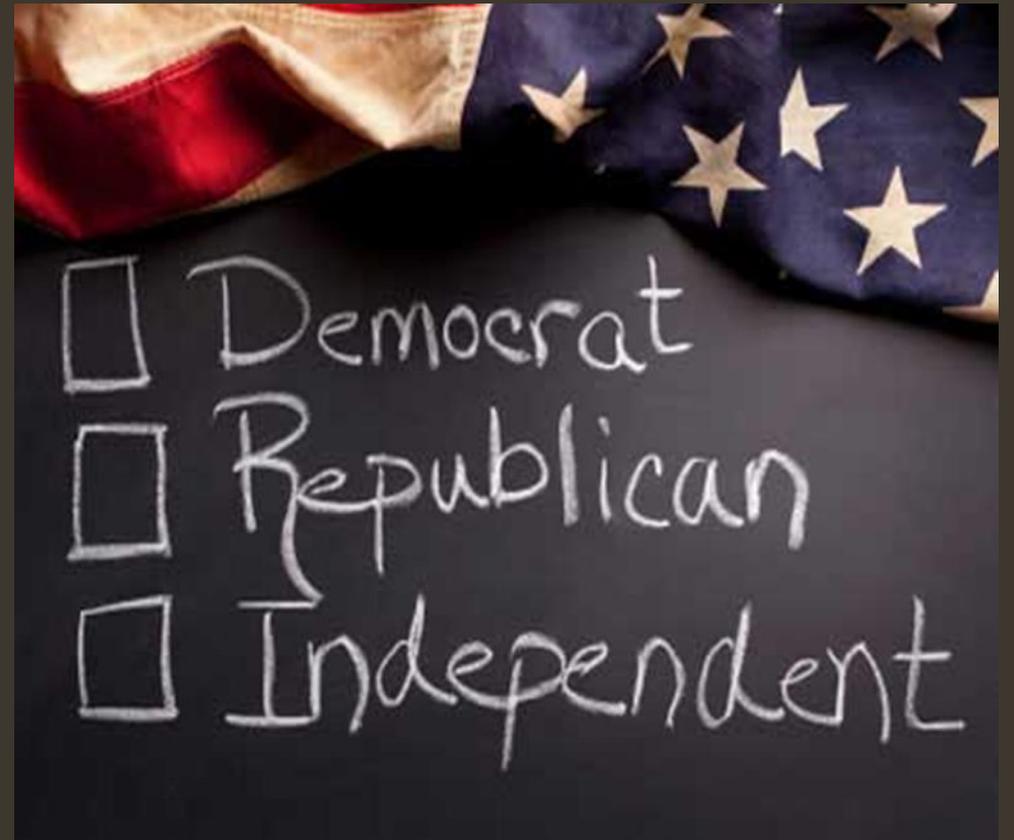


Unit Three: Lesson # 6

- ❑ Components of Political Parties
- ❑ Functions of Political Parties
- ❑ The Rise & History of Political Parties
- ❑ Divided Government
- ❑ Realignment & Dealignment
- ❑ Minor (third) Parties

WHAT IS A POLITICAL PARTY?

- A group of people seeking to control government by gaining office in elections and determining public policy



WHAT IS A POLITICAL PARTY?

THREE COMPONENTS OF PARTIES

#1 Party-in-Government. Party leaders occupy positions in:

- Presidency & Congress
- State governors & Legislatures
- Local governments (though sometimes these are nonpartisan positions)
- **Govern in hopes of implementing their desired public policy**

Party in Government

Party in government performs two basic functions

- 1. Organize governmental machinery when in the majority
 - a. staff the leadership of Congress
 - b. fill posts in the executive branch
 - c. fill vacancies in the judicial branch
- 2. Serves as loyal opposition when in the minority
 - a. watches the majority to keep it honest
 - b. provides the public with an alternative ready to take power

WHAT IS A POLITICAL PARTY?

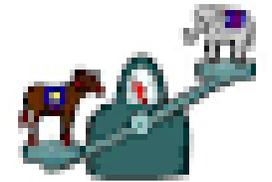
THREE COMPONENTS OF PARTIES

2 Party-in-Electorate

- Registered Democrats
- Democratic identifiers/leaners
- Registered Republicans
- Republican identifiers/leaners

Party in the Electorate

- The largest component of an American political party.
- Does not require a membership card
- Does not require any dues.
- You only have to claim you are a Democrat, Republican, Independent, etc.



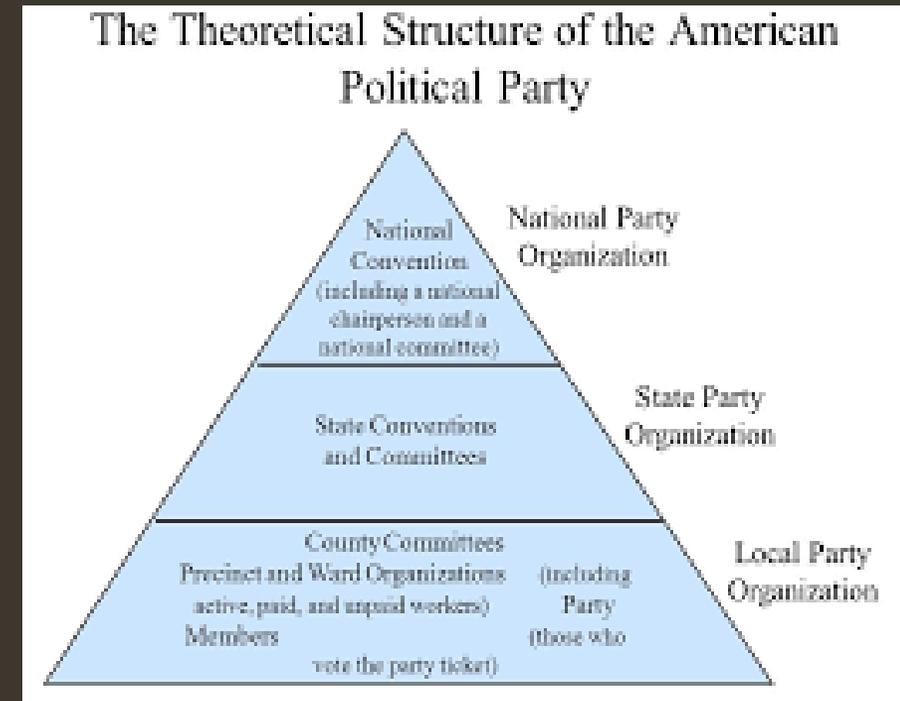
Political parties link the people of the United States to their government and its policies.

WHAT IS A POLITICAL PARTY?

THREE COMPONENTS OF PARTIES

3 Party Organizations. Parties are decentralized along federal lines.

- National level
 - National Convention. Highest authority
 - National Committee. When convention not in session.
 - National Chairperson.
 - Congressional Campaign Committees (for House seats).
 - Senate Campaign Committees.
- State Committee
- Local Committees: city, ward, precinct levels
- National Creates platforms that define their ideas & goals.
- Neither DNC or RNC can “punish” state/local committees if they stray from the party line – again, parties are decentralized.



5 Major Functions of Parties

1 Nominating Candidates for public office

- ✓ THE major function (unify the electorate)
- ✓ Select candidate and present them to run under party label.
- ✓ Work to help their candidate win elections
- ✓ Best tool for finding candidates and gathering support
- ✓ Sets political parties apart from other groups in politics
- **Nominate candidates**
 - Previously: caucuses >> nominating conventions
 - Now: primary elections
 - With advent of primaries, nominating function now seriously lessened.



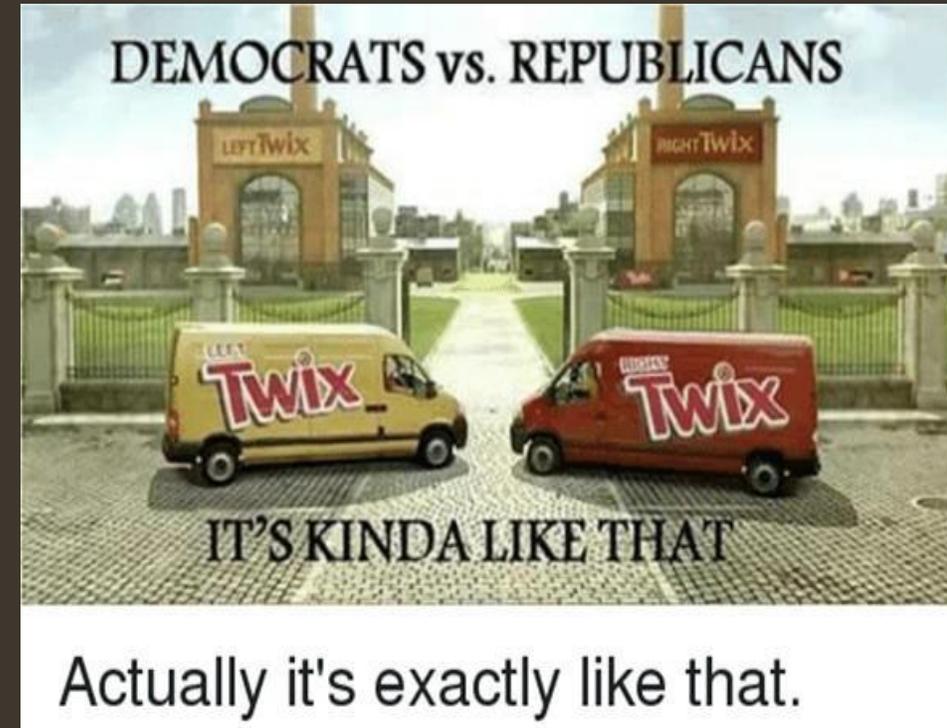
5 Major Functions:

2 Informing and Activating Supporters

Activate interest and participation in public affairs

Primarily by:

- ✓ Campaigning for their candidates
- ✓ taking stands on issues
- ✓ Criticizing the candidates/positions of their opponents
- ✓ Advertising
- Simplify decisions for voters: provide “shorthand” through which busy and uninterested voters can base a voting decision, use of “party lens” by voters.



5 Major Functions:

3 Act as a Bonding Agent

- ✓ Ensures the good performance of its candidates and officeholders
- ✓ Tries to make sure they are men and women who are both qualified and of good character
- ✓ Prompts its successful candidates to perform well in office
- ✓ If they fail to do so, both party and candidate may suffer the consequences in future elections

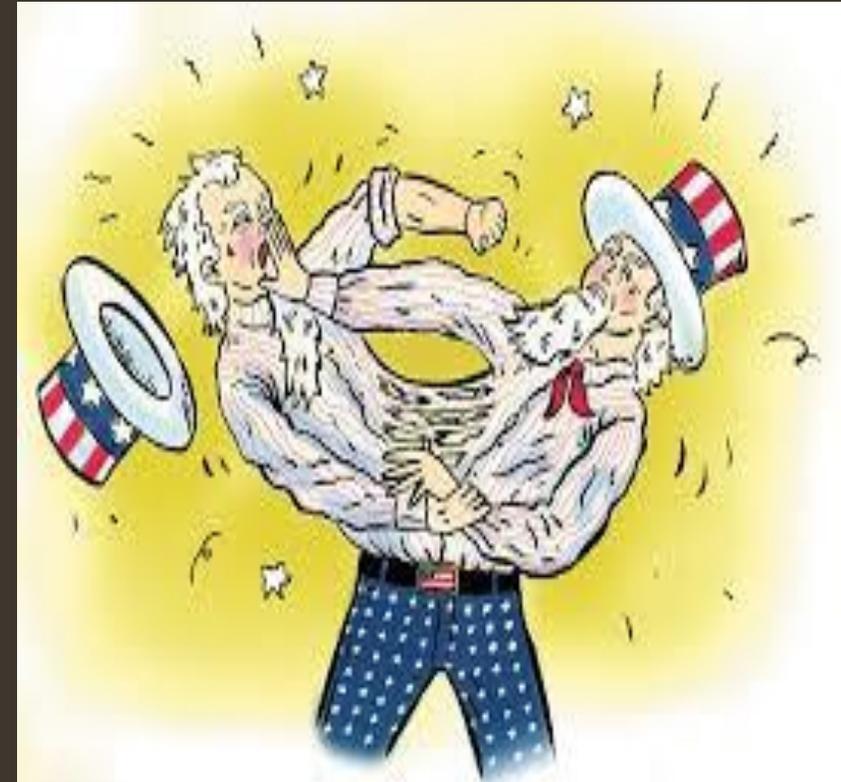


5 Major Functions:

4 Governing

- ✓ Public officeholders are regularly chosen on the basis of party
- ✓ Congress and State legislatures are organized on party lines
- ✓ **Partisanship** – government action based on firm allegiance to a political party
- ✓ Legislative and Executive branches must cooperate in order to accomplish anything:

Political Parties provide the channel for these branches to work together



5 Major Functions:

5 Watchdog

- ✓ The party NOT in power closely watches the actions of the **party in power***
 - * Party that controls the executive branch of government; i.e., the Presidency at the national level, or the governorship at the State level
- ✓ Party out of power tries to convince the voters that they should be the ones making the decisions
- ✓ Often makes those in power more responsive to the wishes and concerns of the people



RISE OF POLITICAL PARTIES

OUR FIRST PARTIES

- Dangers of factions mentioned by Madison in *Federalist #10* and Washington's warning about the "baneful effects of the spirit of party."
- Parties became necessary to get things done, e.g., Hamilton's financial plan and support for Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase.
- Necessity of an institution that unifies government in order to overcome the systems of separation of powers and checks and balances that divide government.



RISE OF POLITICAL PARTIES

Historical development: the Six Party Systems in American history:

- **1796-1820: 1st party system**
 - Federalists v. Jeffersonian Democratic-Republicans
- **1824-1856: 2nd party system**
 - Jacksonian Democrats v. Whigs
- **1860-1892: 3rd party system**
 - Republican dominance as the party against slavery and the party that put the Union back together.
- **1896-1928: 4th party system**
 - Second period of Republican dominance with its coalition of big business and the working classes against the Democratic rural interests.
- **1932-1964: 5th party system**
 - Democratic dominance begun under FDR and the New Deal. FDR's grand coalition included urban dwellers, labor unions, Catholics, Jews, the poor, Southerners, Blacks, farmers.

RISE OF POLITICAL PARTIES

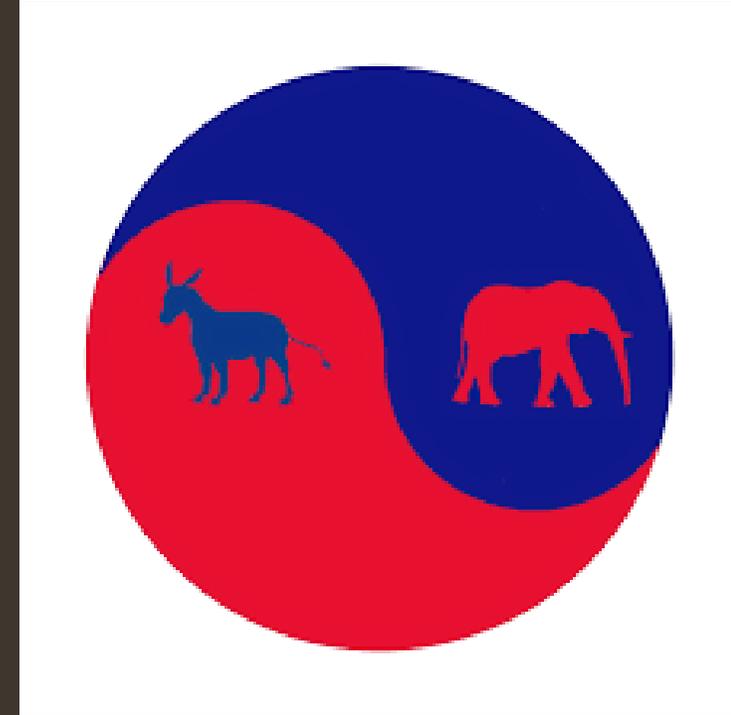
Historical development: the Six Party Systems in American history.

Realignment occurs roughly every 36 years or so.

- **1968-present: 6th party system**
 - **Era of Divided Government and Dealignment**
 - **Much split ticket voting**
 - **Presidents of one party (typically Republican) with Congresses of the opposite party (typically Democratic).**
 - **An era of party dealignment, as voters are moving away from both parties and are increasingly independent.**
 - **Nixon (“Southern strategy”) and Reagan built a coalition of disenchanting white suburban middle class, Southern white Protestants, big business**
 - **Clinton won twice in part because of his resurrection of FDR’s grand coalition, especially Southern middle class moderates (“Reagan Democrats”). Women’s votes were also decisive.**
 - **Election of 2000 gave us a Republican president who won only a minority of popular votes, a 50-50 Senate (which became a 50-49-1 Democratic Senate after Jeffords defection), and a House w/a narrow Republican majority**

DIVIDED GOVERNMENT

- Since 1953, we have had divided government twice as often as we have had one party in control of both legislative and executive branches
- Republican President and a Democratic Congress (control of even one house) or Democratic President & Republican Congress (control of even one house)
- Relative party strengths
 - National Government 2013-2015
 - President: Democrat
 - House: 246 Republicans, 188 Democrats, 1 vacancy (114th Congress)
 - Senate: 54 Republicans, 44 Democrats, 2 Independents (114th Congress)



REALIGNMENT AND CRITICAL ELECTIONS



Mechanisms of Political Change

- *Realignment*
 - A process in which a substantial group of voters switches party allegiance, producing long-term change in the political landscape
 - Ex. Texas' shift from Dems. to Reps. (1950s)
- *Dealignment*
 - A decline in party loyalties that reduces long-term party commitment
 - Absence of strong partisan attachments make it easy for parties to decline and/or split
 - Ex. Increasing independent voters today

REALIGNMENT AND CRITICAL ELECTIONS

- A "critical" election usually serves as the basis for realignment.
- Characteristics
 - Intense electoral involvement by the voters
 - Disruptions of traditional voting patterns
 - Changes in the relations of power within the community
 - The formation of new and durable electoral groups
- Four critical (or realigning) elections (each realignment lasts roughly 36 years)
 - 1824: Andrew Jackson and the Democrats
 - 1860: The Civil War and the rise of the Republicans
 - 1896: A Party in transition
 - 1932: Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal alignment
 - 1968: Nixon?

DEALIGNMENT

Factors that have weakened the parties and contributed to dealignment

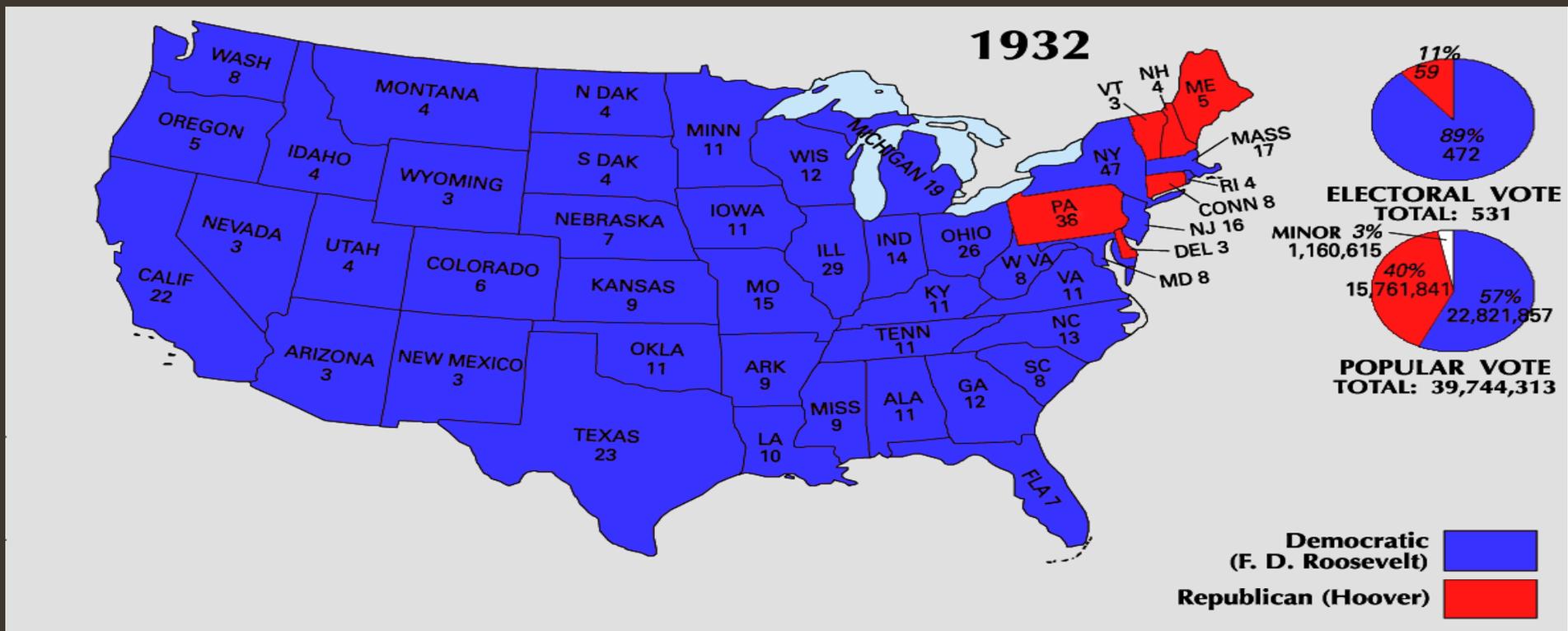


- Candidate-centered campaigns (especially after FECA)
- Public disenchantment with parties and politics during the 60's
- Growth of interest groups – have taken on some party functions
- Development of mass media – candidates rely on media rather than party organization to get message across
- Growth of political independents
- Trend to “vote the man, not the party” and rise of ticket splitting (voting for candidates from both political parties)

Realigning/Critical Election

- 1800 Election
 - Democratic-Republicans sweep the White House and Congress from the Federalists
- 1824/1828 Elections
 - Leads to split of Democratic-Republicans into Democrats and Whigs
- 1860 Election
 - Republican Party replaces the Whigs against the Democrats
- 1896 Election
 - Tactics change toward campaign finance and swing-state campaign stops
- 1932 Election
 - Franklin D. Roosevelt (D) establishes new Democratic coalition of blacks, farmers, southerners, Catholics, Jews, unions, and urbanites
 - Democrats win landslide victories and majorities in White House and Congress
- 1968 Election
 - Republican use of the Southern Strategy
- 1994 Mid-Term Elections
 - Republican Revolution

Realignment Election of 1932



MINOR (THIRD) PARTIES

TYPES

- Ideological
 - Communist Party, Libertarian Party
- Single issue
 - Free Soil opposed the spread of slavery
 - Right to Life opposes abortion
 - Know Nothings opposed Irish-Catholic immigration
- Parties centered around a strong personality
 - Teddy Roosevelt's Bull Moose Party
 - George Wallace's American Independent Party
 - Ross Perot's Reform Party



MINOR PARTIES IN THE UNITED STATES

Year	Party	Presidential Candidate	Percentage of	
			Popular Vote Received	Electoral Votes
1832	Anti-Masonic	William Wirt	8	7
1856	American (Know-Nothing)	Millard Fillmore	22	8
1860	Democratic (Secessionist)	John C. Breckinridge	18	72
1860	Constitutional Union	John Bell	13	39
1892	People's (Populist)	James B. Weaver	9	22
1912	Bull Moose	Theodore Roosevelt	27	88
1912	Socialist	Eugene V. Debs	6	0
1924	Progressive	Robert M. La Follette	17	13
1948	States' Rights (Dixiecrat)	Strom Thurmond	2	39
1948	Progressive	Henry A. Wallace	2	0
1968	American Independent	George C. Wallace	14	46
1980	National Unity	John Anderson	7	0
1992	Independent	Ross Perot	19	0
1996	Reform	Ross Perot	8	0
2000	Reform	Pat Buchanan	0	0
2000	Green	Ralph Nader	3	0
2004	Reform	Ralph Nader	0	21 0
2008	Independent	Ralph Nader	0	0

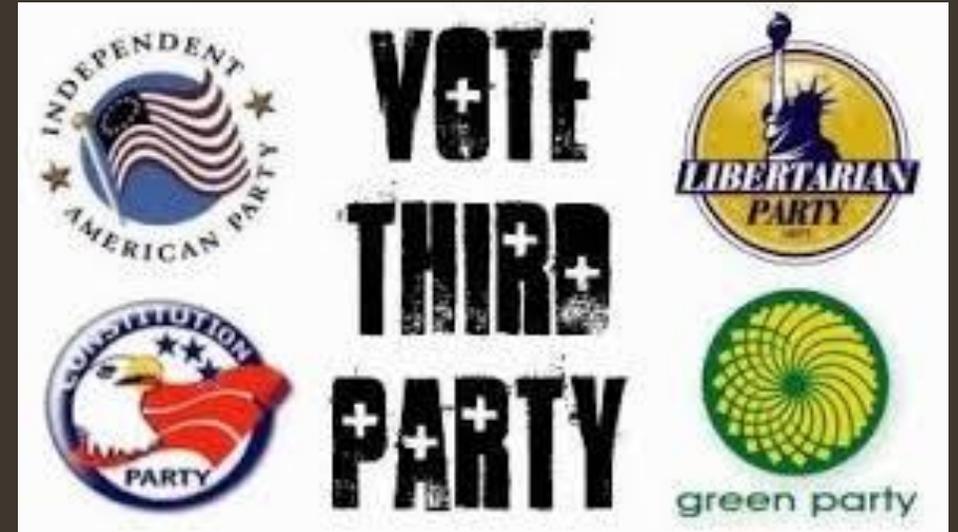
MINOR (THIRD) PARTIES

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THIRD PARTIES

- Raise issues that other parties must address, and often incorporate into their own party platforms. “Champions not of lost causes, but of causes yet to be won” (e.g., Populist Party: direct election of senators, income tax, etc.)
- Voice for the fringe elements in society
- Safety valve for discontent in society

EFFECTS OF THIRD PARTIES

- Rarely win elections
- Influence the outcome of presidential elections (e.g., 1968, 1992, 2000): “spoiler role”



MINOR (THIRD) PARTIES

OBSTACLES

- Two-party tradition (because of single-member legislative districts)
- Single-member, winner-take-all, plurality district system for *congressional* seats, as opposed to the multi-member, proportional system that is common in other countries
- Electoral College's Winner-Take-All system: Perot won 19% of the vote in 1992, but had zero electoral votes.
- Getting candidates on the ballot
 - Democrat and Republican candidates are automatically placed on state ballots
 - Minor party candidates must persuade registered voters to sign petitions in order to have their names placed on the ballot.
- Money
- Media coverage
- Exclusion from TV debates

