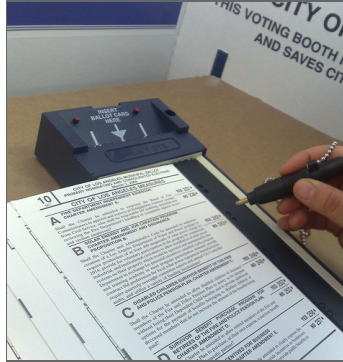


WHO VOTES?

- Voting rates are higher among those with higher **socioeconomic status** (SES):
 - Income
 - Occupational prestige
 - Education
- Other factors affecting likelihood of voting, aside from SES:
 - Age
 - Race and ethnicity



LEGAL FACTORS DEPRESSING TURNOUT

- Potential voters must *register* in advance in most states.
- National Voter Registration Act (“Motor Voter”).
- Recent **voter identification** laws may lower turnout.

OTHER FACTORS REDUCING TURNOUT

- Registration and voting is *optional*.
- Elections normally held on *workdays* in most states.
- Limited opportunities for early or *absentee* voting.
 - All voting by *mail* only in a few states.
- Decline of *social connectedness*.

MOBILIZATION AND TURNOUT

- Turnout depends on *mobilization* by parties and campaigns: **get-out-the-vote** (GOTV) efforts.
- Turnout lower in *midterm* and *off-year* elections.
- Turnout lowest in *primary elections* and *runoffs*.
- Frequent elections and lengthy ballots may lead to *voter fatigue*.



OTHER FORMS OF PARTICIPATION

Most people do not participate in politics beyond voting.

- Donating to, working on political campaigns.
- Contacting elected officials.
- Attending rallies and political meetings.
- Participating in strikes.
- Boycotting businesses or government services.
- Attending political protests.
- Political violence, including armed conflict.

WHY DO PEOPLE VOTE?

- *Paradox of voting* since chances of affecting election outcomes are small.
- *Costs* of voting appear to exceed the expected *benefits*.
- However, sense of fulfilling one's *civic duty* may be considered a benefit.



PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATIONS

- Goal of presidential candidates: earn *party nomination* by capturing a majority of the **delegates** available.
- Parties allocate delegates to states and territories using complex formulas, including party support and population.
- Minor parties tend to use *state conventions* to choose delegates to national convention.
- Some states use *precinct caucuses* to choose delegates to county, regional, and state conventions who then choose delegates for major parties. Notably, **Iowa**.

PARTY PRIMARIES

- Most states use **primary elections** to select delegates for major parties.
 - **Open primaries** allow any registered voter to participate, regardless of party affiliation.
 - **Semi-open primaries** (or **modified open primaries**) are limited to registered voters from the party and independent voters.
 - **Closed primaries** are limited to registered voters from the party *only*.

DELEGATE SELECTION RULES

- Democrats require *proportional* allocation of delegates; generally candidates must get 15% of the vote to receive any delegates.
- Republicans tend to favor *winner-takes-all* rules: whoever gets the most votes statewide wins all delegates available.
- Both parties reserve some delegate positions for party leaders and elected officials (**PLEOs**); Democrats tend to have many more of these **superdelegates**.
- Democrats require *quotas* of women, minorities, and young people among delegates; Republicans don't.

WHY SO COMPLEX?

- Discontent with Democratic Party nomination process boiled over at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago.
- Popular anti-war candidate Eugene McCarthy bypassed for vice president Hubert Humphrey, favored by party leaders.
- After election, Democrats formed the *McGovern-Fraser Commission* to reform their nomination process; changes in state laws led to more primaries for Republicans too.



CRITIQUES OF THE NOMINATION PROCESS

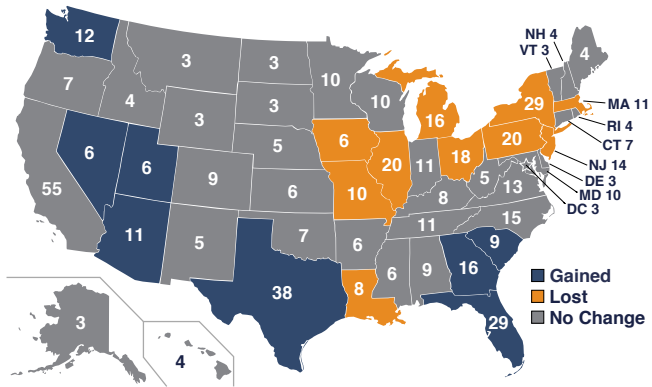
- **Front-loading** of primary calendar has stretched out the presidential nomination campaign; Iowa caucus now in early January.
- Privileged positions of Iowa and New Hampshire; neither state is very representative of Democrats' base in particular.
- Expense of campaign has led to fundraising starting years before election; the **invisible primary** contributes to the “permanent campaign.”

THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

President chosen via the **Electoral College**:

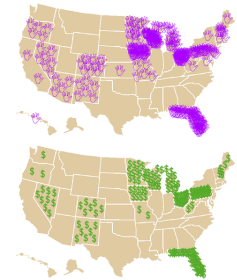
- Each state has at least three electors.
- 48 states and DC use “winner-takes-all” rule:
 - Candidate with most votes gets *all* electoral votes.
- Maine and Nebraska are different:
 - Winner in each congressional district gets one electoral vote each; statewide winner gets two more.
- If no majority (winner needs 270 of 538): president chosen by House, VP chosen by the Senate.

THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE SINCE 2012



EFFECT OF THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

- Electoral College system means candidates focus their campaigns on a few **battleground states** and ignore most of the country.
- May distort politics by causing parties to focus on interests of battleground states rather than nation as a whole.
- Candidate with most *popular* votes does not necessarily win the electoral vote.



ELECTIONS TO THE HOUSE AND SENATE

- Senators elected statewide (“at large”) since ratification of **17th Amendment**; only face reelection every six years.
- House members elected from *districts* every two years (except in small states with only one seat, where they too are elected “at large”).
- Most states use *direct primaries* to choose major party nominees; some states use caucus systems.
- Most states use *plurality elections*: candidate who receives the most votes wins the seat.

ELECTORAL REFORM?

- Directly elect the president?
 - Plurality winner (e.g. **National Popular Vote Compact**).
 - Alternatives: run-off voting; instant run-off; approval.
- Proportional Representation in Congress?

HOW VOTERS DECIDE

- Most important factor is **party identification** (or *partisanship*): one's sense of attachment to one of the two major parties.
 - Political scientists use seven-point scale.
 - “Strong” partisans particularly loyal.
 - Voters' partisanship can change over time.
 - Partisanship appears to “update” based on changing political conditions and circumstances.

MORE FACTORS AFFECTING VOTING

- **Retrospective voting**: evaluating candidates based on past performance.
 - **Economic voting** in particular.
- Relatively little **issue voting** due to information costs. More likely for *salient* or *valence issues*.
- **Candidate attributes**: “character”; temperament; appearance; personality.

WHO WINS PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATIONS?

- Building a “war chest” is important early on, before contests start: the **invisible primary**.
- Biggest factor in nomination contests appears to be **momentum**.
- Other factors matter too: party factions, media coverage and “expectations,” etc.

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION RESULTS

Four key factors identified by political scientists forecasting elections:

- Partisan breakdown of the electorate.
- Approval ratings of the incumbent party's president.
- State of the economy leading up to the election.
- Incumbency.