

Chapter Eight: Political Parties

Learning Outcomes

1. Define the term political party, and cite some of the major activities of the parties.
2. Explain how the history of U.S. political parties has resulted in the two major parties that exist today.
3. Summarize key economic and cultural positions taken by the two major parties.

Learning Outcomes

4. Describe three faces of a party: the party-in-the-electorate, the party organization, and the party-in-government.
5. Give some of the reasons why the two-party system has endured in America.
6. Evaluate the impact of third parties on U.S. politics.

Learning Outcomes

7. Discuss some of the ways in which support for the parties can change, and explain the increasing importance of independents.

What Is a Political Party?

- Political party: group of political activists who organize to win elections, operate the government and determine public policy
- Factions: smaller groups trying to obtain power or benefits
- Interest groups: seek to influence government

What Is a Political Party?



- Functions
 - ✓ Recruit candidates
 - ✓ Organize and run elections
 - ✓ Present policy alternatives
 - ✓ Responsibility for running government
 - ✓ Act as organized opposition

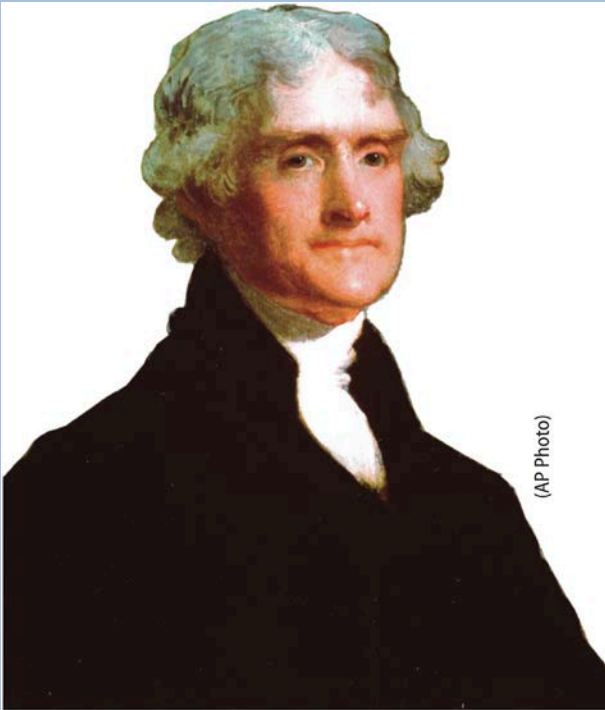
A History of Political Parties in the United States

- Two-party system
 - Unique historical forces
 - Linked to government created by Constitution
 - Emerged with country's founding

A History of Political Parties in the United States

1. Formation of parties (1789 to 1816)
2. Era of one-party rule (1816 to 1828)
3. Jackson's presidency to eve of Civil War (1828 to 1856)
4. Civil War to post-Civil War period (1856 to 1896)
5. Republican ascendancy/progressive period (1896 to 1932)
6. New Deal period (1932 to 1968)
7. Modern period (1968 to present)

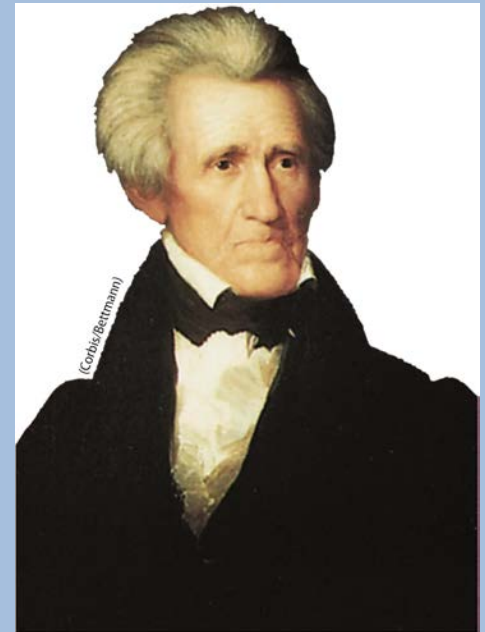
A History of Political Parties in the United States



- The Formative Years:
Federalists and Anti-Federalists
 - First partisan political division
 - Federalists and Republicans
 - One-party interlude (1800-1820)

A History of Political Parties in the United States

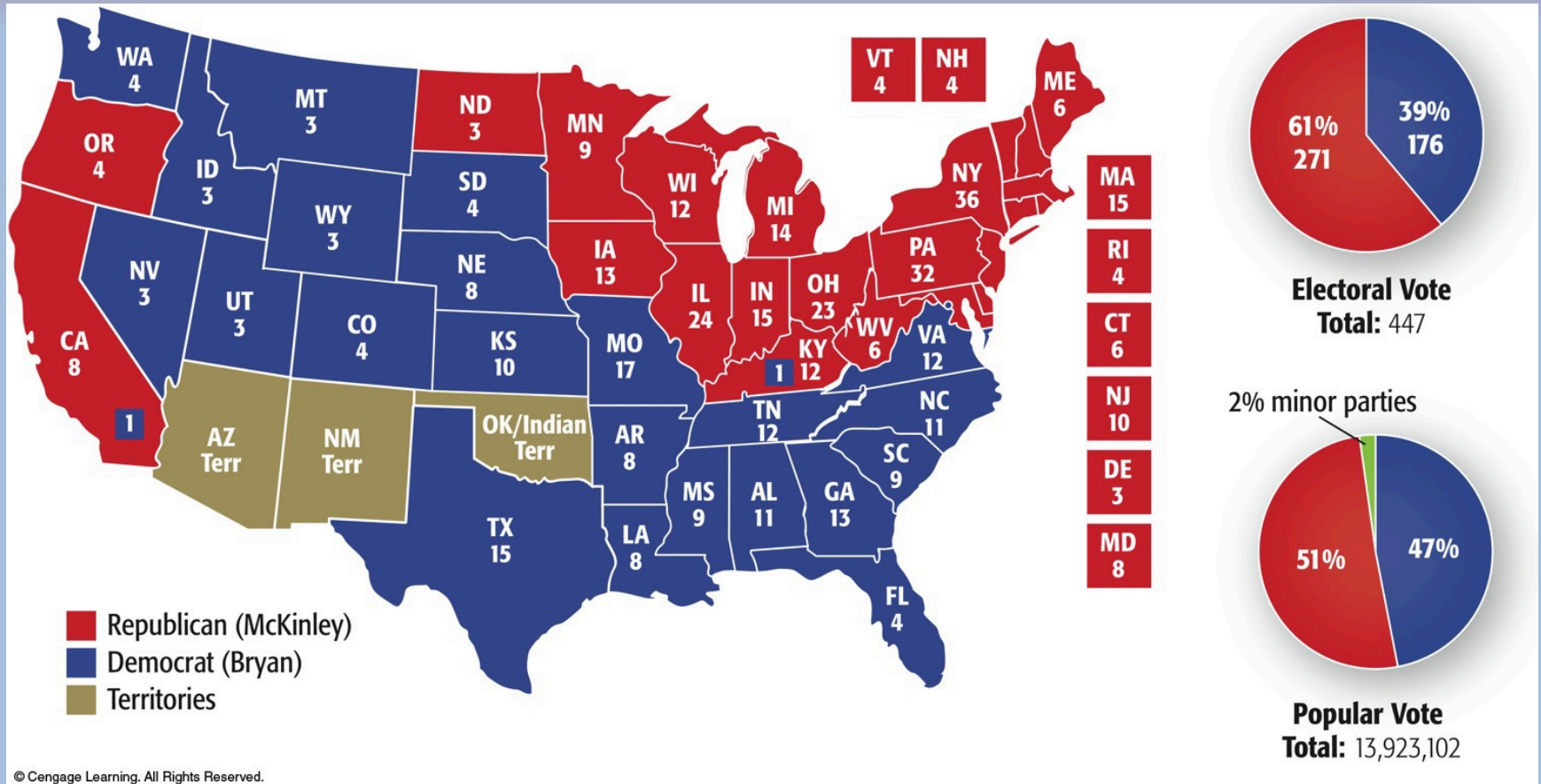
- Democrats and Whigs
 - Organized two-party politics returns
 - Democratic Party (Jackson supporters)
 - Whigs (National Republicans)
- The Civil War Crisis
 - Issue of slavery divides parties
 - Northern Whigs unite with antislavery Democrats & antislavery Free Soil Party to found modern Republican Party



A History of Political Parties in the United States

- Post-Civil War Period
 - Democratic Party heals divisions, now dominates white South
 - Republicans: “Grand Old Party” (GOP)
 - Cultural politics
 - Triumph of the Republicans
 - Republicans gain edge in 1890s
 - Populism emerges in West and South
 - Realignment

The 1896 Presidential Elections



A History of Political Parties in the United States



- The Progressive Interlude
 - Spirit of political reform in both parties
 - 1912 Republican Party temporarily splits
 - Wilson's progressivism marks radical change in Democratic Party

A History of Political Parties in the United States

- The New Deal Era
 - Major political realignment in 1932
 - New Deal coalition includes African Americans, working class
 - Mostly Democratic dominance until 1968

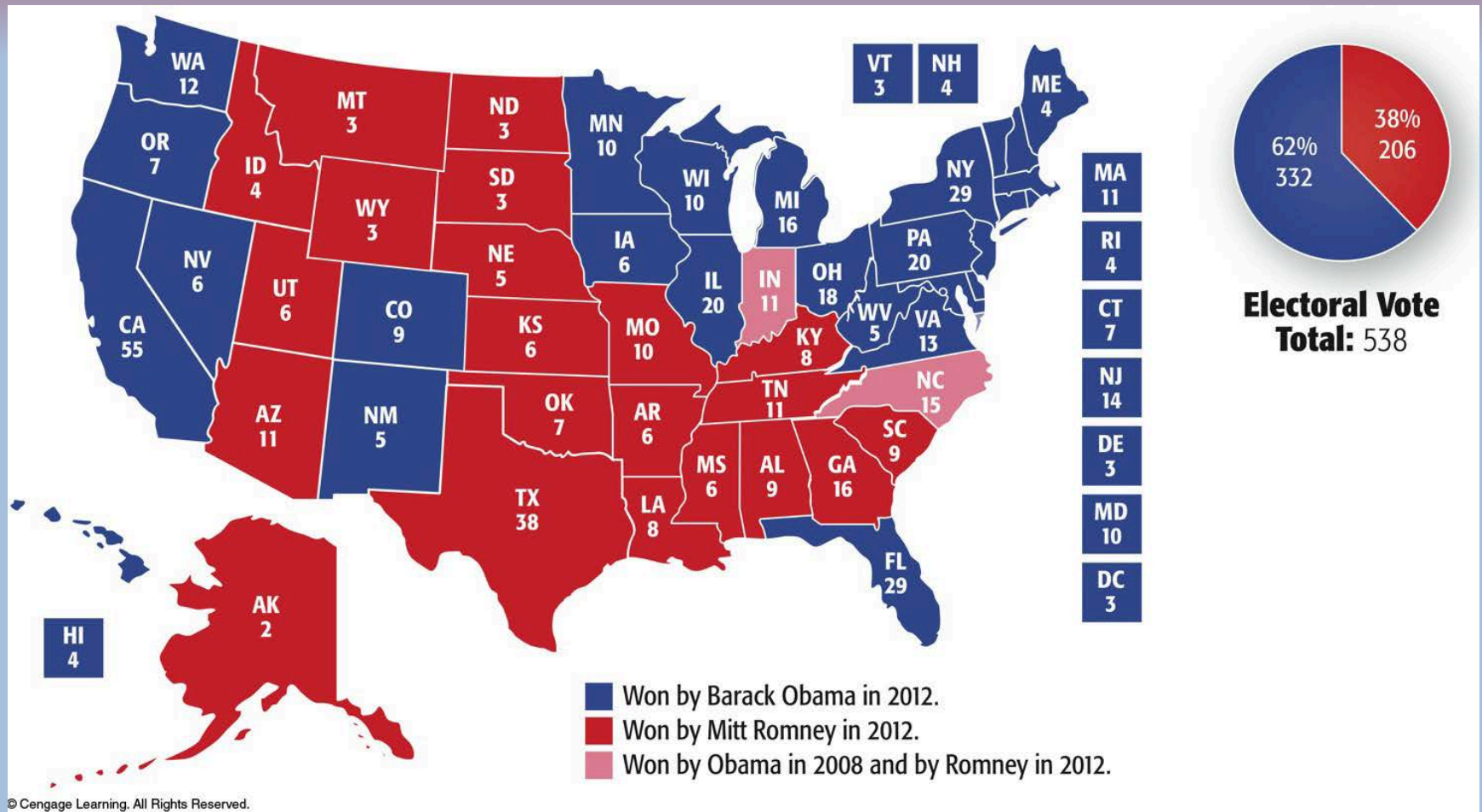
A History of Political Parties in the United States

- Era of Divided Government
 - Social issues dominate, many in South leave Democratic Party
 - Slow-motion realignment begins in 1968
 - Red State, Blue State
 - 2000 presidential election reverses 1896 presidential election results
 - Democrats become party of pro-civil rights and expanded government action

A History of Political Parties in the United States

- A Series of “Wave” Elections
 - Partisan balance stays close in Congress
 - Temporary shifts of party in power
 - Both parties lose popularity

The 2012 Presidential Elections



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The Two Major U.S. Parties Today

Democrats

- ✓ Coalition of labor, plus racial and ethnic minorities; urban
- ✓ Least-educated plus well-educated voters
- ✓ Social programs
- ✓ Increased government intervention in economy
- ✓ Supports government regulation of business

Republicans

- ✓ Business interests, white evangelicals; rural
- ✓ Supports private marketplace
- ✓ Ethic of self-reliance
- ✓ Limited government

The Two Major U. S. Parties Today

- Cultural politics
 - Plays significant role in defining parties
 - Cultural politics and socioeconomic status
 - Regional factor in cultural politics

The Two Major U. S. Parties Today

- Cultural divisions within Democratic Party
 - Obama vs. Clinton supporters
 - Different groups, mostly similar politics
- Cultural divisions within Republican Party
 - Religious Right (moral issues)
 - Business-oriented (economic issues)
 - Libertarian-leaning business-oriented
 - Candidates must appeal to all groups
- Moderate and radical Republicans
 - Impact of Tea Party

The Two Major U.S. Parties Today



The Three Faces of a Party

1. Party-in-the-Electorate

- All persons claiming party attachment
- Do not need to be politically active

The Three Faces of a Party

2. Party Organization

- National party organization
 - National convention
 - Party platform
 - Convention delegates
 - National committee and chairperson

The Three Faces of a Party

2. Party Organization

- State party organization
 - State convention
 - State committee and chairperson
 - State central committee
- Local party (grassroots)
 - District leaders, precinct captains and party workers
 - Patronage

The Three Faces of a Party

3. Party-in-Government

- Organizes and controls government
- Partisanship plays important role
 - Divided government lessens control
 - Limits of party unity
 - Party polarization
 - Blocking tactics

Delegates and Voters

Convention Delegates and Voters: How Did They Compare on the Issues in 2012?

Table 8-1 ▶ Convention Delegates and Voters: How Do They Compare on the Issues?



Source: Excerpted and adapted from *The New York Times/CBS News* poll, July 23–August 26, 2008.
 Note: These responses are from delegates to the 2008 national conventions. Delegates to the 2012 conventions were not surveyed.

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Why Has the Two-Party System Endured?

- Reasons for enduring:
 1. Historical foundation of the two-party system
 2. Political socialization and practical considerations
 3. Winner-take-all electoral system
 4. State and federal laws favoring two-party system

Why Has the Two-Party System Endured?

- Winner-take-all electoral system
 - Plurality system
 - Presidential voting (electoral college)
 - Popular election of governors and president
 - Proportional representation

The Role of Minor Parties in U.S. Politics

- Third parties (any political party other than Democrat or Republican)
 - Based on issue or ideology
 - Split from major parties
 - Organized around charismatic leader

The Most Successful Third-Party Presidential Campaigns since 1864

Table 8-2 ▶ The Most Successful Third-Party Presidential Campaigns since 1864

The following list includes all third-party candidates winning more than 5 percent of the popular vote or any electoral votes since 1864. (We ignore isolated "unfaithful electors" in the electoral college who failed to vote for the candidate to which they were pledged.)

Year	Major Third Party	Third-Party Presidential Candidate	Percent of the Popular Vote	Electoral Votes	Winning Presidential Candidate and Party
1892	Populist	James Weaver	8.5	22	Grover Cleveland (D)
1912	Progressive	Theodore Roosevelt	27.4	88	Woodrow Wilson (D)
	Socialist	Eugene Debs	6.0	—	
1924	Progressive	Robert LaFollette	16.6	13	Calvin Coolidge (R)
1948	States' Rights	Strom Thurmond	2.4	39	Harry Truman (D)
1960	Independent Democrat	Harry Byrd	0.4	15*	John F. Kennedy (D)
1968	American Independent	George Wallace	13.5	46	Richard Nixon (R)
1980	National Union	John Anderson	6.6	—	Ronald Reagan (R)
1992	Independent	Ross Perot	18.9	—	Bill Clinton (D)
1996	Reform	Ross Perot	8.4	—	Bill Clinton (D)

*Byrd received fifteen electoral votes from unpledged electors in Alabama and Mississippi.

Source: *Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections* at www.uselectionatlas.org.

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Policies of Selected American Third Parties since 1864

Table 8-3 ► Policies of Selected American Third Parties since 1864

Populist: This pro-farmer party of the 1890s advocated progressive reforms. It also advocated replacing gold with silver as the basis of the currency in hopes of creating a mild inflation in prices. (It was believed by many that inflation would help debtors and stimulate the economy.)

Socialist: This party advocated a “cooperative commonwealth” based on government ownership of industry. It was pro-labor, often antiwar, and in later years, anti-Communist. It was dissolved in 1972 and replaced by nonparty advocacy groups (Democratic Socialists of America and Social Democrats USA).

Communist: This left-wing breakaway from the Socialists was the U.S. branch of the worldwide Communist movement. The party was pro-labor and advocated full equality for African Americans. It was also closely aligned with the Communist-led Soviet Union, which provoked great hostility among most Americans.

Progressive: This name was given to several successive splinter parties built around individual political leaders. Theodore Roosevelt, who ran in 1912, advocated federal regulation of industry to protect consumers, workers, and small businesses. Robert LaFollette, who ran in 1924, held similar views.

American Independent: Built around George Wallace, this party opposed any further promotion of civil rights and advocated a militant foreign policy. Wallace’s supporters were mostly former Democrats who were soon to be Republicans.

Libertarian: This party opposes most government activity.

Reform: The Reform Party was initially built around businessman H. Ross Perot but later was taken over by others. Under Perot, the party was a middle-of-the-road group opposed to federal budget deficits. Under Patrick Buchanan, it came to represent right-wing nationalism and opposition to free trade.

Green: The Greens are a left-of-center pro-environmental party. They are also generally hostile to globalization.

The Role of Minor Parties in U.S. Politics

- Ideological third parties
 - Member see themselves as outsiders
 - Psychological cohesiveness
 - Goal is not immediate electoral success
- Splinter parties
 - Dissident faction with major parties
 - Bull Moose Progressive Party
 - Ross Perot and Reform Party

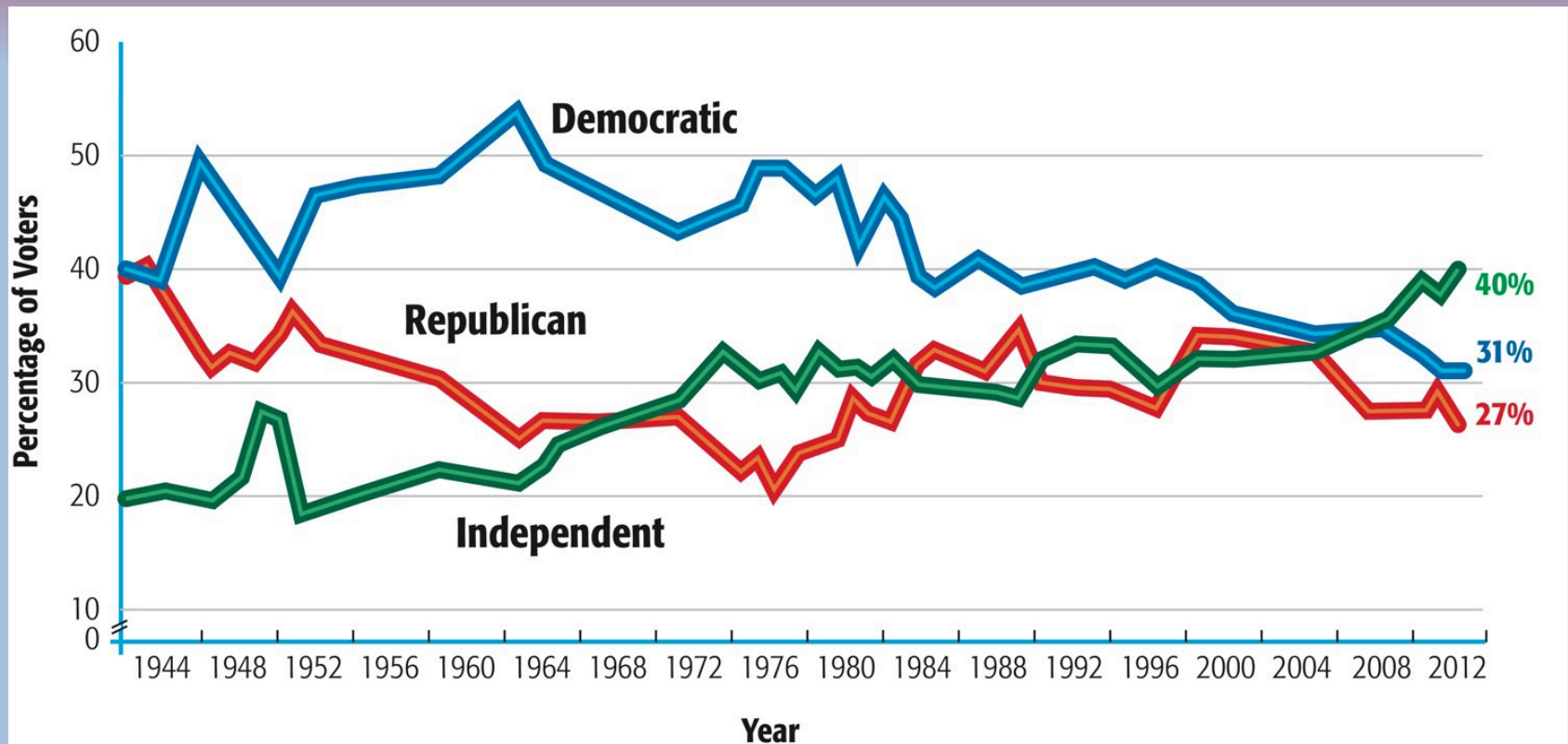
The Role of Minor Parties in U.S. Politics

- Impact of minor parties
 - Influencing major parties on issues
 - Affecting election outcomes (spoiler)

Mechanisms of Political Change

- Realignment: major constituencies shift allegiance
- Dealignment: decline in party loyalties
- Tipping: a group becoming more numerous over time grows large enough to change political balance
 - Straight-ticket voting
 - Split-ticket voting
 - Swing voters

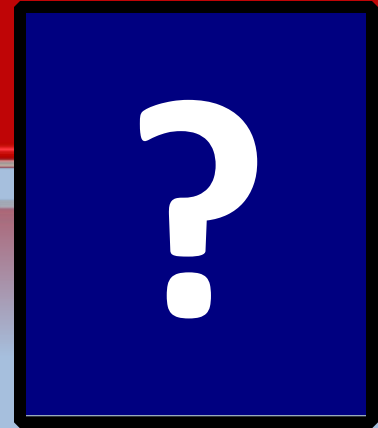
Party Identification from 1944 to the Present



Sources: *Gallup Report*, August 1995; *New York Times/CBS* poll, June 1996; *Gallup Report*, February 1998; The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, November 2003; Gallup polls, 2004 through 2011.

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Questions for Critical Thinking



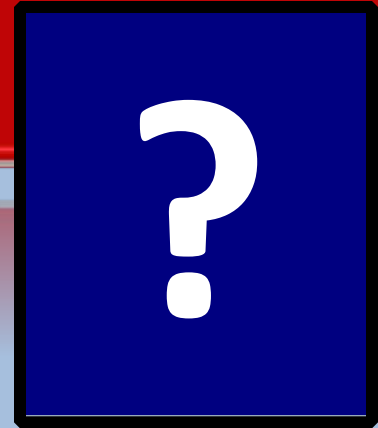
- ★ What do you predict the Republican party will have to do to align with the Tea Party movement?

Questions for Critical Thinking



- ★ What will the Democratic and Republican parties have to do in order to attract independent voters in the future?

Questions for Critical Thinking



- ★ In your opinion, would federal funding of political parties limit the amount of exposure and influence that large donors have over the party platform and message of either party?

Questions for Critical Thinking



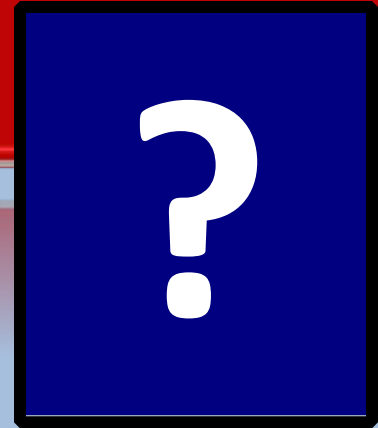
- ★ Is the time right for a third party candidate that is moderate, socially liberal, but fiscally conservative? If so, what would be the appropriate time to run for office?

Questions for Critical Thinking



- ★ Is party identification only a useful indicator when the party is popular and doing well in the polls?

Questions for Critical Thinking



- ★ In your opinion, which of the three faces of a party is most important and why?