In a representative democracy, elections involve a lot of uncertainty. Which candidate will win? How will citizens figure out which candidates to support? How can voters be sure that they are selecting individuals who will advocate for their interests? Even the most attentive voters find it difficult to grasp all of the details about what a candidate stands for or hopes to accomplish once in office.

Enter the political party. By organizing and supporting candidates running for office, parties provide labels to those candidates—shortcuts for voters, really—that cut through the noise and signal to voters that this is a candidate who deserves their support. Once in office, those candidates work with the support of other party members to advance a set of policies.
Party leaders face another challenge: creating an attractive and consistent message that gets their candidates elected and maintains party cohesion. American political parties have often been successful in doing this, but every several decades or so, a party finds itself challenged by members within its own ranks who have felt that their voices are being ignored by party leaders.

In 2016 both major parties, the Democrats and the Republicans, found themselves confronting just such a situation. Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump—as far apart on the traditional American political spectrum as one could diagram—emerged as major forces in their respective parties. Both were outsiders and insurgents, and a lot of Americans responded to their campaigns. They also turned much conventional wisdom on its head, causing uproar within their parties, forcing experts in American politics to admit that they had gotten it wrong, and leading the established leaders in both parties scrambling to figure out how to respond.

The 2016 election cycle may very well be studied by future political scientists as one of the most critical in the nation’s history. How did this all come to pass? Could it result in a reshaping of party politics or even the destruction of one or both of America’s major political parties? How will voters respond? The 2016 election cycle provides a chance to analyze this presidential election in relation to others that have come before and also to better understand the role that parties play in American representative democracy.

Through an exploration of the presidential election of 2016 and the challenges that Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump posed to their own party establishment, you will be able to do the following:

7.1 Identify the roles that parties play in American representative democracy.

7.2 Explain how American party systems have evolved over time.

7.3 Understand the rules surrounding national elections and the function they serve.

7.4 Describe the structure, stages, and main challenges of presidential and legislative campaigns.

7.5 Describe the forms of political participation Americans engage in, including the factors that limit or facilitate engagement.

BERNIE SANDERS AND DONALD TRUMP SHAKE UP THE FIELD . . . AND CONVENTIONAL WISDOM ABOUT THE POWER OF PARTIES

American presidential elections are often filled with drama. Normally, most of the fireworks happen between the candidates vying to win office. To put it mildly, 2016 was different. There, the explosions were happening within the major parties themselves. Two of the leading candidates in the election—Vermont senator Bernie
Sanders, an independent running as a Democrat, and Republican multimillionaire Donald Trump—in different times would have been regarded as too extreme to pose a legitimate threat to party status quo. Trump’s highly unconventional and controversial campaign in particular upended many widely accepted political rules and challenged the belief that political party leaders are powerful.

In 2016 Sanders and Trump advanced far in the electoral process due to voters’ profound disgust with “politics as usual.” Both made statements or adopted policy positions that were on the fringes of party platforms or far out of touch with the mainstream. And, unlike many presidential contenders, neither of them concentrated on courting the best-known activists and leaders in their parties—the so-called party establishment or party elites, who are the most powerful insiders in party politics. In fact, their campaigns seemed to go out of their way to alienate those elites.

The emphasis on criticizing elites and the establishment, generally referred to as *populism*, has a long political history. America has witnessed several powerful populist movements, many of which tied their critique of the establishment to perceptions of racial, ethnic, or cultural superiority or to strong anti-immigrant views, a charge frequently leveled against Trump. What made Sanders and Trump more noteworthy was that their criticisms struck such a deep chord with so many voters; each kept winning state nomination contests long after many political observers were certain they would fade. To the astonishment of both Republican and Democratic loyalists, Trump would eventually go on to win the general election.

The success of the campaigns of Sanders and Trump came in part because Americans have become less attached to political parties. At the same time, the country has grown increasingly polarized by political ideology. More conservatives hold strongly conservative views than in the past and more liberals strongly liberal views. The party organizations have shouldered much of the blame for creating and fostering an environment in which the two sides seem forever locked in combat. Despite this ongoing battle, the parties haven’t become any stronger. According to journalist Jonathan Rauch, “Here is the reigning political paradox of our era: Partisanship is strong, but parties are weak.”

Both Sanders’s and Trump’s campaigns reflected this disjuncture. Sanders didn’t even belong to the Democratic Party when he announced he was running for that party’s nomination. Instead, he described himself as an “independent socialist,” strongly in favor of the idea that government and society should meet the needs of the public. Sanders’s message that the playing field was unacceptably tilted toward the top 1 percent of Americans resonated with many voters, especially young adults who felt the American Dream was out of their reach. Sanders said his campaign involved creating a...
“political revolution” that could serve “millions of Americans, working people who have given up on the political process.”

But his main Democratic opponent, Hillary Clinton, and many others in the mainstream of the Democratic Party said Sanders’s proposals were unrealistic. Party leaders were concerned his ideas were too radical and might drive away people who otherwise would support Democrats in other races. Many voters disagreed. “I really like Bernie Sanders for his consistency, authenticity and relative independence from corporate interests,” said Anton Terrell, a recent college graduate in Austin, Texas.

Like Sanders, Trump was very much an outsider in his party. Unlike Sanders and most other presidential candidates, though, he had never held elected office. That disturbed some in the GOP (“Grand Old Party” or Republican Party) as they believed those seeking the nation’s highest legislative post should have at least some prior political experience. As well, between 1987 and 2012, Trump had switched political parties seven times, registering for periods of time as a Democrat, a Republican, or as an independent until he became a Republican again in 2012. That made conservative Republicans question whether Trump would remain faithful to the party. Many Republicans also viewed his claim that he would use his business acumen to cut deals to benefit the U.S. economy as directly contradicting their philosophy of limited government; the conservative magazine *National Review* devoted an entire issue to arguing why its readers shouldn’t support Trump for that reason.

On the campaign trail, Trump did little to assuage the Republican Party that he would toe their line. Trump’s extreme statements on immigration caused a further uproar. He called for building a massive wall on the U.S.-Mexican border to keep out those coming into the country illegally also and for a ban on Muslims being allowed to enter the United States. His positions enraged Hispanics and Muslims, and a number of Republicans said he had gone too far. Part of Trump’s campaign theme, “Make America Great Again,” involved replacing “stupid” decision makers with smart ones. His blaming of all politicians—not just Democratic ones—for what he called their inability to solve problems irked the GOP’s establishment, which he bluntly described as ineffectual. He accused them of being too beholden to what he said were the party’s narrow interests and unresponsive to the public’s massive hostility toward government. “People are angry . . . I just know it can be turned around. It can be turned around quickly,” Trump said.

Trump could afford to alienate the Republican establishment because of his celebrity and his ability to command significant news media attention without buying advertisements. Unlike other Republicans, he feuded with Fox News, whose audience consisted largely of hard-core GOP loyalists. One study estimated that he had essentially been given $2 billion in free media coverage in newspapers, television, and other journalistic sources. That was two-and-a-half times more than Democratic Party candidate Hillary Clinton and many times greater that of any of his Republican rivals. Trump made frequent use of Twitter, regularly condemning his opponents with tweets that drew even more media attention.

Many of Trump’s supporters cared little about any of the criticisms leveled against him. He tapped into their deep frustration with politics and, in turn, the
parties. They said they agreed with Trump’s call to upend the entire system and described him as refreshingly authentic and blunt—qualities they said mattered more to them than his sometimes-vague policy stances. “He disrupts a broken political process and beats establishment candidates who’ve long ignored their interests,” a lawyer in a poor, rural North Carolina town wrote in explaining Trump’s widespread appeal there. “When you’re earning $32,000 a year and haven’t had a decent vacation in over a decade, . . . you just want to win again, whoever the victim, whatever the price.”

Americans asked for a disruptor, and they got one. Everything political insiders thought parties had the power to do—choose candidates, influence their messaging during the election cycle, and win voters—came apart. In the next section we look at what roles parties ordinarily can and do play in American politics in order to come to an understanding of their potential effectiveness—and their limitations. Later in the chapter we will also look at the role the political campaign structure and the factors that influence political participation and voting play in shaping electoral outcomes.

1. American political parties _____.
   a. Support candidates for office
   b. Provide voters with labels
   c. Enact policies in government
   d. All of the above

2. Why did Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump pose challenges to their own political parties?

3. What concerns or fears did Sanders and Trump try to highlight in their respective campaigns? How were they similar? How were they different?

Answer Key: 1. d; 2. Answers should discuss why some voters in each party might have felt that the parties were not focusing on the issues of concern to them; 3. Answers might focus on both candidates’ challenge to the establishment and contrast Trump’s anti-immigration statements with Sanders’s emphasis on economic inequality.

The role of political parties in shaping policy agendas is crucial. Parties organize, signal, and promote policy agendas through various mechanisms, ensuring that the political landscape is dynamic and responsive to public needs. Political scientists identify several key roles parties play in this process:

1. As organizations, political parties recruit, nominate, and support candidates for political office.
2. In the electorate, parties act as labels that are provided to candidates and officeholders and that voters can use as shortcuts in identifying different positions on issues.

Describe the major roles that political parties play in shaping policy agendas, and provide examples of how these roles are manifested in current political discourse.
candidates closer to their own political ideologies and advocating similar policy positions.

3. In government, a party enacts the policy positions of its members and acts as an opposition to the majority party when it is in the minority.

Parties Unite People as Organizations

A political party seeks to unite people under a shared banner of social, economic, and ideological goals. It finds and supports candidates to run for federal, state, and local offices, which includes mobilizing voters and potential voters to support its candidates. Parties raise money to fund campaigns and provide other forms of help to try to get their candidates elected. If those candidates win, the parties then try to make sure the politicians stay in office. The parties also come up with themes and principles that they want their candidates to follow in appealing for votes.

Political Parties Are Decentralized

When some people think of political parties, they think of big shots in Washington, D.C., commanding the armies of supporters below them. The reality is that parties are decentralized. They’re basically a large collection of state organizations that, in turn, are loose collections of local groups. This is because the system of federalism dictates that power should not just be concentrated at the top. As reporter Jonathan Rauch explained it, “State parties play a key role. They recruit and cultivate political talent, building a farm team of candidates for higher office. They coordinate campaigns up and down the ballot, connecting politicians to each other and discouraging rogue behavior. They build networks of volunteers, connecting leaders with the party base. They gather voter data and make it available to all candidates, building a library of knowledge about the electorate.”

Today, however, many state party organizations are struggling in part because of the ability of nonparty groups to legally raise and spend large amounts of money on behalf of political causes. This has overshadowed not just state parties but the federal ones as well. Another problem facing state parties is the complexity of the campaign finance system. Its rules restrict the ability of the state parties to raise and spend money and to coordinate campaigns so that candidates of the same party can pool their expenses.

Party Leaders Are Advisers, Not Rulers

The president generally chooses the chair of his or her national party. The national party chair raises money and serves as a prominent spokesperson on television and other media. But the national party organization’s power over the state and local parties is advisory; it can’t tell them what to do. In fact, the state parties can put pressure on national parties. In 2014, for example, Republican Party officials at the state level began dropping party platforms and policies opposing same-sex marriage; the national committee leadership later followed their lead.
Each state has a central committee made up of people from that state’s counties and legislative districts who run for office and are elected to terms just like regular politicians. They help shape the national party’s governance, or how it manages its money and runs its operations.

**Parties Shape Elections by Recruiting and Supporting Candidates**

One way a party tries to shape elections is through recruitment, which is considered one of its central tasks. The parties seek candidates who best reflect the party’s philosophy and who can attract the voters the parties seek to mobilize. Party officials often recruit by finding people who can appeal to specific groups with high concentrations of voters, such as African Americans or Latinos. The parties also look for people who can contrast sharply with their opponents.

In recruiting, parties also try to discourage prospective candidates within their own ranks who aren’t seen as having a good chance of winning. They fear that those candidates could end up drawing votes away from their preferred choice.

**Parties Help Run Political Campaigns**

Parties play a key role in national, state, and local political campaigns. While we often talk about one candidate’s “campaign,” in fact there are several phases to a campaign, each with its own dynamics. First, candidates have to decide to run, which often involves the help of party leaders and activists. Second, parties establish a process through which they will nominate their chosen candidates. Finally, parties act to support their nominees in the elections themselves. We will examine the decision to run for national office as well as the dynamics of presidential and congressional campaigns later in this chapter. Here, the focus will be on the process of nomination.

**Parties Select Candidates through the Nomination Process**

After recruiting and supporting candidates, parties shape the process of nomination in which a party officially selects one candidate to run for one office against the nominees from other parties. In some races and in some states, the electoral process may pit members of the same party against each other in the general election.

Once the official presidential campaign process kicks off, declared candidates vie with others in their own party for that party’s nomination. Beginning early in the election year, candidates seek to get the support of party delegates, whose votes they will later need to secure the party’s nomination. While many of the rules governing the nomination process are set by federal and state laws, most of the details about how things actually work are hammered out by the parties themselves. There remain key differences across states and between the parties themselves.

Most states hold presidential primary elections wherein a state’s voters choose delegates who support a particular candidate (see Figure 7.1). In some states, these elections may be open primaries in which all eligible voters may
FIGURE 7.1
Presidential Primary Systems by State, 2016


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vote in a party’s primary election, regardless of that voter’s partisan affiliation. Others may hold closed primaries—open only to registered voters from a particular political party. While open primaries encourage undecided and independent voters to participate in a way that closed primaries do not, they also open up the possibility for strategic voting. Feeling confident in the chances of the presumed nominee in their own party, voters may then use their votes to sabotage the candidate in the opposing party whom they see as the biggest threat to their own preferred candidate.

Some states hold caucuses wherein eligible voters gather to discuss candidates and issues and to select delegates to represent their preferences in later stages of the nomination process. Caucuses differ from primaries because the voting may be public instead of being done by secret ballot. The rules for taking part in a caucus also are more complicated as they involve more than simply marking a ballot to record the selection of a candidate. Because of their complexity, caucuses tend to draw fewer participants than primaries and attract those who are more committed to a candidate or cause.11

The schedule of primary elections and caucuses also matters to the ultimate outcomes of the nomination process. Party leaders in a state have a strong incentive to hold their primary election as early as possible in order to garner media attention as well as candidate attention. A win in an early state helps party candidates establish momentum, and issues that are important to specific states may translate later into policy attention should one of the party’s candidates win the presidency. To take advantage of this, states try to engage in a process of front-loading—pushing their primaries or caucuses as early in the season as possible.

By tradition, the Iowa caucuses and then the New Hampshire primary have been the first two on the schedule. While neither state’s nomination process results in a large number of delegates awarded, their early position creates a problem of perception and demographics, the grouping of individuals based on shared characteristics such as ancestry, race, ethnicity, and gender. Since both states have larger white, non-Hispanic voting populations than much of the rest of the nation, there is a concern that the diversity of American voices will not be heard until the narrative of the nomination campaign has already been established.

The final phase of the nomination process takes place in the national conventions held by the parties in the summer of the presidential election year. During the conventions, delegates vote to select the party’s nominee. For much of American history national conventions were sources of high drama, with many rounds of delegate voting required to select a nominee, in recent decades the final outcome is already known or expected. In modern conventions, the drama comes from the selection of the vice presidential nominee—typically done by the presumptive presidential nominee.

Questions about what parties do and how they should go about it both involve a third consideration: how effective parties are in going about their activities. In 2008 four political scientists argued in an influential book titled The Party Decides that party leaders serve as powerful gatekeepers. The parties—whom the political scientists defined not just as senior party officials but the organized advocacy and interest groups that make them up—“scrutinize and winnow the field before voters get involved, attempt to build coalitions behind a single preferred candidate, and sway voters to ratify their choice.”12
In the complicated relationship between candidates and their parties, politicians rely on their parties to help them get elected or stave off challengers, but in doing so they grant power to party leaders. According to political scientist John Aldrich, things get really interesting when candidates no longer feel that the parties and party leadership are serving their goals and may “turn elsewhere to seek the means to win.” Does the party decide, steering the nomination process toward selecting the most “electable” candidates in the general election, or can voters in primaries and caucuses impose their will should they feel that party leaders are not responding to the issues that voters want addressed?

The Party Connects with Voters in the Electorate

Parties shape American politics not only through their organizational capabilities but also through their ability to connect with voters. In their efforts to do this, parties rely on a variety of methods. One is party identification, or the degree to which voters are connected to a particular party.

One of the most important things that parties do is to signal that they will advance the agendas associated with a particular set of political beliefs, which is key to their role in providing candidates with labels and voters with cues and shortcuts. Party ideology refers to the consistent set of stances on major issues shaped by an underlying philosophy about the proper role of government in society and then communicated to voters.

In the United States, the two major parties identify with the key political ideologies that we discussed earlier. In recent decades, the Democratic Party has told voters that it will pursue policies connected with liberalism and the Republican Party with conservatism (see Figure 7.2). It is important to remember that party ideology and party identification are not the same thing. Parties do try to appeal to potential members by focusing on issues, policies, and solutions that might appeal to individuals with particular ideologies. Individuals’ political beliefs, including partisan party identification, have many contributors and sources, including family, education, and life experiences.
Since the 1980s, more people have identified themselves as Democrats than as Republicans. But one frustration for both parties is that increasingly larger numbers of people consistently have not identified with either party. Instead, the percentage of Americans self-identifying as independent has grown sharply (see Figure 7.3). Why? A big part of it is Americans’ deep frustration with the inability of the federal government to enact policies.

An increase in partisanship also means that voters have shown less inclination in recent decades to back candidates of different parties in a single election, a practice known as split-ticket voting. From 1964 until 1988, as many as one-third of House elections featured a candidate of one party winning even though a presidential candidate of the other party got the most votes in that House candidate’s district. Once people identify a group to which they belong, “they are much more likely to vote for their party and less likely to split a ticket,” according to political scientist Matthew Levendusky. “They are more likely to become devoted cheerleaders.” In 2016, despite deep divisions in the Republican Party establishment, every state that went for Trump elected a Republican senator. On the other side of the aisle, every state that went in Clinton’s favor elected a Democrat to the Senate.

The Party Assists in Policy Formation and Governing

If they have been successful in mobilizing citizens to vote for the candidates they have selected and supported, a party’s members take office and begin the process of governing. At the national level, during presidential nomination
FIGURE 7.3
Americans’ Party Identification over Time


Note: Gallup began regularly measuring independent party leanings in 1991. Data for 2016 are current through September 18, 2016.


conventions, party members write, argue over, and agree on a party platform, which seeks to define the party’s general stance on issues. These platforms are then voted on at the conventions.

The pressures that parties face to point out sharp differences between their positions and those of the opposition have led to increasing political polarization. Polarization isn’t the result of a flaw in our constitutional system,
but the Constitution's separation of powers has made it worse. In Washington, increased polarization has led to gridlock, which occurs when parties are unable to find any common ground to work together, an increasingly common occurrence over the past few decades.

All members of a political party do not hold the same beliefs. Each party contains factions within it that try to pressure the party to adopt its positions. Labor unions are one important faction within the Democratic Party; they push the party to raise the minimum wage and pass other bills aimed at improving working conditions. In the Republican Party, the House Freedom Caucus has become an influential faction within the last decade. It is not a formal party but a loosely organized collection of groups that demands steep cuts in government spending, extremely limited regulation of private companies, and more accountability from government employees.

In 2016, Both Parties Chose but at a Cost

By the time of the Democratic National Convention, it was clear that the Democratic Party's rules had worked in Hillary Clinton's favor. Even though Sanders actually won the vote in some state primaries and caucuses, the party's rules for how delegates are allocated neutralized his victory, handing Clinton the nomination. The Democratic Party had developed a specific set of rules precisely because it wanted to be able to pick presidential nominees strategically. Party members believed that long-term party members would have an interest in backing the strongest possible candidates and that giving those officials the power to switch their votes could avoid messy fights over the nomination.16 The Democratic Party provided Clinton with other advantages over Sanders. The most obvious was that she actually belonged to the party; he did not. That gave her a broad network of prominent supporters who coalesced ahead of primary voting to warn of what they saw as the danger of a Sanders candidacy affecting other races in which Democrats were running.

In his campaign, Donald Trump took positions that were so extreme that fewer than usual Republican Party loyalists were willing to join him, even though his stances and pugnacious style attracted public support. But as he gained strength in the polls and began winning primaries, those party officials were caught in a difficult bind. Trump's candidacy exposed the Republican Party's weaknesses in several ways. Republicans leaders could not, as they had in some past elections, unify around a consensus candidate. None of the party-favorite, mainstream candidates succeeded in captivating broad swaths of voters and all eventually dropped out. Changes in party nomination rules that were brokered between conservative activists and party leaders in 2012—proportional delegate selection in the primaries and a shorter primary calendar—also ended up providing Trump with significant and unexpected institutional advantages.

For both Democrat and Republican Party elites, rules and institutions had been established to help bring order to an often chaotic process, though their nomination rules were different. For both establishments, however, things turned out differently.
1. The responsible party model focuses on the need for party leaders to be less cohesive and offer a variety of perspectives to voters.
   a. True
   b. False

2. How do state caucuses and primaries differ?

3. How has party identification by the American electorate changed in recent decades?

4. What challenge to the theory that “the party decides” did the Sanders and Trump campaigns pose?

Answer Key: 1. b; 2. Answers should focus both on the different mechanics of the processes and on the differences between participants; 3. Answers should emphasize the fact that while most Americans still identify as either Democratic or Republican, the percentage of those who identify as independents has risen; 4. Answers should focus on the candidates' different challenges to the party establishment.

WHAT HAVE I LEARNED?

Described how American party systems have changed over time.

AMERICAN POLITICAL PARTIES
UNDERGO CYCLES OF CHANGE

For about the past 150 years, most politicians have belonged to either the Democratic or Republican Party. Since then, control of government has shifted back and forth between the parties in periods of realignment, which occur when public support shifts substantially from one party to the other. Periods of realignment may be ushered in by critical elections (or critical eras) in which, according to political scientist Aldrich, a short event or era leads to a “new period of relative stability.”

Party Systems Are Eras of Stable Party Control

Political scientists have drawn on the underlying idea to which Aldrich was referring—periods of stability punctuated by periods of rapid change—in their debates about the boundaries of major eras in party control and how decisive a particular election was in signaling a change in those boundaries. They call the more or less stable eras party systems. Political scientists often divide American political history into six party systems (see Figure 7.4).

The First Party System, 1790-1828: Factions and the Creation of America’s First Political Parties

America’s first president, George Washington, was not a member of a political party and indeed had warned the nation about the dangers partisanship posed to the young Republic. However, during his tenure, Washington’s administration split into two factions: those like Treasury secretary Alexander Hamilton and Vice President John Adams supporting a strong federal government and those like Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson and James Madison who believed that individual states should be given more authority over their own affairs.
As these individuals tried to gain support for their policies in Congress and in the state legislatures, they coalesced into two parties: the Democratic-Republicans (Jefferson and Madison) and the Federalists (Adams and Hamilton).

**The Second Party System, 1828-1856: The Roots of Mass Politics**
The Democratic-Republican Party had largely dissolved by 1824, with many of its members moving to form what became known as the Whig Party. This era also saw the decline of the Federalist Party. Due to the granting of suffrage...
to large numbers of white men who had previously been excluded because of their lack of wealth or property, this era saw the rise of the Democratic Party and the election of Andrew Jackson as president in 1828. The Democratic Party remained the dominant party in Congress for the next three decades. The politics of national campaigns evolved into how we now think about them, featuring broad appeals to voters and strengthening party organizations.

The Third Party System, 1856-1892: The Issue of Slavery Upends the Party System

The unresolved issue of slavery led to a major realignment, with members of both parties divided among themselves. This led to the forming of two new parties. “Free Soil” Democrats joined with Whigs in arguing that slavery should be kept out of the rapidly expanding southwestern territories in the United States. They stressed a belief in the potential of the individual and argued against slavery on moral grounds. The antislavery Whigs and Democrats formed the Republican Party. The new Republican Party won control of the House of Representatives but then lost it two years later. That led the party to broaden its appeal to owners of small farms and businesses, and it succeeded in recapturing control of the House in 1858. Two years later, it also took control of the Senate and elected Abraham Lincoln as president. After the Civil War, the United States entered the period of two-party dominance by the Democratic and Republicans. Party identification became sharply regional, with Republicans dominating the Northeast and Democrats the South. Support for the parties was divided in the midwestern states.


During this era, Democrats and Republicans continued to dominate national politics, though not without occasional challenges by third parties. Slavery had ended, but the two parties were divided by the politics of Reconstruction and differences of opinion about how strongly the federal government should act to secure civil rights. In addition, divisions between urban and rural voters as well as debates over immigration and federal policy in an era of massive industrialization shaped politics and party success and failure.


In 1932 the Great Depression ushered in another major change in the party system. The election of Franklin Roosevelt in 1932 and in three subsequent elections led to a period of Democratic Party dominance. Between 1930 and 1994, the Democrats lost their majority in the House just twice, in 1946 and 1952, and they quickly regained control two years later both times. The Democratic Party emphasized a commitment to a strong federal government in the service of social welfare policies. Republicans emphasized a smaller role for the federal government and less involvement in and regulation of the economy.

During the sixth party system, the Democratic Party remained focused on a vigorous federal government in the service of securing civil rights and support for affirmative action and a woman’s right to choose. Republicans remained focused on a smaller federal government, advocating conservative views on social issues, lower taxes, and fewer restrictions on American businesses. What changed were the coalitions of voters supporting the parties, especially with regard to the geography of partisan support in the nation.

The underpinnings of today’s Republican Party were laid in 1964 when its presidential nominee, Barry Goldwater, was roundly defeated by incumbent Democratic president Lyndon B. Johnson. The Republican Party’s conservative base, frustrated by Goldwater’s loss but still animated by his opposition to civil rights legislation, began shifting away from the Northeast and toward the rapidly growing South and West, enabling Nixon to win the presidency. Much of this had been driven by the realignment of large numbers of southern white voters from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party during the civil rights era. Nixon strategist Kevin Phillips had urged the president to pursue a “southern strategy” and play on whites’ negative reaction to the Civil Rights Act of 1964.21

The Republican Party’s fortunes declined temporarily as a result of the Watergate scandal, which led to Nixon’s resignation in 1974. But Ronald Reagan reinvigorated the party with his landslide critical election win in 1980 against Democrat Jimmy Carter. Reagan’s message of lower taxes, smaller government, and a strong defense remains highly influential in the GOP today.

In 1992 Democrat Bill Clinton prodded his party toward the ideological center after years of being depicted as being too captive to its most liberal factions. But two years later, Republican representative Newt Gingrich emerged with a sharply partisan approach that focused on intensifying public resentment of Washington politicians. Gingrich’s moves helped his party break the Democrats’ forty-year hold on the House and also regain control of the Senate. But continued warring between the parties helped propel Clinton to reelection in 1996.

With Republicans in search of someone who could unite the party, Texas governor George W. Bush campaigned in 2000 as a “compassionate conservative.” He lost the popular vote to Vice President Al Gore but carried every southern state while drawing 83 percent of the evangelical Christian vote.22

At the state level, the Republican Party began using the congressional redistricting process to redraw districts to move greater numbers of Democrats into cities, making the Republican Party more competitive in suburban areas. Meanwhile, northeastern states became less Republican as large numbers of people migrated to the South and West and the mostly moderate and liberal Republicans who remained were overshadowed by what had become a southern-anchored party.

In 2008 Republicans hoped that Arizona senator John McCain could muster enthusiasm among voters with his national security credentials and heroic story of survival as a prisoner of war in Vietnam. Nonetheless, he lost to Barack Obama, who took 53 percent of the popular vote, the best Democratic percentage since 1964. Democrats also kept control of the House and Senate and eventually had a sixty-vote majority in the latter chamber to give them even more clout.
The party’s dominance was extremely short-lived. President Obama pushed several pieces of economic- and health care-related legislation that led to a political backlash that gave rise to the Tea Party movement. The Tea Party was credited with helping Republicans regain control of the House in the 2010 elections. The weakened economy, with an unemployment rate stuck at around 8 percent, led Republicans to confidently predict they could recapture the White House in 2012. But the party did not coalesce quickly around its candidate, Mitt Romney. Romney and other Republicans sought to make the elections a referendum on the president’s handling of the economy, but Democrats portrayed Romney as a wealthy corporate executive with an inability to understand average Americans. Not only did Obama win but Democrats kept their majority status in the Senate.

As we have seen, the 2016 election did not go as either the Republican or the Democratic Parties planned. Both have been forced to take a hard look at how they might please their party bases while at the same time appealing to other groups to form a winning electoral and governing strategy. See Figure 7.5.

A Seventh Party System?
The sixth party system has been one of the longest in the nation’s history. However, it is unclear how much longer it will last. The Democratic and Republican Parties are trying to stay relevant in an age of intense and increasing polarization. That polarization has led some voters to become engaged not just because they support their party but out of an intense dislike of the other side.
It remains to be seen what this means for the parties. Robert Reich, an economist and liberal activist who served as secretary of labor under President Clinton, predicted an antiestablishment “People’s Party” made up of disaffected Democrats and Republicans could take root as soon as 2020. Others say such a shift could occur but that it’s also possible the parties could absorb elements that are currently in the other party.

The Democratic Party, however, has had its own problems. Democrats were unable to translate the support Obama enjoyed into broader enthusiasm for the party in general and unable to recruit successful candidates for many lower political offices. As a result, during Obama’s two terms, the Democrats lost many seats in the House, Senate, and state legislatures as well as more state governorships. Part of the reason was Republicans’ ability in many states to redraw congressional districts after the 2010 census to make it easier for members of their party to win and remain in office. Another reason was the continued inability of Democrats to turn out their most loyal supporters in midterm elections, when a presidential candidate isn’t on the ballot.

In the cases of both the Democratic and Republican Parties, many experts agree that they are institutions formed in a different era; they now must deal with a host of obstacles to maintain the social conditions that help parties thrive.

America’s Electoral System Leads to Two-Party Dominance

There is no law requiring that American national politics be dominated by two major political parties. Other countries have none, one, two, or many political parties dominating national politics with the existence of more than two being the norm. With a few very important exceptions, a two-party system has been dominant for most of America’s political history. Why?

Scholars usually point to institutional explanations for America’s two-party dominance, specifically the ways in which candidates are elected to national office, especially Congress. The U.S. method of voting—a single-member plurality system in which voters have a single vote for one candidate and the candidate with the votes wins—encourages this. Other countries have proportional representation systems in which the rules discourage a two-party system. Although there are many differences between nations in the details, proportional representation systems award party representation in legislative bodies based upon percentage of votes overall.

In the American winner-take-all single-member plurality system, the candidate who gets the most votes in a state or congressional district wins the election. In presidential elections, with the exceptions of Maine and Nebraska, the candidate who wins the popular vote in a state wins all of that state’s electoral votes.

The winner-take-all system allows the largest politically cohesive groups—the Democrats or Republicans—to elect almost every office in a jurisdiction. Proponents of the system say this promotes stability; if people are happy with the job that a representative from one of those parties is doing, they can keep voting for that representative’s party even after he or she leaves office.

Critics say it doesn’t do much to help people who are stuck in an area in which one party dominates, such as Republicans in cities and Democrats in
rural states. They say that this can be a significant barrier to encouraging greater numbers of people, including minority groups and young people, to take part in politics. Instead, candidates can run divisive campaigns aimed at turning out only the most partisan voters since the winner-take-all system provides little incentive to reach out to opponents.

Minor Parties May Challenge the Two Major Parties

The Democratic and Republican Parties have occasionally had some competition. Third-party candidates usually focus on a single issue that they don’t think the major parties are emphasizing enough. “What happens is, third parties act as a gadfly,” said Sean Wilentz, director of the American Studies program at Princeton University. “There’ll be an issue that’s being neglected or that is being purposely excluded from national debate because neither party wants to face the political criticism that it would bring.”

Third-party candidates do sometimes make fairly big splashes. In the 2000 election, consumer activist Ralph Nader captivated many liberals when he ran for president under the Green Party banner. He won 2.74 percent of the popular vote—just enough, many Democrats continue to believe, to deny the presidency to Al Gore. The tendency among some voters to conclude that a vote for a third-party candidate essentially is a vote helping someone they oppose has made it difficult for third-party candidates to win national elections.

The Democratic and Republican Parties have worked to discourage third-party candidacies. One way is to prevent those candidates from taking part in presidential debates. Another is having local officials set stringent requirements for candidates to collect a certain number of signatures before they can appear on a ballot, which can be difficult for many third-party hopefuls.

During the general election in 2016, as the Clinton and Trump campaigns both struggled against heavily negative perceptions, third-party challengers emerged, drawing votes from both. Gary Johnson, candidate for the Libertarian Party; Jill Stein, the Green Party candidate; and Evan McMullin, an independent candidate, all vied to establish their respective parties as credible challengers to the Democratic and Republican Parties. Many observers originally expected third-party presidential candidates to do well, Johnson and Stein in particular; ultimately none presented a serious challenge to Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump.

1. The primary reason for two-party dominance in American political history is _____.
   a. The Constitution of the United States
   b. U.S. Supreme Court decisions
   c. The method of electing individuals to national office
   d. All of the above

2. What issues have led to major transitions between American party systems?

3. Why might the election of 2016 usher in a new party system?

Answer Key: 1. c; 2. Answers might focus on crises and perceived failures by the parties to address them or the parties’ failure to adequately incorporate Americans’ concerns; 3. Answers should emphasize cleavages between party members and supporters.
Elections and Campaigns Have Many Moving Parts

As we explored previously, political parties ordinarily do strongly affect the outcomes of elections. Next we look more closely at the electoral process that brings candidates to office. National elections are the tools with which the American political system chooses its presidents and members of Congress. National campaigns are the tools that would-be representatives use to connect to American voters.

Campaigns and elections are both composed of many moving parts. The rules governing them, the people who choose to run, and the composition of the electorate all may shift over time, sometimes with profound and long-lasting consequences. Candidates, even those who have been in elected office for years, need to be aware and adaptable, ready to change message or strategy if necessary.

The Framers of the Constitution did not want the system they created to be too democratic; they feared the potential mischief of faction and the dangers of tyranny of the majority. Therefore, they built in roadblocks to slow down the transmission of the “passions of the people” into public policy. Senators, for example, were originally chosen by state legislatures rather than by the people.

Another safeguard against faction is the system of American federalism, which divides sovereignty between the nation and the states. The Constitution requires that “The Times, Places and Manner of holding Elections for Senators and Representatives, shall be prescribed in each State by the Legislature thereof.” The effects of this clause have been consequential. Today its language ensures that states can devise their own voting technologies, whether electronic or paper based, and have different policies on whether or not those convicted of felonies are allowed to vote.

American elections are also notable for the fact that they occur on fixed and predictable schedules. Unlike in parliamentary systems in which the chief national executive has the choice of when to “call” an election (subject to specific rules and constraints), in the United States, voters weigh in on their president every four years, regardless of what is happening in the nation or world, through economic depressions and even war.

Elections Help Hold Elected Officials Accountable

In a representative democracy, elections serve other important purposes besides selecting individuals for a specific office or position in government. Elections are the key way Americans can keep their elected officials in line. Voters achieve this by using the threat of voting an incumbent out of office and voting in a challenger if they decide the incumbent’s performance has not been in line with their goals and policy preferences. This reflecting back on an incumbent’s past performance in an election is called retrospective voting. Elections also serve as a signal—a way of transmitting information to elected officials about voters’ preferences and priorities.

Understand the rules surrounding national elections and campaigns and the function of those rules.
Elections help define or change the national agenda, especially when candidates respond to the growing electoral and political power of voters whose agenda-setting preferences may not have been well-addressed in the past. For instance, trying to assess the top issues for Latino voters, one of the fastest-growing demographic groups in the United States, is not always an easy task. It is a diverse group, and many surveys are not conducted in Spanish. However, a 2014 Pew Research Center survey concluded that the top five issues for Latino registered voters were—in order of perceived importance—education, jobs and the economy, health care, immigration, and conflicts in the Middle East.30

Elections also confer legitimacy on the laws and public policies enacted. Finally, participation in the electoral system may serve to remind Americans of their rights and liberties and the need to protect those rights; thus, they are educative.

**Elections Are Expensive**

In the 2016 presidential campaign, roughly $1.5 billion in total was spent in support of each of the campaigns of Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton and Republican candidate Donald Trump and the other minor party candidates, a figure that includes candidate spending, national party spending, and money spent by others in support of their respective campaigns.31

Adding in total candidate and outside spending on the other national elections that year, the total spent was about $6.8 billion. According to CBS News, “That’s more than what consumers spend on cereal ($6 billion), pet grooming ($5.4 billion) and legal marijuana ($5.4 billion).”32

**What Money Buys**

What do candidates get for all of this money? Where does it go? First and foremost, money buys media time on television and radio, in print, and in social media outlets. Some campaign advertisements focus on the candidate’s qualities and creating a positive image. Others focus on policy differences between the candidate and his or her opponents. Negative campaign advertisements attack an opponent or opponents and try to raise doubts in voters’ minds about them. While negative campaigning is pervasive and often uncomfortable, not all scholars agree that it is a bad thing. Political scientist John Geer has argued that negative campaign ads may actually “increase the quality of information available to voters as they make choices in elections.”33
Money also allows a candidate to hire campaign staff, help manage the campaign message, coordinate a campaign and media strategy, arrange public appearances, and conduct public opinion polls. Efforts to mobilize voters or potential voters, called get out the vote (GOTV) efforts, also cost money. Finally, having a sizable war chest, especially early in a campaign, might discourage potential challengers from entering a race in the first place. In this way, money is also a strategic weapon. For all of these reasons, the cost of winning the presidency has only gone up.

Can Campaign Contributions Be Effectively Regulated?

Given the power of money, several sources, including activists, the Supreme Court, and the federal government, have long struggled to control the dangers of campaign finance. In the 1970s, following the Watergate scandal, Congress passed the Federal Election Campaign Act, which created the Federal Election Commission (FEC), a bureaucratic entity charged with overseeing and implementing national campaign finance laws. The act also set rules for the disclosure of the source of campaign funds, placed limits on campaign contributions, and instituted a system for public financing of presidential elections. In 1976, in *Buckley v. Valeo*, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of restrictions on campaign contributions by individuals, though not on monies spent independently, monies spent by the candidates themselves, or the total amount of contributions.34

When it comes to money and elections, however, controlling the influence of money has often been like handling a balloon—squeeze it in one place and it seems to pop up somewhere else. In 2002, in an effort to more effectively control the balloon, Congress passed the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA), which placed stricter limits on campaign contributions. Since then, however, the Supreme Court has limited these regulations. In *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* (2010), in a divided 5–4 decision, the Court struck down portions of the BCRA, ruling that independent, uncoordinated political contributions by corporations during political campaigns is protected by the First Amendment.35

The “new world” of campaign finance in the United States is thorny. Although limits on individual campaign donations remain in place, groups of individuals may contribute, but the rules are complicated. Political action committees (PACs) are groups of at least fifty individuals who seek to raise money to elect and defeat candidates. PACs may contribute higher dollar amounts than individuals; though, again, there are limits. In the wake of the Court’s decision in *Citizens United*, certain types of PACs called super PACs are allowed to spend unlimited amounts on a political campaign; however, that spending must not be coordinated with that campaign. These contributions raise a tricky issue. Even if there is no contact between a super PAC and members of a campaign, if the super PAC, for example, runs a series of campaign advertisements that work, candidates will take notice. Information will still change hands, even if this transfer is uncoordinated and legal.
CHAPTER 7 • Parties, Elections, and Participation

PRESIDENTIAL AND CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS: THE SAME BUT DIFFERENT

The basics of both presidential and legislative elections are, unsurprisingly, laid out in the U.S. Constitution and subsequent amendments. For the presidency, that includes the frequency of these elections (every four years) and the general rules defining what it takes to run for the presidency. Much of the structure of the congressional electoral process is the same as it is for presidential elections. For example, states still structure the nuts and bolts of the process. Would-be national legislators also seek out their party’s nomination, just as aspirants to the presidency must do. And they must then win in the general election, just as presidential nominees must do. Many important structures and processes are also influenced by two other sets of actors: the states and the political parties.

Presidential Campaigns Are Divided into Different Phases

Presidential elections have two official campaign phases: the nomination campaign in which candidates try to secure the nomination of their political party and the general election campaign in which successful nominees compete for the presidency. While the ways in which parties structure their nomination processes

WHAT HAVE I LEARNED?

1. American representative democracy is designed to provide as many opportunities as possible for voters to weigh in on public policy directly.
   a. True
   b. False

2. In a political campaign, money buys a candidate _____.
   a. Media coverage
   b. Get out the vote (GOTV) efforts
   c. The possibility of scaring off potential challengers
   d. All of the above

3. A super PAC _____.
   a. Can spend unlimited amounts of money but must not coordinate with a campaign
   b. Has strict limits placed on its allowable contributions
   c. Can spend unlimited amounts of money in coordination with a campaign
   d. Can no longer make campaign contributions

4. In a debate about the degree to which contributions to political campaigns should be restricted or regulated, what might some arguments be for each side?

Answer Key: 1. b; 2. d; 3. a; 4. Answers for restrictions may focus on wealth inequality or factions. Answers against might focus on free speech and the First Amendment.
have changed, the general trend in modern campaigns has been one of increasing openness, of taking some of the power away from party elites and placing it in the hands of party activists and average Americans. This is not to say that party leaders do not matter, however. They still have more power to shape the nomination than the average American voter.

**Before the Official Campaign**

Nomination campaigns begin long before the actual events through which the nominees are picked. Presidential hopefuls may work on laying the foundations for their bids years before the official process begins. They begin raising money and set up an *exploratory committee*, which is subject to different federal campaign finance rules than a campaign committee. An exploratory committee allows a potential candidate to “test the waters,” to travel around the country in order to conduct public opinion polls, make outreach phone calls, and raise money to pay for all of this. In addition, a candidate’s announcement that he or she has formed an exploratory committee may gain a bit of a bump in media coverage.

If a candidate decides to press ahead, his or her campaign will become official, a status that can be triggered through a potential candidate’s statements and fund-raising or other activities.

**The Nomination Process**

Once the official campaign process kicks off, declared candidates vie with others in their own party for that party’s nomination. Beginning early in the election year, candidates seek to get the support of party delegates, whose votes they will later need to secure the party’s nomination. While many of the rules governing the nomination process are set by federal and state laws, most of the details about how things actually work are hammered out by the parties themselves. Key differences exist across states and between the parties themselves. As we discussed earlier in the chapter, most states hold presidential primary elections in which a state’s voters choose delegates who support a particular candidate. The concluding phase of the nomination process takes place in the national conventions held by the parties late in the summer of the presidential election year.

**The General Election**

Once selected by their parties, the nominees then proceed to the general election campaign. At this point, candidates need to pivot from speaking mainly to their base of core supporters and begin...
to try to appeal to independent and undecided voters. This can be a trap. Voters who participate during the nomination campaigns trend toward the wings of their parties, and there are not often enough of them to win a general election.

Maintaining the energy of core party voters while also appealing to the undecided middle is a challenge. If core partisan voters think their nominee has moved too far to the center and abandoned core party goals, they will not help mobilize undecided voters to join their nominee’s side. On the other hand, if a candidate has survived the nomination campaign by appealing primarily to the extremes of the party, then he or she may be seen as too far left or too far right to be the best person for governing the nation in the views of independents and undecided voters.

The Rules of the Electoral College Decide the Presidency

The dynamics of the Electoral College system presents another significant challenge. Technically speaking, American voters do not vote for the president. Instead, they vote for a slate of electors pledged to vote for a nominee in the presidential election. These electors are chosen by party leaders within their respective states in a system called the Electoral College. It is their vote that actually chooses the president. Established in the original Constitution and modified since the founding, its roots lie partly in the Framers’ mistrust of direct democracy but also in concerns of convention delegates from less populous states who feared Virginians would always be elected since theirs was the most populous and powerful state at the time.

Presidential candidates need to clear 270 Electoral College votes in order to win. Each of the fifty states is allocated one electoral vote for each of its two senators and one for each of its members of the House of Representatives, guaranteeing each state at least three electoral votes. Adding the three electoral votes allocated to the District of Columbia brings the total to 538. In all but two states, Maine and Nebraska, electoral votes are awarded in a winner-take-all system.

Electors are chosen from party leaders and loyal activists. Although they have pledged to vote for their party’s candidate, there is a risk that they may become faithless electors, changing their minds in between the general election and the electors’ vote.

This system has significant consequences. Theoretically, it is possible to become president by winning in only the eleven most populous states. More significantly, a presidential candidate can win the presidency without actually winning the popular vote. That can happen when a third-party candidate poses a serious challenge, which contributed to President Bill Clinton’s victory in 1992, or when a candidate wins a majority of the popular vote but loses in the Electoral College, which happened in 2000 when George W. Bush defeated Al Gore, and again in 2016 when Donald Trump defeated Hillary Clinton (see Figure 7.6).

The system of electors shapes candidate strategies. Given that all but two states award their electoral votes in a block, candidates tend to focus their campaigns on states with a large number of electoral votes and those whose electoral votes seem to be in play, largely ignoring other states.
In Congressional Elections Constituency Is Key

The most important difference between legislative and presidential elections is defining whom the legislative candidate hopes to represent. States differ on where the bar is set for congressional nominees in the general elections. In most states, a candidate needs a **plurality** of votes in the primaries or general election, meaning that the candidate receives more votes than any other candidate. In other states, a candidate needs a **majority** of votes (more than 50 percent), which may lead to a **runoff election** between the two with the highest total if no one candidate scores a majority.

At the most basic level, the rules governing the division of voters into **constituencies**—bodies of voters in a given area who elect a representative or senator—are laid out in the Constitution. However, the process of this division, especially for the House of Representatives, is often controversial. Even the
Supreme Court has had to weigh in on the process in the past. The ways in which incumbent members of Congress use their incumbency to enhance their chances of getting reelected have significant effects on the behavior of all candidates in an election. Finally, every election is unique. Local, state, and national conditions during a given election matter as well, and there are always unanticipated events that can powerfully shape a given candidate’s electoral chances.

**Constituency and the Senate**

The size of the Senate depends only on the number of states in the Union since two senators represent each state. Since the admission of Hawaii as the fiftieth state in 1959, therefore, the Senate has been composed of one hundred members, each representing the entire state from which they were elected. Because the Senate was divided into three “classes” in order to stagger the elections of senators, no two senate seats from the same state will be up for grabs in the same election unless a retirement or other event has opened up one of the seats.

Like many other aspects of the basic structure of the federal government, the guarantee of equal state representation in the Senate came about as a result of conflicts and bargaining between less populous and more populous states as well as between slaveholding and non-slaveholding states during the Constitutional Convention. The result of equal state representation is that individual voters are unequally represented in the Senate. The 585,501 citizens of Wyoming get two senators and so do the 39.25 million citizens of California.

**Constituency and the House of Representatives**

In spite of the potential repercussions of equal state representation in the Senate, determining one’s potential constituents is a very simple matter for that chamber. When it comes to the House of Representatives, however, things are a bit more complicated—and political.

**Apportionment**

While initially the size of the House was allowed to grow with the population, it is now fixed at 435 members. The size of a state’s representation in the House depends upon its population. The process of determining the number of representatives for each state is called **apportionment**; through this process the number of representatives is allocated based on the results of the census that is conducted every ten years. As part of the process of apportionment, each state is divided into one or more congressional districts with one seat in the House representing each district and each state guaranteed one representative, no matter how small its population.

Given the fact that the size of the House is capped, changes in population can produce “winners and losers” among the states following each census. Trends in population growth and distribution in recent decades have produced
a clear pattern of gains in House seats for states in the South and the West and losses for states in the Northeast and Midwest.

**Redistricting and Gerrymandering**

While the process of apportionment has important consequences for the representation of states in the House, it also has important consequences for the boundaries of constituency. Following each census, states enter into the process of **redistricting** in which they redraw the electoral district boundaries. Seven states have only one representative; therefore, their district boundaries are the same as the boundaries of the state. Some states have undertaken redistricting between censuses, especially when a political party gains control over the state’s legislative and executive branches, though many states have constitutional or legislative prohibitions against this practice.

The stakes involved in redistricting are high, and the process is often very political and controversial. In most states, the legislature appoints the members of a commission to draw the district boundaries. In others, a bipartisan or nonpartisan commission handles the process to try to make it less political, though the state legislatures typically still have to approve these plans.

The intentional use of redistricting to benefit a specific interest or group of voters is referred to as **gerrymandering**. The term comes from state legislative districts that were oddly drawn in 1812 under Massachusetts governor Elbridge Gerry to benefit his Democratic-Republican Party. Federalists complained that one district looked like a monster or a salamander, and the term created by the fusion of salamander with the governor’s last name stuck. There are three types of gerrymandering: partisan, racial and ethnic, and incumbent.

**Partisan Gerrymandering**

Partisan gerrymandering aims to increase the representation of one political party at the expense of another. The idea is to concentrate the opposing party’s supporters in a small number of districts, which that party will win easily. The party in control then tries to maximize the number of districts that its candidates will win comfortably but not by huge margins. By doing so, the party in charge of redistricting is able to “waste” many of the votes of its opposition since there is no more of an advantage—in terms of the number of House seats a party has—of winning 90 percent of the votes in any one district than there is by winning 55 percent. Redistricting can put incumbents at risk by changing the composition of their constituencies or by forcing two incumbents to run for the same seat.

**Racial and Ethnic Gerrymandering**

A second form of gerrymandering aims to increase the likelihood of electing members of racial and ethnic minorities as representatives by concentrating voters of minority ethnicity within specific congressional districts. Racial and
ethnic gerrymandering results in **majority-minority districts** in which voters of *minority* ethnicity constitute an electoral *majority* within the electoral district. Racial and ethnic gerrymandering has led to some oddly shaped congressional districts—some of the most notable of which were drawn after the 1990 census. The Twelfth Congressional District in North Carolina, for example, “stitched together African American communities in several of the state’s larger cities, using Interstate 85 . . . as the thread.”

**Incumbent Gerrymandering**

The third form of strategic redistricting is incumbent gerrymandering wherein district lines are drawn to protect the reelection prospects of an incumbent representative. It is often less compelling for a party in power in state government to undertake incumbent gerrymandering, as it does not necessarily improve the prospects of the party overall. In addition, ambitious members of a state legislature may themselves be eyeing a seat in the House, giving them a strong incentive to ensure their party’s victory in their home district but few incentives to protect the electoral fortunes of a potential rival.

**The Supreme Court and Congressional District Boundaries**

In recent decades, the Supreme Court has become more active in ruling on congressional district boundaries, the drawing of which had generally been left up to the states and the political process. Affirming the “one person, one vote” rule of representation, the Court in two cases ruled that *malapportionment*—where the population is distributed in uneven numbers between legislative districts—is unconstitutional as it violates the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

While the Court has highlighted potential problems with partisan gerrymandering in several recent cases, it has not gone so far as to declare the practice inherently unconstitutional. The Court has held that voters in these districts are still represented but by members from different political parties. *Davis v. Bandemer* (1986) involved an Indiana redistricting plan. The Court upheld the plan, ruling that the partisan gerrymander did not violate the Fourteenth Amendment’s equal protection clause. *Vieth v. Jubelirer* (2004) involved a Pennsylvania partisan gerrymander. In this case, the Court overturned the Republican-controlled gerrymander, but it did so on the grounds that the plan created districts with unequal numbers of voters, not because it was an attempt to favor one political party. In 2006, in *League of United Latin American Citizens v. Perry*, the Court upheld most of the Texas redistricting plan from 2003 but required that one district’s lines be redrawn to protect the voting rights of Hispanic Americans. In June 2017, the Court, as its session ended, declared that it would consider revisiting the constitutionality of partisan gerrymandering in its session that would begin in October. Given the nature of the Court in 2017, should it do so, whatever decision is made will no doubt be sharply divided.

The Court has also weighed in on the proper role of racial and ethnic considerations in drawing district boundaries. In *Thornburg v. Gingles* (1986), the
The Representational Consequences of the Great Compromise

Number of U.S. Residents per Senator


(Continued)
One of the most contentious battles in the Constitutional Convention was over changing the “one state, one vote” structure of state representation in the Confederation Congress (under the Articles of Confederation). Less populous states, such as New Jersey, Delaware, and Connecticut, were not about to consent to the formation of a new congress in which states received votes based on their populations. The Great Compromise settled this question, with the House of Representatives apportioning seats based on population and the Senate allotting seats equally, two to each state.

While the compromise avoided what many feared was a fight that might tear the young nation apart, it did so with representational consequences. Although each state is guaranteed at least one representative in the House, there are variations between states in the number of representatives per resident, which range from about six hundred thousand residents per representative to nearly a million, with an average of about 710,000 residents per representative.

These variations, however, are very small in comparison to those in the Senate wherein each resident of each state is represented by two senators regardless of the state’s population. Given the sizable differences between state populations, the number of state residents per senator varies dramatically.

As they come from the most populous state in the Union, each of California’s two senators must represent more than sixty-five times the number of citizens as a senator from Wyoming, the nation’s least populous state.45 This means California’s senators are spread much more thinly when trying to address the concerns of individual constituents. There is also evidence that the least populous states benefit more from congressional spending than they would if the Constitution did not guarantee them equal representation in the Senate.46

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Say that you are a researcher exploring whether or not citizens from less populous states receive better senatorial representation than those from the most populous states. How might you define better? What evidence would you look for to form your hypothesis?

Court overturned a state’s legislative district boundaries on the basis that they diluted the electoral power of African American voters and violated their voting rights.43 In Shaw v. Reno (1993), the Court rejected a North Carolina reapportionment plan designed to produce majority-minority districts because it resulted in a bizarrely shaped district and used race to such a degree in drawing these boundaries that it could “only be understood as an effort to segregate voters into separate districts on the basis of race.”44 Since Shaw v. Reno, states are allowed to use race as a consideration but not as the predominant factor in drawing district boundaries.
Congressional Incumbents Have Significant Institutional Advantages

In congressional elections, the most important determinant of who will win is incumbency. Stated simply, incumbents usually win, and those with serious aspirations to enter Congress are often, and wisely, very wary of challenging an incumbent representative or senator. Making full use of the resources available to them, incumbent representatives and senators possess many advantages over any candidate who might challenge them. This *incumbency advantage* has only grown stronger in recent decades.

The vast majority of congressional incumbents who seek reelection succeed. Incumbent senators and members of the house have reelection rates of 80 to 90 percent.\(^47\) Given the fact that incumbents enjoy such an advantage, “nearly everything pertaining to candidates and campaigns for Congress is profoundly influenced by whether a candidate is already an incumbent, is challenging an incumbent, or is pursuing an open seat.”\(^48\)

The Logic of Incumbency

Political scientist David Mayhew explained the strategic logic of incumbents and how they use their institutional advantages to maximize their chances of reelection. For Mayhew, legislators are “single-minded seekers of re-election” who make the most of their institutional advantages.\(^49\) These advantages include using their franking privileges, the free use of the mail for communication with constituents, to advertise their campaigns. Incumbents usually enjoy higher levels of name recognition than their challengers, which is increased by more media coverage than any potential challengers. In media coverage and public events, incumbents claim credit for what they have done in Washington and announce their positions on key pieces of legislation of interest to their constituents.\(^50\) Finally, incumbents perform casework for individual constituents, especially in helping them deal with the federal and state bureaucracy.

If incumbents are usually in no danger, then why do they spend so much time and energy trying to secure reelection? Another strategic explanation involves decisions made by potential challengers. Not all challengers are equally credible, and incumbents maximize their resources to try to ensure that they will not face qualified challengers. Knowing the odds, credible challengers often wait for their chance to run in an *open seat election* in which there is no incumbent to face.

What makes for a high-quality challenger? Successful challengers are skillful with the media and public events. They also are knowledgeable about the issues and where their constituents stand on those issues. But they need two things above all else: experience and money. Experience is usually gained by moving up through the layers of local and state politics to become professional, polished, and respected. Money buys more than airtime, advertising, and campaign events—it also buys information, by, for instance, hiring pollsters to help them better understand their constituents’ preferences. Money can help scare off potential opponents and signal to other potential donors that this is a campaign with a legitimate shot at success. Most challengers lack the financial resources to wage effective campaigns.\(^51\)
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION TAKES MANY FORMS

Everyday Americans are also involved in many ways in the political process—and not simply as the receivers of political messages from parties and candidates. Casting a ballot in an election is the form of political participation most think of when they consider participation, but other forms of participation can influence the choices of those in office and the attitudes and actions of other citizens. Efforts to work to make society better through political and nonpolitical action is called civic engagement. In their foundational study of American political participation, Sidney Verba and Norman H. Nie sorted acts of civic engagement into four categories: (1) voting, (2) supporting or participating in political campaigns, (3) contacting or pressuring politicians in office, and (4) acting outside of the electoral process—for example, by volunteering or organizing in concert with fellow citizens. The first two of these forms of participation take place within the electoral process; the second two take place after its outcomes have been determined or outside of it.

Within the electoral process, individuals may choose to vote. They may also act to support the candidacies of those vying for political office whether through working on campaigns, donating money, or convincing others to support their chosen candidate.

Once the elections are over, citizens have many ways to connect with their elected representatives if they want to make their preferences known about issues being discussed in government. They might join together to work cooperatively for
Political Participation Takes Many Forms

a shared set of political goals by organizing members of their community or working with members of their religious communities. While Americans participate at the voting booth at lower rates than individuals in other democracies, their rates of nonelectoral participation are equal to or higher than their counterparts in other nations (see Figure 7.7).35

Individuals might also take part in a social movement, which occurs when a group of people come together to make social and political change and place ideas and issues on the political agenda. People in social movements participate in political protests, attend political meetings, contact elected officials, or reach out to other citizens to educate them on issues. Whether acting as a member of a social movement or on their own, individuals may also work on political campaigns, donate time and money to candidates, work in their communities, or contact their elected representatives. In all of these activities, individuals try to make their voices heard.

Voting Decisions Are Influenced by Institutional, Circumstantial, and Individual Factors

Participation in the electoral process is an essential component of a representative democracy, yet very large percentages of Americans do not vote. In 2016, only an estimated 58 percent of eligible voters showed up at the polls, placing the United States near the bottom of democratic nations based on voter turnout. Americans’ relative lack of voting participation raises two immediate questions: Why? And, does it matter?

Anthony Downs has argued that the decision not to vote might very well be a rational one, given the costs of voting in terms of an individual’s time and intellectual effort and the infinitesimally small probability that any one vote will prove to be decisive, especially in national elections.54 In the view of democratic theorists, however, should all potential voters make a rational calculation not to vote, then the mechanism of representation would be endangered.
Many factors shape a person’s decision of whether or not to vote. Some contributors to voter turnout are institutional, shaped by the laws and procedures surrounding the electoral process. Others depend upon the particulars of an election—for example, whether or not it takes place during a presidential election year. A third category of contributors centers on the potential voters themselves, their characteristics and lived experiences. Elsewhere in the book we have examined how individual characteristics impact how people vote and who they choose to support. Now, we will consider how these characteristics shape whether or not people vote. Political scientists count a set of individual factors as among the most important determinants for voting: level of economic status, level of education, political efficacy, age, race or ethnicity, gender, and partisan attachment.

Socioeconomic Status and Educational Attainment
Voting is costly. It takes time, commitment, and intellectual engagement. Not all voting-eligible Americans have the same resources with which to engage in the process of voting. A key factor in voter turnout is an individual’s socioeconomic status (SES), which is a measure of an individual’s wealth, income, occupation, and educational attainment.

A clear and consistent pattern in electoral participation is that Americans with higher levels of SES participate in electoral activities, likely because individuals with higher incomes have more money to donate to a political campaign. Also, certain occupations might be associated with networks in which political issues are more likely to be discussed and acted upon.

The most important contributor to the measure of an individual’s SES, and one of the most important determinants of the decision to vote is the level of educational attainment by a potential voter. Not only are higher levels of educational attainment associated with higher incomes but they also reduce the “costs” of voting by making it easier to navigate the issues involved in an election and the process of becoming a voter itself.

Political Efficacy
Education also plays a role in shaping how individuals think about themselves as political actors and potential voters. The intellectual resources and skills that higher levels of education produce also increase an individual’s sense of political efficacy, or one’s confidence that she or he can make effective political change.

Age
Another trend is also clear: Young adult voting-eligible Americans vote at lower rates than members of older generations. Again, like income and education, age is connected to many other factors. Older Americans are more likely to have higher levels of income and wealth. Another factor may be the challenges of learning about voter registration requirements, especially if the young adult voter is in college or has recently moved to a new state. For college students living in a different state, voter identification laws may add another hurdle to
their decision to participate at the polling place. While a 1979 Supreme Court ruling affirmed the right of college students to vote in their states of school attendance, state voting laws and local practices “often make students travel a rocky road.”

**Racial and Ethnic Identities**

The turnout of voting-age Americans is also highly correlated with racial and ethnic identity, which, again, is often connected to SES. While turnout rates between white and African American potential voters have narrowed in recent years, Latino American turnout rates lag far behind those of Americans with other racial and ethnic identities. While some Latino Americans are undocumented immigrants and therefore ineligible to vote, they are also as a group younger, and as we have discussed, younger voting-eligible Americans vote in far fewer numbers than their older counterparts. As Latino eligible voters grow older and grow in numbers, the political landscape is going to shift dramatically.

**Gender and Voter Turnout**

Since the presidential election of 1980, women have voted at a slightly higher rate than men—typically a difference of a few percentage points. Prior to 1980, voting-eligible men voted at higher rates than women. The differences between men’s and women’s modern voting patterns hold true across racial and ethnic identities with the largest percentage difference between black men and women, which was more than 9 percent in the 2012 presidential election. Differences in voter turnout in recent elections between men and women are also connected with age, as a higher percentage of women ages eighteen to forty-four voted than men in the same age cohort, while men seventy-five and up voted at higher rates than women within the same age group.

**Partisan Attachment**

Individuals with a stronger attachment to a political party are more likely to vote than those without one. Efforts by members of American political parties to turn out the vote matter as well, and individuals with strong partisan attachment may find themselves more likely to be on the receiving end of party activities. **Political mobilization**, such as efforts to GOTV, can be decisive in an election. These efforts may be direct—recruitment, sponsorship of meetings, or requests for contributions—or indirect, such as in the building of social networks through which potential voters engage with their friends and associates.

**Legal and Institutional Factors Enable and Constrain Voter Turnout**

Other factors that affect voter turnout are not individual but rather systemic or institutional. Since the ratification of the Twenty-Sixth Amendment to the Constitution in 1971, all American citizens eighteen years old or older are
guaranteed the right of **suffrage**. The practical exercise of this basic right, however, is complicated. Undocumented American immigrants are not granted the right of suffrage, and in most states, otherwise eligible voters who have been convicted of felonies are also denied the right to vote in what is called **felon disenfranchisement**, though the time of their loss of this right varies according to state laws.

State **registration requirements** may also help or hinder the ability of voting-age Americans to participate in the electoral process. Voting actually involves two actions. The second is the casting of a ballot on an election day. But the first is the act of registering to vote. In some states, a voter may register on election day. In most states, however, would-be voters need to register prior to the election, often as much as thirty days before, otherwise they will not be allowed to vote.62

The scheduling of national presidential and congressional elections, by tradition held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday of November, may also serve to discourage participation as work schedules may make it more challenging for some Americans to make it to the polling place. Although states are increasingly allowing voters to cast **absentee ballots**, some reformers have proposed that national elections be held on weekends or that election day be declared a national holiday.

Finally, some advocates of electoral reform have focused on the process of registration itself, hoping to make it easier and less costly in terms of time and energy. In contrast to most modern representative democracies, in the United States the burden of registering to vote falls entirely on the potential voter, and there is no governmental action to register them automatically. The National Voter Registration Act of 1993, commonly called the **Motor Voter Law**, tried to make voter registration less difficult by allowing Americans to register to vote when applying for or renewing their driver’s licenses and making it easier for Americans with disabilities to register to vote. As of 2016, thirty-one states and the District of Columbia had established systems of online voter registration, with six more having passed but not yet fully implemented them.63 While effective online registration requires efforts to make the process secure and free from fraud, it offers the promise of increasing turnout.

**Election-Specific Factors**

Also contributing to the level of voter turnout in a given election are factors surrounding the election itself. If it is a presidential election year, then voters will turn out in higher numbers than if it is not.

Finally, an “election” is not really one election. It is many. When Americans go to the polls, they are often confronted with a long list of choices that, depending on the election parameters, can include the president, members of Congress, state legislature positions, state judges, county supervisors, and members of a water resource board. **Ballot roll-off** refers to the fact that voters may often not complete the entire ballot; they may stop once they reach a set of races with which they are not familiar and for which they may not have traditional cues, such as partisan affiliation.
CONCLUSION

The Fallout

There is a somewhat obscure 1950s science fiction movie called *Attack of the Crab Monsters*. Thanks to, I think, radiation, giant mutant crabs on an island evolve, eat people, and absorb their unfortunate victims’ voices, personalities, and knowledge to grow stronger, more powerful, and more dangerous. The mutant crabs use the voices and identities they’ve stolen to lure other unsuspecting humans to their doom. In the “words” of one of the crab monsters, impersonating a human and trying to lure a group of people into the caves, “It is almost exhilarating! Will you come?”

This is what the two dominant American political parties in American political history have always tried to do with insurgents—without the eating people part, of course. An internal revolution is often a signal that the party has to adapt; to bring the voices of those insurgents back into the fold; to keep the party viable, relevant, and strong. Or, if that fails, it is to put an end to the insurgency, once and for all.

While political scientists will no doubt be talking about the election of 2016 for years, one of the main questions will be this: What impact will the candidacies of Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump have on their respective political parties? And how will voters act in subsequent elections? Sanders attempted to push the Democratic Party to embrace the need to address economic inequality, issues that nominee Clinton

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1. Political participation refers only to voting.
   a. True
   b. False
2. Factors that contribute to Americans’ relatively lower levels of voter turnout among representative democracies include _______.
   a. Felon disenfranchisement
   b. Registration requirements
   c. Mobilization
   d. All of the above
3. Election-specific factors that affect voter turnout include _______.
   a. Presidential or nonpresidential election years
   b. Age
   c. Level of education
   d. All of the above
4. Why do you think Americans choose to vote or not vote?

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Answer Key: 1. b; 2. d; 3. a; 4. Answers might focus on demographic characteristics, election-specific factors, or thoughts about why people might feel that their voices do not matter.

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began to address more frequently as her campaign progressed. Will Democrats continue to prosecute that argument? Donald Trump’s populist rhetoric alienated many Republican leaders, yet after the election the Republican Party controlled the White House, Congress, and the majority of state governorships and legislatures. Is that message going to continue to appeal to and mobilize voters?

In this chapter, we have explored the challenge that Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump presented to their own parties’ establishment. That turned out to be very true; however, the larger story about the election of 2016 may not be only about divisions within political parties but about deeper divisions within the American republic itself.

## CHAPTER REVIEW

This chapter’s main ideas are reflected in the Learning Objectives. By reviewing them here you should be able to **remember** the key points and **know** these terms that are central to the topic.

### 7.1 Identify the roles that parties play in American representative democracy.

#### REMEMBER . . .

- In their ideal form, parties are organizations with leaders who work to promote the candidates and issues they support, uniting people under a set of common ideas and goals. They are reflected in the electorate by citizens who express solidarity with their views. In government, elected officials work to enact their parties’ policies.
- Political scientists have argued that parties often play the deciding role in candidate selection.

#### KNOW . . .

- **caucus**: a process through which a state’s eligible voters gather to discuss candidates and issues and select delegates to represent their preferences in later stages of the nomination process (p. 215)
- **closed primaries**: primary elections in which only registered voters from a particular political party may vote (p. 215)
- **delegates**: people who act as voters’ representatives at a convention to select their party’s presidential nominee (p. 213)
- **demographics**: the grouping of individuals based on shared characteristics, such as ancestry, race, ethnicity, and gender (p. 215)
- **front-loading**: when a state pushes its primary or caucus to a date as early in the season as possible to become more instrumental in the nomination process (p. 215)
- **gridlock**: an inability to compromise and enact legislation that is driven by political polarization (p. 219)
national conventions: meetings where delegates officially select their party’s nominee for the presidency (p. 215)

nomination: the formal process through which parties choose their candidates for political office (p. 213)

open primaries: primary elections in which all eligible voters may vote, regardless of their partisan affiliation (p. 213)

party identification: an individual’s attachment to a particular party (p. 216)

party ideology: a set of stances shaped by an underlying philosophy about key issues and the proper role of government in society and then communicated to voters (p. 216)

party platform: a set of positions and policy objectives that members of a political party agree to (p. 218)

polarization: a sharp ideological distance between political parties (p. 218)

political party: an organized group of candidates, officeholders, voters, and activists that work together to elect candidates to political office (p. 207)

presidential primary elections: elections in which a state’s voters choose delegates who support a particular candidate for nomination (p. 213)

recruitment: the process through which political parties identify potential candidates (p. 213)

split-ticket voting: when a voter chooses a candidate from one party for one office and a candidate from a different party for another position on the ballot (p. 217)

7.2  Explain how American party systems have evolved over time.

REMEMBER . . .

Control of government has shifted back and forth between the parties during periods of realignment, which occur when public support shifts substantially from one party to the other, often following critical elections.

KNOW . . .

critical elections: major national elections that signal change either in the balance of power between two major parties or the emergence of a new party system (p. 220)

party systems: periods of stability of the composition of political parties and the issues around which they coalesce, brought on by shorter periods of intense change (p. 220)

proportional representation systems: structures of electoral representation in which parties are represented in government according to their candidates’ overall share of the vote (p. 225)

realignment: a major shift in allegiance to the political parties that is often driven by changes in the issues that unite or divide voters (p. 220)

single-member plurality system: a structure of electoral representation in which a candidate and the party that he or she represents must win the most votes in a state or district in order to be represented in government (p. 225)

third-party candidates: members of a political party that operates over a limited period of time in competition with two other major parties (p. 226)
7.3 Understand the rules surrounding national elections and the function they serve.

REMEMBER...
• American national elections are somewhat unique among democratic nations in that they occur on fixed and regular schedules.

KNOW...
• challenger: a candidate for office who does not currently hold office (p. 227)
• get out the vote (GOTV): efforts to mobilize voters or potential voters (p. 229)
• incumbent: a current officeholder (p. 227)
• negative campaign advertisements: campaign ads that attack an opponent or opponents and try to raise doubts in voters’ minds about them (p. 228)
• political action committees (PACs): organizations that raise money to support chosen candidates and defeat others (p. 230)
• retrospective voting: reflecting back on an incumbent’s past performance in an election (p. 227)
• super PACs: PACs permitted to spend unlimited amounts of money in a campaign, though these actions must not be coordinated with that campaign (p. 230)

7.4 Describe the structure, stages, and main challenges of presidential and legislative campaigns.

REMEMBER...
• The presidential campaign involves two formal stages: the nomination campaign and the general elections. Presidents are elected by the Electoral College.
• Challenging entrenched congressional incumbents is extremely difficult; credible challengers often wait for an open seat election.

KNOW...
• apportionment: the process of determining the number of representatives for each state using census data; states are divided into congressional districts that have at least one representative each (p. 234)
• constituencies: bodies of voters in a given area who elect a representative or senator (p. 233)
• Electoral College: a process for electing the president that involves the voting population choosing a slate of electors who are pledged to vote for a nominee in the presidential election (p. 232)
• exploratory committee: a group that helps determine whether a potential candidate should run for office and that helps lay the groundwork for the campaign (p. 231)
• faithless electors: party electors who change their minds in between the general election and the Electoral College vote (p. 232)

• gerrymandering: the intentional use of redistricting to benefit a specific interest or group of voters (p. 235)

• incumbency advantage: institutional advantages held by those already in office who are trying to fend off challengers in an election (p. 239)

• majority-minority districts: districts in which voters of a minority ethnicity constitute an electoral majority within those electoral districts (p. 236)

• majority: when a candidate receives more than 50 percent of the vote (p. 233)

• malapportionment: the uneven distribution of the population between legislative districts (p. 236)

• open seat election: an election in which no incumbent is seeking reelection (p. 239)

• plurality: when a candidate receives more votes than any other candidate (p. 233)

• redistricting: states’ redrawing of the electoral district boundaries following each census (p. 235)

• runoff election: an election that is held between the two candidates with the highest total votes if no one candidate scores a majority (p. 233)

7.5 Describe the forms of political participation Americans engage in, including the factors that limit or facilitate engagement.

REMEMBER . . .

• By participating politically, either in traditional or nontraditional ways, Americans express their commitment to civic engagement.

KNOW . . .

• absentee ballots: ballots completed and submitted by a voter prior to the day of an election (p. 244)

• ballot roll-off: when voters do not cast votes for a set of races with which they are not familiar and for which they may not have traditional cues (p. 244)

• civic engagement: working to improve society through political and nonpolitical action (p. 240)

• felon disenfranchisement: the denial of voting rights to Americans who have been convicted of felonies (p. 244)

• Motor Voter Law: law allowing Americans to register to vote when applying for or renewing their driver’s licenses and making it easier for Americans with disabilities to register to vote (p. 244)

• political efficacy: a person’s belief that she or he can make effective political change (p. 242)

• political mobilization: efforts by members of American political parties to turn out the vote and encourage their members to get others to do so (p. 243)
• political participation: the different ways in which individuals take action to shape the laws and policies of a government (p. 240)

• registration requirements: the set of rules that govern who can vote and how, when, and where they vote (p. 244)

• socioeconomic status (SES): a measure that captures an individual’s wealth, income, occupation, and educational attainment (p. 242)

• suffrage: the right to vote in political elections (p. 244)

• voter turnout: the number of eligible voters who actually participate in an election versus the total number of eligible voters (p. 241)