinton had, *60 Minutes* gave the candidate and his wife a forum to react to the charges. Candidates also try to portray their opponents negatively through ad campaigns and face-to-face debates. Reagan was portrayed as a forgetful, aging man by Mondale in a 1984 debate, and a Bush ad used ex-convict Willie Horton to portray Michael Dukakis as soft on crime. Bill Clinton successfully portrayed the Republicans as extremists in areas that voters could identify with. From the shutdown of the government over budget showdowns in 1995 and 1996 to attempts by the GOP to lower the increases in entitlements, education, and other government spending programs, Clinton was able to position himself as the self-proclaimed protector of the middle class. The theme of the 2000 campaign for the Republicans was to "restore honor and dignity" to the White House, while portraying Vice President Gore as a candidate who embellished his accomplishments and advocated big government. Gore tried to portray Bush as a candidate without the experience or intellect to be president. He also attacked Bush's tax plan as "risky." In 2004, George W. Bush was able to portray his opponent John Kerry as a "flip-flopper" and Kerry was put on the defensive throughout the campaign, even though he attempted to make the election a referendum on Bush's economic policies and the Iraq war. In 2008, Obama successfully created a coalition of young voters, African-Americans, women, and Hispanics to give him a popular vote majority, winning 52% of the popular vote.

Attract the support of divergent groups. Factors such as ethnic, religious, and other minority support are crucial for success in a campaign. Traditionally, Democrats have attempted to attract votes from organized labor, minority groups, Jews, and big-city residents. They try to paint a picture of Republicans as the party of the rich and big business interests. Seeing that Reagan's strategy of attracting traditional Democrats worked, candidates have since gone after groups that will translate into a centrist coalition. In 1996 President Clinton attracted a new group—the "soccer mom"—a group of women voters, some of whom are single parents, others who have, besides working, the responsibility of transporting their kids to soccer games. This coalition of women voters voted disproportionately for Clinton, which resulted in a very significant gender gap. In 2000, the gender gap continued to be a factor. However in 2004, according to exit polls, Bush made inroads into traditional Democratic constituencies while expanding his own base. Bush decreased the overall gender gap, but a new gap emerged between single women (giving Kerry a majority) and married women, given the name of "security moms" (giving Bush a majority).

Bush also cut into the African-American vote, the Hispanic vote, and for the first time since Ronald Reagan's election, received a majority of the Catholic vote, even though Kerry was a Catholic. But most significantly, Bush was able to increase by a significant margin the turnout of so-called evangelical voters, who gave Bush over 70 percent of their vote. The only group that Kerry made inroads with was younger voters, who gave him a 54 percent margin.

Use issues and events for their own advantage. There is no doubt that if the Gulf War had occurred during the presidential campaign, George H. W. Bush would have been elected overwhelmingly for a second term. The lesson to be learned is that a candidate must be aware of the issues facing the country and hope that world events play into his hands. Franklin Roosevelt used the problems of the Great

Depression and the hopes of the New Deal to win a landslide victory in 1932. He sustained his popularity during World War II, and the country would have been hard-pressed to defeat a sitting president during a national emergency. The fear of communism and Dwight Eisenhower's background as a successful military commander projected him into the role of Republican standard bearer in 1952. John Kennedy's hopes for a new generation and a new decade helped him against the image of a more conservative Richard Nixon. The war in Vietnam was unpopular in 1968; Richard Nixon promised a plan to end it and was elected. In 1980, Reagan took advantage of the negative image of America abroad and runaway inflation at home, asking the electorate, "Are you better off today than four years ago?" Looking at a poll of the top 20 worries of the American electorate in 1996, you can begin to understand why President Clinton struck such a positive chord with the electorate. From his convention theme of "building a bridge to 21st Century" to his constant mantra of protecting education, the environment, Medicare, and Medicaid, the voters became convinced that the incumbent president deserved reelection. In his 2000 campaign, George W. Bush succeeded in convincing the voters that he was a different kind of Republican, making education reform a top priority. His mantra that he would "leave no child behind" struck a chord with voters. The events of September 11, 2001 dominated the 2004 campaign. Seventy percent of voters polled called this election "the most important election of their lives." Bush's senior political consultant Karl Rove, the architect of his election victories, developed a three-pronged strategy for Bush. He had Bush emphasize his "steady leadership," thus portraying Bush as a commander-in-chief who could best protect the country against another terrorist attack. Bush became the champion of moral values, opposing same sex marriage and supporting a constitutional amendment that would define marriage as the union of a man and a woman. Bush also reminded voters that he was a "compassionate conservative" while making the claim that his opponent was a "Massachusetts liberal." In 2008, McCain attempted to portray Obama as a candidate who didn't have the experience to be president. However, McCain's mistakes in dealing with the failing economy turned voters against him. One of the turning points of the campaign came less than two months before the election, after McCain admitted he was not an expert on the economy and tried to defend an economy in free-fall, stating that he believed "the fundamentals of our economy are sound." Obama pounced on the remark, and McCain's poll numbers declined along with the economy.

Take advantage of the media as a primary means of communicating with the public. High-tech campaigns have become the major characteristic of the modern presidential campaign. The use of paid political ads attempts to bring the message to the voters. The 30- and 60-second spots, as well as paid infomercials incorporating charts and graphs, have all been used in recent campaigns. Ever since the 1960 televised political debates between Kennedy and Nixon, television has played a decisive factor in the campaign. The irony in that debate was that those people who heard the debate on the radio felt that Nixon won, whereas TV viewers thought that Kennedy won. Reagan became known as "the great communicator" and established a positive presidential image in his debates with Carter. Reagan's "there you go again" comment portrayed him as somebody who could hold his own. Even the vice presidential debates provide a contrast between the candidates. Lloyd Bentsen's response to Dan Quayle that "I knew Jack Kennedy, and you are no Jack Kennedy" temporarily hurt the Bush campaign. "Spin doctors," those campaign staff members who attempt to influence the media, also became a part of the campaign landscape.

(There will be more on the role of the media and debates in Chapter 13.) More than any factor, the media contrast between President Clinton and Senator Dole in 1996 portrayed two candidates not only years apart in age, but miles apart in utilizing the media. From the contrast of the 1996 State of the Union address and the poorly-received response by Senator Dole, to the apparent differences perceived by the public in the three debates, President Clinton had a tremendous media advantage over his opponent. In 2000, the three presidential debates were a turning point. Vice President Gore, though "winning" the debates on substance, lost them on style. He came across as overly agressive, and he made statements that later had to be modified because of his exaggeration. Bush played on low expectations and held his own against the more experienced debater. Political advertisements and the presidential debates took on added importance in the 2004 election. The election was the first since the McCain-Feingold campaign finance law outlawed "soft" contributions. Even with that restriction, both campaigns raised record amounts of hard money. In addition the creation of "527" independent groups (exempt from the law as a result of Internal Revenue Service 527 regulations) were created. Even though these groups could not legally coordinate their ad campaigns with the presidential candidates, it became apparent that the backers of these groups were sympathetic to the candidates and their campaigns. *Moveon.org* sponsored many anti-Bush ads and the Swift Boat Veterans ran a devastating ad that questioned John Kerry's Vietnam service. The parties and candidates themselves sponsored millions of dollars worth of ads, many of them negative. There were three presidential debates; polls showed that most people thought that Kerry won the first one decisively and that he also won the next two. But this became the first election where the so-called winner of the debates did not win the election. In 2008, in the three presidential debates, voters saw Obama as a presidential candidate who many in the media described as "no drama Obama." He came across to the electorate as knowledgeable, steady, and confident. Polling reflected voters' perceptions that Obama won all three debates.

Use the campaign organization and workers to get the vote out. The party faithful on the local level are responsible for getting the vote out. Telephone calls, mailings, and posters drive the message. The selection of a campaign staff on both the national and state levels is crucial for success in the campaign. John Kennedy's choice of his brother as campaign manager, Jimmy Carter's choice of Hamilton Jordan, and Bill Clinton's selection of James Carville had a major impact on their respective campaigns. On the other hand, the ineptness of John Mitchell to run the Committee to Re-elect the President (CREEP) eventually led to his downfall and Richard Nixon's resignation as a result of Watergate. A candidate's coattail potential—the ability of the top of the ticket to help other candidates from the same party win—also plays a role on the state level. Knowing that the election of Lyndon Johnson in 1964 was never in doubt played a motivating role for local organizations. Labor has also been a source of major support for the Democrats, and recently the Republicans have benefited from religious groups who have used the pulpit to urge their congregations to vote for Republicans who are against abortion. Because President Clinton held a double-digit lead throughout the 1996 campaign, there was little suspense regarding the outcome. Therefore, he and the Democrats had to combat apathy and had to concentrate on the contest for control of Congress. However, the Republican strategy was successful. In the waning days of the campaign, when it became obvious that Dole was going to be defeated, the GOP changed its strategy and aired television commercials asking voters what would happen if they elected a

Democratic president and a Democratic Congress. The ads worked, and even though Clinton won an easy electoral victory, the Republicans maintained control of Congress. By the eve of the 2000 election, it was clear that the contest would be one of the closest in United States history. As a result of a concerted "get out the vote" effort in the black community, Vice President Al Gore won the popular vote by just over 0.5 percent of all votes cast, but lost the electoral vote to George W. Bush after the Supreme Court ruled that Florida's electoral votes should be awarded to Bush.

Getting the vote out was the story of the 2004 election. Final vote totals reflected a record turnout of voters, almost 126 million (an increase of more than 15 million from the 2000 election). There was a significant increase in overall voter turnout, from a little over 60 percent in 2000 to over 64 percent in 2004. This number rivaled the voter turnout from the 1960s. And even though the youth vote (18–29) stayed at seven percent of the electorate in 2000, the actual turnout increased from 44 percent in 2000 to over 54 percent in 2004, with greater numbers in the so-called battleground states. President George W. Bush and Senator Kerry had the support of their bases, but the Republicans did a much better job getting out a constituency that did not come out in big numbers in 2000—the evangelical vote—and they also cut into some traditional Democratic constituencies. In 2008, one of the keys to Obama's victory was his campaign organization. Starting in the primaries, the Obama campaign surpassed the Republicans in registering new voters and getting them out to vote. There was also a significant increase in early voting in key battleground states, with more than 30% of voters in those states voting either by mail or in person prior to Election Day. Obama won a significant majority of those voters in such key states as Florida, Nevada, and North Carolina.

Ultimately it is up to the American electorate in the privacy of the voting booth to determine the winner and the also-ran. In Chapter 13 we will focus our attention on voter behavior.

ELECTION REFORM

Critics of the nominating process point to the cost, length, and manner in which candidates wage their campaigns for delegates as reasons for reform.

At the time the primary was introduced during the progressive era, the hope was that it would make the process more democratic by taking the power away from party bosses. The system expanded to include primaries for every elective office. Even though it gives the party regulars a greater choice, it forces the candidates to wage three election campaigns. Another by-product of the general primary system is that the more candidates running against the party's official designee, the more likely there will be a split among the party faithful. And if one of the defeated candidates stays on the ballot as an independent candidate, the likelihood exists that the winner of the primary may be the loser in the general election.

Major criticism has been directed at the process of the presidential primary. Critics point to the media hype of the Iowa caucus and New Hampshire primary as "make or break" contests. The irony is that the voters in Iowa have similar political philosophies but stress different issues than the voters in New Hampshire. The winner of these contests achieves the "big mo" (momentum), whereas losers must scurry to make up lost ground.

If one of the prerequisites of a successful candidacy is the ability to raise funds, the success in the early primaries and caucuses is necessary to sustain the flow of money during the general campaign. In 2008, record amounts of money were raised by Senators Obama and Clinton. In the general campaign, Barack Obama made the

decision not to accept federal matching funds. He raised over $800 million, compared to $375 million for the McCain campaign—more than a 2–1 money advantage for Obama.

A candidate can win a primary with less than 30 percent of the registered voters participating in primaries. In a caucus, with the exception of Iowa, the figure is well under 10 percent. The voters are more educated and wealthier than those in the general election, suggesting that they are less representative of the average voter.

In response to the overblown importance of the Iowa and New Hampshire votes, many Southern states changed their primary day to the same day early in March. Super Tuesday became a key event for presidential hopefuls and gave an advantage to those candidates who were more conservative and had a Southern political base. Media coverage of the Super Tuesday primary certainly provided the winners with a great deal of publicity and momentum. Even though the Republicans thought the front-loaded primary system hurt their presidential candidate, the nature of the primaries in election year 2004 remained the same as 2007. However, in 2008 a Nevada caucus followed the Iowa caucus, and the South Carolina primary followed the New Hampshire primary. Super Tuesday was moved to early February where 20 states, including New York and California, held primaries.

Alternatives

If the primary and caucus system is flawed, what are the alternatives? Having a national presidential primary certainly would shorten the primary season especially if it were held in the late spring. Proponents of a single primary vote feel that more people would vote, expenses could be cut down, and the nomination would be wrapped up after the votes were counted. Critics of the plan suggest that a national primary would become as expensive and complex as the regular campaign because of its scope. The role of the media would become even more significant, and they could easily be accused of playing a kingmaker role.

An alternative to a national primary would be a series of Super Tuesday regional primaries. This strategy would have the advantage of decentralizing the system and keep the attention focused on different regional issues. However, it would not reduce the cost or emphasis of media attention. The advantage would still remain with the candidate who won the first regional primary.

Other suggestions include increasing the number of caucus votes. The supporters of this proposal claim that it is the most democratic and possibly would reduce the amount of media intrusion because it is much more decentralized. Another suggestion is substituting a series of state party conventions for any primary or caucus. The potential of party bosses dominating this system makes its adoption less likely. Of all the proposals made, the one that has been talked about the most is a national primary day. However, states like New Hampshire and Iowa, with all the attention presidential hopefuls and the media give them, are hesitant to give up the national spotlight.

As a result of the disputed 2000 election, calls for election reforms were widespread. Florida reformed its own procedures, doing away with the controversial "butterfly" ballot and moving toward electronic voting. Congress voted to allocate funds to help states reform and update their ballot procedures.

FINANCIAL REFORM

Campaign finance reform aims to remove the influence of special interests by limiting the amount and nature of political contributions by political action committees and lobbyists.

Most political observers point to the funding as a key ingredient for the success of congressional and presidential campaigns. Costs escalate because of the use of the media by candidates, the increase in direct mailing, the reliance on polling, and an increase of campaign staff salaries. There is a definite correlation between the amount of money raised and spent and who wins an election. Even though there is federal funding of presidential campaigns, the cost of those elections has skyrocketed. When Eisenhower beat Stevenson in 1952, he spent a little over $5 million. When Bush beat Dukakis in 1988 he spent over $46 million. The total amount of money in federal elections has escalated from $14 million in 1952 to more than $200 million in 2004; it reached over $1 billion in 2008.

How do candidates raise funds? They do accept small contributions of $5 and $10, but this accounts for the smallest percentage of funds raised. Jerry Brown, acting like a populist in 1992, attempted to convince the other candidates to accept contributions only up to $100 and even established an 800 number for these contributions. One of the complaints by the average voter is that in order to run for elective office, you must have a significant financial base. This was brought home when Ross Perot spent his own money during the 1992 campaign. Political action committees donate millions of dollars to congressional candidates. In the 2000 election, groups such as the American Medical Association, National Education Association, Teamsters Union, National Rifle Association, and National Association of Realtors gave millions of dollars to political candidates. Election committees are also set up for candidates, and this becomes another means for groups to channel money into the coffers of political hopefuls. Campaign donations are considered a direct form of political participation, but there have been many questions raised regarding the kind of influence and payback these contributors expect.

Federal Election Campaign Act

Federal law has regulated campaign financing. The 1971 Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) set up restrictions on the amount of advertising, created disclosure of contributions over $100, and limited the amount of personal contributions candidates and their relatives could make on their own behalf. Following this act, the Revenue Act of 1971 allowed private contributions through tax credits and tax deductions. A $1 tax write-off was allowed on federal income taxes. This allocation had the effect of publicly subsidizing federal elections. The turning point of campaign finance legislation came after revelations in the Watergate hearings that the Committee to Re-elect President Nixon had "laundered" campaign contributions to support political operatives conducting dirty tricks and providing "hush money" to the organizers of the Watergate break-in. The committee also promised favorable treatment by Nixon to those businesses who contributed large amounts of money.

The 1974 Federal Election Campaign Act established a six-person Federal Election Commission whose responsibility it would be to enforce the provisions of the law and establish matching federal funds for presidential candidates in primaries and the general election. In order to receive these funds, a candidate had to raise $5000 in at least 20 states. The candidate would then be eligible for matching funds as long as the candidate agreed to disclose campaign contributions. It also restricted campaign contributions as follows.

- Citizens were limited to contributions of $1,000 per candidate in primary and general federal elections, $20,000 to political parties, and $5000 to political action committees. This type of contribution is known as "hard money."
- The total amount of allowable contributions by an individual was limited in any given year.
- Unlimited and unregulated corporate and labor contributions known as "soft money" were used to support the political parties. In 1996 much of this soft money was raised and used illegally.
- Political action committees were limited to a $5000 maximum contribution to any one candidate in any election. It did not, however, restrict contributions for other purposes such as donations to senators and representatives.
- Candidates who did not accept matching federal funds could spend unlimited amounts of personal funds. Ross Perot did this in 1992. Further amendments to this law in 1974 allowed the formation of political action committees by special interest groups and set down specific requirements related to the operation of these groups. By 1990 PAC contributions to presidential candidates rose by over 35 percent. In 1979 a series of amendments to the FECA increased the power of the Federal Election Commission and authorized state party contributions aimed at increasing voter turn-out programs. Each state, by law, has the responsibility of setting up its own campaign finance laws, and many echo the provisions of federal law. George W. Bush raised a record amount of money during the primaries and refused matching funds. He did accept them during the general campaign. John Kerry also refused matching funds during the 2004 primaries. However, both Kerry and George W. Bush received $175 million in the general election campaign.

The public funding of presidential campaigns has had a significant impact on the election process since it was instituted in 1971. Money has been given to candidates during the primary campaign, to the parties to help fund national conventions, and to candidates in the general election campaign. In 1988 candidates received more than $65 million in federal matching funds. The two parties got over $9 million for their 1988 national conventions, and George H. W. Bush and Michael Dukakis received over $46 million in public funds. In 2004, candidates received $75 million in federal matching funds. In 2008, McCain received $84 million in matching funds.

Soft Money

By accepting public funding, candidates must pledge that they will not spend more than what was given to them and that they will not accept other kinds of specified donations. There were loopholes including PAC donations and so-called soft money raised by state and local party organizations. One of the central issues raised during the 1996 presidential election was campaign finance abuses. By the end of the campaign it became apparent that soft money was abused, foreign money was laundered, and there was a possibility that China was using illegal contributions to influence local, congressional, and presidential elections. The Democratic Party returned millions of dollars in illegal contributions. Both the president and vice president were under suspicion for using the White House for illegal fundraising. The issue of "presidential coffees" and "sleepovers" in the Lincoln Bedroom in

return for contributions haunted the Democrats. Both parties were criticized for using soft money as a way to create political commercials. This broke a law preventing a national party from using soft money to air ads favoring specific candidates. As a result of the scandal, both houses held hearings regarding the fundraising practices of both political parties. The objective of the hearings was to investigate the extent of the illegal use of funds with the end result being the passage of new campaign finance reform laws.

After the escalating cost of the 2000 presidential election, campaign finance reform reemerged as a political issue. Spurred on by the efforts of Arizona Senator John McCain (R), Wisconsin Senator Russ Feingold (D), Connecticut Congressman Chris Shays (R), and Massachusetts Congressman Marty Meehan (D), Congress passed a comprehensive campaign finance reform bill that President George W. Bush signed in 2000. The main features of the bill include a ban on all soft money, increased individual hard money donations, and a ban on special interest political ads paid for by soft money prior to the primary and general election. In 2002, the Supreme Court ruled that the law was constitutional. In the election campaign of 2004, both parties increased the amount of hard money raised. Special Interest groups got around the ban on soft money donations by forming what was called "527" independent groups such as *moveon.org*. These groups raised large amounts of soft money but were protected by the tax code, enabling them to run independent advocacy ads.

Hard Money	To each candidate or candidate committee per election	To national party committee per calendar year	To state, district & local party committee per calendar year	To any other political committee per calendar year*	Special Limits
Individual	$2,000*	$25,000*	$10,000 (combined limit)	$5,000	$95,000* overall biennial limit: • $37,500* to all candidates • $57,500* to all PACs and parties*
National Party Committee	$5,000	No limit	No limit	$5,000	$35,000* to Senate candidate per campaign*
State, District & Local Party Committee	$5,000 (combined limit)	No limit	No limit	$5,000 (combined limit)	No limit
PAC (multicandidate)*	$5,000	$15,000	$5,000 (combined limit)	$5,000	No limit
PAC (not multicandidate)	$2,000*	$25,000*	$10,000 (combined limit)	$5,000	No limit

* These contribution limits will be increased for inflation in odd-numbered years, beginning in 2005.