

## 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 the importance of campaign funding to election outcomes, the major sources of such funding 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 enter the electorate in large numbers, old party loyalties weaken, and/or a crucial issue splits the majority party.

### CHAPTER OUTLINE WITH KEYED-IN RESOURCES

- I. Campaigns, then and now
  - A. Then: Campaigns for the nomination were nearly nonexistent.
    1. Nineteenth century: congressional members from party caucus picked candidate
    2. After nominating conventions replaced caucuses, local party leaders or bosses selected candidate.
  - B. Now: Candidates must orchestrate a highly structured campaign
    1. Run by large staff:
      - a) Media consultants create advertisements and buy air time from media outlets.

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- b) Direct-mail firms design and produce promotional materials for fund-raising purposes.
  - c) Polling firms survey voters on their attitudes toward issues and candidates and run focus groups.
  - d) Political technology firms supply services such as web site design, online advertising, online fund-raising, and voter-targeting.
2. To pay for this help, candidates must raise and spend large sums of money.
    - a) Candidates for the 435 House races spent \$1 billion.
    - b) Candidates for Senate races spent \$400 million
    - c) Candidates for president spent \$1.75 billion.
    - d) The amount spent by presidential candidates has exploded since 1976, with most of the money going to fund various forms of media, including TV, radio, newspapers, yard signs and the Internet.
  - 3 Largely based on media advertising
    - e) Large amount of money spent on media advertising
    - f) Advertisements appeal largely to emotions, such as fear, patriotism, or community pride.
- C. Are campaigns better or worse?
1. Candidates use polling data to determine voter opinions, positions
  2. In 2008, both presidential campaigns made extensive use of micro-targeting software to reach sets of voters.
  3. Parties emphasize get-out-the-vote activities
  4. Candidates rely heavily on advice of political consultants
  - 5 “Campaigning” has become synonymous with “fund-raising”
- D. Campaigns, in the United States and abroad
1. Differences in how candidates secure party nominations
    - a) In America, the nomination is determined by individual effort
    - b) In Europe, the nomination is determined by party leaders
  2. Differences in how nominees secure electoral victory
    - a) In America, largest role of parties is to provide individual candidates with label for voters
    - b) In Europe, elections are largely contests between parties, not between individual candidates
- II. Presidential versus congressional campaigns
- A. Differences
1. Most obvious difference is size: 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 individuals, distancing themselves from “the mess in Washington”; presidents cannot.
    - a) However, members of Congress may feel voter anger about national affairs, particularly the economy.
    - b) Presidential coattails do not have the value they once had; some scholars argue they do not exist anymore.
  6. Congressional elections are now substantially independent of the presidential election.

- B. Running for president
  - 1. Getting mentioned
    - a) David Broder: “The Great Mentioner”
    - b) Let it be known to reporters “off the record” that you are considering running.
    - c) Travel around the country making speeches
    - d) Have a famous name (John Glenn)
    - e) Be identified with a major piece of legislation
    - f) Be the governor of a big state
  - 2. Setting aside time to run
    - a) Reagan: six years; Mondale: four years
    - b) May have to resign from office first (Dole in 1996), though many campaign while in office
  - 3. Money
    - a) Individuals can give \$2,000; PACs can give \$5,000 in each election to each candidate.
    - b) 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.
  - 4. Organization
    - a) A large (paid) staff
    - b) Volunteers
    - c) Advisers on issues: position papers
  - 5. Strategy and themes
    - a) Incumbents defend their record; challengers attack incumbents.
    - b) Setting the tone (positive or negative)
    - c) Developing a theme: “trust,” “confidence,” “compassionate conservatism”; in 2008, Barack Obama developed the themes “Change you can believe in” and “Yes, we can”.
    - d) Judging the timing (early momentum versus reserving resources for later)
    - e) Choosing a target voter: Who is the audience? Who will change his or her vote?
- C. Getting elected to Congress
  - 1. Incumbents with extraordinary advantage—and Congress has no term limits
  - 2. Each state has two senators; number of House representatives based on state population, as determined by the census
  - 3. House members are now elected from single-member districts.
  - 4. District boundaries can affect election outcomes; two enduring problems have characterized congressional electoral politics.
    - a) Malapportionment: districts have very different populations, so the votes in a less-populated district “weigh more” than do those in a more-populated district.
    - b) Gerrymandering: boundaries are drawn to favor one party rather than the other, resulting in odd-shaped districts.
  - 5. Problems associated with House elections:
    - a) Total size of the House, which Congress decided in 1911
    - b) Allocating House seats among the states (states gain and lose seats following the census)
    - c) Determining the size of congressional districts within the states, which states have decided in keeping with stringent Supreme Court rulings
    - d) Determining the shapes 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 signatures to appear on the ballot for a primary election

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2. Win party nomination by winning the primary election—parties have limited influence over these outcomes
  3. Run in the general election—incumbents 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 Congress, because they cannot influence electoral outcomes.
  2. Affects how policy is made: members gear their offices to help individual constituents while securing committee assignments that will produce benefits for their districts.
  3. Members must decide how much to be delegates (do what district wants) versus trustees (use their independent judgment).

### III. 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 for media attention, contributor interest
    - c) Winners tend to be most liberal Democrat and most conservative Republican
  3. The balancing act
    - a) Being conservative enough or liberal enough to get nominated
    - b) Once nominated, move to center 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. Position issues: issues in which rival candidates have opposing views and voters are divided; a partisan realignment may result
    - a) Position issues in 2000: social security, defense, public school choice systems
    - b) In 2008 McCain favored tax cuts, whereas Obama favored increasing taxes for people earning over \$200,000
    - c) Great party realignments (e.g., 1890s, 1960s) have been based on position issues
  2. Valence issues: issues on which nearly everyone agrees (strong economy, low crime rates, health-care reform)
    - a) Voters select candidate who seems most closely linked to universally shared view
    - b) Increasingly important because television leads to a reliance on popular symbols and admired images
    - c) The 2008 campaign relied on both valence and position issues. Both Obama and McCain supported “reforming” the health care system to make it “affordable.”
- C. Television, debates, and direct mail
1. Paid advertising (spots)

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- 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. Debates
    - a) Usually an advantage only to the challenger
    - b) Reagan in 1980: reassured voters by his performance
    - c) 2008 Barack Obama and John McCain: no clear winner; not likely to have affected the election results
  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 as or more than ideas
  5. Ross Perot’s campaign depended on television
    - a) CNN appearances
    - b) Infomercials
    - c) Televised debates with major party contenders
  6. In 1996, major networks gave free time to “major” candidates—and denied it to minor third-party nominees
  7. The Internet
    - a) Makes direct-mail campaigns possible
    - b) Allows candidates to address specific voters via direct mail
    - c) Mailing to specific groups, so more specific views can be expressed
    - d) Howard Dean’s 2004 campaign based on Internet appeals
  8. The gap between running a campaign and running the government has been growing.
    - a) Party leaders had to worry about their candidates’ reelection, so campaigning and government were linked.
    - b) Today’s consultants work for different people in different elections and do not participate in governing.
- IV. 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 up to a legal limit of major party candidates and part of the costs of minor party candidates if they receive 5 to 25 percent of the vote.
    - (3. Congressional elections: mostly private money
      - a) From individuals, political action committees, and political parties
      - b) Most money comes from individual small donors (\$100–\$200 a person)
  - B. Campaign finance rules
    1. In 1972, the Watergate scandal and illegal donations from corporations, unions, and individuals catalyzed change.

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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) Must have at least fifty voluntary members
      - (2) Must give to at least five 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 fund-raising 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) In 2008, John McCain declined public financing for the primaries but accepted it for the general election. Barack Obama relied entirely on his own funds to support his campaign in the primaries and general election.
      - (5) Partial funding available for minor party presidential candidates in the general campaign if they won at least 5 percent of the vote in the previous election. (In 2000, the Reform Party and Green Party candidates, Pat Buchanan and Ralph Nader, respectively, each received some funding; neither was eligible in 2004.) No minor party won more than 5 percent in either 2004 or 2008, so no one got public support.
  4. The 1973 reform produced two problems:
    - a) Independent expenditures: an organization or PAC can spend as much as it wishes on advertising as long as it is not coordinated with a candidate's campaign.
    - b) Soft money: unlimited amounts of money may be given to a political party as long as a candidate is not named; this money can then be spent to help candidates with voting drives and so on. (Approximately half a billion dollars in soft money was spent in 2000 and again in 2004.)
- C. A second campaign finance law
1. Following 2000 election, desire to reform the 1974 law led to the Bipartisan Campaign Finance Reform Act, which enacted 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, and nonprofit organizations cannot use their own money for an advertisement referring to a candidate by name for thirty days before a primary and sixty days before a general election.
  2. Immediately challenged in court as restriction of free speech (*McConnell v. Federal Election Commission*, 2002); Supreme Court upheld almost the entire law
- D. New sources of money
1. 527 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. Democratic 527 organizations:
    - a) The Media Fund
    - b) America Coming Together
    - c) America Votes (and many others)
  3. Republican 527 organizations:
    - a) Progress for America
    - b) The Leadership Forum
    - c) America for Job Security (and many others)
  4. In 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 based on three factors:
    - a) Political party affiliation (the 20 percent of voters who swing between the parties)
    - b) The state of the economy
      - (1) Often called “pocketbook voting”
      - (2) Not clear whose pocketbook is being voted, though: the individual’s or that of the country as a whole?
    - c) Character: personal characteristics or social/religious values
  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
    - a) Challenger must spend to be recognized
    - b) Jacobson: big-spending challengers do better
    - c) Big-spending incumbents do better than low-spending ones
  5. Advantages of incumbency, in fund-raising
    - a) Can provide services to constituency
    - b) Can use franked mailings
    - c) Can get free publicity by sponsoring legislation or conducting investigations
- V. What decides elections?
- A. Party
1. Not so simple as it seems: most people identify as Democrats, but the Democrats lost six of nine presidential contests between 1968 and 2000.
  2. Democrats are less wedded to their party than are Republicans.
  3. Republicans tend to do better among independents. Since 1960, Republicans have won the independent vote seven times; the Democrats won it five times.
  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 (for example, abortion)
  2. Relatively few voters vote prospectively.
    - a) Those voters know the issues and vote accordingly
    - b) Most common among activists and special interest groups
  3. Most voters vote retrospectively; decides most elections

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- a) Voters judge the incumbent's performance and vote accordingly.
  - b) Have things gotten better or worse, especially economically?
  - c) Examples: presidential campaigns of 1980, 1984, 1988, 1992, 2008
  - d) Usually helps incumbent, unless economy has gotten worse
  - e) Midterm elections: voters tend to turn against president's party
- C. The campaign
- 1. Campaigns do make a difference.
    - a) They reawaken voters' partisan loyalties.
    - b) They let voters see how candidates handle and apply pressure.
    - c) They let voters judge the character and core values of the candidates.
  - 2. Campaigns tend to emphasize themes over details.
    - a) True throughout American history
    - b) What has changed is importance of primary elections.
    - c) Emphasis on themes gives more influence to single-issue groups with loyal members who vote as a bloc
- D. Finding a winning coalition
- 1. Ways of looking at various groups
    - a) How loyal are groups to the candidate or party?
    - b) How important are groups to the candidate or party?
  - 2. Democratic coalition
    - a) African Americans most loyal
    - b) Jews almost as loyal as African Americans
    - c) Hispanics loyal, though somewhat mixed because of underlying ethnic differences
      - (1) Cubans tend to vote Republican
      - (2) Mexicans and Puerto Ricans strongly Democratic
      - (3) Turnout among Hispanic voters still quite low
    - d) Catholics, southerners, unionists departing the coalition
  - 3. Republican coalition
    - a) Party of business and professional people who are very loyal (exception: 1964)
    - b) Farmers are often Republican, but are quick to change parties.
  - 4. When making demands on party leaders or presidential candidates, representatives of different groups within the coalition stress loyalty or numbers but can rarely claim both.

## VI. The effects of elections on policy (THEME C: ELECTIONS AND PARTISAN ALIGNMENTS)

- A. The broad trends in winning and losing
- 1. 1876–1896: Democrats and Republicans hotly competitive
  - 2. 1896–1932: Republicans dominant party
  - 3. 1932–1952: Democrats dominant party
  - 4. 1952–present: power has changed hands frequently
- B. Argument: Public policy remains more or less the same no matter which official or party is in office.
- 1. Depends on the office and the policy
  - 2. Voters must elect numerous officeholders.
  - 3. Parties have limited ability to build coalitions of officeholders.
  - 4. 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 periods of rapid change alternate with periods of consolidation.
2. Most elections are not “critical”; instead, they are retrospective judgments about the incumbent president and the current congressional majority.

## WEB RESOURCES

American Association of Political Consultants: [www.theapc.org](http://www.theapc.org)

American Votes, Presidential Campaign Memorabilia: <http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/americanvotes>

Center for Responsive Politics: [www.openscrets.org](http://www.openscrets.org)

Federal Election Commission: [www.fec.gov](http://www.fec.gov)

The Living Room Candidate: <http://livingroomcandidate.movingimage.us>

Project Vote Smart: [www.vote-smart.org](http://www.vote-smart.org)

## RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION TOPICS

**What is the optimum timing for primaries?** The first Tuesday of March is unofficially dubbed “Super Tuesday” because a large number of states simultaneously hold their primary elections on this date. Voters in states that hold primary elections later in the season often feel discounted, because the frontrunner that emerges after Super Tuesday is often crowned as the unofficial winner by the media and by potential donors. To combat this, several states have voted to move their primary dates to before Super Tuesday, which has the effect of accelerating the entire primary campaign season. What are the advantages and disadvantages of compacting the primary schedule? What are the implications for the general election campaign if the primary season effectively ends in March?

**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 her- or himself from the party’s presidential candidate? Have students think about these questions in terms of political campaigning, fund-raising, 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 ask students to establish whether and how their differences are reflected in their funding sources. For data, visit [www.fec.gov](http://www.fec.gov).

**Does advertising make a difference?** Much of the candidates’ money is spent on media advertising, which is distributed between radio, television, and print media. Have students research advertising from past political campaigns and survey others as to their effectiveness. Which ads resonate most with the average voter? Which would motivate the voter to show up on Election Day? Are positive ads more effective than negative ads? Past commercials can be viewed online at [www.livingroomcandidate.movingimage.us](http://www.livingroomcandidate.movingimage.us) and <http://youtube.com>.

## IMPORTANT TERMS

<b>527 organization</b>	Organization that, under Section 527 of the Internal Revenue Code, raises and spends money to advance political causes
<b>blanket primary</b>	A primary election in which each voter may vote for candidates from both parties
<b>closed primary</b>	A primary election in which voting is limited to already registered party members

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<b>coattails</b>	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
<b>general election</b>	An election held to choose candidates to hold office
<b>gerrymandering</b>	Drawing the boundaries of legislative districts in bizarre or unusual shapes to favor one party
<b>incumbent</b>	Person currently holding an elective office
<b>independent expenditure</b>	Spending by political action committees, corporations, or labor unions that is done to help a party or candidate but is done independently of them
<b>malapportionment</b>	Drawing the boundaries of legislative districts so that they are unequal in population
<b>open primary</b>	A primary election in which voters may choose for which party to vote as they enter the polling place
<b>political action committee</b>	A committee, set up by a corporation, labor union, or interest group, that raises and spends campaign money from voluntary donations
<b>position issue</b>	An issue about which the public is divided and on which rival candidates or political parties adopt different policy positions
<b>primary election</b>	An election held to choose candidates for office
<b>prospective voting</b>	Voting for a candidate because the voter favors his or her ideas for handling issues
<b>retrospective voting</b>	Voting for a candidate because the voter likes his or her past actions in office
<b>runoff primary</b>	A second primary election held when no candidate wins a majority of the votes in the first primary
<b>soft money</b>	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
<b>sophomore surge</b>	An increase in the votes congressional candidate usually enjoy when they first run for reelection
<b>valence issue</b>	An issue about which the public is united and on which rival candidates or political parties adopt similar positions in hopes that each will be thought to best represent those widely shared beliefs

## THEME A: HOW CAMPAIGNS ARE CONDUCTED

### Instructor Resources

Emmett H. Buell, Jr. and William G. Mayer, eds. *Enduring Controversies in Presidential Nominating Politics*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004.

R. Lawrence Butler. *Claiming the Mantle: How Presidential Nominations Are Won and Lost Before the Votes are Cast*. Cambridge, MA: Westview Press, 2004.

Rhodes Cook. *United States Presidential Primary Elections, 2000–2004: A Handbook of Election Statistics*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2007.

David A. Dulio. *For Better or Worse? How Political Consultants Are Changing Elections in the United States*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004.

*Guide to U.S. Elections*. 5th ed. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2005.

Paul S. Herrnson, Colton Campbell, Marni Ezra, and Stephen K. Medvic, eds. *Guide to Political Campaigns in America*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2005.

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

Douglas A. Lathrop. *The Campaign Continues: How Political Consultants and Campaign Tactics Affect Public Policy*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003.

L. Sandy Maisel and Kara Z. Buckley. *Parties and Elections in America: The Electoral Process*. 4th ed. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005.

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

William G. Mayer and Andrew E. Busch. *The Front-Loading Problem in Presidential Nominations*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2004.

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

James A. Thurber, Candice J. Nelson, and David A. Dulio, eds. *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 factor. The primary election has taken from party leaders the power to select the party's nominee for office; therefore, they 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 officeholders, 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 group 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. As George McGovern found in 1972, this 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

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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 (as did 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 that they 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 opposing 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, whereas radio listeners considered Nixon the 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. In today’s media-intensive style of campaigning, candidates must learn how to condense their policy ideas into thirty-second, or even fifteen-second, sound bites in order to get their message through to viewers and listeners. What possible implications does this raise for the candidates’ campaigns? Do candidates need to formulate detailed positions on complicated issues before getting elected? Or will a short explanation suffice? How does the use of sound-bite explanations affect our expectations of candidates once elected? Are all policy issues explainable in thirty seconds or less?

## THEME B: MONEY IN ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS

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## Summary

Political campaigns cost a lot. This has been particularly true in recent years. Political machines can no longer 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 can. Richard 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

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amount any individual could contribute to any single candidate in any one federal election. The Bipartisan Campaign Finance Reform Act raised this ceiling to \$2,000 per candidate. Under particular circumstances (as 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 (PACs) 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 that business and labor spend on elections, with business spending 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 of Congress for the first time in forty 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, loopholes remain in the campaign finance law, so more money can be spent.)

Campaign-finance reform laws have effects that are not yet entirely clear. However, the following seem likely:

1. Candidates who are personally wealthy have an advantage, as do candidates who can successfully appeal to many small donors.
2. Candidates have to spend much more time on fund-raising to appeal to a large group of small donors.
3. Incumbents will continue to enjoy a substantial advantage in fund-raising.
4. Late starters will be at a disadvantage, because the raising of money from many small donors must begin far in advance of an election.
5. 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.)
6. Celebrities will continue to play a role in politics, because they can host fund-raising events to generate more money for the candidates.

### Discussion Questions

1. Suppose we consider campaign-finance reform as an attempt to redistribute political influence: The excessive influence that is usually associated with big donors is reduced, and the influence of small donors is concomitantly increased. 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. The Supreme Court has ruled that unless candidates accept public funds for their campaigns, they may supplement their campaign funds with personal funds. This has led some to believe that in time, U.S. elections will become overrun with millionaire candidates, and “average” candidates will be shut out of the process. Do you believe that this is a likely scenario? Should Americans seek a constitutional amendment to prohibit wealthy candidates from using their personal fortunes to finance their campaigns? What are the advantages and disadvantages of having financially mismatched candidates competing against one another in a general election?
  3. Should congressional elections be publicly financed? Why or why not? What effect has public financing had on the presidential elections?

## THEME C: ELECTIONS AND PARTISAN ALIGNMENTS

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### Summary

When political scientists look at election outcomes, they are interested in broad trends in winning and losing and in what these trends 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 a sharp, lasting shift occurs in the popular coalition supporting one or both parties. This may occur at the time of an election, when 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, whose power steadily declined until they later 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 the 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.
5. 1932—when, amid an economic depression, Franklin 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. Alternatively, 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 United States is overdue for another realigning period. Indeed, some think the 1980 election signaled the breakup of the New Deal coalition and replaced it with a Republican-centered 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 they can 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 every 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

1. 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 the American political system is excessively biased against change? On the other hand, does the system produce changes only when clear majorities *want* a change, which is likely to occur during a crisis?
2. How should the 1992, 2000, and 2008 elections be classified? Are these realignments, dealignments, or simply instances of voters acting erratically?