**Campaigns and Elections**

**Elections**
The US Constitution reserves the power of holding elections to the individual states. This includes all local, state, and national elections.

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**Elections to Local Office:**
A. County Officials: Commissioners, Manager, School Board  
   (Judges, Attorneys, Clerk, Coroner, and Engineers are elected or appointed.)
B. City/Town Officials: Mayor, City Council, Manager, Treasurer, Clerk

**Kinds of Elections:**
1. **General Election** - an election between candidates to fill a public office.
2. **Primary Election** - an election in which voters narrow the candidates to one candidate that will run on a party's ticket. Primaries are also used to choose convention delegates.

**Nominations**
A **Nomination** is selecting a candidate that will run in an election for a specific public office.

Individuals are nominated for public office in the following ways:

**Primaries**
A. **Presidential Primary** - elects delegates to the presidential nominating conventions.
B. **Direct Primary** – is an election in which voters determine candidates to run in a general election.

**Types of Direct Primaries:**
- **Closed Primary** – voters must declare party affiliation before voting and can only vote for candidates running in that party’s primary. This means only members of a political party can vote and it prevents members of other parties from "crossing over" to influence the nomination of an opposing party's candidate.
- **Open Primary** – voters do not declare a party affiliation before voting but when they vote they can only vote for candidates from one party. This means all voters may participate.

- **Blanket Primary** – a type of open primary where the ballot that lists the candidates for nomination of all the parties, and thus you can help select the Democratic candidate for one office and the Republican candidate for another.

- **Nonpartisan Primary** – no party affiliation is shown on the ballot, only candidates’ names.

C. **Runoff Primary** - if no candidate gets a majority of the votes, a runoff is held to decide who should win.

### Other Nomination Methods:

- **Conventions** – parties hold conventions at local, county, and state levels to choose candidates to run.

- **Caucus** – public meetings of party leaders to choose nominees for election. It is used today mainly to choose delegates to the national party convention and candidates for a few local offices.

- **Nominating Petitions** – a person announces his or her candidacy and files petitions that a certain number of voters have signed in order to be placed on the ballot.

- **Self-Announcement** – declaring yourself a candidate. (Used only in minor elections)

- **Write In Candidate** – supporters write in candidates name on ballot.

### Voting

#### Ballots:

Features: Most US voting poll use ballots based on the *Australian Ballot*

- printed ballot that bears the names of all candidates and the texts of propositions
- is distributed to the voter at the polls
- marked in secret - Also called *secret ballot*

#### Absentee Ballot

An absentee ballot is a vote cast by someone who is unable or unwilling to attend the official polling station to which the voter is normally allocated.

### Types of Voters:

A. **Straight-Ticket Voting** – voters that select the candidates of their party only in all elections.

B. **Split-Ticket Voting** – voters that select candidates from different parties based on the election.

### Winning the Election:

A. **Plurality** – person with highest number of votes wins.

B. **Majority** – person must have over 50% of the votes to win.

C. **Run-off Elections** – held if no one gets a majority until someone does. (usually between the two candidates with the most votes)
Constitutional Changes in Elections

**12th Amendment** - Before the 12th amendment, every candidate running for President ran for President by himself, regardless of political party. The electors would pick two of these candidates, one for President and one for Vice President. By the laws of the United States, those that won the top two electoral vote totals would be President and Vice President. This meant that the President and Vice President could be from different Political Parties. The most important part of the 12th amendment is that instead of casting two votes for President, each elector must pick a President AND a Vice President on his or her ballot. This ensures that the President will be paired with his running mate after the election. This has been the way we have operated the Electoral College since 1804.

**17th Amendment** – Before the 17th amendment, the legislature of every state used to elect the state’s senators. The problem with letting representatives choose representatives is corruption. Many of the Senators that were “elected” by the state legislatures had struck corrupt bargains with the legislature and many people were angry. The 17th amendment provides for regular voters to directly elect their Senators.

The Electoral College: Electing the President

**Determining Electoral Votes:**
Each **State** is given by the **Constitution** a specific number of **Electoral Votes** based on the combined number of **Congress** members (Senators + Representatives) from that State.

(Ex. Georgia gets 16 Electoral Votes based on having 2 Senators and 14 Representatives.)

In addition, the 23rd Amendment gives Washington D.C. the number of Electoral Votes they would receive if they were a state.

435 Representatives + 100 Senators = 535 Electoral Votes + 3 for D.C. = 538 Total Electoral Votes

**Selecting Electors:**
Before the election, each Candidate/Political Party selects a slate of **Electors** (for each State according to the number of Electors for the state) that pledge to faithfully support and vote for the candidate in the **Electoral College**. On the first Tuesday in November, voters cast their ballots for a presidential ticket. The Electors representing the Presidential/Vice Presidential Candidates that receive the plurality (highest number) of popular votes for each state are selected to attend the Electoral College.

**Winning the Presidency:**
A majority of the total Electoral Votes is needed to win. A majority of 538 = **270** Electoral Votes to Win!

*Each state's slate of electors assembles in their state capitol in December. At this meeting, the electors sign the "Certificate of Vote," which is sealed and delivered to the Office of the President of the United States Senate. A special joint session of the U.S. Congress convenes in January where the President of the Senate reads the Certificates of Vote and declares the official winner.*
Political Campaigns

Campaign Organization

- The Candidate
- Campaign Manager - heads the campaign organization. He or she plans and carries out overall strategy.
- Fundraising Director – directs fundraising strategies
- Finance Chairman (Treasurer) - manage finances
- Media Director - handle relations with television, radio, newspapers, advertising, and campaign materials
- Online and Social Media Director – handles online web and social media presence
- Volunteer Coordinator – recruits and organizes volunteers
- Grassroots Coordinator – organizes local campaign volunteers, media distribution, and get the vote strategy

*For national campaigns, the state party chairperson runs the campaign at the state level and local party officials and field workers contact voters, hold local rallies, and distribute campaign literature.

Financing Campaigns

Running for political office is very expensive. Money can give candidates the chance to broadcast their views to voters. The problem is that corruption can occur when money is donated in exchange for political favors.

The Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) provide the framework governing campaign financing by:

1. Candidates are required to disclose all spending
2. Business organizations and labor unions are prohibited from making direct contributions
   These groups can form Political Action Committees (PACs) to make donations to campaigns.
3. Individuals and groups are limited in contributions

The Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act, passed in 2003:

- bans unlimited soft-money donations to national political parties
- prohibits interest groups from running issue ads aimed at a candidate for a certain period before an election
- established reporting procedures to receive electronic contributions on the internet

Following the Supreme Court’s 2014 decision in *McCutcheon v. FEC*, there is no longer a total limit on how much an individual can give in total to all candidates, PACs and party committees combined.

The Federal Election Commission (FEC) keeps records on all campaign contributions and spending over $100.00.

Issue Advocacy Advertising - These advertisements, paid for by special interest groups, urge voters to support a particular position on issues such as gun control or health care.

Federal Funding - Presidential candidates have the choice of accepting federal funding for their campaigns. If they do accept, they are limited in how much they can spend. Presidential candidates of third parties qualify for federal funding if their party received at least five percent of the vote in the previous presidential election.
Media Influence
The image, or mental picture, that voters have of a candidate is extremely important. Various types of media influence the image of the candidates and encourage voters to vote for specific candidates.

- **News** – television news and newspapers focus on the candidates of their choosing and frame the candidates and issues according to the broadcaster’s opinions.
- **Commercials** – candidates and interest groups run commercials to influence viewers how to vote
- **Debates** – help viewers learn where candidates’ stand on various issues and influences undecided voters
- **Websites** – provides the ability to read about the candidate, volunteer, attend events, and donate money
- **Social Media** – provides candidates the ability to have immediate and direct communication with followers

Measuring Public Opinion
In the past, elected officials read newspapers, met with leaders of interest groups, and talked with voters to assess public opinion.

- **Political Party Organizations** were once a reliable source of information about voters. Local and state party leaders were in close touch with voters.
- **Interest Groups** make sure public officials know the opinions of their members. Yet interest groups represent a minority concerned with certain issues.
- **The Mass Media** speak to a broad audience that helps determine the media’s content. Politicians watch newspaper headlines, magazine cover stories, and talk shows to know what the public is thinking.
- **Electronic Access** E-mail, social media, fax, and phone calls to members of Congress and the White House allow citizens to react almost immediately to events and government decisions.
- **Letter Writing** is a time-honored form of expressing opinions in a democracy. Interest groups stage massive letter-writing campaigns using computerized mailings to generate thousands of letters on an issue. However, officials often give more attention to personal letters from individuals.
- **Opinion Polls**
  A. **Scientific Polls** uses scientific steps to measure public opinion. This involves five basic steps:
    1. **Determine the Universe** - the group of people to be studied
    2. Select a **Representative Sample** of the group to be questioned
      - **Stratified Sample** - divides the population into groups called strata, based on characteristics (gender, age, etc.)
      - **Random Sample** - this means everyone in the universe has an equal chance of being selected
      - **Cluster Sample** - organizes people by geographical divisions
    3. Prepare carefully worded (non-biased) questions
    4. Ask the questions to the individuals in the sample
    5. Interpret and report the results
  B. **Straw Polls** are unscientific attempts by newspapers, radio, and television stations to measure public opinion. Newspapers may print ballots in the paper and ask readers to mail in their vote. Television and radio hosts ask questions and give the audience telephone numbers to call in yes or no answers.