

**TEXTBOOK:** Wilson 14<sup>th</sup> Edition, Chapter 9 (pp. 188-217), Chapter 10 (pp. 224-248), Chapter 11 (pp. 251-275), Chapter 13 (pp. 302-337)

### OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 Identify the primary characteristics and functions of political parties in the American political system
- 3.2 Trace changes in American political parties and electoral identification.
- 3.3 Explain party fundraising and assess government regulation of fundraising.
- 3.4 Explain how congressional elections work and assess the impact of the electoral system in the United States
- 3.5 Differentiate the powers of Congress, and compare and contrast the structure and powers of the House and the Senate
- 3.6 Compare and contrast the leadership systems in the House and the Senate, and explain the committee system.
- 3.7 Identify the steps by which a bill becomes a law
- 3.8 Characterize the ways legislators represent their constituents, and influences on their voting
- 3.9 Evaluate the influence of citizens on the legislative process
- 3.10 Explain the role and influence of interest groups in American politics.

### OUTLINE

National political parties are coalitions of local interests. Although very powerful in the past, most voters no longer strongly identify with one of the major parties. The spread of the direct primary has made it harder for parties to control who is nominated for elective office, thus making it harder for the parties to influence the behavior of officeholders. Delegate selection rules, especially in the Democratic Party, have contributed to shifting the center of power away from moderates, and toward more ideological wings. The two-party system is maintained, and minor parties are discouraged, by an election system of winner-take-all, plurality elections. This arrangement makes voters fear that voting for a minor party will “waste” their vote.

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 are coming into the electorate in large numbers, old party loyalties are weakening, and/or a major issue is splitting the majority party

Congress is a collection of individual representatives from state districts who are expected to serve the interests of their constituents, their personal political views, and the demands of party leaders. In serving those interests, members of necessity rely on investigating, negotiating, and compromise, all of which may annoy voters who want Congress to be “decisive.” The unpopularity of Congress is made worse by the recent tendency of its members to become ideologically more polarized. One of the most important changes in the profile of representatives is the increased ability of incumbents to get re-elected. This reflects the growth of constituent service, name recognition, and the weakening of party loyalties among voters. Congress has always protected its authority and independence, which has helped create sharper conflicts between Congress and the President.

Interest groups in the United States are numerous and fragmented. The goals and tactics of interest groups reflect not only the interests of their members but also the size of the groups, the incentives with which they attract supporters, and the role of their professional staffs. The chief source of interest group influence is information; public support, money, and the ability to create “trouble” are also important. The right to lobby is protected by the Constitution, but the tax and campaign finance laws impose significant restrictions on how money may be used.

### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to give the student a preview of the major questions to be asked throughout the textbook and to introduce key terms. After reading and reviewing the material in this chapter the student should be able to do each of the following:

- Are some types of parties more likely to be stronger and more electorally successful than others?
- How is the political system helped or hurt by the fading popularity of political parties?
- What does evidence suggest about the impact of issues on elections? How should a candidate devise an electoral strategy to balance personality and issues?
- Should congressional elections be publicly financed? What effect would that have on the incumbent advantage?
- Is congress accomplishing the goals the Framers set for them? Why or why not?
- What are the characteristics of members of Congress? Are they truly representative of America?
- Is the process for electing members of Congress fair? Is it representative?
- How does a bill becomes a law?

- What are the motivating factors for representatives in voting?
- Why have interest groups grown stronger as the parties have grown weaker?
- Which incentive—material, purposive, solidary—is most important in the formation of an interest group? Why?
- Why would members of Congress introduce legislation written either entirely or in part by interest groups? Is the public vulnerable to exploitation by powerful groups due to their monopoly over information?
- Is legislation regulating lobbyists constitutional? Why or why not?

**VOCABULARY**

**IDEOLOGICAL PARTY**  
**CATCH-ALL PARTY**  
**“BIG TENT”**  
**COALITION**  
**LINKAGE INSTUTION**  
**DEMOCRAT**  
**REPUBLICAN**  
**LIBERTARIAN**  
**PLATFORM/PLANK**  
**CROSSOVER VOTING**  
**REALIGNMENT**  
**PLURALITY SYSTEM**  
**PROPORTIONAL SYSTEM**  
**CLOSED PRIMARY**  
**OPEN PRIMARY**

**PARLIAMENT**  
**CENSUS**  
**REDISTRICTING**  
**GERRYMANDER**  
**SAFE SEAT**  
**INCUMBENT**  
**REPRESENTATIONAL**  
**ORGANIZATIONAL**  
**ATTITUDINAL**  
**PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE**  
**SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE**  
**MAJORITY LEADER**  
**WHIP**  
**COMMITTEES**  
**QUOROM**

**EARMARK/PORK**  
**CAUCUS**  
**FILIBUSTER**  
**IMPEACHMENT**  
**INTEREST GROUP**  
**LOBBYING**  
**SOFT/HARD MONEY**  
**REVOLVING DOOR**  
**PAC**  
**2002 BCRA**  
**527 ORGANIZATION**

**Court Cases:**  
**CITIZENS UNITED v FEC**  
**BAKER v CARR**