

# American Political Parties



# American Political Parties

**Definition** – an organization that sponsors and supports candidates for office under its label.

Are they disintegrating?  
Becoming more vital?





# American Political Parties

## Party in the Electorate

Ordinary people  
who identify with  
that particular  
party



# American Political Parties



## Party Organization

Active party workers, precinct captains, county chairpersons, etc...



# American Political Parties

## Party in Government

Candidates who  
have won in  
their respective  
parties



# American Political Parties

## Functions of Political Parties

### 1. Linkage institutions

## Linkage Institutions



**INTEREST groups**  
SHOW YOUR INTERESTS. SHOW YOUR LIFE.

**MEDIA**

*We the People*

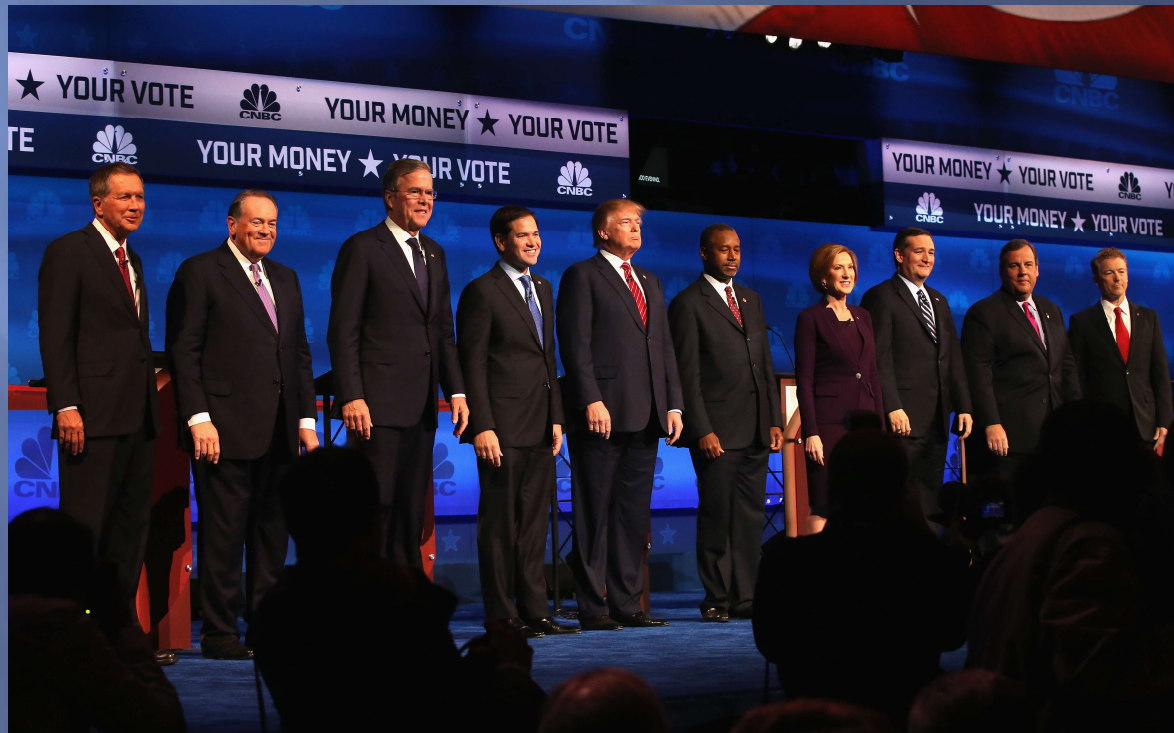
AP U.S. GOVERNMENT & POLITICS – Linkages



# American Political Parties

## Functions of Political Parties

### 2. Recruit candidates



# American Political Parties

## Functions of Political Parties

### 3. Provide a convenient label



# American Political Parties

## Functions of Political Parties

### 4. Educate the public

<b>DNC PLATFORM</b>	<b>VS</b>	<b>DNC LEADERSHIP</b> <small>(New members appointed by Tom Perez, they're also superdelegates)</small>
<b>RAISE THE FEDERAL MINIMUM WAGE TO \$15 AN HOUR</b>		<b>Daniel Halpern - Head of anti-minimum wage lobbying group</b>
<b>COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE AND BUILD A CLEAN ENERGY ECONOMY</b>		<b>Manuel Ortiz - Lobbyist for CITGO Petroleum and Citigroup</b>
<b>REFORM OUR CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM: CLOSE PRIVATE PRISONS</b>		<b>Jeff Berman - Lobbyist for private prisons and Keystone XL</b>
<b>REIN IN WALL STREET AND FIX OUR FINANCIAL SYSTEM</b>		<b>Minyon Moore, Maria Cardona - Lobbyists for predatory lender Countrywide Financial</b>
<b>PROTECT OUR PUBLIC LANDS AND WATERS</b>		<b>Frank Leone - Partner at firm that defends biggest polluters (Monsanto)</b>

# American Political Parties

## Functions of Political Parties

### 5. Resolving conflicts

**Jokes about  
Socialism aren't funny**

**Unless  
everybody gets them**

imgflip.com



# American Political Parties

## Basic Characteristics of American Political Parties

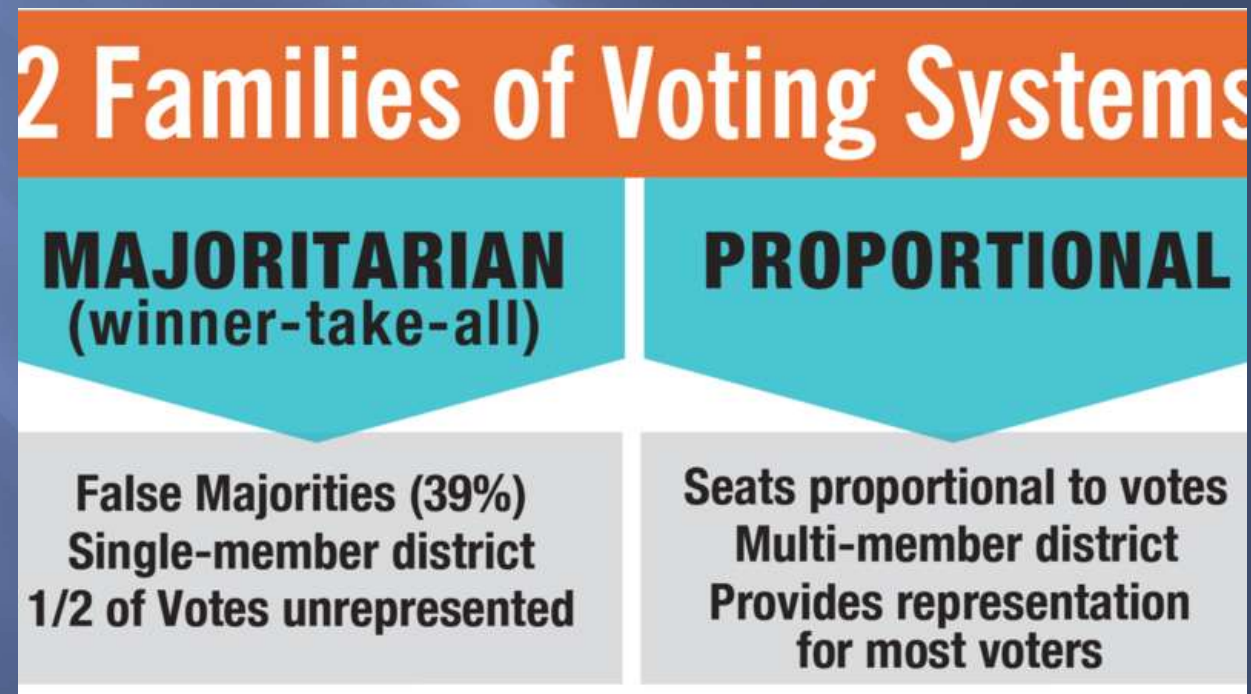
### 1. Two-party system!



# American Political Parties

## Basic Characteristics of American Political Parties

2. Single-member districts – plurality vote



# American Political Parties

## Basic Characteristics of American Political Parties

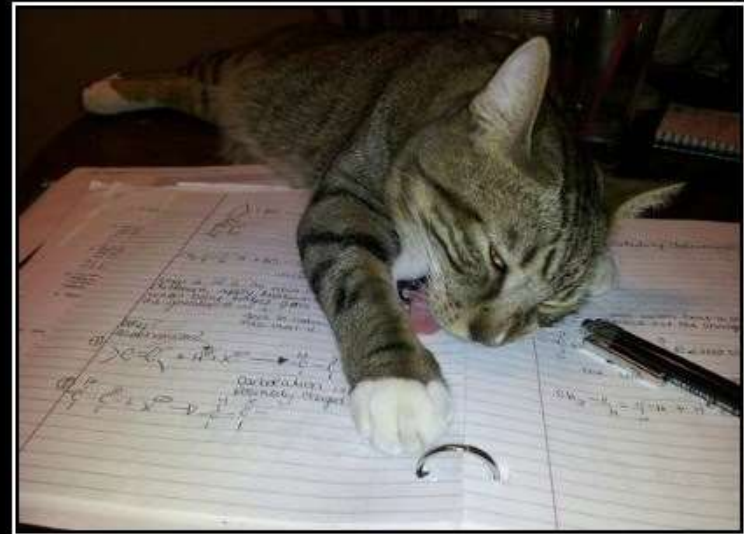
3. Pragmatically oriented – fighting for the middle



# American Political Parties

## Basic Characteristics of American Political Parties

4. Not structurally centralized  
(defectors)



MY POLITICAL PARTY:  
THE PROCRASTINATION  
PARTY

Due tomorrow? Do tomorrow.

# History of American Parties – 3 Eras



# American Political Parties

Federalists vs. the Democratic-Republicans

(1790s-1820s)

Democrats vs. Whigs

(1820s-1850s)

Democrats vs. Republicans

(1850s-1890s)

(1896-1932)

(1932-present)

# American Political Parties

**Critical Elections** – Elections which drastically alter the balance of power in American politics.

2 main types:

## Critical Elections

### The Election of 1932

F. Roosevelt and the Democrats win in a landslide

The country repudiates  
Republican economic  
principles

Democrats hold the presidency  
for 20 years



# American Political Parties

1. **Converting** – majority party stays dominant, but the parties' conditions change.

CRITICAL  
ELECTIONS  
AND THE  
MAINSPRINGS  
OF AMERICAN  
POLITICS

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
*Walter Dean Burnham*

# American Political Parties

2. **Realigning** – majority party sinks to minority status and the underlying voter conditions change.

## 5 Realigning Elections

Year	Victor	Reason
1800	Jefferson	"Finished off" the Federalist Party. Power moves from industrial North to agricultural South.
1828	Jackson	More or less modern two-party system—liberal and conservative— begins. Twenty years of Jacksonian democracy ensue.
1860	Lincoln	Republican party drives out old Whigs. Southern secessionists begin moves leading to Civil War.
1896	McKinley	Industrialization leads to a shift to increasingly urban-based political power. Business interests begin to dominate politics.
1932	Roosevelt	Great Depression leads to a Democratic majority that lasts until 1956.

# American Political Parties

Conditions  
Leading to  
Critical  
Elections:

1. New Issues



# American Political Parties

## 2. Incompetent Party Leadership



# American Political Parties

## 3. External Factors

- a. Public opinion polling
- b. Proliferation of information



**American Political Parties**

**Political Parties  
and the 4  
Theories**

# American Political Parties

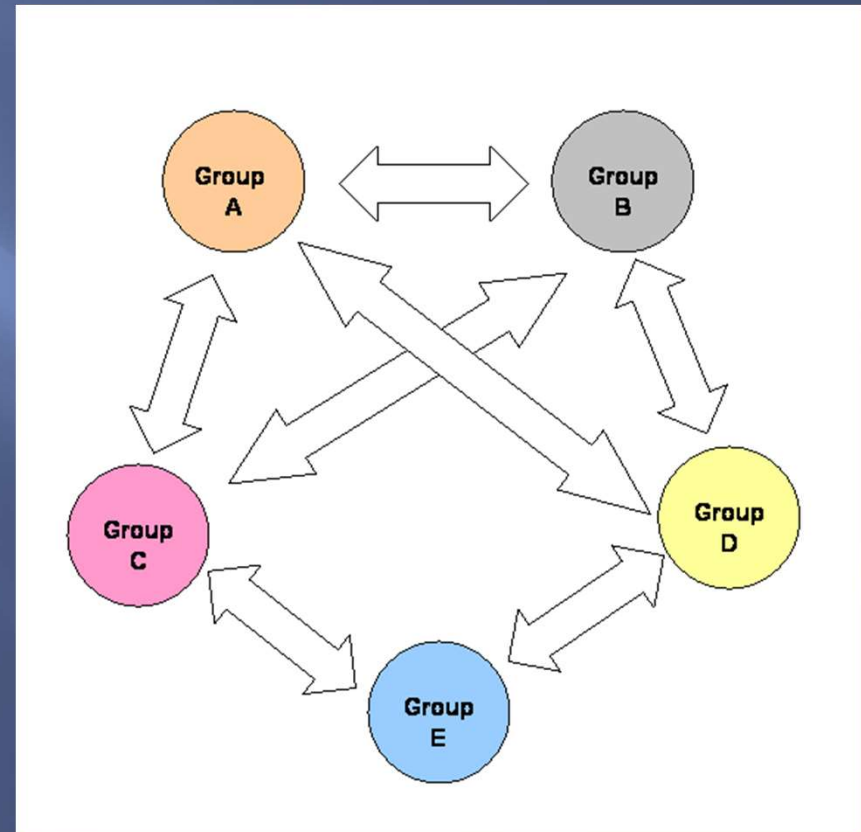
## 1. Democratic theorists

emphasize the linkage function of parties and note how party helps organize alternatives for voters to facilitate their choice on election day.



# American Political Parties

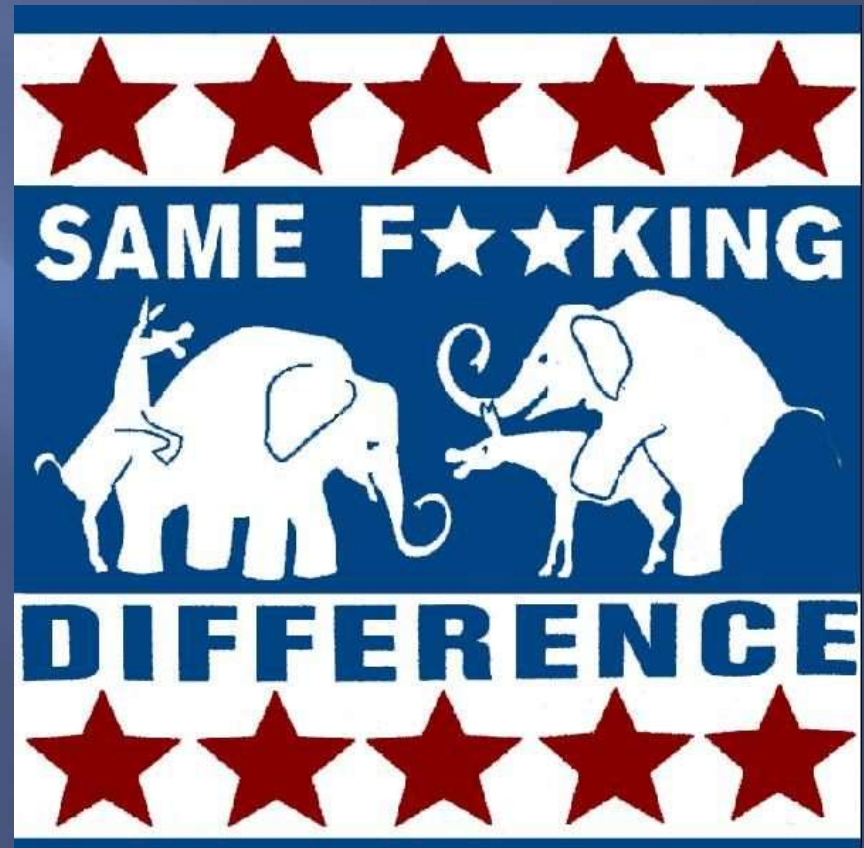
**2. Pluralists** contend that each party is composed of a coalition of interests. Much bargaining and negotiation take place to produce party positions that give each of the various constituent groups something of value.



# American Political Parties

## 3. Elite theorists

counter that there is little difference between the parties and that both parties are firmly dedicated to corporate capitalist interests for their survival. Voters get little meaningful choice.



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