

## AP GOVERNMENT EXAM 2 STUDY RESOURCES

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### POLITICAL ASSOCIATION:

- Political Parties: The foundation upon which candidates run for office, and often times sets the precedent for their stances on issues.
  - Commonly referred to as the **Platform**, a party will establish its acting principles so that voters know how that candidate/party aligns.
- While there are two main parties, the Democratic & Republican parties, **Third Parties** do exist as well. However, Third Parties struggle to gain traction due to insufficient funding and exposure.
  - The **Democratic** Party, as it is today, truly came into effect with President FDR and the New Deal Era. This was a period of American hardship and overcoming following the Great Depression and World Wars.
    - The Democratic Platform established in 1932, as it continues to be, represents welfare, supporting the American populous, and liberal ideologies.
    - This is accomplished, traditionally, through higher tax rates to support lower-income communities. President Biden has continued this through programs such as the “Green New Deal” EV initiatives and Student Loan Forgiveness program.
  - The **Republican** Party, as it is today, runs on the platform of lower taxes, lower government involvement, and upholding Conservative values.
    - Republicans and Conservatives are often focused on sticking to the writings of the **Constitution**; dividing powers between States and Federal government to ensure the Feds cannot grow too big. (Marble Cake Federalism, anyone?)
    - Typically associated with “far-right” extremists, the public notion of the Republican party has been tainted by politicians such as former President Donald Trump. While not withstanding of the entire Republican party, it has caused voters to reconsider their alignment.
  - **Third Parties** may be where many voters in America consider themselves to be. Moderates, or “politically centered” individuals who do not align with either of the major parties, make up the majority of Third-Party voters.
    - Third Parties often run on their own Platform aligned with their personal interests, however many independent politicians run with centrist ideas.
    - The **Libertarians** are easily the largest minor-party, who run on a middle-ground between Republicans and Democrats. They intend on keeping America as the Framers intended it to be.
    - Third Parties, while rarely having the opportunity to win elections, do have influence in the Electoral College. Presidential candidates such as

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. have the ability to steal votes away from major candidates, making it harder for those candidates in **battleground states**.

- Voters tend to align themselves with these parties, creating **Party Loyalty**, even when they don't necessarily agree with the candidate running.
  - There are points, known as **critical elections**, where party **realignment** and **dealignment** may occur:
    - When the country shifts political values on a mass scale, such as FDR's election in 1932, this is known as a critical election and is typically caused by larger events or previous governmental failure. President Obama's election in 2008 may have been considered a critical election, gathering mass support for the Democrats after the Bush administration and 9/11.
    - When these shifts occur, they are known as **re/de-alignments**. Voters, on a mass scale, adjust their loyalty based on current issues, and realign from their previous political views.
- While party loyalty is still very important and influential in modern politics, in recent years a rise in **candidate-centered** campaigns has occurred.
  - Ever since President JFK and the rise of TV broadcasts, there has been a change in how politicians campaign. JFK v. Nixon was the first debate **broadcast on TV**.
  - Politicians now focus on running as themselves, rather than running as a party, known as candidate-centered campaigning.
    - This is most significant with third party candidates, such as RFK Jr. running as an independent Presidential nominee.
- With changes in political campaigns, the way Americans vote is also changing. Voters tend to base their voting principles off of the issues which **matter to them**.
  - **Retrospective voting**, the act of voting based off the previous President's term and political efficacy, is most common when the incumbent is running again.
    - In the 2024 election, voters will likely be concerned with how Joe Biden has handled America's economy, foreign relations, and sustainability. This is retrospective, as it reflects previous leadership.
  - The opposite of that is **prospective voting**, wherein voters make their decisions based on future promises of a candidate.
    - In the 2016 election, former President Trump promised American prosperity, stronger border control, and more. While he may not have met all his goals while in office, he was elected based off his **promises**.
  - **Rational-Choice** voting, the final and most personal voting type is where voters go to the polls with the goal in mind to benefit themselves. It is less a matter of America's benefits and focuses only on **self-interests**.
  - **Split Ticket** voting is similar to rational choice voting, where the voter will vote based on candidates they support, **not political affiliation**.
  - **Straight Ticket** voting happens when a voter will vote solely on political affiliation, with every vote going to one party or another. Some states have check boxes on their ballots to make this easier for voters.

- American voters are often influenced by external beliefs and pressures, known as **political socialization**.
  - Families are often influential in the development of political ideology. People often gravitate towards liberalism in their youth, however, align to their parents later in life. Other pressures such as friends and locations affect political views.
- When voting, there are various types of elections before the big day in November:
  - **Open Primaries** involve voting for a party's Presidential nominee **without** having to declare a political bias. (Democrat vs. Republican)
  - **Closed Primaries** are the same, however are restricted to only registered party supporters. For example, some 2024 Republican Primaries may be restricted to only Republican voters so that others may not sway the vote. These do not declare a President, but Primaries are useful to determine the leading candidate per party.
  - **Caucuses** come before any other election but serve a similar purpose to the primaries. They are similar to **town hall meetings**, where supporters per candidate attempt to win support and get their candidate to lead the party. They are more localized than Primary elections. The first 2024 Republican Caucus has taken place in **Iowa** (who always hosts the first caucus), where Donald Trump won every district in the state.
- When we finally make it to Election Day, America does not choose a President based off of a popular vote. Rather, we have the **Electoral College**.
  - The Electoral College was established by our founding fathers in **Article II** of the Constitution, as a way for smaller/less populated states to still have a voice.
  - The E.C. regulates that each state is delegated a certain number of **votes**. These votes are distributed by **electors**, who after the public vote, will declare their support for one candidate or another.
    - Some states require that electors give all of their votes to the candidate of popular choice. This is known as a “**winner-takes-all**” system.
    - In other states, electors are not required to abide by the public vote, but often will.
  - Any Presidential candidate needs to reach **270** E.C. votes to win the election, (if 270 are not reached, the decision goes to the House) so they will often focus on states worth more votes in their campaigning.
    - Some states are politically aligned in a majority and will **always** vote for that party. (Texas is nearly always a Republican-supporting state, for example)
    - Other states switch between parties, known as **battleground or swing** states, and will often see higher political campaigning. This is another example of socialization and how it affects our elections.
  - And of course, Midterm elections occur every **2 years**, while Presidential elections are hosted every **4 years**.

- But it hasn't always been this way. It has, but not for everyone.
  - Following the Civil War, many Southern states still tried to deny P.O.C. their rights. Notably, workarounds for **voting rights** following the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment which granted said rights to every man in America.
  - Policies such as the following were used to **keep** the voting population white:
    - Literacy tests.
    - Poll taxes.
    - “States’ Rights” local constitutions and laws.
    - Physical intimidation.
    - The “**Grandfather Clause**” which excluded any prior voter from needing to obey the previous rules. Any man who had voted freely in 1866/1867, as well as their lineage, could continue with those provisions. However, many Black men were still enslaved at this point, and could not utilize this act. Which was the goal.
  - In 1915 the U.S. Supreme Court declared these provisions **unconstitutional** against the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment of 1870.
  - Also, around this time, in 1919, the **19<sup>th</sup> Amendment** was signed into law, granting white women the right to vote.
  - It wasn't until 1965 when President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the **Voting Rights Act** as part of the Civil Rights movement, which would outlaw literacy tests for voters, amongst other things.
    - While **Poll Taxes** had been deemed unconstitutional by the 24<sup>th</sup> Amendment the prior year, the VRA would substantially increase Black voter turnout. All citizens in America were now eligible to vote.
  - Following mass unrest regarding the Vietnam War, the 26<sup>th</sup> Amendment was passed in 1971, which allowed everyone **over the age of 18 to vote**.
- What does this all mean for elections and voter turnout in America?
  - Following passage of the 24<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> Amendments, and the VRA, America saw a **much higher voter turnout** in previously unheard demographics.
    - Voters of Color began turning up to vote in much higher droves than ever before, due to such a select number of the population being eligible to vote then.
    - The Civil Rights movement saw great strides as a result of the VRA and following acts passed by that leadership.
    - Younger voters began turning up to express their grievances, particularly with the Vietnam War. If you're old enough to die in battle, you should be old enough to vote.

- Current laws exist in America to ensure fair elections, but none which are so blatantly discriminative as prior laws.
  - **Photo ID** laws are now used in 36 states to ensure that ballots belong to their voters. Voters must bring some form of photo ID, whether a Driver's License, Passport, etc. This also ensures that voters only **vote** once. Some argue that Photo ID laws are, however, discriminative towards immigrants without ID.

#### MEDIA IN AMERICA:

- Voting in America, as mentioned previously, has changed over time. Notably, the first Presidential debates broadcast on television featuring JFK and Nixon.
  - The Mainstream Media (MSM) was, for a period, unbiased and dedicated to delivering the news as it was. However, in modern America, the MSM is designed to promote **political agendas**.
  - Various interest groups install their goals and motives into MSM broadcasting to rally their bases and **influence** choices/elections which affect them.
- In the last decade, roughly, **social media** has played a large role in voters and political socialization:
  - Presidential candidates such as Ron DeSantis and Robert Kennedy Jr. utilize Twitter/X to promote their agendas, share campaign updates, and gain support.
  - Social Media “influencers” and advertisers will also often promote candidates or bills which align with their goals.
- Voters, when it comes to election time, are often more willing to vote in Presidential elections than the Midterm elections. Turnout, historically, is always higher for **Presidential** elections.
- During campaign season, many media, interest groups, and parties host **polls** for voters.
  - **Benchmark Polls** are used by candidates to assess their standings before the election, often to gain support before their campaign announcement.
  - **Brushfire Polls** are used during campaign season, for candidates to determine their progress, standings, and political efficacy.
  - **Tracking Polls** are used to determine averages for reasons similar to the other polls.
- When we make it to Election Day, voters may be asked to participate in other polls about their **voting choices**:
  - **Entrance Polls** are taken before a voter enters the voting booth, to learn their stances ahead of them signing the ballot.
  - **Exit Polls** are taken after a voter leaves the voting booth, again to learn their stances, how they voted, and why.
    - All of these polls are subject to volatility and inaccurate results. A good poll will be **conducted scientifically**, where the questions are asked in an unbiased manner, to a randomly selected crowd, to be as accurate as possible.
- [Horse race journalism is the racing pace of media attempting to out-promote opponents.]

## CAMPAIGN FINANCING & INTEREST GROUPS:

- None of the intensive Presidential campaigns that occur could do so without hefty **donations** from sponsors, PACs, and individuals.
  - PACs – **Political Action Committees**. These organizations are responsible for supporting political parties & candidates. They are **tax-exempt** groups (527s) who are allowed to donate unlimited financial quantities to boost parties, legislation, and more.
  - SPACs – **Super Political Action Committees**. These groups serve the same purpose as normal PACs, except for the fact that they are much larger. SPACs contribute significantly more amounts of money and support than PACs.
- There are two types of money which are traditionally donated by these organizations:
  - Some cash may be donated to parties for general purposes, not directly tied to a particular federal candidate or bill. This is known as **soft money** and is not as limited by the BCRA.
  - Other cash is donated to parties solely to support a candidate, bill, or other specific party element. This is known as **hard money** and is heavily restricted for individuals.
    - (PACs/SPACs may donate either without FEC limitation.)
- These groups would not be able to exist and influence politics as they do, without the crucial case of *Citizens United v. FEC*. (2010) and the history before it.
  - In 1974, following President Nixon's Watergate scandal, the Federal Election Commission (FEC) passed the FECA which placed **limits** on political donations.
    - Following this, the FEC then changed their mind to rule that there were **no limits** on donations, provided it was **soft money**.
  - The Bipartisan Campaign Reforms Act, (BCRA) (2002), was passed in the same vein as the FECA (1974). Its goal was to **limit** soft money donations, as well as political candidate advertisements in time near elections.
  - In **Citizens United v. FEC**, an independent film group raised question to the FEC over their prohibition of producing a film regarding Hillary Clinton's Presidential campaign.
    - This case was regarding the provisions made in the BCRA eight years prior, arguing that the restriction of their film was in violation of their **First Amendment** rights.
    - The Court ruled in favor of *Citizens United*, determining that there could not be limitations on political support, per the First Amendment. This lifted restrictions on political advertising, as well as **political spending**.
  - Following *Citizens United v. FEC*., the amount of donations from SPACs **increased dramatically**. This has given rise to incredibly expensive political campaigns; in the 2020 election, an estimated \$1.2B was cumulatively spent on candidate campaigning.
- That said, **individuals are still limited** to what amounts they may donate to any political candidate, per FEC guidelines.

- **Interest groups and corporations** also hold significant influence in modern politics.
  - Groups in America such as the National Rifle Association (NRA), National Education Association (NEA), and more work hard to **lobby Congress** and politicians.
    - These groups represent mass interests, similar to Unions, in political legislation and pressure.
    - Many have raised questions over the **integrity** of Congressmen and politicians who are influenced by these interest groups. If our Representatives were required to wear their sponsors on their shirts, I have heard, they would look similar to an F1 driver.
  - Corporations and other entities also pressure legislation, whether they legally should or not, in effort to promote their own benefits. They are **not allowed to**, per the FEC, donate contributions to political candidates.

#### AMENDMENTS & COURT CASES:

- **First Amendment** – guarantees protection for speech, political contributions, protest, assembly, religion, and the press.
  - **Free Speech** is perhaps the most important and most well-known portion of the First Amendment.
    - *Schenk v. United States (1919)* found Charles Schenck promoting anti-war material during WWI, arguing against the Espionage Act and that the war violated the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment. However, the Espionage Act was ruled a reasonable extension of Congress’ power, and Schenck’s speech created a “**clear and present danger**”. This would set precedent to what is allowed under Free Speech.
  - **Free Exercise & Establishment Clauses** were crucial to the First Amendment, which allowed the free practice of religion and prohibition of a nationally-mandate following.
    - *Wisconsin v. Yoder (1972)* ruled that the Free Exercise clause prohibited the state of Wisconsin from inhibiting the Amish faith. This applies to all religions; government may not infringe on the right to **peacefully practice any religion**.
    - *Engle v. Vitale (1962)* ruled that the Establishment Clause **prohibited any state-sponsored prayer or religious practice**. In this case, a New York school hosted a voluntary prayer at the start of school, which was shut down due to it being a technically state-sponsored event.
  - **Freedom of the Press** has also been tested again and again in the court system yet remains important to the education of the public.
    - *New York Times, Co. v. United States (1971)* watched President Nixon attempt to silence the media from publishing papers which he believed **threatened national security**. This was ruled unconstitutional, and the papers were permitted to print their stories regarding the Vietnam War.

- **Freedom to Assemble** is crucial to the people's right to protest and challenge the government, permitted they are doing so peaceably.
  - *Tinker v. Des Moines (1969)* challenged the people's right to protest the Vietnam War. A group of students organized to wear black armbands in protest but were silenced by Des Moines' school authority. This was ruled unconstitutional, as the **government cannot stop peaceful protest**.
- **Fourth Amendment** – protections from search and seizure by the government without a warrant.
- **Eighth Amendment** – protections against **cruel and unusual** punishment, excessive bail, or fines.
  - This has been used as precedent in cases for and against the **death penalty**, however the Supreme Court has ruled that it **does not prohibit such**, only restricts how it may be carried out.
- **Right to Privacy** – not explicitly stated by any amendment specifically, however inferred from the first, third, fourth, fifth, and ninth amendments. This guarantees **protection from government** and outside interference in Americans' lives.
- **Fourteenth Amendment** – guarantees equal protection rights, and legal process for all citizens in the country.
  - *Brown v. Board of Education (1954)* challenged a white school's restrictions on racial integration and the “**separate but equal**” rules by addressing the **equal protection clause** of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment. The Court ruled in favor of Brown that such policies are against the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment.
  - *Shaw v. Reno (1993)* challenged a North Carolina congressional apportionment by insisting that it was **racial gerrymandering** – which is strictly prohibited by the 14<sup>th</sup>. Court ruled in favor of Shaw, that the district was odd enough that it must have been created with racial intentions in mind.

[All information for this study program has been addressed from reputable, reliable sources, with intention of academic success.]