# Political Participation

## Electorate Terminology
- **Electorate**: The people who are entitled to vote in an election.
- **Suffrage (Franchise)**: The Right to Vote
- **Disenfranchise**: To take away the right to vote

### Voting Rights Act of 1965
- Federal government started enforcing 15th amendment
- No more literacy tests

### Education Level
- Most important statistic correlated to voting levels. The higher your education the higher the likelihood you will vote.

### Voter Turnout
- Voter turnout in U.S. is around 50-60%

### Reasons for Low Voter Turnout
- **Voter fatigue**: too many elections in federal system
- **Too busy**: conflicting work/school/family
- **Voter apathy**: simple lack of concern for election
- **Voter efficacy**: feeling your votes counts (some people don’t have it)

### Modern Day Voting
- **Voting Requirements**
  - Citizenship (must be legal U.S. citizen)
  - Residence (must be resident in State)
  - Age (must 18-years-old to vote)
  - Registration (49 states require to register prior)
- **Voting Limitations (differ per State)**
  - Mental Competency
  - Convicted Felons

### Demographics that Tend to Vote Liberal
- Women
- African Americans & Hispanics
- Catholics & Jews
- East coast & West coast
- Wage earners & Craftsmen & Factory line workers

### Demographics that Tend to Vote Conservative
- Men
- Whites & Asians
- Protestants & Evangelicals & Mormons
- Cuban-Americans
- South & West
- Business community & Entrepreneurs & Shareholders

## Political Parties

### Segments of a Political Party
- **Political Party**: A group who attempts to win elections to acquire power.
  - **Segments**
    - Governmental: Office holders who pursue policy that favor the political party’s goals.
    - Organization: People who work or volunteer for party.
    - Electorate: Voters who associate with the party.

### Influences on the Structure of Parties
- Critical elections and regional realignments
- Campaign finance law
- Changes in communication and data-management technology

### Functions of Political Parties
- **In Elections**
  - Recruit & label candidates
  - Building coalitions
  - Gather funds
  - Get information out
- **In Office**
  - Policy formation & promotion
  - Watchdog: oppose other party (call them out)

### Party System in United States

#### Two Party System
- We have this due to single member districts (winner-take-all system). A person that wins by one vote wins the election (of entire district)
- Democrats & Republicans are two major parties (now)

#### Minor Party (Third Party)
- A political party that plays a smaller role in elections.
- Major parties often adopt ideas from them.
- Can sometimes play spoiler (Roosevelt, Perot, and Nader)
- Provides a voice for fringe groups

#### How Parties Change and Adapt
- Adapted to candidate-centered campaigns, and their role in nominating candidates has been weakened
- Parties modify their policies and messaging to appeal to various demographic coalitions
### ELECTIONS & CAMPAIGNS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION</th>
<th>INCUMBENCY</th>
<th>CAMPAIGN FINANCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOMINATIONS</td>
<td>INCUMBENT</td>
<td>FEDERAL ELECTIONS COMMISSION (FEC)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Primaries and caucuses are held in each State (both parties) to see which candidates can receive the majority of delegates. Candidates run in Open and Closed primaries/caucuses.</td>
<td>- A person seeking re-election.</td>
<td>- Independent agency that regulates elections.</td>
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<tr>
<td>NATIONAL CONVENTION</td>
<td>INCUMBENCY ADVANTAGE</td>
<td>Hard Money – political contributions given to a party, candidate, or interest group that are limited in amount and fully disclosed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Delegates officially nominate their party’s candidate and they write a party platform.</td>
<td>- Name Recognition, Franking (free mail to inform voters about their state or district), Money (PACs back winners), Coattail effect.</td>
<td>Soft Money – contribution to a political party that is not accounted as going to a particular candidate and thus avoids various legal limitations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>GENERAL ELECTION (ELECTORAL COLLEGE)</td>
<td>INCUMBENCY DISADVANTAGE</td>
<td>527s – election focused groups who are not subject to FECA regulations (Swift boat Veterans for Truth)</td>
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<td>- The popular vote in each State determines how (most) of electors will vote. (A candidate needs 270 Electoral votes)</td>
<td>- Bad economy doesn’t help anyone get re-elected.</td>
<td>Buckley v. Vallejo (1976)</td>
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<th>WINNER TAKE ALL</th>
<th>MODERN CAMPAIGNS</th>
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<td>- The winner-take-all allocation of votes per state (except Maine and Nebraska) under the setup of the Electoral College compared with the national popular vote for president raises questions about whether the Electoral College facilitates or impedes democracy.</td>
<td>BENEFITS/DRAWBACKS</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Five presidents have lost the popular vote but won the Electoral College (John Quincy Adams, Rutherford B. Hayes, Benjamin Harrison, George W. Bush, and Donald Trump)</td>
<td>- Dependence on professional consultants</td>
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<td>- Rising campaign costs and intensive fundraising efforts</td>
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<td>- Duration of election cycles (Run nearly 2 years in advance of election)</td>
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<td>- Impact of and reliance on social media for campaign communication and fundraising</td>
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Buckley v. Vallejo (1976)
- upheld federal limits on campaign contributions
- spending money to influence elections is a form of protected free speech
- candidates can give unlimited amounts to their own campaigns

McCAIN-FEINGOLD (Bipartisan Reform Act)
- Banned soft money (party building purposes)
- Increased limitations on hard money (for candidates)
  * $2,000 from individual
  * $5,000 from PACs (political action committees)
  * $25,000 from national parties

- Corporate funding of independent political ads in candidate elections cannot be limited under the first amendment (corporations are people and how they spend their $ is protected free speech)
- Yeah commercials!