

CAMPAIGNS AND ELECTIONS

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INTRODUCTION

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- Thousands of other offices (mayors, councilors, commissioners, etc)
- There are somewhere around 90,000 governments in the US, most of which are elected

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- Most Americans can vote three or four times a year

- Incomplete information

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- Knowing what politicians will do once elected

ELECTIONS AS INSTITUTIONS

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- These laws determine everything from the timing to who can vote, how votes are counted, what it takes to win, etc

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 - Local: ~10-20%

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- Should the US have mandatory voting?

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 - Prison and felons (and sometimes ex-felons) (~3 million)

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 - Being challenged in the courts

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 - Not all votes in the US are secret - for example, town halls and (some) caucuses

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- Produces greater fragmentation in control over government

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 - In 1967, Congress mandates single-member districts

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- Eventually, civil rights groups and the courts extend this to most other elections (city councils, school districts, etc)

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- Senators originally elected by state legislatures

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 - 17th amendment changes this

- Electoral college

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- Number of votes is number of Senators plus number of representatives

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- Majority tendency of districts makes it hard for minorities to get representation

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- Gerrymandering can dilute the influence of a group too - **cracking**

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- Main alternative to plurality rule is **proportional representation**

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- Voters don't want to waste theirs

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Recall removing a public official by vote

- Texas only allows legislatively referred proposed constitutional amendments

HOW VOTERS DECIDE

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- Age and education play a large role in determining whether someone will vote or not
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- 71% of those above 65 voted

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- 67% of homeowners voted, only 49% of renters

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- Strongest single predictor is partisanship

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- But what is partisan identification?

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- Those 18–25 in 1984 ID with the Republicans (Reagan)
- Those 18–25 in 2008 ID with the Democrats (Obama)

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- Today's parties are much more ideologically coherent than those in the 70s and 80s

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- Each president lets us update our beliefs about that

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- Voters vote for candidates based on the issues too
- **Prospective voting**: making choices that focus on future behavior
- **Retrospective voting**: making choices that focus on past performance

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- **Median voter theorem** pushes candidates towards the middle of the spectrum

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- Personality also matters - people tend to like candidates who appear “honest,” or “competent”

CAMPAIGNS

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- Door-to-door canvassing and direct mail

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 - This cycle has been cheaper - as of October 19, Clinton had spent \$897.7 million (with \$171.6 M on hand) and Trump had spent \$429.5 M (with \$83.9 M on hand)

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- Most other democracies also limit expenditures and fundraising activities

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 - Public funding for presidential elections

- *Buckley v. Valeo*: the Supreme Court decides that money is a form of speech
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 - Candidates, groups, and parties may spend as much as they like, but the donations must come in small amounts

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 - Banned certain sorts of political attack advertisements in the last weeks of a campaign

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 - Strikes down limits on independent expenditures by corporations
 - Decides that corporations have the same right to political speech as individuals

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- Seems like it's around 5–10 percentage points in most non-presidential elections

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- While individual ads can have a large impact, their effect tends to die out relatively quickly
- Competing campaigns also tend to cancel out each others' effects