

Chapter 5

Political Parties

Section 1: Parties and what they do

- “Winning isn’t everything; it’s the only thing.”

What is a party?

- **Political Party**

- A group or persons who seek to control government through the winning of elections and the holding of public office
- Generally joined together on common ideology pertaining to public policies and programs
- U.S. **major parties** are more election oriented than issue oriented

What do parties do?

- They are the major mechanisms behind the development of broad policy and leadership choices
- Nominating Candidates
- Informing and activating supporters
 - They campaign for their candidates and their positions
 - they “educate” the public, in order to persuade

- Both parties try to shape positions that will attract as many voters as possible
 - Possibly offending as few voters as possible
- The Bonding Agent Function
 - Parties work to ensure that candidates are both qualified and of good character
- Governing
 - U.S. government primarily controlled by parties
 - Much of the government business is done on the basis of **partisanship**
 - the strong support of their party and its policy stance
- Act as Watchdog
 - The party out of power tends to criticize the policies and behavior of the **party in power**

Section 2: The Two party system

Why a Two-Party System?

- U.S. has primarily a **Two-Party System**
 - Two major political parties
- There are minor parties
 - Political parties without wide voter support
- Multiple reasons for U.S. having two party system
 - The Historical Basis
 - Ratification of Constitution created two political groups
 - Federalist and Anti-Federalist
 - Framers however did not like political parties
 - The Force of Tradition

Why a Two-Party System? (Con't)

- The Electoral System
 - Most elections in U.S. are for **single-member districts**
 - Where only one candidate selected for office
 - Members tend to get **plurality**
 - Largest number of votes cast for the office
 - People hate “wasting a vote”
 - Republicans and Democrats work **bipartisan** to keep other parties out of system
 - They find common ground and work together
 - Difficult for minor parties to get on all ballots

- The American Ideological consensus
 - Tend to be homogeneous
 - Same ideals, same basic principles, same patterns of belief
 - America is however a **pluralistic society**
 - Consisting of many cultures and groups
 - However there is a **consensus** on fundamental matters
 - A general agreement among various groups
 - Both Republicans and Democrats look much alike and tend to be moderate
 - Democrats tend to want a bigger government
 - Republicans tend to want a smaller government

Multiparty System

- Europeans have a **multiparty system** in their democracies
 - System in which several major and many lesser parties exist, seriously compete for and actually win public offices
- Party based on a particular interest
- While it does produce broader representation, it also creates government instability
- Requires the creation of a **coalition**
 - Temporary alliance of several groups who come together to form a working majority in order to control a government

One-Party System

- Only one party is allowed to run for office
 - Most dictatorships
- Some parts of the U.S have been a modified **one-party system**

One-Party Systems

Types of One-Party Systems

One Party Systems where only one party is allowed.

Example:

Dictatorships such as Stalinist Russia

Modified One-Party Systems where one party regularly wins most elections

Example:

Republican North and Democratic South until the 1950s.

Party Membership Patterns

Factors that can influence party membership:

<i>Family</i>	<i>Major events</i>
<i>Economic Status</i>	<i>Religion</i>
<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Age</i>

Party Membership Patterns

- Voluntary
- Political parties tend to have a cross section of support
- Typically
 - Democrats get votes from African Americans, Catholics, Jews and Union members
 - Republicans tend to get votes from white males, protestants and business community
- Biggest pattern based on family preference
 - Nearly 2/3 of U.S. vote the way their families vote

Party Membership Patterns (Con't)

- History determines
 - Based on world events and/or against the party in power
- Income
 - Higher incomes for republicans
 - Lower incomes for democrats
- Other factors
 - Age, place of residence, level of education, work environment, religion

Section 2:

The Nation's First Parties

- Ratification of the constitution
 - Federalist
 - wanted a stronger national government
 - appealed to financial, manufacturing and commercial interests
 - led by Alexander Hamilton

- Anti-Federalist
 - More sympathetic to the “Common Man”
 - Favored limited government
 - led by Thomas Jefferson
 - Beginnings of the Democratic Party
- John Adams was the last federalist candidate
 - He was the **incumbent** but was beat by Jefferson in 1800
 - Current office holder

American Parties: Four Major Eras

- The era of the Democrats, 1800-1860
 - They controlled most politics till mid-1820's
 - Then split into **factions**
 - conflicting groups
 - split over public lands, 2nd bank of U.S., high tariffs, and slavery
 - Andrew Jackson changed political landscape
 - voting rights for all white males
 - an increase in number of elected offices
 - Spoil system: awarding government favors for those who supported the party
 - Civil war split Democrats
 - helped by the rise of the Whig Party

American Parties: Four Major Eras (Con't)

- Republican Era, 1860-1932
 - Election of Lincoln ushered the republicans from a third-party to a major party
 - Good economic times kept the GOP in power
 - 1896 GOP expanded it's **electorate**
 - people eligible to vote
 - however, Democrats went away from **sectionalism**
 - focus on a particular region

American Parties: Four Major Eras (Con't)

- The return of the Democrats, 1932-1968
 - The Great Depression ushered in FDR to office
 - His New Deal program expanded the electorate for the Democrats
 - Only lasted till the pressures of Vietnam in the mid 1960's
- The start of a new era
 - From Nixon to today, has been marked with a divided-partisan government

Section 3: The Minor Parties

Minor parties in the U.S.

- **Ideological parties**
 - Based on a particular set of beliefs
 - Example
 - socialist party, libertarian party
- **Single issue parties**
 - names based on their issue

Minor parties in the U.S. (Con't)

- **Economic Protest parties**

- Demanded economic changes to the Major parties
 - faded demands after economics improves
 - Example
 - Greenback party and Populist party

- **Splinter parties**

- Groups that split from major parties
 - normally short lived

Why Minor parties are important

- Help impact policies and bring them to the fore-front
- Also they play the “Spoiler-role”
- Minor parties tend to make clear-cut stands on issues
 - Progressive income tax, women’s suffrage, railroad and bank regulation, and old age pension plans
- Problem is major parties adapt to minor parties platform

Minor Parties in the United States

Ideological Party



Single Issue Party



Economic Protest Party



Splinter Party



National Party Machinery

- National Convention
 - Considered party's national voice
 - Meet to nominate party's Vice Presidential and Presidential candidates
 - Today is more of a pep rally
- The National Committee
 - The party's affairs are controlled here
 - Really, only works to organize National Convention

National Party Machinery (Con't)

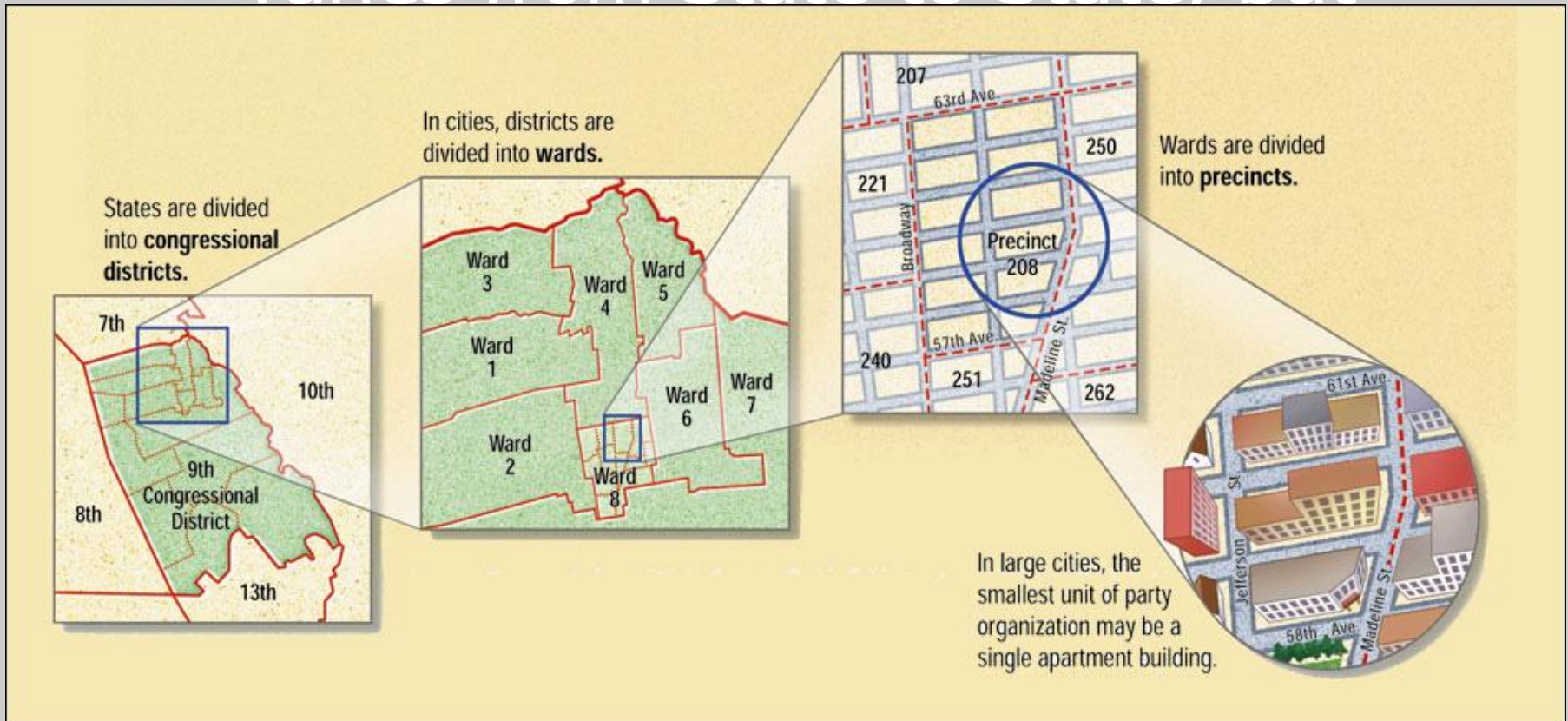
- The National Chairperson
 - Leader of National Committee
 - Directs the work of the party's headquarter
 - Otherwise in charge of promoting party unity, raising money, recruiting new voters, and preparing for presidential elections
- The Congressional Campaign Committees
 - In charge of getting incumbents re-elected

State and Local Machinery

- Organized by electoral map
- Split-up into congressional districts within states
 - Then into wards and precincts
 - **Ward**: a unit into which cities are often divided for election of city council members
 - **Precinct**: voters in each report to one polling place

State and Local Party Machinery

State and local party organization varies from State to State, but



The Future of the Major Parties

- **Split-ticket voting**
 - Voting for candidates of different parties for different offices at the same time

The Future of Major Parties

Weakened connections to political parties:

For voters :

- More people are unwilling to label themselves as “Democrats” or “Republicans”
- Split-ticket voting—voting for candidates of different parties for different offices at the same election

For candidates:

- Structural changes have increased conflict and disorganization within parties
- Changes in the technology of campaigning, especially the use of television and the Internet, have made candidates more independent of the party organization
- The growth of single-issue organizations provides candidates with another source of financial support