

# POLITICAL PARTIES

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## OVERVIEW OF PARTIES

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- An organization that attempts to influence government by electing its members to office

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- Washington’s infamous farewell address warns against the evils of party
- *However*, it is difficult to see how government could function without parties



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- Parties allow voters to hold officials accountable
- Parties allow lasting coalitions to form to enable governing

- Democrats and Republicans

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  - Occasional splinters (e.g. the Progressives) generally return or move to the other party
- Choice between two parties combined with majority rule means that you're making a choice for government

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- Harder to know these coalitions beforehand, and harder to assign blame after

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- Power-sharing and competition among politicians

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  - Like the AFL-CIO with the Democrats or the Chamber of Commerce with the Republicans

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- In return they get influence over public policy

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  - Usually takes the form of minor players defying party leadership

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- Parties provide a relatively clear path for career advancement

## FUNCTIONS OF PARTY

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- Candidates need to be well-qualified and charismatic
- And able to raise lots of money

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- Nomination by **convention** or **primary election**

## GETTING OUT THE VOTE (GOTV)

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  - It is costly to vote and policy is *non-excludable*



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- Parties help voters hold government accountable

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- Democrats today generally want the government to regulate the economy (especially wrt pollution, poverty, and unemployment), protect and expand civil rights (esp for minorities)



## PARTIES IN GOVERNMENT

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- We've already covered this, but the **majority party** runs each branch of Congress - especially the House

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- The committee system is organized by the parties

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- Other party members are appointed to head the various executive agencies

## PARTIES IN THE ELECTORATE

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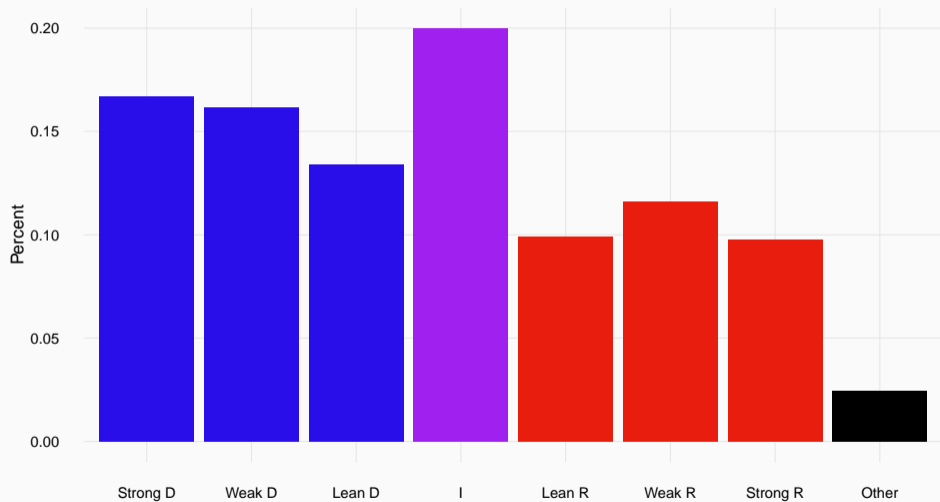
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- **Party activists** are the partisans who contribute time, energy, or effort to help support their party

## PARTY IDENTIFICATION (2014 GSS)



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- Parties can appeal to unorganized groups as well through policy promises

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- Asian Americans are divided

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- In 2012, Obama won 55 percent of women's votes and 45 percent of men's

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- Born-again and fundamentalist Christians tend to be Republican

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- Middle-income Americans are about evenly split

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- The Midwest is a battleground

## PARTIES AS INSTITUTIONS

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- The national conventions

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  - Primarily deal with the presidential campaign

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  - These committees help raise funds, developing strategies, recruiting candidates, training newly-elected officials, etc

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  - Then county committees, state senate district committees, judicial district committees, citywide party committees, wards, precincts, etc

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- This is fairly new - since the early 90s (ish)



## PARTY SYSTEMS

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- The US has had six party systems in its history

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- Jackson and supporters greatly expanded the electorate
- Sets the stage for mass-based political parties (conventions, etc)

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- Not many clear policies
- Ran candidates on personality and favorability
- Breaks up under strain of different interests

- 1860 - 1896



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  - Tammany Hall, etc

- 1896 - 1932

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- During this time, Republicans dominated the presidency (7 of 9) and Congress (control of both houses in 15 of 18 contests)

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- The federal government *greatly* expanded in size and scope

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- In the 1960s, the Great Society program, the Vietnam War, and advances in civil rights broke up the New Deal coalition



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- Today's parties are relatively ideologically homogeneous

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- Single-member plurality districts also make it very difficult for minor parties to win anything